

# Driver Education Program Edmund Rice Centre WA



Settlement  
Council  
of Australia

## AT A GLANCE

### Target participants:

SETS Clients

### Aim of program:

Provide culturally sensitive subsidized lessons to clients, making their journey easier to gaining their driving license. Getting a driver's license offers a variety of opportunities to ease daily life by securing employment, reducing negative mental health, achieving confidence, self-esteem, and independence.

### Organisations

#### involved /

#### partnerships:

Edmund Rice Centre WA, Mercycare, 54 Reasons and Communicare (Cannington).

**Location:** Mirrabooka WA

### Funding:

SETS, FIG and Communicare



Keys for Life class

## INTRODUCTION

A driver's license can mean the difference between successful integration, and exclusion. However the cost of lessons is prohibitive and many are unable to afford driving lessons until employed but unable to secure work or access to workplaces without a licence.

The Driver Education program is available to eligible humanitarian entrants and includes 36 driving lessons, Drive Safe classes and assistance with preparing for the "Hazard Perception Test". The subsidised cost of the program is \$1,188. If the client is unable to pay the total amount, support is given to apply for an interest free loan through Mercycare Lending Service. Interested clients are first required to complete and pass an English test. This test determines whether the client will be a suitable candidate to enroll in the Keys for Life (12 hour) program or not.

The **Keys for Life** program consists of presentations, games, learning activities and a workbook with over 200 practice quiz questions, which must be completed, and culminating in a final theory test quiz.

Instead of 5 consecutive weeks (2hrs each week), our class is for 2 full days from 9am to 3pm, with 1 day of study in between. This allows clients to study at home after day 1 to revisit the workbook and practice questions before day 2 when completing the theory quiz test. We also allow the clients to complete the final theory test quiz on paper rather than computer as most clients are not familiar with technical devices.

Once the student passes the requirement, they receive an accredited **Keys for Life** certificate from Department of Education partnered with Department of Transport. This entitles the client to obtain their official WA Learners permit which allows the commencement of their practical driving experience.

### **Practical driving program**

The Driver Education Program is designed to provide driving practice/ subsidized hourly lessons to clients who want to get their WA driver's license. Every enrolled client is entitled to a full program (30 hrs) delivered by qualified multi-lingual driving instructors who can communicate with the clients in their own language if required. Each client is interviewed and if all the eligibility requirements are met, the client is then enrolled after applying the amount of their subsidized portion in advance or if a loan is required, assistance with that can also be provided through the NILS from Mercycare. Instructors are designated to clients, taking into consideration, the client's English level as well as their ethnic language spoken to make communication easier and worthwhile during teaching/ learning driving skills.

Clients are refunded for the hours they haven't used (eg: passed their Practical Driving Assessment (PDA) or for other reasons such as holiday overseas, operation and other issues that affect full commitment to the program.

### **Hazard Perception Test Training**

This is an additional step for getting a WA drivers license. Clients who already have had at least 20-30 hours of practical driving experience are encouraged to get the training. It is designed to assist learner drivers in becoming more confident when facing road hazards. This requires a lot of practice and if clients are unaware of the basic tasks to overcome and pass the HPT at the Department of Transport, they will not be allowed to book their PDA (Practical Driving Assessment). The training involves basic skills such as using a mouse to step by step instruction on each question in person, one on one to minimise any misunderstanding as only 2 mistakes are allowed out of 24 questions in total.

## POINT OF DIFFERENCE

The Driver Education Program is like no other program that suits the primary needs of our clients from beginning to the end of getting a WA driver's license. Since 2010, we have taken every opportunity to make sure that this program offers the best possible outcome for our clients. Dissecting every aspect and filling in all the gaps have given our clients us the opportunity to use this one stop shop where they are provided with step 1 to 6 of getting their driver's license.

We have a team of at least 12 driving instructors for our Northern Suburbs program and a 6-driving instructor team for the driving program in the Southern suburbs making it accessible for all our clients in Perth. Our driving instructors are all from different nationalities and are multilingual to accommodate the language needs of all our enrolled clients.

Our qualified instructors are from culturally diverse backgrounds and speak over 20 languages. Participants can begin instruction in their language and transition to English once confident. This increases clarity and reduces stress and anxiety, improving the prospect of passing the practical test.

## CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge we have is having limited resources to meet the demand for the program. This is addressed by sourcing additional funding opportunities and prioritizing clients based on eligibility. A further challenge has been the demand for the program post SETS eligibility, especially from women. This has been somewhat addressed by successfully applying for a Fostering Integration Grant (FIG) that is for this target group.

Some specific operational challenges include:

- No funding available for the for Keys for Life classes (resources by ERCWA and catering by Mercycare)
- There are many referrals but only limited numbers can be accepted per class
- For the Practical Driving Program, we have a large number on the waiting list as there isn't enough funding to cater for all applicants. Clients then need to be prioritized on a case by case basis
- Clients have also found it difficult to pay for our program

## OUTCOMES

Successfully gaining a driver's license results in participants having increased access to employment, training, and social participation as well as increased independence, self-confidence, knowledge of Australian laws and road safety, reduction in traffic violations and illegal driving.

Participants gain their license, improve valuable English skills, and have increased opportunities to attend job interviews, English classes, and community activities thus contributing to greater participation in Australian life. These benefits extend to family, friends, and communities they belong to.

- Since 2009, almost 1000 participants have completed the program with a 70% success rate. Our funding currently allows us to offer the program to between 60 and 80 people per year however we received over 150 applications and many more enquiries.
- In 2019 we introduced the 'Keys4life program as part of the package with a success rate of ~85% and also offered support for the Hazard perception test with 90% success.
- We have also subsidised 12 people from new and emerging communities to successfully complete a Certificate IV in Transport and Logistics. They are now nationally accredited Driving Instructors operating their own small business.



**Instructor at work**

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