

Case study:

INVERCARGILL CITY COUNCIL

Getting the most from new parking technology, with a bespoke online permit solution

Invercargill is the commercial centre of New Zealand's Southland region, with a population of over 57,000 and a busy central city. In 2021, Invercargill City Council (ICC) upgraded its old 'lollipop' parking meters with leading edge pay-by-plate, ticketless solar-powered parking machines. The change was well-received by city residents, who can now pay quickly and easily by coin, card (via Paywave), or mobile app. Parking isn't time-limited; however ICC sets a universal hourly parking tariff that increases as the parking session lengthens.

THE CHALLENGE

Although the new pay-by-plate technology represented a big improvement for customers, ICC still needed a way to tailor the parking experience for user groups with monthly or annual permits, or those entitled to free parking.

A traditional parking solution would meet this challenge with paper parking permits; creating internal control issues, regular permit management, and enforcement inefficiencies. ICC didn't want their smart new parking technology to be dragged down by this cumbersome, old-fashioned approach.

THE SOLUTION

We worked with ICC to first identify the specific user groups who required different treatment. We then designed and implemented a bespoke online solution: vPermit.

Central to the solution are online permits which are associated with a vehicle registration number. vPermit enables a simple payment experience for different users, including:

- Council contractors, who can purchase and self-manage monthly permits online for their vehicle fleets. Drivers no longer need to make daily onsite transactions.
- Holders of annual leased car park spaces, who can purchase their annual permits online. Residents over 80 years of age, who are entitled to free parking. This group can visit council offices to be assisted with their online permit application.

- Visitors to council departments, who can be issued guest parking permits by authorised staff members. These can be reported on, and allow for each department to potentially be billed monthly.

When scanning licence plates, parking enforcement officers are able to see at a glance if the vehicle is compliant, whether by pay-by-plate payment or by permit. The ability to have all parking sessions validated solely on vehicle licence plate numbers future-proofs ICC's parking solution for the introduction of static licence plate recognition cameras for enforcement.

