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[BEGINS]

MACA hails proposed road rule changes as a “significant” step towards equitable transport for children with disability in Australia

An issues paper published today has been welcomed by Mobility and Accessibility for Children and Adults (MACA) CE Helen Lindner as a “significant first step” towards more equitable transport in Australia.

The paper, developed by the National Transport Commission (NTC), outlines a draft regulatory framework which would empower states and territories to tackle significant gaps and implement consistent road rules for children with disabilities and medical conditions when requiring an alternative restraint or method of travel. The proposed updates recognise the rights of all children to safe transport and the expert role of trained allied health professionals in undertaking transport assessments.

Currently, families navigating transport regulations for children with additional transport needs face legal and financial challenges, often coupled with administrative burden and emotional distress. The proposed approach aims to streamline processes for families and allied health professionals and to improve access to safe travel.

“This proposed framework responds to significant advancements in world leading Australian research that is rapidly improving safe transport for children with disabilities and medical conditions. If adopted, these significant changes would promote the rights of all children to safe transport,” Ms Lindner said.

“It suggests a sensible path forward, improving road rules and alignment across borders.”

Under the current Australian Road Rules (ARR), the role of allied health professionals as experts in undertaking transport assessments is not recognised. The framework proposes formally recognising suitably trained allied health professionals as prescribers of “alternative restraints/methods of travel”. This change would grant them the authority to issue families with exemptions when required.

“This change supplements the existing role of medical practitioners and is a testament to the expertise of allied health professionals, such as occupational therapists, who have undertaken specialised training in this area,” Ms Lindner said.

“The proposed framework provides the workforce of over 800 MACA certified allied health professionals already operating across Australia the authority to grant an exemption when prescribing a suitable vehicle restraint.

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“If adopted, this would reduce burden and costs for families, who previously needed to seek medical practitioner referrals for exemptions, in addition to engaging their allied health specialist.”

The CE of the national not-for-profit applauded the forward-thinking framework which aligns with MACA's vision that every person should have access to safe and equitable transport.

“We know that when road rules are unclear or appropriate exemptions are unavailable, it can result in children with disabilities or medical conditions missing out on safe transport, impacting their education, community participation, and family life.

“We urge our supporters, and all interested parties to read the issues paper and share their feedback on the proposed changes via the online portal or survey on the NTC website.”

MACA commends the NTC on its inclusive process, which included MACA and other representative agencies in developing the draft framework.

“We look forward to the second round of consultation in early 2026,” Ms Lindner said.

[ENDS]

About MACA

MACA is a not-for-profit organisation and the only national body dedicated to advancing the rights of people with disabilities and medical conditions to safe and equitable transport.

MACA is leading a groundbreaking program of research and initiatives to tackle systemic barriers in policy, research and practice that affect road safety and participation outcomes for people with disability.

The organisation receives funding support from the Australian Government Department of Social Services and provides a national information website, specialist training courses, and an expert support service. MACA also established the world leading Australian Safety Assessment Program (AuSAP) to independently assess, and crash-test specialised vehicle restraint systems used by people with disability. Products are published on MACA's National Product Register.

MACA's leadership and impact have been recognised with prestigious honours, including the 2024 Prince Michael International Road Safety Award and the 2025 HESTA Disability Team Excellence Award.

More information: www.macahub.org

About the Australian Road Rules review

The National Transport Commission (NTC) is reviewing the Australian Road Rules relating to child restraints for passengers under 16, including children with medical conditions and disabilities.

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The review aims to ensure the rules are safer, more inclusive, and aligned with the latest safety research and best-practice guidelines. It includes a specific focus on:

- the appropriate use of child restraints
- children using adult seatbelts
- children travelling in the front seat
- improving protection for children with medical conditions and disabilities

To support this work, the NTC has established an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to provide independent, evidence-based advice on current challenges, their impacts, and potential solutions.

MACA CE Helen Lindner is a member of the EAG.

Public consultation is open from Monday 27 October to Friday 19 December 2025.

A second round of consultation will take place in early 2026, presenting an impact analysis of proposed changes. Review recommendations will be considered by transport ministers in the second half of 2026.

More information: www.ntc.gov.au

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