



THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA NPC

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Re: Request to extend grace period for licenses

Dear Minister,

The national lockdown announced by President Ramaphosa on 24 March and implemented on 26 March has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on every aspect of our daily lives. The measures enacted affected, amongst others, individuals, businesses, and government departments and associated institutions.

We are aware that within the current restrictions dealing with all aspects of transport over this period is an enormous undertaking. We would like to thank the Department and its various arms for the transparent manner in which these issues have been dealt with.

Of concern to the Automobile Association of South Africa (AA), however, is the impact the lockdown has had on the provision of licensing services to aspirant as well as existing license owners. Notwithstanding the generous extension of the validity of driving licenses to the end of August, a further extension is, in our view, necessary and inevitable.

Of particular concern is that current extension period only covers those driving licences which expired before the end of May. Any licences which expire in June or July may have an immediate 21-day grace period, but the problems outlined below make it difficult for these drivers to renew licences within that time.

There are several issues at stake.

The current National Traffic Information System (NaTIS) has been problematic since its inception in 2018. Among the concerns most often raised with us are difficulties in securing bookings, not only at local, convenient Driving Licence Testing Centres (DLTCs) but also at those DLTCs which require further travel. This is a recurring issue which prevents many drivers from making timely bookings, thus preventing them from obtaining the necessary legal documentation.

The difficulties which arise relate to no available, or limited slots, at DLTCs, issues with pre-payments to confirm bookings, and continued long waiting times on the days of the bookings. These problems are being exacerbated due to the lockdown as certain centres are no longer operational; the backlogs are therefore increasing daily.

In centres outside of Gauteng, the problems are similar, particularly in those areas where DLTCs have been forced to close. These closures put pressure on those centres which are open, compounding the problem.

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Our experience is that the majority of drivers in South Africa prefer to remain compliant with regulations, and to be on the road legally. Although the system is often problematic, drivers take the necessary steps to ensure they remain within the law. However, given the current constraints on the system, many are faced with the real possibility that they may not be able to do this.

We are therefore appealing to you to consider extending the grace period for all licences beyond the initial period which ends on 30 August. In our view this period will be insufficient to cater for all new and backlogged cases. It must also be mentioned that backlogs already started occurring before the lockdown began and that these need to be accounted for in addition to the current backlogs being created now.

We therefore believe a further extension to the end of January 2021 is more feasible. This extension also makes provision for the closure of DLTCs over the festive period, and for further potential closures as a result of COVID-19 infections.

As an alternative to an extension, which may not be a viable option for you, we would like to propose that the Department of Transport allows third party agents such as the AA to perform the renewal services currently being offered by the DLTCs. This is a function we are able to perform through our extensive nation-wide network of agents, and which we believe will go a long way in dealing with any backlogs at points of interaction. A further benefit is that this will alleviate the pressure on the current DLTC infrastructure, and make the process more seamless for the thousands of applicants whose intentions are to remain legitimately on the road.

On a related issue, we believe it is important that should any extension be granted, it is communicated thoroughly to all law enforcement officers in the country. This is particularly important as we have had sporadic reports of drivers being threatened with fines despite the fact that their licences fall within the grace or extension periods.

I trust the above meets your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely



Willem Groenewald
CEO
AA South Africa