



ACT
Government

Justice and Community Safety

VEHICLE VERGE PERMITS PRACTICE MANUAL

THIS PRACTICE MANUAL

The practice manual has been developed to assist applicants, current permit holders and Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) staff in the interpretation, issuing permits and compliance with the *Public Unleased Land Act 2013* (the Act).

It is intended that this practice manual will operate as a living document, which will be improved upon as policy or the law is amended. This may also include capturing responses to issues as they arise in the application of the policy and the law.

We encourage all stakeholders to feel comfortable in raising issues regarding this Manual, with a view to clarifying policy or legal issues, to improve the administration of the Act.

Written and published by the ACT Office of Regulatory Services

OUR CUSTOMER COMMITMENT

Who We Are:

We are the Office of Regulatory Services (ORS). The Office is made up of a variety of licensing, registration and compliance activities including:

- Vehicle Verge Parking
- Parking
- Liquor Licensing
- Land Titles
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Tobacco regulation
- Consumer protection

Objective:

Our mission is that we are a regulator of best practice, serving the ACT community, industry and government. Our objective is to register, licence and ensure compliance of activities against relevant legislation.

Where to get more information:

The Act is available at www.legislation.act.gov.au. Forms are available at www.ors.act.gov.au

If you wish to make a complaint or you have a suggestion:

Please contact the ORS on (02) 6207 3000 or via email at ors@act.gov.au

Or attend the office at:

255 Canberra Avenue
FYSHWICK ACT 2609

Our office hours are:

9am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays)

You may also wish to refer to our Complaints Policy at Chapter 7.

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CHAPTER 1 - THE LEGISLATION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

1.1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC UNLEASED LAND ACT 2013

The *Public Unleased Land Act 2013* (the Act) replaces the *Roads and Public Places Act 1937*. The Act modernises the legislation that regulates the use of public land and provides a permit system for using public land. The object of the Act is to facilitate use of land while ensuring that the amenity and natural value of the space is not diminished.

The use of unleased Territory land for verge parking is dependent on a range of factors such as the streetscape and the existence of street fixtures and furnishings such as public seats, parking metres and signs, light poles, bicycle racks, waste bins, trees, garden beds and pedestrian crossings.

A copy of the Act and its associated Regulation can be obtained at www.legislation.act.gov.au under Acts and then P for Public.

1.2 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

1.2.1 ENTITIES YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF UNDER THE ACT

Director-General - is the person responsible for issuing public unleased land permits. The relevant Director-General is the Director-General responsible for the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate. The Director-General has delegated responsibility for vehicle verge permits to ORS.

Investigators - have powers under the *Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) Act 1992* to enter premises to ensure that the Act is being complied with.

The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) - reviews decisions including those made by the ORS under this Act.

1.2.2 IMPORTANT TERMS

Public unleased land - means unleased Territory land that the public is entitled to use or is open to or used by the public. The Act does not deal with verge parking that is on private or leased land.

Public unleased land permit - is a permit issued under the Act which authorises the permit-holder to exclusively use the stated public unleased land. The permit may be issued for a stated time and for a stated activity.

Vehicle verge parking permit - is a public unleased land permit which permits the land to be used for parking of vehicles. This applies primarily for motor vehicle dealers who wish to display their vehicles for sale on public land adjacent to their licensed dealership.

CHAPTER 2 -PERMITS

2.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

OFFENCE FOR NOT HOLDING A PERMIT

The Act provides that any person using unleased land without a permit commits an offence. The maximum penalty for this offence is \$2200 for an individual and \$11000 for a corporation. Land is used when an activity they are carrying on excludes some or all members of the public from the place. For example, parking cars on the verge.

This offence does not apply to verge parking that is on private or leased land.

2.2 EXEMPTIONS

The requirement to hold a permit to use public land for vehicle verge parking does not apply if:

- the land is not public unleased land;
- a licence for the area and activity has been issued under the *Planning and Development Act 2007* and the land is being used in accordance with the licence;
- a work approval for the area has been issued and the land is being used in accordance with the approval; or
- a hawker's licence has been issued to park the vehicle and the land is being used in accordance with the approval.

2.3 VEHICLE VERGE PERMITS

The ORS can issue vehicle verge permits under the Act:

Vehicle verge parking permit - is a public unleased land permit which permits the land to be used for parking of vehicles. This applies primarily for motor vehicle dealers who wish to display their vehicles for sale on public land adjacent to their licensed dealership.

The ORS may need to seek approvals or information from other Directorates to issue a permit.

CHAPTER 3 - APPLYING FOR A VEHICLE VERGE PERMIT

3.1 HOW AND WHERE TO LODGE AN APPLICATION FOR A PERMIT

Please note that a permit will not automatically be issued just because there is available space outside a business premises. Talk to the ORS to ensure that you understand what is required if a permit is to be granted and the site can be inspected if necessary.

An application for a public unleased land permit must be in writing on the form at www.ors.act.gov.au or available from the ORS shop front.

The Act requires the ORS to consider the following before a permit is issued:

- whether the applicant is suitable;
- whether the activity is suitable;
- any submission about the activity received following public consultation (if required);
- any risk management plan (if required); and
- the results of any inspection (if required).

3.2 FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM

3.2.1 PARTS OF THE FORM

An application for a public unleased land permit must be in writing on the form at www.ors.act.gov.au or available from the ORS shop front.

The vehicle verge permit form includes applicants details, particulars of the land for the permit and details of the activity for the permit.

If the applicant is a company, a separate applicant details page of this form must be completed by each company director. If the applicant is a partnership, a separate applicant details page must be completed by each partner.

The form seeks consent for ORS to consult with other Directorates or agencies affected by an application to seek their approval.

The form also allows applicants to seek to have public furniture or items removed. This is not guaranteed and the ORS will need to seek approval for this from other Directorates and the applicant will have to pay the costs of relocation.

An application must be accompanied by a location plan showing the location, boundaries and dimensions of the public unleased land for the permit and the position of the activity on the public unleased land.

The plan for a vehicle verge permit does not have to be professionally drafted but it should clearly show the dimensions of the proposed area, its location to existing businesses and it should show the proposed access and egress for the vehicles.

3.2.2 IF FURTHER INFORMATION IS REQUIRED

The Act provides for the ORS to require an applicant for a permit to provide additional stated information or documents that are reasonably needed to decide whether they or an influential person is suitable or if the activity is suitable. Some examples may include information about close associates and details of the circumstances of a particular conviction or finding of guilt. Also information may be required about any approvals or permits to use the land.

If additional information is needed the applicant will be advised in writing and the application will not be processed until the information is received.

CHAPTER 4 – CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS FOR A PERMIT

4.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR BEING ISSUED A PERMIT

The ORS will issue a permit for vehicle verge parking only if reasonably satisfied that:

- the applicant is suitable to hold the permit;
- if the applicant is a corporation - that each influential person is suitable; and that
- the activity is a suitable activity for the public unleased land permit.

4.1.1 SUITABILITY OF THE APPLICANT

The Act provides that the ORS must not issue a permit unless satisfied that the applicant is suitable to hold the permit.

Suitability information will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The ORS may decide to approve the permit without further information or request supporting information.

When looking at offences and non-compliance the ORS will look at:

- relevance to the permit being applied for;
- the severity and nature of the non-compliance, offence or charge;
- previous relevant convictions or findings of guilt.

If any relevant offences are identified further information will generally be requested. This further information may identify the nature of the offence, the agreed facts about the offence and, if possible, the consideration of the magistrate or judge.

For example a person will not be considered suitable if a person has recent convictions for substantially damaging Territory property or unsafe behaviour that may be relevant to the permit.

4.1.2 SUITABILITY OF THE AREA FOR THE ACTIVITY

The Act provides that the ORS must not issue a permit unless satisfied that the activity is suitable for the permit. The Act requires the ORS to consider the following in making a decision:

- suitability information about the activity including:
 - the nature of the objects to be included on the land;
 - the size of the objects;
 - the intended use of the objects;

- when the objects will be on the public unleased land;
- any risks that the placement of the object may cause to the public, and how the risks are to be minimised; and
- any other matter relevant to the appropriateness of the object on the public unleased land;
- the location plan;
- any submission about the activity received following public consultation (if required);
- any risk management plan (if required); and
- the results of any inspection (if required).

4.1.3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Applications for a new permit for vehicle verge parking may require public consultation during the application process as the issue of a permit may have a significant impact on people in the location or nearby.

The applicant must display a sign on the land or in an adjacent window of the premises and publish a notice in the Canberra times.

Both the sign and notice must state:

- the proposed times for the permit;
- the proposed activity;
- that a written submission can be made about how the use of the land may have a significant impact on anyone nearby; and
- that submissions must be provided to ORS within 15 working days of the date of the sign or notice.

The ORS will not make a decision on an application until after the public consultation period and after considering all submissions. If the ORS is to decide that a permit is not to be issued because of the issues identified in public consultation the ORS will give the applicant notice of this and allow the applicant 20 working days to dispute this.

4.1.4 INSPECTIONS

The ORS will inspect the unleased Territory land prior to issuing any permits. The ORS may during these inspections talk to the applicant or may simply take measurements to confirm the location and identify any issues with the use of the site.

4.1.5 INSURANCE

Permit holders must maintain public liability insurance as part of the condition of holding a permit. The insurance is to the value of at least \$20 million. Before a permit is approved the public liability insurance policy must have an endorsement noting the ACT Government's respective rights and interests and indemnifying the ACT Government for the permitted area.

The policy shall cover specified hours of operation or when the area is being used outside the permitted times.

4.2 SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERING APPROPRIATENESS OF A VEHICLE VERGE PERMIT

In considering an application for a vehicle verge permit the ORS generally requires the following:

- the permit will not reduce or affect sightlines for vehicles or pedestrians including vehicles exiting the dealership or adjacent property;
- clearance of 2.5m from the kerb line;
- no encroachment of emergency service vehicle access ways;
- no encroachment of public utilities such as fire hydrants, toilets, service pits, kerbs, ramps and access ways to these items;
- approval from neighbouring businesses if the permit area is to be in front of a neighbouring business;
- the permit area will not block main public thoroughfares, pathways or entry points for public activities;
- the permit area will not impede other commercial operations or access to other operations;
- the permit area will not impede access for people with disabilities;
- the permit will not create dark corners or an unsafe areas;
- the permit will not affect public art or a heritage area;
- the gradient and surface of the area are safe for use of vehicles
- clearance of 1.2m to trees;
- the speed limit of the road is 60km/h or less;
- the area is not prohibited from parking (excluding the Australian Road Rule - Stopping on a path, dividing strip or nature strip);
- the driveway of the permit holder must allow for two way movement into and out of the property and retain a clear width of 6.0m between the kerb line and property line;
- the movement of vehicles must be safety achieved within the dealership lease site boundary or within existing access arrangements;
- where a footpath is adjacent to the boundary that a uniform 1.2m wide path is retained for pedestrians and is not obstructed by vehicles;
- direct vehicular access between the permit area and the main road will not be permitted;

- only vehicles with four wheels or less to be displayed. Each vehicle must be registered and safely secured;
- 1.2m must be provided between the sides of the end vehicles and the permit boundaries;
- the maximum permitted hours of use are from 6am - 6pm each day; and
- the sight distances for vehicles leaving the driveway or entering the public road should be safe according to the below table:

Road Speed limit	Safe intersection sight distance (m)	Minimum safe intersection sight distance (m)
40km/h	100	60
50km/h	125	80
60km/h	160	105

(These safe distances apply provided TAMS surveys show that not more than 15% of drivers exceed the speed limit)

4.3 DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS

Following an application for a permit the ORS may do any one of the following:

- issue the permit;
- refuse to issue the permit; or
- issue the permit subject to conditions.

Decisions on new applications must be made within 28 days of receiving the applicant, or 28 days after receiving requested information.

Any decision to refuse to issue a permit to or issue a permit subject to conditions can be appealed to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

4.3.1 FINANCIAL ASSURANCE CONDITIONS

The Act provides that the ORS may impose a financial assurance condition on a permit if the permitted activity will cause serious or material damage to the land. The condition may require a bank guarantee, bond, insurance policy or other form of assurance to compensate the Territory for damage to the land. The ORS will not generally require a bond or financial assurance.

4.4 ISSUE OF A PERMIT

If a permit is granted, it will be issued in writing and will be issued for up to two years. Permits will include the following information:

- the name of the permit-holder;
- the location of the permitted public unleased land;

- the permitted activity, being display of vehicles and the number of objects permitted;
- the length of the permit;
- the conditions on the permit; and
- the expiry date of the permit.

In addition to issuing the permit, the ORS will paint lines on the ground to indicate the area for the permit. If these lines fade or are unclear please contact ORS so they can be remarked.

4.5 PAYMENT OF FEES

The fees for a permit are determined annually and change on 1 July. Current fee information is available at www.ors.act.gov.au.

Fees are based on the area size and location if the application is successful. Upon payment of the fees the permit will be issued by the ORS.

4.6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF VEHICLE VERGE PERMIT HOLDERS

Vehicle verge permit holders must:

- be responsible for the health and safety of patrons, workers and people who will come into contact with their business;
- be aware of noise restrictions. This is especially relevant to dealerships near residential dwellings;
- maintain the permit area to ensure it remains free of litter and vehicle fluid leaks;
- remove vehicles at the end of the permit time; and
- maintain public liability insurance to the value of \$20million indemnifying the Territory for damage or injury.

Some or all of these responsibilities may be included on the permit as conditions.

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSFERS, RENEWALS AND ALTERATIONS

5.1 TRANSFER A PERMIT

The Act provides for the transfer of a permit. The process for transferring a permit is to apply in writing using the form at www.ors.act.gov.au. The form includes complete details of suitability of the proposed new permit holder. Transfers are only allowed where the transfer of the permit is part of a business sale/transfer. Transfers of the permit must be applied for within one month of the business transfer to have effect under the Act.

The ORS will transfer a permit if satisfied that the proposed new permit holder is suitable to hold the permit and that the time, size and use of the area remains the same after the transfer. In making this decision the ORS may impose or amend a condition on the permit.

5.2 AMENDMENT OF A PERMIT

The Act provides that a permit can be amended by ORS or by application from a permit holder.

If the ORS is to amend a permit it must first write to the permit holder giving notice of the proposed amendments and giving the permit holder 14 days to make submissions about the proposed amendments. This does not apply if the permit holder has applied for the amendments or has agreed to them. The ORS must consider any submissions by the permit holder before making a decision.

If a permit holder wishes to amend their permit they may apply in writing to the ORS using the form at www.ors.act.gov.au. An application to amend a permit will involve consideration of the factors for issue of a permit and may require public consultation.

5.3 RENEWAL OF A PERMIT

The Act provides for renewal of a permit. As a general principle ORS will remind permit holders of the approaching expiry date of a permit. However, if you fail to inform the ORS of a change of address you may not receive advice of the approaching expiry of your permit. This may result in you forgetting to renew the permit and being in breach of the Act. The fees payable for the renewal of a permit are available at www.ors.act.gov.au.

In making a decision on an application for renewal the ORS will consider whether the applicant remains a suitable person and whether the area remains suitable for the permit. In renewing a permit the ORS may impose conditions or may amend conditions.

5.4 NOTIFYING THE ORS OF CHANGES OF DETAILS

The Act provides that the ORS must be notified of a change in the name or address of a permit holder. These changes must be notified within 30 days. A notification can be

made via ors@act.gov.au. The ORS will amend the details on the permit and will provide this to the permit holder.

CHAPTER 6 - COMPLIANCE AND RISK PROFILE

6.1 COMPLIANCE

ORS undertakes a range of compliance activities to regulate vehicle verge permit holders in accordance with the Act.

Investigators in the ORS are authorised to investigate compliance issues by permit holders or persons who should hold a permit. Some of the more common complaints that are investigated against permit holders are:

- parking cars on the verge without a permit;
- having items in the permit area that are not approved;
- having rubbish or mess inside the permit area;
- operating the business outside of the permitted times;
- unsafe occurrences in the permit area; and
- having cars outside of the permitted area.

The ORS compliance strategies include:

- education;
- monitoring and inspections;
- self-regulation;
- information sharing; and
- enforcement.

The ORS conducts both routine inspections and after hours inspections. The inspections are proactive, in response to complaints and to follow-up on cancelled/suspended permits.

6.2 INSPECTIONS

ORS investigators are authorised to enter premises to ensure compliance with the Act. Investigators can enter the following places at the stated times:

- at any reasonable time, enter premises that the public is entitled to use or that are open to the public;
- at any time when the premises is open for business;
- at any time, enter premises with the occupier's consent;
- enter premises in accordance with a permit condition;
- enter premises in accordance with a search warrant; or

- at any time, enter premises if they believe on reasonable grounds that the circumstances are so serious and urgent that immediate entry to the premises without the authority of a search warrant is necessary.

Once they have entered the premises investigators have a range of powers including the power to examine and copy documents, and take photographs and samples. Investigators can also require a person to give information or produce documents and can seize items.

6.3 PENALTIES RESULTING FROM INSPECTIONS OR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE ACT OR REGULATION

6.3.1 TYPES OF PENALTIES

The Act provides for a range of penalties resulting from non-compliance with the Act or Regulation. In particular the Act provides for a series of criminal offences, for regulatory action to be taken against a permit holder, closure orders and for confiscation of objects.

6.3.2 CRIMINAL PENALTIES

The Act includes a number of offences that permit holders should be aware of and can be prosecuted for. These are all set out in the Act, but below are the basic offences in the Act:

- using public land without a permit;
- failing to comply with a condition of a permit;
- failing to notify of changes to details;
- failing to return amended, suspended or cancelled permits;
- failing to comply with a Director-General's direction or an emergency closure order; and
- interfering with seized goods.

Infringement notices can also be issued for breaches of these offences.

6.3.3 REGULATORY ACTION

The Act provides for the ORS to take regulatory action against permit holders. The ORS will take regulatory action either following a complaint or following an investigation by investigators. The grounds for regulatory action are:

- (a) the permit-holder contravened a condition of the permit;
- (b) the permit holder provided false or misleading information in a material particular in their application; and

- (c) the permit holder provided false or misleading information in a material particular in an application for amendment, transfer or renewal of a permit.

The types of action that the ORS may take are:

- impose a condition on the permit;
- suspend the permit;
- cancel the permit; and
- Disqualify the person from applying for another permit.

If there are grounds for regulatory action the ORS can issue a show cause notice giving the permit holder details of the proposed action to be taken and the grounds for the action. The permit holder will have up to 14 days after they are given the notice to give a submission to the ORS about the proposed action to be taken. Before taking the action, the ORS is bound to consider the submission given by a permit holder and the ORS cannot take action that they did not raise in the show cause notice, unless the action is lower than that listed in the show cause notice. For example the ORS may state that they propose to cancel a permit, however following consideration of the permit holder's submission the ORS imposes a condition on the permit instead. The ORS cannot give notice that they are going to impose a condition and then considering the permit holder's submission cancel the permit.

Any decision made by ORS can be appealed to the ACAT.

6.3.4 IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION NOTICE

In addition to taking regulatory action, the ORS can when issuing a show cause notice, give a permit holder notice that they are immediately suspending a permit. This will only occur when it is necessary in the interests of public safety. For example, a suspension notice may occur when significant injury has occurred in the permitted area.

6.3.5 DIRECTION TO REMOVE OBJECTS

The Act provides that the ORS or a police officer can issue a direction to remove objects on unleased Territory land if there is no permit for the objects or for objects outside of a permitted area. The direction will state a date by which the objects must be removed. The date will be at least two days for a vehicle and seven days for another object. If the objects are not removed as required the person can be prosecuted or the objects can be removed and disposed of by the Territory.

6.3.6 DIRECTION BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The Act provides that the Director-General or a delegate can issue a direction if they believe on reasonable grounds that there is, or is likely to be a breach of a permit or a contravention of the Act and the breach is or is likely to cause disturbance, inconvenience or offence to people in nearby or risk to people or property.

The director-general may direct that action be taken to prevent the breach or contravention. A director-general's direction must be in writing and either state the

action to be taken and when the direction must be complied with, or state the conduct that should stop and for how long the direction is in force

6.3.7 EMERGENCY CLOSURE ORDER

The Act provides that a Senior Police Officer can close a permitted place if they believe on reasonable grounds that a breach of the Act has happened or is likely and that closure of the place is necessary to prevent or reduce undue risk to people or property. In these circumstances the permit holder will be given a notice in writing advising of the order and the duration of the closure.

6.3.8 SEIZURE OF OBJECTS

If a person is subject to a removal direction and does not comply with the direction or an object is abandoned or causing an obstruction or hazard for people, the Act provides for the removal of objects and the placement of these in a retention area. Objects in a retention area can be dealt with as uncollected goods and can be disposed of. For any vehicles the registered operator will be given seven days to collect the vehicle before it is disposed of.

CHAPTER 7 - COMPLAINTS POLICY

7.1 HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT AN ORS OFFICER

The ORS is committed to providing customer service in a professional, efficient and respectful manner. All people have the right to raise concerns and make legitimate complaints and expect that the issues raised will be handled in a fair, confidential and responsive manner and free from repercussion or prejudice.

The ORS Complaints Policy is available at the ORS office in Fyshwick and at www.ors.act.gov.au. The policy sets out the responsibility of the ORS to:

- recognise, promote and protect the customer's right to complain about their dealings with the ORS;
- ensure an accessible and well publicised complaints procedure is in place;
- recognise the need to be fair to both the complainant and the organisation or person complained about;
- provide a mechanism for responding to complaints in a timely and courteous manner;
- determine and implement remedies;
- provide adequate resources to support the complaints management process;
- record, assess and review complaints on a regular basis to ensure responsive and on-going commitment to service improvement.

7.2 HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A VEHICLE VERGE PERMIT HOLDER

If you want to make a complaint about a permit holder or a business using unleased public land without a permit you should follow the procedure set out in the External Complaints Policy available at the ORS office in Fyshwick and at www.ors.act.gov.au.

Generally the policy indicates that a complaint can be made over the phone or by other informal means depending on the nature or severity of the complaint. A complaint can be made by phoning (02) 6207 3000.