Elderly driver smashes into chemist shop

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The Age Victoria

AUSTRALIA-No one was injured in the incident, which occurred in the Richard Edwards Chemmart. *Photo: Channel Seven*

An 85-year-old man has driven through a chemist window in Narre Warren, the latest in a spate of incidents involving elderly drivers.

No one was injured in the incident, which occurred in the Richard Edwards Chemmart in Webb Street about 11.30am.

Police said the driver hit the accelerator by mistake. He could be charged, a spokesman said.

"A car has basically turned into the car park in front of the pharmacy and continued up and onto the footpath and through the front door," pharmacy owner Peter Johnson said.

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Mr Johnson said there were eight to 10 people in the pharmacy, mostly staff, at the time. Everyone was "shocked and surprised", he said, but there were no injuries.

He said the car was still in the shop. "We're just waiting for assessors from insurance and shopfitting to come and make a decision. It will be towed this afternoon."

There were six incidents involving elderly drivers in July, including a very similar incident in Campbellfield. On that occasion, a 77-year-old man also drove his car through a shop window.

The accidents prompted renewed calls for testing of elderly drivers, but road groups such as the RACV, VicRoads and the Monash accident centre oppose such proposals on the grounds of cost, poor outcomes and stress for the driver.

''Older drivers are not worse drivers,'' RACV's Manager of Road User Behaviour Melinda Congiu said.

''Research has shown that older drivers are generally more law abiding, safer and more courteous than other road users.''

''RACV believes that everyone should able to drive for as long as it is safe for them to do so.

''Licence restrictions should not be based on age alone. Impairment, not the driver's age, is the key issue.

''We encourage all older drivers to discuss their fitness, health and medication with their doctor to ensure that they can continue driving safely.''

VicRoads Director of Vehicle and Road Use Policy James Holgate said that age-based assessment had been investigated many times and there was no evidence to suggest that age-based assessment led to improved road safety outcomes.

''Older drivers often self regulate their driving by restricting themselves to local driving and often demonstrate less risky behaviours than drivers of other ages," Mr Holgate said.

''VicRoads offers drivers aged 75 years and over a three year licence to encourage them to assess their fitness to drive on a regular basis.''

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