



**Disabled Parking Permit for the Autistic
3 June 2009**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (15:07): Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex brain development disorder affecting approximately one to two in every 1,000 people. People diagnosed with ASD have difficulty with communication, social interaction and behaviour. They also have difficulty understanding and responding to other people's instructions, thoughts and feelings. The cause of ASD is unknown, and there is no cure. The effects of autism differ dramatically from person to person and not every ASD trait or characteristic is in evidence in every person.

Family dynamics are dramatically different in a household with an autistic child. Routines are unavoidably based around the person with ASD and everyday tasks, such as shopping, which may seem simple to most of us, can become complex and extremely difficult. The stress and pressure that are put on the carer or family of the person with ASD, who are their carers 24 hours a day, are immense. It can be extremely easy for other family relationships to become strained, neglected, and even break down.

Taking someone with ASD to the local shop or supermarket is not the simple task that the rest of us take for granted. They can become a danger to themselves, the general public and their family or carer in busy car parks or roads as they can be easily distracted and run off before their carer can react. The closer the car can be parked to the shop, the better for everyone.

A disabled car park, which is usually situated close to the shop's entrance, can help reduce the risk of accidents and is also available if a fast exit is required. Unfortunately, in South Australia using a disabled car park is not an option for people with ASD. In South Australia, those who qualify for a disabled parking permit are:

Persons with a temporary or permanent physical disability whose speed of movement is severely restricted by the impairment and whose ability to use public transport is significantly impeded by the impairment.

A Port Lincoln mother of a 13 year old boy who has been diagnosed with ASD applied for a disabled parking permit. Her son has no control over his impulsive sensory behaviour and is strongly affected by cars—their noise and the general hustle and bustle of traffic. He becomes extremely unpredictable and has been nearly hit by cars on occasions when he has run out into the road to seek out something that grabbed his attention.

It is nearly impossible for his mother to restrain him because of his size, strength and determination to reach the object. The closer she can park to an entrance, the fewer distractions for her son. Unfortunately, he was denied a disabled person's parking permit as 'autism is not deemed to be a physical impairment'.

The mother applied to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles for review of the decision, and in her application she had supporting letters from doctors and teachers. Her application was denied, again with the same reason: autism is not deemed to be a physical impairment. After the first rejection, the mother wrote a letter to me, as follows:

Disability comes in many shapes and forms and therefore presents many challenges in many areas, and my belief is that disability parking was implemented to reduce the challenges faced by these people every day of their lives. Whilst I support the objective, I believe the permit should include all those that have disabilities that profoundly affect their wellbeing and participation in the community.

She speaks from her very personal experience. South Australia should follow Victoria and Tasmania's lead and make criteria to cover other disabilities. For example, in Victoria, a person with autism is eligible for a disabled

parking permit 'if a specialist medical practitioner or a clinical psychologist indicates that he/she is an extreme danger to himself/herself and others in a public place without continuous attendance by a caregiver'.

Families with a disabled member should not be further disadvantaged. A car park close to a shop's entrance may not seem much to most people, but to carers of children and adults diagnosed with severe ASD it is a measure of safety that a caring community should adopt for the safety of the disabled person, their carers and their community.

I commend David Holst and the Intellectual Disability Association of South Australia on the effort they have put in to have what appears to be a very simple change made to the criteria the Registrar of Motor Vehicles is required to comply with. I ask the Minister for Transport to have some compassion and make this simple change that will make such a difference to people with ASD and their carers.

Time Expired. Remainder of Speech:

According to Melissa Poole the chairperson of the autism support group Kaleidoscope in Port Lincoln, the autism ratio on Eyre Peninsula is a staggering one per every 160 people. In 2008 according to Autism SA, 540 new cases, that is about 50 per month were diagnosed in this State alone. The problem is obviously not going to go away.