

Fed-up driving schools launch e-mail petition



❑ Frustrated student Ross Hendry has his own car but can't drive it because he has been unable to book a driver licence test.

Picture: Liza van Deventer

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City driving instructors, fed up with endless delays and inefficiency at testing centres, have resorted to an online petition to make their grievances heard.

Countless aspirant drivers face the prospect of their learner's licences expiring and having to fork out for the test again, or go the illegal route of bribing officials.

SA Institute for Driving Instructors (Saidi) chairman Pat Allen said incompetence lay behind the delays. Saidi members have had problems since 2003 in providing an acceptable service to clients because of the problems at testing centres, she said.

Last Friday a petition was set up "to give everybody a forum to express their frustrations", she said.

My Driving School manager Ben Grobler said the booking system did not work. "Driving schools are struggling." A shortage of testing grounds and a vast number of students compounded the problem, he said.

Adrian Bonasede, owner of Elite Driving School, said all confidence in the system had been lost and "people don't want to go for driving lessons anymore. Schools have been forced to close their doors".

Bonasede said he and the public were "tremendously frustrated". He blamed top management at the call centres. "I want them to resign."

Astrid Sieburg said her son had been on the waiting list for two months, but this week there "wasn't a soul in sight on the testing grounds" at Waltloo Testing Centre.

"You'd expect that if you can't get an appointment because the

bookings are full that the testing grounds would be busy, but not so."

First-year student Ross Hendry said he had been trying for six months to get an appointment and was using taxis. "The situation drives honest people to go to corrupt officials to get their licences.

"I know some people who went the bribe route, but there is too much risk and it's expensive."

Hendry said he was approached by a man at a test centre who offered him a licence for R1 500.

He said he initially booked through a driving school which cost him R200. He failed his first test and has since tried to book himself. "The call centre said that I should book through e-mail.

"I did that and got no response."

The petition website can be visited at <http://www.saidi.co.za/>