

## Summary report

National consultations about the harmonisation of  
disability parking permit schemes in Australia initiative

February 2010

## Disclaimer

**The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the author or authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and cannot be taken in any way as expressions of Government policy.**

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## Executive summary

On 26 May 2009, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, released the *Harmonisation of disability parking permit schemes in Australia* discussion paper. This included a form to enable interested stakeholders to make a submission about the proposals outlined in the paper.

National consultations were undertaken by the Commonwealth, States and Territories commencing on 3 June and concluding on 31 July 2009. These involved stakeholder sessions in 19 locations (capital cities, regional and rural areas), public information sessions (capital cities, Alice Springs, Townsville and Cairns) and a submissions process.

The public meetings were attended by 277 people and 3,675 people contacted the call centre hotline to receive a copy of the discussion paper. Submissions were received from 687 individuals/organisations.

The main issues raised in the submissions were that:

- there is widespread support for a national disability parking scheme, including the introduction of a national permit and nationally consistent eligibility criteria and concessions;
- people who require various aids and support to assist with their mobility should be eligible for a parking permit;
- further work is required to develop nationally consistent eligibility criteria, an assessment tool and minimum standards for concessions; and
- there should be more done to stop ineligible people using reserved parking spaces and/or using parking permits that are not valid.

In addition to the information received about the development of the national scheme, the submissions raised a number of other key issues related to the experience of respondents when using their permit:

- there are accessibility issues with many parking environments, including parking meters and ticketing machines;
- there should be greater enforcement of reserved parking spaces at shopping centres, in local government and street parking spaces as well as increased fines; and
- there needs to be drop-off points for carers and maxi taxis at public places.

# Introduction

The Commonwealth Government's initiative to harmonise disability parking permit schemes aims to achieve a national scheme that best meets eligible users' needs.

A working group consisting of representatives appointed by transport, roads and local government ministers has been working with the Commonwealth to develop a proposed scheme. Working group members and their advisory groups include:

- state and territory agencies that administer parking schemes
- the Australian Local Government Association and its members
- state and territory advisory committees made up of permit holders and other stakeholders.

On 26 May 2009, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, released the *Harmonisation of disability parking permit schemes in Australia* discussion paper which outlined proposals to establish nationally consistent arrangements for disability parking.

Of the 687 written submissions received:

- 486 were from individuals (380 of whom were permit holders);
- 76 were from support organisations;
- 75 were from local government representatives;
- 19 were from national peak bodies;
- 14 were from small businesses;
- nine were from medical practitioners; and
- eight were from government agencies.

A breakdown by state and territory is as follows:

NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Not specified in submission
179	159	85	66	71	21	14	42	50

## What we consulted about

Feedback was sought about the following elements of the proposed scheme:

- nationally consistent eligibility criteria;
- national minimum standards for parking permit concessions; and
- nationally consistent parking permit design.

The following sections of this report provide a summary of this feedback.

# Proposed nationally consistent eligibility criteria

## Permanent permit

The discussion paper identified that there are currently a diverse range of eligibility criteria applied across the existing state and territory disability parking permit schemes. The criteria proposed in the discussion paper were drawn from these existing eligibility criteria.

Criteria 1: You are unable to walk and always require the use of a manual wheelchair or powered mobility device, or

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	65	15	20	100

125 comments were made in 16 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- hidden or invisible disabilities/medical conditions should be eligible (54 per cent of comments);
- the terminology used in the criterion needs to be defined (16 per cent of comments);
- the following issues each represented less than 2 per cent of the comments:
  - the term ‘wheelchair’ should be included but the term ‘powered mobility device’ should be excluded and the eligibility should be assessed based on functional ability;
  - the criterion should include a reference to age;
  - people should be automatically eligible if they receive the Disability Support Pension;
  - there should be a two tier system;
  - people who use walking sticks should be eligible;
  - there should be a reference to walking distance;
  - the existing criteria used in each jurisdiction should be retained;
  - the criteria should be based on eligibility already used;
  - children should be eligible;
  - people with vision impairment or intellectual disability should be eligible;
  - the criterion is too broad; and
  - the criterion is too narrow.

Criteria 2: Your ability to walk is permanently and severely restricted and you sometimes require the use of a mobility or medical aid. This does not include a walking stick, shopping trolley or pram, or

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	43	50	7	100

557 comments were made in 51 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- hidden or invisible disabilities/medical conditions should be eligible (36 per cent of comments);
- people with walking sticks and who lean on shopping trolleys should be eligible (36 per cent of comments);
- people with vision impairment, and children and people with intellectual disability, should be eligible on the basis of safety (4 per cent of comments); and
- the terminology used in this criterion needs to be defined; specifically ‘sometimes’, ‘mobility or medical aid’, and ‘permanently and severely restricted’ (24 per cent of comments).

Criteria 3: You do not use a mobility or medical aid but your ability to walk is permanently restricted by a significant medical condition or disability, which sometimes requires the physical assistance of another person and limits your access to the community.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	42	49	9	100

457 comments were made in 51 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- hidden or invisible disabilities/medical conditions should be eligible (45 per cent of comments); and
- the terminology used in this criterion should be defined; specifically ‘significant medical condition or disability’ and ‘which sometimes requires the physical assistance of another person’ (55 per cent of comments).

## Temporary permit

The minimum period for temporary permits is 6 months duration.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	46	30	24	100

197 comments were made in 29 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- the minimum period is too short (30 per cent of comments);
- the minimum period is too long (43 per cent of comments);
- 40 per cent of comments noted that both:
  - temporary permits should be issued and renewed at the discretion of the medical professional assessing the applicant; and
  - the recovery time experienced by individuals after surgery or an accident varies.

The maximum period for temporary permits is 12 months duration.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	48	28	24	100

179 comments were made in 27 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- the maximum period is too short (48 per cent of comments);
- the maximum period is too long (52 per cent of comments);
- 24 per cent of comments noted that both:
  - temporary permits should be issued and renewed at the discretion of the medical professional assessing the applicant; and
  - the recovery time experienced by individuals after surgery or an accident varies.

## Overall statements about proposed nationally consistent eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria are clear and easy to understand.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	36	18	46	100

The proposed eligibility criteria will help the right people.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	38	27	35	100

There is a need for consistent eligibility criteria across Australia.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	69	4	27	100

# Proposed national minimum standards for disability parking permit concessions

Time limits and extensions currently differ across jurisdictions for disability parking permit holders in on-street parking and in some local government off-street parking spaces. National minimum standards for disability parking permit concessions were therefore proposed for permit holders in all states and territories.

Permit holders may park in reserved parking spaces displaying the International Symbol of Access (ISA).

The following concessions would apply in other parking spaces.

Concession 1: If the parking sign is up to and including 30 minutes – up to one hour.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	48	34	18	100

261 comments were made in 39 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- increase the time, however, a suggested time was not specified (78 per cent of comments);
- increase the minimum to 90 minutes (2 per cent of comments);
- increase the minimum to 2 hours (10 per cent of comments); and
- increase the minimum to more than 2 hours (10 per cent of comments).

These 261 comments also identified that there needs to be:

- more time for minimum concessions to allow for the loading/unloading of vehicles;
- time for people who need rest stops; and
- more time to ensure that permit holders can get to their destination and back and this may be in environments that are not easy to access.

Concession 2: If the parking sign is more than 30 minutes – twice the time limit.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	47	35	18	100

265 comments were made in 39 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- increase the time, however a suggested time was not specified (67 per cent of comments);
- increase the minimum to 2 hours (5 per cent of comments);
- have unlimited time/all day parking (28 per cent of comments); and
- there should be all day free parking (18 per cent of comments).

Concession 3: Parking meters – after the maximum period indicated on the meter has been reached, the time limits in points 1 and 2 apply.

Points 1 and 2 relate to territory and/or local government operated parking areas.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Agree</b>	<b>No Comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	41	40	19	100

368 comments were made in 39 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- permit holders should not pay (35 per cent of comments);
- this concession should be removed (4 per cent of comments);
- parking meters are sometimes inaccessible (7 per cent of comments);
- the concessions that currently exist should be maintained (13 per cent of comments); and
- there should be all day free parking (20 per cent of comments).

## Overall statements about proposed parking concessions

There is a need for consistent parking concessions across Australia.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	68	4	28	100

The proposed concessions are clear and easy to understand.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	51	17	32	100

The proposed concession of twice the time limit on the parking sign will adequately meet the needs of permit holders.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	40	26	34	100

The proposed ticket/meter parking concession where the time extension occurs after the maximum time limit is reached is fair and reasonable.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	38	26	36	100

## Nationally consistent parking permit design

The discussion paper noted that more than 100 different permit designs are currently issued by authorities around Australia and that widespread abuse of the system includes illegal use of permits or copies of permits.

To address these issues, the paper proposed two options for a nationally uniform style of permit:

- Option A – a permit that would be affixed to the inside of the windscreen
- Option B – a permit that would be hung from the rear view mirror once the car is parked.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>% of submissions received</i>			
<b>Option A</b> – a permit fixed to the inside of the windscreen	45	14	41	100
<b>Option B</b> – a permit hung from the rear view mirror once the car is parked	37	20	43	100

771 comments were made in 83 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- permit Option A – fixing it to the windscreen will prevent loss, this design is easier to use by people with upper body mobility issues and this design is not easily transportable if changing vehicles (16 per cent of comments);
- permit Option B – hanging from the rear view mirror once the car is parked will be easier for enforcement officers to see permit, this design is easily transportable if changing vehicles but this design would cause a hazard if displayed while driving (21 per cent of comments);
- the permit should include more individual information e.g. the permit holder's photo, name and/or date of birth (12 per cent of comments);
- the permit should not include individual information to protect the individual (2 per cent of comments);
- the size of the permit needs to be smaller (5 per cent of comments);
- the permit needs to be resistant to sun damage (3 per cent of comments);
- the expiry date needs to be clear and easy to see and read (5 per cent of comments);

- if NSW retains its current card, this is not consistent with national harmonisation (8 per cent of comments);
- both permit designs should be available (8 per cent of comments); and
- use different colours to distinguish between permanent and temporary permits (5 per cent of comments).

## Overall statements about proposed permit design

The proposed disability parking permit design will be easier to use than my current permit.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	26	16	58	100

The proposed design will make it less likely to lose the permit.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	25	18	57	100

The proposed design will reduce the opportunity for fraud.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	32	16	52	100

There is a need for a common disability parking permit design across Australia.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	67	3	30	100

## Overall statements about the proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme

The proposed scheme will be less confusing for people who travel or move interstate.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	66	4	30	100

The proposed scheme will increase the availability of disability parking for those who really need it.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	28	27	45	100

The proposed scheme will limit abuse by those who should not really have a permit.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	29	25	46	100

Overall, the proposed scheme will be more effective than the current schemes.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not agree</b>	<b>No comment or neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>
% submissions received	39	16	45	100

# Additional comments about the proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme

813 comments were made in 56 per cent of submissions and highlighted the following issues:

- there need to be more reserved parking spaces, more wider bays at the appropriate standard and drop off and pick up zones (20 per cent of comments);
- the administration of the scheme needs to be improved and consistent (9 per cent of comments);
- the application and assessment process needs improvement in terms of which medical professionals should issue a permit and what information they need to assess applications. (15 per cent of comments);
- there needs to be more enforcement, increased fines and penalties and auditing and recovering permits that are no longer valid (15 per cent of comments);
- there is substantial misuse and abuse of reserved parking spaces by those without a permit (13 per cent of comments); and
- there needs to be a marketing campaign to support the new scheme and that there should be an ongoing education campaign for all stakeholders (21 per cent of comments).

# Action to address feedback from submissions

## Proposed nationally consistent eligibility criteria

- In response to feedback from national consultations, Disability and Roads/Transport Ministers have agreed that further work will be conducted in 2009/2010 to further develop the eligibility criteria in response to issues raised in the consultations.
- This further work is being undertaken in consultation with disability and ageing peak bodies as well as relevant medical and allied health peak bodies.
- Disability Ministers agreed to support a scheme where no existing permit holders will be worse off under the new scheme.

## Proposed national minimum standards for concessions

- In response to feedback from national consultations, Disability and Roads/Transport Ministers have agreed that further work will be conducted in 2009/2010 to determine minimum standards for concessions.
- This further work is being undertaken in consultation with disability and ageing peak bodies.
- Ministers have also agreed that a communications strategy will be implemented to improve information about concessions in each state and territory under the new scheme. This will involve the development of a national website, training for enforcement officers and community education products for all stakeholders.

## Proposed national permit

- Disability and Roads/Transport Ministers endorsed a national permit design in late 2009. It incorporates feedback received during the consultations (see design on page 20) that the expiry date and International Symbol for Access are prominently displayed and the security features are maintained.
- The permit design does not include a photo or personal identification to be visible when displayed in the vehicle based upon feedback that permit holders' privacy needs to be protected.
- The agencies responsible for issuing parking permits in each state and territory are currently working on a strategy to manufacture and roll-out the new permit nationally in 2010.

## Design for the Australian Disability Parking Permit

### Format A

Windscreen/dashboard display



### Format B

rear view mirror display



### Reverse side of permit

(same information on all formats)



## Action to address additional issues raised.

Both the Attorney-General's Department and local government associations are being consulted to provide advice about how to address feedback about the need for more reserved parking spaces including drop off and pick up zones, the accessibility of public premises and parking meters and enforcement at private car parks.