

DISABILITY PARKING BAYS - MISUSE

655. Mr R.C. KUCERA to the Minister for Disability Services:

My question relates to something that makes us all angry. What is being done to stop the misuse of disability parking bays?

Mr A.D. McRAE replied:

I thank the member for Yokine for the question. I am sure that many members understand what it means for people who have limited mobility to go to a restaurant, a local government authority or the shops -

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Alfred Cover to order for the second time.

Mr A.D. McRAE: As I was saying, most members understand the frustration and anger experienced by people with limited mobility -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I do not know what that was all about. I call the member for Swan Hills to order for the first time.

Mr A.D. McRAE: When I came out of a shopping centre in my electorate last month, I saw a large Cadillac diagonally parked across a blue-marked parking bay. Clearly the parking bay was designated for people with an Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled, or ACROD, sticker. When I asked the driver whether he was aware that he had parked in a blue-marked parking bay, he said that he did not care less and that he was not bothered at all about the implications that parking in that bay would have for people with a disability. That example is consistent with the stories that I have heard as Minister for Disability Services about the regularity with which people without an ACROD parking bay sticker park in specified bays. This is no small matter for those who must make an extraordinary effort to prepare themselves for a journey. They have to get into their wheelchair, then into their car and then they have to travel to their destination. When they find that there is no parking bay at their destination to allow them to park their car, quite often they return to their residence, frustrated and angry that they have not been able to complete the purpose of their trip. The Carpenter government is determined to tackle this problem. I have written to every local government authority in Western Australia and have drawn to their attention the fact that under the Local Government Act they have the authority to fine people \$120 for the inappropriate use of an easy-access parking bay and \$140 for the unauthorised use of an ACROD permit. I also pointed out to the local government authorities that if a matter ends up in court, the fine for misuse of either a bay or a sticker is a maximum of \$1 000. Unfortunately, I have to report that too many local government authorities do not see this as a priority; they either do not enforce the parking restrictions that apply to disability parking bays or do not view the issue as important as do people with limited mobility. Many local government authorities limit fines to between \$30 and \$50 for an offence. That is clearly inadequate. As we move into the Christmas period and there is increased pressure on people to pop in to the shops for only a couple of minutes, I have asked local government authorities to enforce those provisions to make it clear that even though Western Australia is a boom state, it is also about access and inclusion for people who have limited mobility. I ask all members to communicate to their local government authorities that they support that practice.