

Talking points and Q&As – Authorising third party access to driver licence photographs for register maintenance and licence card production

Cabinet Committee: Cabinet Economic Policy Committee (ECO) – 4 March 2026

Talking points

Purpose
• I seek Cabinet’s agreement to table an Amendment Paper to the Regulatory Systems (Transport) Amendment Bill (the Bill). • This Amendment Paper would address a gap in the Land Transport Act 1998 relating to access to driver licence photographs. • The Bill enables third party access to driver licence photographs for the purpose of creating or maintaining <u>electronic</u> driver licences. This revealed that there was not an equivalent provision for <u>physical</u> driver licences and driver identification cards, and for developing and maintaining the driver licence register. • s 9(2)(h) • The proposed amendments are tightly scoped. The access to photographs they provide is limited to uses that are consistent with the original purpose for which driver licence photographs are collected. • Access to and use of the photographs would continue to be subject to existing privacy, security, and information-handling requirements. This includes contractual obligations on providers and alignment with the Privacy Act 2020. • The proposed changes align with the overarching policy intent of the Bill (agreed to by the Business Committee under standing order 267), which is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and resilience of transport regulatory systems by addressing technical gaps and reducing the risk of regulatory failure. • The amendments are minor and technical in nature and do not alter the overall policy direction of the transport system.

Questions and Answers

Why does NZTA contract out the production of driver licences and driver identification cards and maintenance of the Driver Licence Register?
• Section 97 of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 requires NZTA to consider whether it could most efficiently and effectively perform its functions and exercise its powers itself, or by delegating or contracting out operations to appropriate organisations or people. • NZTA doesn’t have the ability to produce driver licence or driver identity cards — it’s more efficient to contract out the production. Establishing an in-house function would require significant capital and operational funding and could require a pause on the production of licences while this function was set up.

Who does NZTA contract to produce driver licence cards and maintain the driver licence register?

- NZTA contracts Placard to produce physical driver licences. Arrangements have been in place since 2011.
- NZTA contracts Unisys to maintain the driver licence register. Arrangements have been in place since 1998.

s 9(2)(i)

How many driver licences are issued each year?

- Approximately 1.1 million physical driver licences are produced each year. This includes on average:
 - 120,400 replacement licences.
 - 71,100 renewed licences for older drivers.
 - 36,600 new licence endorsements.
 - 19,500 renewed licence endorsements.
 - 1,100 replacement driver identification cards.

How many licences are held in the driver licence register?

- The driver licence register holds the details of over 5.4 million licence holders, including their photographs.