

Upcoming Changes will affect Driving Licence holders and Vehicle Owners from February.

The Solomon Island's Government in partnership with the New Zealand Aid Program has funded a new electronic transport management system which will move the Solomon Islands from a paper based manual driving and vehicle licensing system to a computerised and automated Driving and Vehicle Licence production system.

The new system will allow Inland Revenue to work more closely with the Police and the Ministry for Infrastructure and Development to ensure the safety of vehicles and that only authorised drivers are on our roads.

What are the key changes which the public and current vehicle owners and driving licence holders need to be aware of?

Driving Licences

Inland Revenue, as the administrator and issuer of driving and vehicle licences, will be replacing the paper based driving licences with plastic credit card-sized driving licences. The new driving licence will contain a photograph of the holder of the licence and the classes of vehicles that a driver is licensed to operate. Below is an example of the new driving licence.



Driving licences will be available for one, three or five years. A discount will be offered for those who prefer to hold a three or five year driving licence.

Provisional driving licences will cost slightly more than full licences to discourage people from merely renewing their provisional licence rather than sitting the test to qualify for a full licence.

Driver testing fees must be paid at the Ministry for Infrastructure and Development (MID) before sitting the driving test.

Vehicle Owners

There will also be changes for vehicle owners:

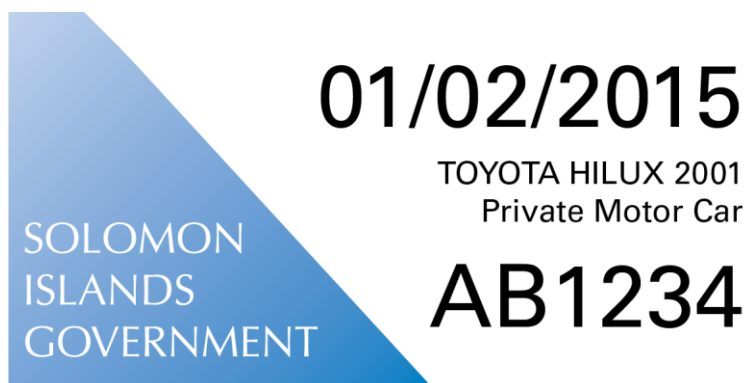
- New machine-printed vehicle licences must be clearly visible on the left side of the front windcreens in pockets that will be provided at the first issue of the new licence (see example below)
- Renewal of vehicle licences will be annual except for public service vehicles
- Owners of public service vehicles – taxis, buses and rental vehicles – will pay one quarter of the annual fee – their licence will be issued for 3 months only, concurrent with the requirement for roadworthiness testing of their vehicles.
- New vehicle registration certificates must be retained in a vehicle at all times as evidence of ownership and provide for transfer of information when vehicle ownership changes
- The new owner will be required to notify the change to Inland Revenue within 14 days of taking possession of the vehicle
- There will be some changes to simplify the classification of goods vehicles
- Vehicle inspection fees must be paid at the Ministry for Infrastructure and Development (MID) before the road-worthiness test

Starting from 1 July 2014, new vehicle registration plates will be issued to all vehicles with the exception of G, X and Diplomatic plated vehicles. The new plates will have black lettering on a yellow background to replace the current black and white plates. An example of the new registration plate is shown below.



The new plates will make it easier for the Police to identify unlicensed and unregistered vehicles. There will be no fee charge for the initial replacement of vehicle registration plates.

For business vehicles, such as taxis and buses, the new vehicle licence will include on it the Business Licence number issued by the Honiara City Council or the Provincial Government. This means that a current business licence will need to be produced by the owner of those vehicles to enable them to renew their vehicle licence. An example of the new vehicle licence is shown below.



From February 2014 all taxis will be required to display a taxi sign on the top of their vehicle when they are operating as a taxi – as most of them do now. This will help the public identify licensed

taxis that are available for hire. Also from February 2014, the current regulation that requires drivers to have a clear view of the road ahead will be strictly enforced. This means that vehicles will no longer be able to operate with tinted front windscreens on public roads.

Fees

Driver and vehicle licence fees were last increased in 2009. To assist to cover some of the costs associated with administering the driver and vehicle licence system, Government has decided to increase driver and vehicle licence fees by an average of 10%.

Penalties

Associated with the new vehicle registration certificates there will be two new penalties:

- For failure to produce the certificate of registration on request, the penalty will be the same as for other failure to produce offences under the Police Regulations 2013.
- For failure to notify change of ownership to Inland Revenue the penalty will be \$500.

The changes to the driver and vehicle licences will align the Solomon Islands with other Pacific Island Countries and elsewhere in the world.