

2025 Lessons: What were the challenges and how this will affect 2026

2025 has been a huge year for us. One theme kept appearing across our training, conversations, conferences and policy work: the licence card doesn't tell the whole story, the training behind it does. Two drivers with the same licence class, tested to the same standard, can have completely different levels of road craft, load restraint ability, fatigue awareness, and confidence on steep descents. We will continue to see changes coming in 2026 with a focus shifting on the quality and competency of the training provided and continuously conducted by businesses as well as what records support the training that has been completed.

 **The Top Skill Gaps We Saw in 2025.** These are the areas where we saw drivers struggle with the understanding or knowledge, regardless of whether they were new to the industry or stepping up to the next level of driving.

GVM/GCM and “Real Weight” Understanding. Most new drivers know the word “weight”, but don’t actually understand how GVM and GCM work in the real world. They rely on what the vehicle looks like it can carry, what a colleague told them, or what’s stamped on a brochure.

- Drivers struggled with the difference between payload vs total vehicle weight, tow-ball load affecting GCM, how passengers, tools, water and fuel add up and down-rated vehicles and upgrades.

Why it matters: GVM/GCM isn’t a technicality, it determines braking distance, stability, tyre contact, and rollover risk.

Fatigue in Local Work: New drivers believed fatigue is a “long-haul” issue, and that local work under 100 km doesn’t require any fatigue thinking at all. This showed up as pushing through heat, no hydration plan, working through lunch to hit deadlines, driving the same route over and over without noticing fatigue signs and assuming it’s fine because it’s “only local”.

Understanding Responsibilities Under the HVNL (even if you are not accredited and operate locally)

Many new drivers and small businesses, still believe the HVNL only applies if you’re part of an accreditation scheme like NHVAS, or if you operate on long-haul, interstate routes. As a result, we saw:

- little understanding of primary duty obligations
- no awareness of responsibility under CoR
- assumptions that standard hours = no rules
- confusion about what records must be kept
- belief that “we’re local” means exemption from fatigue thinking
- no process for managing competency evidence

Not having accreditation doesn’t remove the duty, it simply means you don’t have the formal audited system. The primary duty and duty of care to ensure safety still applies. You must not ask a driver to do something unsafe, or ignore it if it is happening.

In real incidents, regulators look at risk management, training history, instructions given, and what records exist to show competency and intention.

This is the biggest mindset shift coming in 2026:

Licensing and the HVNL are moving toward competency + evidence, not paperwork + permission.

👉 **Quality Training Providers Matter, More Than Ever.** We need to be honest about where the industry is at. Across Australia, we've seen multiple examples where training providers have had their accreditation suspended or withdrawn, and hundreds of licences cancelled or called back for re-assessment because the training and assessment delivered didn't meet the required standard. In NSW and Victoria, there have been well-publicised cases where:

- compliance audits found no evidence of proper training
- assessments were not conducted correctly, or
- drivers were issued licences without demonstrating competency

And when the audit came:

- the accreditation was cancelled
- the certificates of competency were invalidated
- licences were withdrawn or required to be re-tested

None of this is new, these issues have happened for years across multiple states, but the consequences are becoming more visible because regulators, insurers and industry are now asking a different question, "Is this person actually competent?" not just "Do they have a licence?".

I have been working with the Access Canberra to review the policies around accepting out of state certificate of competencies to try and help reduce the number of ACT heavy vehicle licences that maybe caught up in working with non-compliant training providers. We also encourage them to do more with local providers to ensure that licence holders are completing the correct training and assessment.

● **The Impact Isn't Just Today, It Follows the Driver**

What many drivers don't realise, is that poor training leaves a mark long after the course is over. When investigations uncover non-compliant practices, it isn't just the provider who is affected:

- drivers can be told their licence isn't valid and the licence will be cancelled
- they can be asked to re-sit the assessment
- they may lose job opportunities
- employers can be caught off-guard because they assumed the licence = competence

For a driver who has already moved into a professional role, a cancellation or re-test doesn't just cost money, it undermines confidence, damages career progression, and in many cases, puts the business at risk if they have been operating commercially on a licence that is later found to be invalid.

This is why fast-track, cheap and "guaranteed pass" training models are not just "a shortcut" they can have serious future consequences. This also highlights the importance of the changes coming with the HVNL reform around verification of competency for heavy vehicle operators.

🔍 Why This Matters for the Future

The cases of accreditation being pulled and licences being withdrawn are important signals for the industry, they show where the national reforms are heading. The future model of heavy vehicle training and licensing is about proving competency, not just issuing a certificate, training records, not just a pass sheet and evidence behind the licence, not just the licence. But also ensuring there is better education and support for drivers to ensure they are operating in a safe, low risk manner.

💡 **What Good Practice Looks Like in 2026.** For businesses, the message is simple, choose a training provider the same way you would choose a mechanic for your family vehicle, cheap isn't safe.

A credible training provider will train beyond the state required competencies, develop road craft, not just steering, encourage training and not just an hour drive and then complete a final drive assessment or an assessment only, give written trainer feedback, include evidence of competency in their record, be transparent about assessment standards, never guarantee a pass and take ownership of safety and behaviour, not just a result.

When the training is credible, the training record becomes protection, for the driver and the business, especially under the emerging HVNL approach where evidence matters.

💡 **The Honest Reality.** Accreditations being pulled isn't a "scandal", it's the system doing what it should by removing poor practice, protecting drivers, protecting the public and protecting legitimate businesses who invest in quality.

And yes, licence withdrawals affect real people, but they also protect the industry from years of damage caused by a small number of operators treating licensing like a volume product. Those cases are why the reforms exist.



Anthony & I would like to thank everyone who has supported us throughout 2025. It has been a big year and we are grateful for the continued trust you place in us to support your drivers and businesses.

We are looking forward to 2026, with new opportunities to strengthen driver competency, support industry changes, and continue delivering our standard of training and working with the industry associations to ensure that the ACT is not forgotten. January bookings are already coming in, and we encourage anyone planning licence upgrades or refresher training early in the new year to secure their preferred dates.

Our office will be closed from 23 December to 5 January 2026. But our emails will still be periodically checked during this time.

Wishing you and your families a safe and happy Christmas, and we look forward to working with you in the new year.