

Licence stickers

We knew it would happen but I didn't think it would happen to me. On Friday I found out I've been driving an unlicensed vehicle for just over a year. So 7.30 this morning I was taking my Honda Civic (41,000kms) over the pits. OK so it's Valentines Day, my 30th wedding anniversary, mum's birthday - there were more interesting things I could be doing today (working even).

I'm a reasonably astute middle aged parent (where my licensing experiences have been broadest), UWA educated (Horticultural Science), a company director and also President of the Consumers Association of WA (unbelievable breadth of experience) amongst other things. I deal daily with accounts and I'm responsible for licensing the half dozen vehicles my family and staff use for their various peregrinations.

Having bought my car in mid December 2009, the Licence was due to expire on the 28th January 2010. I received a letter dated 23rd December 2009 (Dear Sir/Madam, Yours faithfully etc) entitled "Vehicle Licence Renewal Where Transfer Fees Have Not Been Paid". Although the letter listed various fees ("The fees for renewal are listed below for your information"), the word "Invoice" did not appear. Then I received an Invoice issued on 27th December 2009 for the Transfer Fee and Vehicle Licence Duty (\$659.50). I paid it on 15th January still well before the Licence expiry. I assumed it included the licence fee and not expecting a new sticker (stickers ceased 1st January 2010), removed the old one from the windscreen.

I rang the Department of Transport last Friday enquiring into the whereabouts of my Licence and Third Party invoice, being about a year since (I thought) I had renewed it. Apparently I only paid the transfer fee. I never received an invoice for the Licence - or any other reminder. DOT say they don't send one - the letter is it. I never received a request to hand in the plates. This is apparently normal too. The Department of Transport had my correct address the whole time.

The Third Party implications could have been horrendous. Thanks to cruise control, I haven't had a speeding infringement during the year or I probably would have also been prosecuted for driving an unlicensed vehicle. At least this might have picked up the problem earlier. I can't imagine the consequences if a family member or a mechanic (not to mention my passengers and I) had been involved in a serious collision.

The circumstances which produced my problem are probably a bit unusual but many - people have changed address during the year and if they've overlooked informing the DOT (which isn't hard), there is nothing to remind them of licence expiry. The guys at the Licensing Centre assured me I wasn't alone.

I'm told that someone has found a commercial opportunity in producing generic reminder stickers. You peel off the relevant month - I haven't seen them. If I have to pay a dollar or two (sigh) to the Department of Transport to see stickers return, I think I can justify it.

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