

**A guide for older drivers in the ACT, and
their friends and families.**



developed by Monash University Accident Research Centre



for COTA (ACT)



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Dead Safety Trust



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At some time in our lives, everyone must consider the need to retire from driving. Knowing when that time is for each of us is not easy.

At some time in our lives, everyone must consider the need to retire from driving. Knowing when the time has come, is not easy. From the day we first get our driving licence, driving is in many ways considered our key to flexibility and convenience. For many people, retiring from driving can feel like a loss of independence and mobility. After all, it is important that everyone remain as mobile as possible for as long as possible to make the most of life.

But giving up driving does not have to be stressful. With good planning and a little assistance, the change can be made fairly smoothly, with little loss of freedom. This booklet has been designed to help you to plan and prepare for this change with minimal impact on your lifestyle.

You may have already read the *Older Driver Handbook*, which provides good advice on driving safely and responsibly in the ACT. This booklet is a follow-on, having been written specifically for older drivers in the ACT who are ready to consider retiring from driving.

Alternatively, you may be reading this because you are concerned about a friend or partner's ability to drive and you need guidelines for encouraging them to retire from driving. This booklet is for you, too. It also provides



information on alternative transport options (see pages 35 and 36) available in the ACT including information on the Taxi Subsidy Scheme, ACTION buses, discounts available for seniors card holders, electric scooters and other community transport options.

WHY WE LOVE TO DRIVE

Cars and driving play an important role in today's society. Cars provide mobility, which is important to your independence, general health, well being and quality of life. Having a car of your own allows you to go where you want, when you want. It is no surprise that many older adults rely on driving themselves - particularly when today's older generation is more affluent, healthier and more active than previous generations.

Yet while it is vital that independence and mobility are maintained for as long as possible, there comes a time for all drivers when safety issues around driving must be considered more carefully.

But giving up driving does not have to be stressful. With good planning and a little assistance, the change can be made fairly smoothly, with little loss of independence.



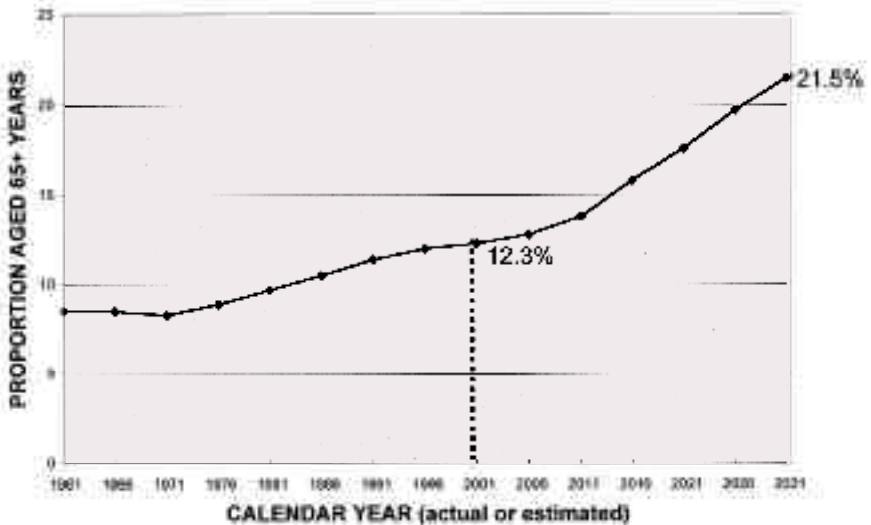
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As an older adult, you may experience problems and difficulties that impact on your ability to drive safely.

THE OLDER DRIVER

As the proportion of older people in the population increases (see figure below), so too does the number of older drivers on our roads.

But living longer doesn't necessarily mean our physical capabilities are not declining. As an older adult, you may experience problems and difficulties that impact on your ability to drive safely. Not everyone will retain the ability to drive their car indefinitely.



Proportion of Australian population aged 65 years or more. (source: Young, 1990)

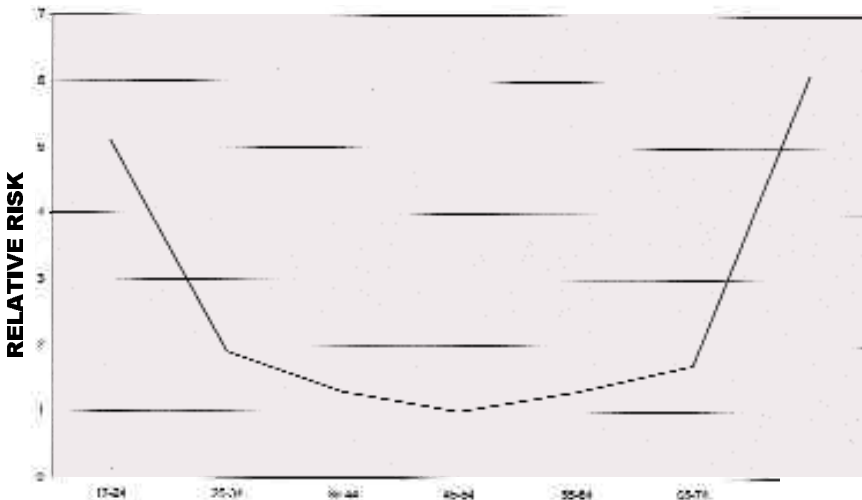


Sometimes there is conflict between the desire to maintain mobility for as long as possible and safety. This can have serious consequences, with incapable drivers putting themselves and other members of the public at risk. It is very important when considering whether or not you think you should stop driving to honestly assess your capabilities.

The safety of yourself and others should always be of foremost importance. Nobody wants to be the cause of an accident.

THE RISKS OF DRIVING AS YOU GET OLDER

The safety of yourself and others should always be of foremost importance. Nobody wants to cause an accident.



AGE GROUP OF DRIVER INVOLVED (years)

The risk of being killed in a crash by age group.



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The reality is that some factors related both to your age and health are beyond your control and can affect the way you drive.

On the whole, older drivers are experienced, conscientious and responsible, and make appropriate driving decisions, modifying driving habits to fit capabilities. Older drivers, tend to drive shorter distances, make more frequent trips and drive more slowly. They also tend to reduce driving under difficult or high-risk conditions such as peak hour and at night. However, the side-effects of ageing mean that your capabilities and physical resilience decline, whether or not you are conscious of it. The reality is that some factors related both to your age and health are beyond your control and can affect the way you drive.

Older driver crashes are currently not a large road safety problem in terms of the number of crashes compared with other age groups. However, older drivers (particularly those over 75 years) are involved in more crashes with serious injury and fatalities per head of population and per distance travelled than younger drivers. This is often the result of being more vulnerable to serious injury as age increases.

Older drivers are often involved in crashes in complex situations such as at traffic signals, turning right and giving way.

On the next pages you will find a checklist that can help you work out whether or not your driving skills are up to scratch.



OFTEN SOMETIMES NEVER

VISION

Do you have problems reading road signs or the number on buses?

Do you ever fail to make a turn onto a street you want because you didn't read the name on the street sign in time?

When you are driving, do cars and objects seem to appear unexpectedly?

Do you have more trouble telling how far away objects are?

When you are driving, does the glare from headlights or the sun bother you more than it used to?

MOVEMENT

When you are driving, do you find it difficult to turn your head to see over your shoulder?

Are you finding it harder to operate the controls of the car (e.g. gears, brakes, accelerator, turning the wheel)?

Are you having more difficulty getting in and out of the car?



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OFTEN *SOMETIMES* *NEVER* **REACTION AND FATIGUE**

- Do major intersections worry you because you have to make too many decisions at once?
- Are you finding it harder to regularly monitor your car instruments while maintaining your position on the road?
- Are you having more trouble stepping on the brake pedal in time?
- Are you slower in reacting to dangerous driving situations than you used to be?
- Do you often get sleepy while driving during the day?
- Do you have trouble maintaining concentration while driving?

MEDICATIONS

- When you buy a new medicine, do you to check with your doctor or pharmacist about its possible effect on your driving?
- Do you sometimes forget to look for warning labels on your medicines?



OFTEN SOMETIMES NEVER

DRIVING

- Do you get lost more often while driving?
- Are you more cautious when driving?
- Do you feel the need to drive well below the speed limit?
- Are you more uncomfortable driving in heavy traffic than you used to be?
- Is merging into traffic or changing lanes harder than it used to be?
- Are you less confident driving to new or different places?
- Do you become stressed or agitated when making a right turn at a busy intersection?
- Are you ever unsure about whom you should give way to at intersections?
- Are gaps in the traffic harder to judge than before?

FEEDBACK

- Have you had an increase in minor accidents or near misses recently?
- Have police officers told you they are concerned about your driving recently?
- Do your children, other family members or friends have concerns about your driving?
- Does your doctor have concerns about your driving?
- Is your eye doctor or optometrist concerned about your driving?



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SCORING

Add up the number of times you ticked "OFTEN", "SOMETIMES" and "NEVER".

Often

Sometimes

Never

For scoring outcomes please turn to page 40.



You probably know someone who is still driving, but shouldn't be. But how do you know when to give up driving yourself? Answering this is difficult. Driving is a complicated task requiring continuous concentration. It is ability - not age - that determines safe driving. No one should stop driving before their ability to do so has diminished.

In the end, you may give up driving for one of many reasons. Everyone is different. It may be a medical condition that makes you decide to stop, or you may feel you cannot drive safely anymore. Maybe it's pressure from friends and family who can see signs that your driving skills are deteriorating.

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Medical conditions and medications can affect driving ability.

EARLY SIGNS THAT IT MIGHT BE TIME TO STOP DRIVING

Fitness and Performance Ability

- Medical conditions and medications can affect driving ability. Feeling drowsy or 'offish' on new medication.
- Declining eyesight can make driving dangerous. It may be difficult to read signs, seeing in poor light, coping with glare or seeing cars or pedestrians in shadows.
- A pattern of 'close calls' or near misses or actually being involved in an accident.
- Increasing difficulty in handling driving situations: being surprised by passing cars, braking harder than normal for hazards, going through red lights or stop signs, turning too fast or too slow, backing into or over objects, running over the kerb, difficulty in keeping the car centred in a lane.
- Concern from friends and family members (particularly when your adult children won't let your grandchildren travel in the car with you).



Feelings about Driving

- Loss of confidence and nervousness when behind the wheel.
- Constantly feeling tired when driving.
- Intimidation from other aggressive drivers and increasing confrontations with impatient drivers who make you feel threatened.
- Feeling uncomfortable in some traffic conditions – eg becoming confused in complex driving situations such as at intersections, or roundabouts; getting lost.



“Bob is an extremely careful driver, however, last year, he was involved in a crash. He was travelling down a street he doesn’t often go down and went through an intersection. He thought there was no traffic coming, and didn’t see the red light until it was too late.”



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Stopping driving does not have to mean you give up your independence.

GIVING UP DRIVING IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

Stopping driving does not have to mean you give up your independence. If you plan ahead and ease yourself into a life without driving, you can continue to enjoy a similar quality of life and be satisfied you are travelling in a safe and responsible way.

Few of us plan for the time when we are no longer able to drive. Of course, there will be some consequences of not driving, but if you plan ahead you can minimise any loss of self esteem and the transition to not driving can be much easier and less stressful. It's never too soon to explore the options available to you. There are a number of things you can look into to help you plan for your successful retirement from driving:





1 *Become familiar with public transport*

A good way to prepare for not driving is to get familiar with public transport options in your local area, including buses and taxis, community transport and volunteer services. You might be surprised at how easily and conveniently you can get around without a car. Public transport can be more relaxing than driving in busy traffic – and you don't have the hassle of finding a car park!

A good way to prepare for not driving is to get familiar with public transport options in your local area

2 *Try to live close to public transport*

Living close to public transport can make the world of difference in getting around without a car. If you are considering moving, it is a good idea to keep the location of public transport well in mind.

3 *Live near family, social networks and medical services*

If your friends and family will be helping you after you stop driving, it might be a good idea to live somewhere close to them. You could also look into trying to live near where you shop and go out, and where you attend medical or health appointments.





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Community transport services offer a safe, accessible and convenient alternative to public transport.

4 Get some advice

Talk to your doctor, or occupational therapist or your pharmacist about tips on driving. There are also some refresher courses available to help improve driving. Look for details on these at local community services such as the Council of the Ageing, Motoring Clubs, Senior Citizens Clubs and Insurance agencies.

5 Look into community transport services

Community transport services offer a safe, accessible and convenient alternative to public transport. There are many such services available. They are also a great way of meeting new people. It's just a matter of finding out what is available. A list of alternative transport options and contact details is provided at the back of this booklet.





Share the driving

It is also a good idea to think ahead about sharing the driving. With many couples, men often do the majority of driving. However, if you share the driving between partners, then when one has to retire from driving, the other has up-to-date experience.

Changing driving patterns

If you find that your driving ability has changed, for whatever reason, it's a good idea to make the appropriate changes to your driving as soon as possible. You can start by avoiding certain driving situations, such as complex traffic areas. Limit your driving to areas and situations where you feel safe, such as familiar areas and during the day. Short trips can help avoid tiredness. Planning your trip can also help avoid traffic situations that make you feel

...if you share the driving between partners, then when one has to retire from driving, the other has up-to-date experience.





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By changing your driving patterns, you can gradually introduce alternative forms of travel into your routine.

uncomfortable. Start to explore alternative forms of transport. By changing your driving patterns, you can gradually introduce alternative forms of travel into your routine.

Holiday travel

Long distance travel is also going to require some rethinking. Maybe towing the caravan is no longer an option. But there are alternatives. There are lots of good deals for budget travel using rail, coach and air services. There are also specialised travel packages with concessions. Think about holidaying with friends and enjoy concessions for group bookings. Look out for good deals in seniors' magazines such as *Australian Seniors* and travel guides – pension card-holders can even get some free trips!





9 Health issues related to driving/ medication

Many health and medical conditions can affect driving. You need to plan around the effects. For example, if you take medication that makes you drowsy, plan trips in the morning when you are brightest and not too tired. Also, plan ahead and try to ensure you don't have to drive when taking medication.

Many health and medical conditions can affect driving. You need to plan around the effects.

“Fred has high blood pressure and his doctor has put him on some medication. He was concerned about the effect the tablets would have on his driving and talked with his doctor about it. He knows not to drive in the afternoons after he has taken his medication, so he makes sure he has done all of his shopping and other trips before lunch.”





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If tiring easily or becoming disoriented in new places - stick to short trips close to home and familiar areas.

Your safety is the most important thing if you continue driving and it is worth thinking about adopting safe strategies.

SOME SAFE PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

- If poor vision affects safety at night, for example - drive only during the day.
- If tiring easily or becoming disoriented in new places - stick to short trips close to home and familiar areas.
- If uncomfortable driving at high speeds - stay off highways and freeways.
- Schedule appointments at times other than during peak hour traffic.



Remember these important signs

- Medical conditions and medications can affect driving ability.
- Declining eyesight can make driving dangerous.
- You should think about stopping driving if:
 - you have a pattern of 'close calls' or near misses or actually being involved in an accident.
 - you experience increasing difficulty in handling driving situations.
 - your friends and family members are concerned about your driving.

Medical conditions and medications can affect driving ability.





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Many older drivers start thinking about retiring from driving due to medical conditions.

Have regular health checks

Many older drivers start thinking about retiring from driving due to medical conditions. Good vision, for example, is vital for safe driving. It's your own responsibility to regularly check with your doctor about medical conditions that may affect your driving. Treatment may be of assistance in some cases (for example, surgery for cataracts). Don't forget that after taking new medication, changing dosages or after surgery, you may not be able to drive for a while.



While it is difficult and often painful, deciding to give up the car keys is something you will probably have to do at some stage. It is much better to make this decision for yourself rather than having an accident or losing your licence. If this happens, your self-confidence can be affected. You may even become severely depressed. But if you make the decision to stop driving for yourself you will feel much more in control of your life and find planning much easier.

Stopping driving does not mean your current lifestyle has to stop too.

Stopping driving does not mean your current lifestyle has to stop too. You just need to have a back-up plan of alternative transport ready to go.



Pat and Max only like to drive in situations that they feel comfortable in. When they have to drive further than usual, say, to a specialist, they sit down together and work out the best way to get there and back. They also make sure their appointments are at a time that they don't have to drive in heavy traffic in the mornings or afternoons.



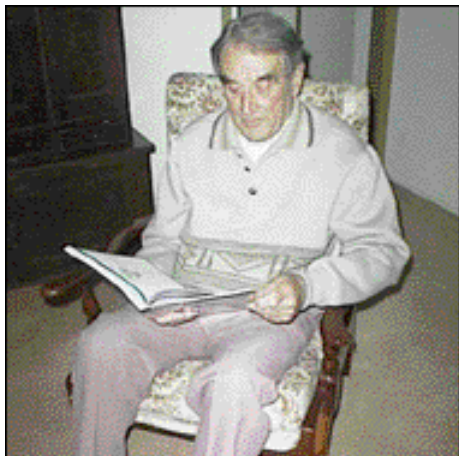
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It's important to try to keep an open mind with this issue. Your safety is at stake.

Where can you go for help?

Sometimes it is difficult to know who or where to turn to when you are trying to make such big life-changing decisions. Your own doctor will most certainly be helpful as they know about your health status and what you are capable of physically. Your family and friends often give you an honest opinion, because they care. Your safety is foremost in their minds and they can give you a good opinion about your skills. It's important to try to keep an open mind with this issue. Your safety is at stake. It may be difficult, but you need to try not to dismiss the value of people's comments just because you do not want to hear or accept them.

John doesn't go out after 4pm, especially in winter. He says he doesn't like the traffic at that time of day – there are lots of people driving fast, making a beeline to get home from work. He also says he likes to be home before it's dark – not only because he doesn't like driving at night, but he's concerned about security too.





The role of friends and family

Some older drivers may choose to resist the concerns of their friends and family. Ultimately, it's up to each of us to decide. However, as well as discussing your driving ability, friends and family members can help you find other transport options and help you adjust to your changed circumstances.

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When considering retiring from driving you may like to do this gradually, rather than suddenly. Remember you need to adopt safe practices.

A gradual approach

When considering retiring from driving you may like to do this gradually, rather than suddenly. Remember you need to adopt safe practices. You can do this by starting to drive during the day only, make shorter trips, drive in familiar areas, drive at speeds that are comfortable for you. Here are some alternatives to consider:

- If poor vision affects safety at night, for example - drive only during the day.
- If tiring easily or becoming disoriented in new places - stick to short trips close to home and familiar areas.
- If uncomfortable driving at high speeds - stay off highways and freeways.
- Schedule appointments at times other than during peak hour traffic.



Keep the car for special circumstances

Another good way to ease into a life without a car is to use the car for special circumstances, for example when other transport is not available. This is, however, a relatively expensive option.

Maybe you could keep a telephone pager or taxi voucher or contact a neighbour who can help in an emergency. When it's time to stop driving altogether, you might sell your car or transfer it to another family member.

The costs of running a car

It's expensive to run a car - especially if it's not being used often. If you were to add up the money poured into petrol and upkeep (tyres, servicing and repairs etc), insurance and registration, you'd probably find that it far outweighs the cost of alternative transport.

You can try out the sums for yourself. Add up the running costs of your car including petrol, servicing and repairs, insurance, registration, licence renewal fee, and parking costs. Then add up the cost of taxi fares (average \$20 per trip) and public transport.

The cost figures from the following table were derived from the RACV's Royal-auto Magazine. They give a good idea of what an average car costs if it is driven 10, 000km per year.

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Compared to alternative transport costs, say three taxi trips a week, which work out to around \$3100 a year, owning a car is a much more expensive way of getting around – taxis included.

Standing costs average cents/km	SMALL CAR Hyundai Lantra GLE	MEDIUM CAR Toyota Camry Csi 2.2	LARGE CAR Holden Commodore Exec.
Depreciation	11.39	12.88	16.86
Interest	3.72	4.52	5.18
Rego/Insurance			
Motoring Club membership	5.51	5.64	5.42
Fuel	5.49	6.09	7.01
Tyres	0.80	0.61	1.08
Service, repairs	1.79	2.37	1.39
Average cents/km	28.71	32.13	36.94
Average \$/week	82.80	92.67	106.56
Average \$/year	4305.60	4819.01	5541.12



So, you've made the decision to phase driving out of your life. It's not the end of the world. Just because you've decided to retire from driving, doesn't mean you have to stay at home.

Alternative transport means you can still get around safely and conveniently. And no car means financial savings. You can maintain your lifestyle with a little help from family and friends, and by ensuring you plan ahead.

Alternative services

All sorts of transport options are available to you. Many are listed in the last section of this booklet (*page 36*). One option might be for your friends and family to drive you around. If you want more independence, you can use taxis, buses, community vans and other volunteer services.

So, you've made the decision to phase driving out of your life. It's not the end of the world. Just because you've decided to retire from driving, doesn't mean you have to stay at home.





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Start a car-pooling club for social outings – this saves money for everyone and the driving can be shared.

ACTION buses have a comprehensive coverage of urban areas, their services are reasonably frequent and they are very safe. Also, the bus fleet in Canberra is increasingly being equipped with ‘kneeling’ buses, particularly on routes where many older people live.

You might think of different travel options for each trip. For example, you could take the bus to your local club and then catch a taxi home if the timetables aren’t convenient. Start a car-pooling club for social outings – this saves money for everyone and the driving can be shared.





Electric scooters are becoming an increasingly popular way to travel. If you think a scooter may be a good option for you, you will need to examine this very carefully because safety varies widely between models. It is important to remember that you keep safe driving practices on a scooter.

Family and friends

Family and friends may be only too willing to drive you where you need to go. While this may often be the easiest option, you may feel as though you are depending on them a little too much. Setting up some sort of exchange system with friends and neighbours can see a whole new social

Setting up some sort of exchange system with friends and neighbours can see a whole new social world open up.





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Just because you've decided to retire from driving, doesn't mean you have to stay at home.

world open up. And it can take the pressure off family, too. Remember – there are many other ways you can get around independently, safely and conveniently.

Community Transport

Many local communities have recognised the need for transport for their senior members. Some communities have door-to-door services to assist older people to get to activities and appointments. Many of these are run and operated by volunteers and are safe, secure, inexpensive and reliable.



“Bill appreciates Kev's help in the garden, and offered to take him to bowls to help him out.”



Identification cards

If you stop driving, you can still keep your licence as an identification card. Even so, there are many other cards and documents you can use for identification, including your senior's card, passport, government cards and 'pub' cards.

Walking

Walking is well-documented as one of the best ways to keep physically fit and active. Walking can be a most pleasurable way of getting around. Perhaps your visit to the local shops to buy the paper, milk and bread can be incorporated with a morning stroll. However, it's important that we feel safe when walking. It's not a good idea to walk alone through lonely or isolated areas such as parks and gardens when it's dark.

If you feel depressed, isolated, or lonely because you feel you can't easily go out, there are people to help.





It is vital that you develop some strategies to maintain mobility - without the car. Don't just sit back and let things happen.

Counselling services

Some counselling services are available to help people make the decision to stop driving. If you feel depressed, isolated, or lonely because you feel you can't easily go out, there are people to help. Counselling services are available everywhere. A list of services in the ACT can be found at the back of this booklet.

Strategies

It is vital that you develop some strategies to maintain mobility - without the car. Don't just sit back and let things happen. Be active, and make sure authorities and community services know what your needs are. If you feel that your area could be serviced by better transport services, let them know.

Home Delivery Services and the Internet

Make use of home delivery services offered by local businesses. This allows you to avoid having to carry heavy bags of shopping if you are walking or using the bus or taxi. And don't forget the Internet. Once you've mastered the computer you'll find that the Internet is a great way to shop from the comfort of your home. It's never too late to learn something new!



FOR ADVICE ON DRIVING, CONTACT:

Council of the Ageing (ACT) 6282 3777

Hughes Community Centre
Wisdom Street, Hughes

Department of Urban Services

General Inquiries	13 22 81
Dickson Motor Vehicle Registry	6207 7000
Civic Shopfront	6207 5139
Belconnen Shopfront	6207 7244
Tuggeranong Shopfront	6207 6071
Woden Shopfront	6207 5231

Driver Re-assessments:

If your doctor or another medical professional recommends a driving assessment, you should initially contact:

The Driver Rehabilitation Unit	
Canberra Hospital	6244 2937

This could involve an on-road assessment and/or medical check.



FOR ADVICE ON ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT,
CONTACT:

ACT Government Taxi Subsidy Scheme **6207 1108**

1st Floor Callum Offices

Easty Street, Woden.

*(This scheme provides a subsidy towards the cost of taxi fares
for those unable to access public transport)*

COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Belconnen Community Centre **6251 5926**

Northside Community Service **6257 6977** or **6257 2255**

Southside Community Service **6295 9521**

Tuggeranong Community Service **6293 2920** (Transport)

Gunghalin Community Service **6242 8200**

Weston Creek Community Service **6288 9077**

Woden Community Service **6282 2644**

*(These community services provide general community
information and support for older people including home visits
and transport services to essential appointments, referral,
advocacy, support and volunteer services)*

**Social Clubs and Organisations:**

Belconnen Senior Citizens Club	6251 6354
Canberra Seniors Centre	6248 9509
Canberra Pensioners Social & Recreation Club	6247 3797
Dickson Seniors Network	6205 1022
Narrabundah Senior Citizens Club	6292 2591
Queanbeyan Senior Citizens Association	6297 4365
Tuggeranong Valley Senior Citizens Club	6231 5343 or 6292 2816
Woden Senior Citizens Club	6282 2573

(Some of these groups provide volunteer drivers and/or organised groups).

Community Information and Referral Service

Information Line:	6248 7988
Room G03, Griffin Centre	
Administration:	6257 1687
Bunda Street	
Canberra City	

(A community information service offering information, advice, referrals and advocacy)



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Community Advocates Office

6207 0707

GIO House

City Walk, Canberra City

(Advocacy Service for fundamental human rights)

Transport Services:

ACTION Bus Service

Timetable & Service Information and General Inquiries:

13 17 10

Canberra Cabs

13 22 27

Canberra Railway Station

Ticket Sales:

13 22 32

General Inquiries:

6239 0111

Queanbeyan Railway Station

6297 1242

Deane's Buslines

6299 3722 *(Interstate Travel)*

Murrays Coaches

6295 3611 *(Interstate Travel)*



If you are considering changing your car to one that makes driving easier, you should give a lot of consideration to safety. New cars tend to be safer than older models and there are safety rating brochures to help you with your choice.

Useful points to consider when buying a new car:

- A car with power steering and brakes and adjustable seats is easiest to drive.
- Automatic transmission is easier to drive than manual, and does not use significantly more petrol.
- Consider a car that is comfortable, easy to get in and out of, and has easy-to-fit modifications such as adding larger or additional mirrors to increase the range of visibility.
- Adjustable controls like special foot pedals will help you reach the accelerator and brakes comfortably.
- Look for cars with adjustable safety belts, firm seats, easy-to-reach and easy-to-operate controls, minimal blind spots, and power seats and windows.
- Safety features – airbags, good safety ratings etc

If you are thinking about buying a new car, you should think about your safety.



CHECKLIST SCORING OUTCOMES

If you ticked “**OFTEN**” more than 5 times, almost certainly you may well be placing yourself and others at increased risk of an accident. You need to read the sections about the responsibilities of driving, how to plan for not driving and see what other forms of transport are available to you.

If you ticked “**SOMETIMES**” more than 5 times, you may have a number of unsafe driving practices and/or problems that affect your driving. You should read the sections to start thinking about how you are going to make the transition from driving to not driving in the future.

If you ticked “**NEVER**” more than 10 times, your answers show you know what is important for safe driving and you are practising what you know. The relevant sections will show you that even though your driving is safe at the moment, early planning for retiring from driving will make this change much easier for you and your family.

