



Association of Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited

ACN 102 164 385

**Submission to the
Proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme**

July 2009

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Australian Disability Parking Scheme Submissions (East Wing)
Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
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Submission for Proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme

The Association of Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited , an Australia-wide community service-based Company , managed by volunteers, commends the Federal Government for its proposal to establish an Australian Disability Parking Scheme to replace present Schemes in place with the various States. Uniformity of rules and regulations will greatly assist retirees and others for local parking, especially for those living on State borders, and when travelling Interstate.

We would like to believe that extending uniformity to create an Australian Disability Parking Scheme will in time lead to universal assistance to disabled persons who travel internationally.

Should you require any further information in relation to this submission, please contact A.I.R. Vice President, Elaine Muir:

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Theresa Kot
National President

About the Association of Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited

The Association of Independent Retirees (A.I.R.) Limited is the peak body representing the interests of retirees who are wholly or partly self-funded in retirement. A.I.R.'s members include full self-funded retirees, part-pensioners, and superannuants.

Formed in 1990, A.I.R. is a not-for-profit, non-political, volunteer organisation that is focused on matters affecting the standard of living, health and welfare of retired and partly-retired people.

As well as carrying out research and gathering information that will assist its members in maximising their life opportunities, A.I.R. is committed to educating the wider community (including political parties at all levels of Government) regarding the views and concerns of self-funded retirees.

Submission

Australian Disability Parking Scheme

- A.I.R. supports all aspects of the proposed scheme.
- A.I.R. strongly suggests that fees for disability parking permits be not charged at any level of government.

1. Consistent eligibility criteria : permanent permit

A.I.R. fully supports all three eligibility criteria for a permanent permit, but would like to be reassured that 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,* would cover eligibility for a permit for a person e.g. who is severely autistic.

Consistent eligibility criteria: temporary permit

3. *The minimum period for temporary permits of six months is adequate.*
 - 3.1. *The maximum period for temporary permits of 12 months – is necessary as with most specialists' visits occurring at 3 monthly intervals, it would be 12 months before an assessment of continuing need for, or discontinuance of, a permit could be made.*

To prevent misuse, it is important that the scheme provides for temporary permits to be recalled at their expiry date.

4. Consistent eligibility criteria, all permits – are clear and easy to understand.

With national consistent eligibility criteria, medical practitioners and other health professionals should not experience any difficulty in assessing persons for eligibility to hold a Disabled Parking Permit Card.

Permanent Permit cards should differ in colour from that of Temporary Permit cards.

There is a great need for consistent eligibility criteria across Australia, to assist those who travel Interstate, and in particular to assist those who live close to another State Border e.g. Albury/Wodonga.

5. National minimum standards for disability parking permit concessions

Permit holders may park in reserved spaces displaying the International Symbol of Access (ISA). The following concessions would apply in other parking spaces:

1. *If the parking sign is up to and including 30 minutes – up to one hour.*
2. *If the parking sign is more than 30 minutes – twice the time limit.*
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.

Parking Concessions should apply uniformly throughout Australia, and the proposed concession of twice the time limit on the parking sign will adequately meet the needs of permit holders.

6. Parking concessions

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

It is not clear whether all parking meters will indicate the time extension after the maximum time limit has been reached.

7. National disability parking permit design

A.I.R. strongly agrees that there is need for a common disability parking permit design across Australia. Option A, a permit fixed to inside windscreen, provided it can be removed easily for transfer to another vehicle, would seem the better of the two designs – especially important when travelling interstate. Uniformity of design throughout Australia should result in instant recognition of the permit anywhere in Australia.

8. National disability parking permit design

- 8.3 A.I.R. strongly agrees that the proposed design will reduce the opportunity for fraud.

- 8.4 A.I.R. believes there is need for a common Disabled Parking Permit Design across Australia. The design should include some method of identifying the permit holder e.g. bar code, photo ID, micro chip.

If local parking officers are unable, through lack of time or lack of sufficient staff, to adequately supervise use of disability parking spaces and identify the permit card holder, then it is highly likely that some spaces will be used by ineligible persons.

Having Australia-wide uniformity of disability parking permits and rules and regulations will be of immense benefit to disabled Australians of all ages.

9. Australian Disability Parking Scheme

- 9.1. The proposed scheme will be less confusing for people who travel or move interstate - this can only be assessed after a few months operation.
- 9.2. The proposed scheme will increase the availability of disability parking for those who really need it.
- 9.3. The proposed scheme will limit abuse by those who should not really have a permit.

For both 9.2 and 9.3 to be effective, there will need to be :

- (1) easy identification of Permit Holder;
- (2) education of the general public;

- (3) education of permit holders and their drivers to avoid, where possible, times when parking spaces, both disabled and other, are in keen demand in their local areas;
- (4) when changes are implemented, apart from release of information to the Media, special requests to be sent to the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and other relevant organizations, to send out information about the scheme to their members;
- (5) possibly some liaison between State Police and Local Traffic Officers which could be helpful in an endeavour to eliminate possible misuse of parking spaces;
- (6) consideration by local government to seek additional funding from the Federal Government for the temporary employment of additional traffic/parking officers from time to time, to conduct checks of parking spaces for the disabled in an endeavour to prevent possible misuse;
- (7) a fail-proof procedure for return of temporary permit cards at their expiration date.

In conclusion:

A.I.R. strongly believes that the proposed scheme will be more effective than current schemes because of harmonisation of the Proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme through uniform rules and regulations, and better design of permit cards.

A.I.R. believes that with a supportive general public education programme on the Proposed Australian Disability Parking Scheme, there will be more awareness by others of issues faced by disabled persons in their endeavours to participate in community life and activities, and to travel further afield.



A.I.R. National Secretariat

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