




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION (ROAD SAFETY, TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (DISABILITY PARKING AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Legislation (Disability Parking and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. I commend the work of the committee in considering this bill and the multitude of organisations and people who have brought this issue to the table. The objectives of the bill I wish to speak to today and lend my support to are the extension of the disability parking eligibility criteria to include vision-impaired persons who are temporarily blind or permanently blind and the increase in the penalty that applies for the misuse of a disability parking area.

The Australian Disability Parking Scheme was implemented in 2010 as a Commonwealth arrangement to consider national eligibility criteria. At the time the consideration was for the scheme to be a mobility scheme and the criteria was to focus on the applicant's ability to walk. It should be noted that when the states adopted this approach some states did incorporate their already existing criteria that extended to vision-impaired persons so as not to reduce eligibility in those states. Now in Queensland expanding the eligibility criteria to those with vision impairment is a game changer for these community members.

While the intent of the original Australian Disability Parking Scheme was commendable in terms of focusing on mobility, Guide Dogs Queensland advise that a person's ability to walk is determined by more than their functional movement. It includes the ability to walk safely, free from harm and for orientation and obstacle avoidance. Understandably, car park environments are a major source of risk for those with vision impairment. Having the ability to park in a space that affords more room can make a big difference to those who are vision-impaired. Those who use guide dogs, for example, need to harness their dogs in a zonal corridor of safety that is best provided by the space afforded by disability parking spots. Those people who require aided walking with a partner—side by side—are best suited to a space afforded by disability parking spots.

Individuals who are permanently blind will be eligible to apply for a permit. Individuals who have temporary blindness will also be eligible to apply, provided that their condition is of at least six months duration or certified by a treating doctor, ophthalmologist or optometrist. In terms of the application process, those who already have a vision-impaired travel pass will be able to provide a copy of their card as eligibility for the disability parking permit scheme. This means applicants will not have to go back to their doctors to get another assessment.

The other aspect of this bill is the increase in the penalty for those who are not eligible and continue to park in disability parking spaces. Currently, the fine under the traffic regulations is two penalty units, which currently is \$266. The proposed increase to four penalty units, bringing the

maximum fine to \$533, will deliver a strong deterrent to those who misuse disability parking spaces. The current fine is one of the lowest in Australia, and over the last five years police officers have issued over 7½ thousand fines to people who have illegally parked in these spaces. This, however, represents only a small fraction of the offences detected as the vast majority are issued by councils.

Councils do set their own fines up to the maximum amount, and many are already in line with the current state set amount. While police have the ability to issue fines to people who illegally park in disability spots on roads and road related areas, which does include shopping centres and other places available for the public to park, the reality is it is primarily the councils that conduct enforcement in those areas. In my city of Logan the council has entered into arrangements with individual shopping centres to allow the enforcement on private property. In my electorate this includes the Beenleigh Mall, Beenleigh Marketplace, Eagleby Plaza, Riverlakes Village and Logan Shopping Village.

I would outline to the House that this is about a strong deterrent. The impact on those who rely on disability car parks when those spaces are occupied cannot be understated. For many people when those parks are unavailable they have to abandon their day out. This has flow-on effects for their lifestyle, particularly in relation to missing medical appointments. This is a bill that will increase inclusion in our communities and that is why I support this bill.

I now turn to the Transport and Other Legislation (Road Safety, Technology and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2020. Two key highlights of the bill are the introduction of the digital licence app and legislation to support the introduction of camera enforcement for seatbelt and mobile phone offences. A digital licence app will allow users to provide digital evidence of age and identity. It will include data from Queensland drivers' licences, photo ID cards such as the old 18+ card and recreational marine licences. The presentation of the digital information from the app will meet many legal requirements for people who are required to produce legal forms of identification.

The introduction of the digital app will reduce the number of cards people need to carry, provide greater security and protection of information, and provide a simple interface for updating personal details. This will deliver a secure platform for businesses and regulatory and enforcement agencies to authenticate someone's identity as well as a simple, real-time method of receiving updates and reminders for renewals and payments. It should be noted that the digital app will not replace the issuing of conventional, traditional licences. The app will not be mandatory; they are both complementary.

To date, the detection of mobile phone and seatbelt offences has been the purview of our police officers working to reduce road trauma. Patrolling officers are constantly scanning traffic, watching vehicles observing drivers and looking for the telltale signs: where are the hands of the driver; where is the driver looking; what other lights are emanating from within the vehicle; and looking at the angle over a driver's shoulder that indicates whether a seatbelt is present.

In 2018 there were 9,607 tickets issued for seatbelt offences in Queensland and in the year 2018-19 there were over 27,000 tickets issued for mobile phone offences in Queensland. This is quite staggering when we consider that in Queensland on average 31 people are killed each year in crashes whilst not wearing seatbelts and that 14 per cent of road fatalities and 20 per cent of serious injuries from crashes are attributed to distracted driving. What is not seen in these statistics is the number of these offences that go undetected. Given that the nature of traffic enforcement in these areas requires police to be at the right place at the right time, a large number of these offences go undetected. Police can only be in so many places at one time, so I do look forward to seeing trials commence on the use of camera detection of seatbelt and mobile phone offences.

Camera enforcement has been successful in reducing road trauma for other serious driving offences like speeding and running red lights. I welcome any initiatives that will reduce the road trauma from distracted driving and seatbelt offences. I am comfortable with the processes to be introduced relating to human oversight once these offences have been detected and I look forward to seeing the evaluation of the trial. I commend these bills to the House.