

child restraints

New child restraint laws will better protect our children in vehicles.



The new legislation varies from state to state; some have already started and others are yet to be implemented as follows:

- The new child restraint laws commenced in New South Wales on 1 March 2010.
- The laws already apply in Victoria.
- In Western Australia and South Australia the dates are yet to be announced, cited as phasing in around mid-2010.
- The laws commence in the ACT on 15 March 2010, becoming mandatory on 15 March 2011.
- For Tasmania, the laws applying to children under the age of four commenced in November 2009, however those relevant to children between the ages of four and seven will apply from 30 November 2010.
- The Northern Territory will be introducing the laws within the next two years, though the date is not yet confirmed.
- For Queensland the laws applied from 11 March 2010.

It is important that each state and territory's traffic authority website is regularly viewed to see what applies.

The Australian Government has introduced a new national system for child restraints in vehicles to be implemented through state and territory governments. These laws are designed to improve safety conditions for Australia's children and they will apply to everyone, including carers who transport children in their care.

In 2007 the National Transport Commission (NTC) released a draft proposal for a national reform agenda relating to age-based minimum standards for child restraints. As an independent statutory body, the NTC submits recommendations for reform to the Australian Transport Council (ATC) for approval.

The NTC said while parents wanted to do the right thing, research showed children were moving to bigger seats too early. According to Dr Jeff Potter, the NTC's Senior Safety Manager, 500 children up to the age of ten years are killed or seriously injured every year in car accidents, with 2,300 sustaining minor injuries. Dr Potter said a system designed around age-based minimum standards would improve the public's understanding of child safety in cars and significantly reduce injuries.

While the new laws will vary slightly, they generally cover all children from birth to seven years, where all children under the age of seven must be secured in an approved child restraint as follows:

- Children up to the age of six months must be secured in a rearward facing restraint.
- Children aged six months to under four years must be secured in either a rearward or forward facing restraint.
- Children aged four years to under seven years must be secured in forward facing child restraint or booster seat.

NEW LAWS WILL VARY SLIGHTLY, THEY GENERALLY COVER CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO SEVEN YEARS.

- Children younger than four years cannot travel in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows.
- Children aged four years to under seven years cannot travel in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows, unless all other back seats are occupied by children younger than seven years in a child restraint or booster seat.

Kidsafe NSW states that children who are not properly restrained are five times more likely to be killed or injured in an accident. A child is less likely to be injured or killed in a car crash when properly restrained in an approved child restraint. 🚗

Links to more information

For more information on the new laws visit your state or territory traffic authority website and search for 'child restraints':

NSW – www.rta.nsw.gov.au

QLD – www.transport.qld.gov.au

VIC – www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

SA – www.dtei.sa.gov.au

TAS – www.transport.tas.gov.au

WA – www.ors.wa.gov.au

ACT – www.tams.act.gov.au

NT – www.nt.gov.au

You can also visit the NRMA website at www.mynrma.com.au and search for 'child restraint laws' – this site provides a useful overview of the new laws and test results of suitable restraints.