

NICK DAMETTO
Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

14/10/2019

Disability parking reform discussion to drive change

THE need to allow vision-impaired persons access to a disability parking permit will be highlighted in a special discussion at Parliament House this Wednesday.

Hosted by Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto, the event will feature guest speakers Guide Dogs Queensland (GDQ) General Manager Jock Beveridge, a vision impaired GDQ client and Hill MP Shane Knuth.

Members of Parliament in attendance will also be able to experience what life is like for a vision impaired person in a blindfolded walk demonstration and get to meet two of the organisation's new Guide Dogs.

Mr Dametto said the discussion was a "wonderful opportunity" for MPs to hear about the vital need to reform the parking permit system so people with a vision impairment could have access.

"With the involvement of Guide Dogs Queensland in this discussion, those attending will be able to get an appreciation of the challenges faced by the vision-impaired and how much a change to the disability parking permit system would benefit them," he said.

"As legislators, we have a responsibility to make people's lives better and for a State that doesn't currently permit the vision-impaired to hold a disability parking permit, I'd ask any Member of Parliament to come along and take a walk in the shoes of the vision-impaired for five minutes to better understand why this legislation needs to be changed."

Mr Dametto said he intended on introducing his Transport Legislation (Disability Parking Permit Scheme) Amendment Bill 2019 into parliament this week, which, if passed, would allow vision impaired persons to qualify for a disability parking permit in Queensland.

"This is a simple legislative change I'm proposing and I would certainly hope for bipartisan support once the Bill goes through the appropriate committee review process and eventually makes its way to parliament for a vote," he said.

"People with a vision impairment deserve the right to hold a disability parking permit and Katter's Australian Party will fight for them to have it."

GDQ General Manager Jock Beveridge said the current exclusion of Queenslanders to the disability parking permit scheme puts people in extremely dangerous situations every day as they navigate through car park traffic and try to avoid cars reversing out of parking spaces.



MEDIA RELEASE

"You can only imagine the impact and stress this has on the everyday lives of Queenslanders with a vision impairment, or for the parents of blind and vision impaired children trying to navigate their children safely through a car park while also managing a trolley full of groceries," he said.

"Even near marked pedestrian crossings, drivers are often in a rush and don't offer the space or patience needed for people using mobility aids, like a white cane or Guide Dog.

"This change is all about safety and being fair, ensuring Queenslanders with a vision impairment have the same access to disability parking as those down south.

"It makes sense, it meets community expectations and I thank the Member for Hinchinbrook for standing up for the Queensland vision impaired community."

Mr Beveridge said having access to disability parking would greatly reduce the risk of injury by providing parking availability in close proximity to access and navigation points at locations like shopping centres and community facilities.

In a 2019 survey of Queenslanders who are blind and vision impaired, Guide Dogs found:

- 92% of respondents reported that they do not feel safe in carparks
- 64% of respondents reporting to have been hit or experienced a near collision in the past five years while moving through a carpark.
- Over 54% of these respondents have been hit or had a near miss with a vehicle more than three times; 31% experiencing these hits or near misses over five times; and 16% over 10 times in the past five years alone.

Hill MP Shane Knuth said it was clear the parking permit system needed reform.

"We are in the year 2019 and yet vision-impaired people are still excluded from accessing a disability parking permit in Queensland - a vital service to ensure their safety," he said.

"We have been approached on numerous occasions by constituents who are vision impaired and have been scared for their life while getting in and out of a normal sized carpark and having to harness their Guide Dog and cane with traffic coming and going either side, coupled with them having to navigate through the obstacles to get to their destination.

"This is completely unacceptable."

A vision-impaired person is eligible to apply for a disability parking permit in NSW, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

NICK DAMETTO
Member for Hinchinbrook

MEDIA RELEASE



—ENDS—

Media Enquiries

Nick Dametto, Member for Hinchinbrook

Michael Serenc – 0423 108 848

Shane Knuth, Member for Hill

Katje Gibson – 0409 725 466