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When driving in Tasmania one meets too many inconsiderate, selfish, ignorant and stupid drivers using the road. Unfortunately, we cannot legislate against these qualities, but possibly we can design road laws and policies to help negate the worst effects of them.

I write as a person with more than 40 years experience on the roads. I have driven in every state and most territories of Australia, and on two other continents. At the peak of my working life I was driving between 50 and 100 thousand kilometres a year. I know what it is like to be involved in a near fatal crash. During my driving life I have participated in several forms of driver training, including two levels of Army Driver Training and two advanced driver skills schools.

I believe we need to design road laws and policies to make it harder to gain a license and easier to lose one and, in some way, remind people to be more aware of other road users.

I am disabled. While my disability is not degenerative and I am only in my early 60's, I am required to submit to an annual driver fitness assessment. The process has shown to me that there are many people driving on our roads who are not physically capable, and may not be aware of it themselves. I think a mandatory annual check-up should be introduced at age 60.

I first came across compulsory preregistration vehicle checks when I moved to NSW in the mid-80's. We still don't have them and Tasmania has the oldest, most unsafe vehicle fleet in Australia. Introduce mandatory road safety checks for cars in two stages, first for cars over 10 years old and then, after 3 years, for cars over 5 years old.

Our present system of driver training is not working. I don't think that banning every young man under the age of 25 would be popular with the general public, but it might work. Short of that there should be a complete matrix of experiences that every aspiring driver must have before they get tested for their license. One that springs to mind for me is driving in a skid pan. We live in Tasmania. Wet and icy roads are a feature of the landscape yet none of our young drivers knows how to handle a skid. There are many other situations which young drivers should know about, but are not taught.

Driving around any of the major population centres in Tasmania will show you why we are the butt of many jokes about Tasmanian drivers (in Tasmania you can either have a sound system or indicators in your car, but not both!), possibly better education and more enforcement can help but I'm not sure. One area which does need immediate attention is that of visibility on the road. Even after dark one comes across the occasional vehicle which does not have its lights on, but at other times of the day the problem becomes more apparent. In Tasmania we have many days affected by overcast, wet conditions where natural light levels are not sufficient to see vehicles moving on the road. As a minimum we should have a rule that lights must be turned on whenever windscreen wipers are, and, as part of driver training, drivers should be made aware of just how visible cars are in certain circumstances. Most cars

these days either have an audible warning that lights are on, or switch them off when one turns off the ignition, so this would not be an impost on anyone.

So, in summary;

Driver's licenses should be harder to get and easier to lose;

Introduce mandatory medical checks from age 60;

Introduce mandatory preregistration vehicle checks;

Change driver training to ensure that each prospective driver is exposed to a specific list of experiences; and

Change the law to require every driver to turn their lights on when it starts raining.

Yours faithfully.

Christopher Spiegel