

Issue: Child Restraints in Vehicles

Raised by: John Wright (A/HCM, Hermannsburg)

Background: There have been various discussions and decisions made around utilisation of child restraints in Remote Health vehicles, but without a definite stance being articulated. Consequently not all vehicles have the appropriate fittings installed, not all health centres possess a vehicle child restraint and not all staff are aware of their obligations.

Discussion: The legal requirement (NT Traffic Reg Section 5) is clear: children must be restrained during carriage in vehicles. Under 12 months, a child must be restrained in an approved child restraint. Further to this, current Australian child restraint guidelines recommend use of a dedicated child restraint (a rear-facing infant capsule or a forward-facing child seat or booster seat with high back and wings) until children are at least 145cm tall.

In the legislation, an exemption from the requirement to restrain passengers (NT Traffic Reg Section 267:5) is allowed for passengers of Emergency Vehicles. Some RHB vehicles fit the criteria of being Emergency Vehicles per legislation; however the implication of this exemption would only apply when the vehicle is being used in an "emergency" capacity (See Atlas item 'Emergency Vehicles'). In any case, the exemption should not be taken to preclude use of restraints.

Given the clear legislation, it is obvious that all health centres should be equipped with an approved vehicle child restraint which is to be utilised whenever applicable.

Given that legislation holds the drivers responsible for ensuring restraint of passengers, and that OCEPE Conditions of Employment state that employees are not indemnified against motor vehicle offences, staff driving departmental vehicles need to take note of this issue.

Most RHB vehicles are troop carriers, which pose a more awkward arrangement for the securing of child restraints than is found in conventional vehicles. The accompanying photographs show a well accepted and functional arrangement for use in troop-carriers, but is not the only option.



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References: [NT Traffic Regulations 2007](#) [Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754:2000](#)
[Seatbelts and the law: How well do we protect Australian children?](#) (Reeve KN; et al, 6/07)
[Guidelines for the use of Child Restraints in Departmental Vehicles](#) (P&OL, Aug 2007)

Outcome: **Routine transport of children under 12 months of age, in Department vehicles, must utilise an appropriately secured approved child restraint.**

- All RHB client transport vehicles must have the appropriate approved fittings, fitted
- All health centres and Remote Health Fleet officers should stock an approved child restraint
- Vehicle child restraints to be added to the RHB Standard Equipment List
- Training in the appropriate use of child restraints to be included in staff development sessions and future orientation processes