

Tuesday, 11 December 2018

NTC examining driver distraction and the Australian Road Rules

The National Transport Commission (NTC) is examining the effectiveness of the Australian Road Rules relating to driver distraction.

NTC Acting Chief Executive, Dr Geoff Allan, said the current approach was developed in 1999 when mobile phones were used primarily for calls and text, and in-vehicle technology referred to television screens.

“We recognise that driver distraction from technology and other factors is a safety risk, but it is not as well understood as other factors such as drink driving and speeding,” Dr Allan said.

“We will recommend what changes, if any, should be made to the Australian Road Rules to regulate for better outcomes for road users regardless of the causes of distraction and the technology used,” he said.

Dr Allan said the current rules prevented or limited the use of particular devices – mobile phones, visual display units and television receivers – while permitting their use as driver’s aids.

“However, the road rules are silent on which behaviours associated with distraction should be avoided or minimised. It is also not clear whether the use of newer technologies, like wearable devices, are regulated by the existing road rules.”

Dr Allan said technology could deliver benefits to road safety, however the current rules may prevent them from being fully optimised.

The NTC released an [issues paper](#) today for public comment with the aim of further exploring questions around responsibility for driver distractions, technologies that can assist and distract from the driving task, and prescriptive versus performance-based approaches.

The paper is open for comment until 14 February 2019. Submissions can be made via the NTC website at ntc.gov.au/submissions.

Following the receipt of submissions, the NTC will develop a discussion paper outlining possible solutions for release in June 2019.

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Notes to editors: The NTC is an independent statutory body charged with improving the productivity, safety and environmental performance of Australia’s land transport system.