

## HANSARD 18 NOVEMBER 2010

### PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION

#### *Grievance*

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton)** [9.28 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport and is about the lack of photographic identification available for Western Australians who do not hold a current driver's licence or a passport. I realise that this issue was raised by the member for Kingsley with the Minister for Seniors and Volunteering sometime in the past, but I think it needs to be raised with the Minister for Transport for reasons that I will outline.

Within our community, there are many situations in which photographic proof of identity is required. Generally, a person's driver's licence, which includes a compulsory photograph, is accepted as the standard proof of identity in Western Australia by businesses and state and federal government agencies. However, for a variety of reasons, many people in our community do not hold a current driver's licence, or a passport, for that matter, and I believe that the number of people in this situation is increasing.

Some people who do not have a driver's licence simply do not wish to drive or travel overseas; some are young people yet to apply for a driver's licence; some people have a disability that precludes them from driving; and some people are elderly and no longer drive a car. But all still need, from time to time, to provide proof of identity.

It could be that they need to send or receive international mail or to prove who they are to claim a registered letter from the post office. They may simply want to open a new bank account, apply for credit cards, enter licensed premises or access restricted goods such as alcohol—even the old sometimes have a drink. Without photographic identification, they may not be accepted as volunteers in organisations that require them to undergo a police clearance check.

They may find it difficult to obtain a working with children check if they want to volunteer as a helper at the local school. In some cases, a valid form of photographic identification is also required to check in to hotel or motel accommodation when holidaying in our great state. However, in Western Australia it is currently very difficult to access these everyday functions without holding a driver's licence or passport.

I recently attended the tenth birthday celebrations of the Perth Southern Districts Branch of the Association of Independent Retirees. While at that function, I learned of a pretty terrible situation that had befallen some of the members. The group had organised a tour to the Garden Island naval facility near Rockingham.

However, when they arrived at the security gate, only those members who had photo identification were allowed to visit the base. Those members who no longer had a valid driver's licence were turned away. Many of them spent a great deal of time waiting in the bus for their fellow group members to return from the tour before going home. This situation was disappointing and embarrassing for those who did not have a photo ID and should never have arisen. These people do not have photographic identification through no fault of their own; it is the system which has let them down and which has ruined what should have been a very pleasant day out.

Our seniors contribute significantly to the state, and will continue to do so into the future, and in their twilight years should be able to access facilities. The state of New South Wales has already recognised this growing need. It has enacted legislation called the Photo Card Act 2005 to provide residents of that state with a photo identification. The New South Wales photo card is voluntary and is valid for five years for people aged 16 years and over who do not hold a current driver's licence.

It enables such people to easily prove who they are. It has the same security features as the NSW driver's licence and as a result is accepted by businesses and government agencies everywhere that a normal driver's licence or passport is accepted. It also includes organ donor consent information. The card is issued free of charge when seniors surrender their current New South Wales driving licence for medical reasons or because of advanced-age retesting.

Although privacy concerns and legislative requirements may need to be considered to bring in similar legislation in Western Australia, I urge the Minister for Transport to act on this matter so that all eligible Western Australians have access to photo identification as soon as possible so that they can enjoy themselves like everyone else.

**MR M.J. COWPER (Murray–Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.32 am]: I thank the member for Riverton for bringing this issue to the house. I also acknowledge the member for Kingsley's previous work on this matter. I suspect, given the events subsequent to September 11, when the world changed, that there is a different approach to the identification that is required at certain installations. It disturbed me greatly to hear about the member's constituents' experience at the Garden Island naval base. Understandably, that base is a secure installation, and it is a very good example of why such cards are needed.

This is a topical issue and it is important to acknowledge that various community groups and individuals would benefit from the introduction of such a card. I am happy to provide an update on this matter following information provided during a grievance raised in this house on this very issue earlier this year by the member for Kingsley to the previous parliamentary secretary, the member for Darling Range. As advised at that time, the Minister for Transport has asked the Department of Transport to investigate the possibility of introducing a voluntary photographic identification card.

This card will be similar to the card functioning in New South Wales, which the member mentioned, and will meet the rigorous identification and verification processes required to combat identification fraud. It is important to mention that although the principal idea of introducing a photographic card, similar to a driver's licence, appears straightforward and even simple and would indeed be welcomed by many, the reality is that it is a rather complex matter with the prospect of there being serious opposition to it. Some may be concerned that this voluntary ID card may become a de facto compulsory ID card—like a driver's licence has become. This is a question that the community will need to accept before the concept becomes a reality.

Currently, no legislative authority allows the Director General of Transport to issue a Western Australian photo card. With this in mind, progress of this initiative would require drafting of legislation, which is intended to be progressed through the Department of Transport. For this legislation to succeed, significant consultation will need to occur.

The Department of Transport has already commenced preliminary formal consultation with Western Australian government agencies and is in the process of assessing the feedback provided by those agencies. When this assessment is completed, the Department of Transport will begin the formal consultation process with the relevant community organisations, members of the public and privacy advocacy groups. Western Australia Police, the Public Sector Commission, the Disability Services Commission, the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor, the Department for Communities and the Department of Corrective Services have expressed support for the photo card proposal.

In conclusion, it is important to recognise that this proposal will not be implemented overnight; however, the work has commenced and I look forward to providing further information on this issue to the house in due course. I thank the member for Riverton for bringing this grievance to the house.