



Economic & Public Policy

Services and Facilities for Motorists with Disabilities

Introduction

- RACQ members regularly comment on the steady decrease in the number of fuel service stations offering driveway services. This is a particular worry for members who have physical disabilities that limit their mobility thus preventing, or restricting, them from doing simple tasks on their vehicle such as refuelling, checking tyres, etc.
- Failure to provide services and facilities for drivers or passengers who have such physical disabilities, in locations and situations where motor vehicles might reasonably be expected, is a form of discrimination.

Background

This statement is to define the RACQ's position on the provision of services and facilities for motorists with physical disabilities that limit their mobility.

For the purpose of this statement, "motorists with disabilities" are defined as drivers or passengers who have a temporary or permanent physical disability that significantly limits:

- Their mobility and physical capability away from their vehicle; and
- Their ability to carry out simple tasks on their vehicle or at service facilities for motorists; or
- Their ability, in the case of drivers, to drive their vehicle safely without its modification.

The degree of disability has a bearing on the need for services and facilities required by motorists with disabilities. The following are the three approximate categories considered:

- Those dependent on complex mobility devices, such as wheel chairs, in order to move away from their vehicles. In Queensland, these motorists are entitled to Blue Disability Parking Permits, which allow on- and off-street parking concessions;
- Those with a mobility impairment that restricts their ability to move any significant distance from their vehicle. These motorists are entitled to Queensland Red Disability Parking Permits, which allow only off-street parking concessions; and
- Those with less severe mobility problems who nevertheless find it difficult or even impossible to carry out necessary simple everyday tasks on their vehicles or at facilities intended to provide services for motorists.

RACQ Analysis

The following are the areas where motorists with disabilities need assistance or special facilities to permit them to properly enjoy the extended mobility available through the use of a motor vehicle.

- *Vehicle Design.* Many of them need to take great care in selecting a vehicle that will accommodate their particular needs, especially if it has to be modified. Depending on their situation they may need modifications to the driving controls, ancillary controls, seating, access and storage for mobility aids and other personal items.
- *On-Street Parking.* The availability and signage of on-street parking places for motorists with blue disability parking permits is very limited, particularly in larger cities. This makes access to some premises and facilities extremely difficult, if not impossible.
- *Off-Street Parking.* Generally, larger public and corporate car parks provide well signed and located car parking for motorists with red or blue disability parking permits, however the situation is far from adequate in many smaller parking areas.
- *Parking Permits.* All states issue some form of parking permit for motorists with disabilities, however the conditions for their issue and use vary from state to state and, in some cases, between councils in areas where they control parking.
- *Driveway Services.* In recent years there has been a marked reduction in the number of fuel service stations providing driveway services including refuelling, tyre checks, windscreen cleaning and simple under-bonnet checks of oils, coolant and battery such that the drivers do not need to leave their vehicles. At service stations where such services are available motorists may be charged for them or, more often, face higher fuel costs.
- *Facilities when Stopping.* Many places where motorists are likely to stop on a journey to refuel, take a short rest, use a toilet, have a drink or a meal or seek overnight accommodation do not adequately cater for the needs of disabled motorists. This often takes the form of difficult or impossible access, as well as tables, shelves, counters, phones etc. at awkward heights or positions.
- *Repairs.* While mobile repair services are available in some areas, elsewhere there are often problems in delivering and collecting their vehicles to and from a workshop. Alternatively, if the work will only take a short time, there may be no suitable facilities where they can wait.

A general problem that motorists with disabilities face is a lack of centralised information about where they can access services and facilities to meet their needs. Normally, they are aware of the local situation, although that can change. However, undertaking a long trip can require a lot of research to ensure their needs are met

without much frustration and wasted time. There appears to be no coordinated effort to provide such information at a local, state or national level.

The Law and Standards

- Both the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 require that services and facilities provided by government and private businesses do not discriminate on the basis of disability through less favourable or unfair treatment.
- Standards exist to ensure that new building work for public and commercial premises are designed and constructed to provide access and facilities meeting the needs of people with disabilities.
- Similarly there are disability standards to ensure the progressive introduction of accessible public transport.

RACQ Position

- Access to public and or private transport and the supporting infrastructure should be available to all persons who reasonably need it, including those with physical disabilities.
- Motorists with disabilities should be able to use their vehicles for all reasonable trips without being significantly disadvantaged by a the lack of suitable services or facilities
- Information should be generally available to motorists with disabilities on the location and standard of services and facilities available to them in local areas and on all major national and state highways.
- A national system of roadside signage should be developed to indicate the existence of services and facilities, to a minimum standard, for travellers with physical disabilities.

RACQ Actions

- The RACQ will continue to provide and improve the following services to members / motorists with disabilities:
 - Temporary repairs and minor adjustments to motorised wheelchairs when immobilised;
 - Advice on the possibility of being able to drive a car;
 - Driver education and rehabilitation training for people with disabilities returning to driving;
 - Advice on suitable models of cars;
 - Advice on the modification of cars to suit their individual needs;
 - Advice on accessories which might meet their requirements;
 - Information on other issues such as the medical assessments they may need to obtain a licence and declarations needed for their vehicle insurance.

RACQ Actions cont.

- The RACQ will support moves to improve the availability of services and facilities that meet the needs of motorists with disabilities including:
 - Improved on-street parking and set-down areas in major urban centres;
 - The provision of parking spaces for people with disabilities in off-street car parks where that is possible and reasonable;
 - Full driveway service at more fuel service stations;
 - Suitable facilities in areas commonly used by motorists, e.g., toilets, payment counters, convenience stores, eating places, access to emergency phones at roadside stopping bays and rest areas;
 - Ready access to adequate accommodation and facilities at motels, etc. that cater for persons with disabilities;
 - Clear roadside signage indicating the presence of services and facilities for motorists with disabilities.

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