

New CPS Requirements - 5 Photos in 5 Easy Steps

By Mark Fenton, Editor and Webmaster for the Chrysler Restorers Club of Australia Victoria Inc

The new/proposed CPS requirements mean that all Clubs will need to have a record, which includes 5 or more photos, of every car joining their Club's CPS. These photos need to be available, on demand, to supply to Vicroads in the event of a query by them, to help understand the possible history of undeclared modifications. For some Club's these requirements are well within the technical capability of their Committee or CPS representative, but for many Clubs it will be a question of how do we do that most effectively. (NB: If you are not responsible for this task in your Club, please consider passing this article on to the person in your Club who may benefit most)

This article provides some suggestions on how a Car Club can do this easily, and is provided as an extension to an article published in the AOMC magazine in Feb 2012, titled "CASE STUDY: How one Melbourne Car Club uses the internet to improve communications with Members". This first article, also written by Mark Fenton of the Chrysler Restorers Club of Australia Victoria Inc, provided suggestions on how to make good use of the internet to help communicate with Club members. It also described a range of software tools that were available free for Clubs, large and small, to use to improve their use of the internet for managing Club communications. It was followed by a presentation to an AOMC delegates meeting in May 2013 which created significant interest and hopefully was the trigger for Clubs to use the internet a little more easily.

After some further encouragement Mark enhanced the Membership database already used by the Chrysler Restorers Club of Australia Victoria Inc to track members and their cars, to make it suitable for any car club looking to improve the management of their member records, including their cars and CPS details. So far, more than 1200 clubs have downloaded the software for investigation, which can be obtained by following the links on the AOMC website and published in their recent magazines. For many Clubs this could be a great first step to managing their Club CPS obligations.

Unfortunately some Clubs have not been able to use this member database:

- This is because it is written for Microsoft Access which cannot be used on Apple computers. That's a bummer - can't help with that.
- For other Club's there were some issues using the free runtime version of Microsoft Access when importing or exporting data. If that included you, please follow the links again, as the menu options were changed slightly to enable data to be copied and pasted when required. Review the additional suggestions on how to import data when using the runtime version.
- One of the original recommendations was to get a free Google Apps account to manage Club mail setup, including email groups and redirections, manage shared calendars etc, but unfortunately Google now expect payment for this functionality, and unless you got it when it was free (before Dec 2012) then it will now cost from \$50pa to set up, although in some cases it may be possible to get a free single email Google Apps account. You can search for this "back door" method on Google but they now make it pretty hard to find and set up as a free account.

- For some Clubs, anything to do with computers is too hard, and again there is not much that can be done but wait for a suitable volunteer with sufficient skills, or willingness to learn, to step forward for your Club. But once you get going it is easier to get help, or follow advice provided by those willing to pass on their learnings.

But back to the management of CPS requirements: You may have your own membership database or spreadsheets doing this satisfactorily but the database mentioned above provides the basics by keeping track of the following:

- Members, including names and addresses, membership types, joining dates etc
 - It also includes functionality to track birthdays of members and their family, and skills which may assist on the social or organisational side of things
- Cars, including year, name/make/model, condition, colour, rego or permit details, and general comments
 - Permit details included Permit No, Expiry date, Last Signed Date, type (45 or 90 day)
- Many reports were available including some specifically for managing the CPS, including full extracts and extracts of unfinancial members with CPS permits

This was sufficient for managing the CPS scheme until now (late 2014). It is still important to have a proper record of all cars in your Club CPS as there still is the responsibility to work with Vicroads should they request confirmation of financial members and their CPS permitted cars. However there are new obligations involving keeping photo records of all new cars added to the scheme. Some Clubs may want to take this a little further and do this for all existing permit cars, but at this stage that is not a Vicroads requirement.

Clubs are to maintain dated photographs (either hard copy or electronic) of vehicles for admission or re-admission to the scheme. Photographs are to illustrate front/rear/sides/engine bay/driving position, including modifications and identifiers such as engine and chassis numbers to the extent possible - Vicroads August 2014

So how can this best be done? You may suggest the photos be added into the database, but to be honest that is technically not the best option for Clubs with minimal skills, and may present a significant risk of database bloat or worse, data loss or broken links, and difficulties managing the photos and generating reports on demand. So let's leave that in the too hard basket for now, and in any case you may not be using this database and would still need a solution. Let's just keep it simple.

What does the Vicroads requirement actually need?

1. The Club must store 5 or more photos of the car applying for a permit
2. Identification on the photo, identifying the owner/car/permit relationship
3. Identification of the date the photo was submitted for the CPS application
4. Be able to supply these photos to Vicroads on request

Here are 5 simple steps and suggestions (some of the software suggestions are specifically for Windows users, although comparable software almost certainly also exists for Apples):

1. Get the Photos

- a. There is no single way of doing this, but CPS applicants will need clear direction on what constitutes the required photos according to Vicroads. Supply these instructions to members before they submit their application
- b. Club's may vary but it is expected that most will require the photos to be supplied by the member submitting the application, although some Clubs may be able to offer the photography as a service. It's up to you!
- c. Some members don't have digital cameras or fancy phones or even any technology awareness. Try and provide options for those who need digital photos taken, or provide options to have their printed photo's scanned as getting 5 or more photos printed and scanned commercially could be a significant cost impost, or difficulty, for them.

2. Rename the Photos

- a. All photo files should be uniquely named to identify them if they become jumbled, or emailed with others
 - i. There are many software options (free or otherwise) to rename/number files in batch mode, but unless you do it regularly and/or are competent in doing it, it is probably easier to just rename the files manually each time (right click and select rename, or rename them individually as they are saved to the working folder)
 - ii. Leave the .JPG or .JPEG filename extension alone and rename the files to a naming convention that suits you eg JONES #123 Permit 1-1.JPG, JONES #123 Permit 1-2.JPG etc.
 - iii. The chosen naming convention needs to take into account that one member may have multiple permits, and the permit No will not be known at the time the application is submitted
 - iv. Consider further renaming the files later, to include the CPS Permit No once it is actually known

3. Resize all photos to a minimum suitable size.

- a. Most modern cameras are capable of saving photos of enormous detail (capable of being printed on a wall without looking blurry!) This is NOT necessary, requires excessive data storage space, and makes sending of multiple photos by email all but impossible
- b. There are many software tools capable of resizing photos but the FREE software I use most effectively for this purpose is "Image Resizer for Windows"
 - i. It can be downloaded at <https://imageresizer.codeplex.com/>
 - ii. Search on Google to find YouTube videos on how to use it
 - iii. NB: If you use Windows XP you might already have an almost identical standard option
 - iv. Once installed you can select multiple photos (ie all 5+ photos at once), right click to choose Resize Pictures, then select the option for the final size (I suggest Small (scales to 854*480 pixels)), and choose "Replace the originals"
 - v. Click OK to resize all the photos to a size that can be emailed easily in one email. The suggested Small (854*480 px) size results in photos about 150Kb each, which should still have sufficient detail for Vicroads purposes

4. Annotate the photos

- a. Once they have been resized write a caption on the photo to record the following
 - i. Member No and Name
 - ii. Date of photo
 - iii. Permit No (when known)
- b. By writing directly on the photo there is no confusion about when the photo was submitted and by whom. While most photos have embedded EXIF data indicating the date when the photo was taken, and possibly the GPS coordinates etc, this does not help much when confirming to Vicroads what photos were received with the application
- c. Again there are plenty of software options for writing captions onto photos electronically, including Windows PAINT, however the quickest way to do this is to select multiple files and annotate them all at once with the same details
- d. One FREE tool I have found easy to use for this purpose is Bytescout Watermarking
 - i. <http://bytescout.com/products/enduser/watermarking/watermarking.html>
 - ii. Select all the photos, right click to Send to Bytescout Watermarking, then click next...to follow the wizard, selecting Text Annotation, and typing in the required text, select Placement = Top Left and save them in the required folder
- e. One significant annoyance is that at the time of a new application the eventual Permit No will NOT be known, making it difficult to include it as text on the original photos
 - i. One option here is to wait until you are advised of the permit No (Vicroads don't do this so you need to ask the CPS holder to advise you when it is received)
 - ii. After receiving these details from the member, update your database records, and consider adding the permit No in another text annotation to the photos in a different location, eg top right
- f. An alternative to annotating the photos is to include the date in the renamed photo, eg JONES #123 Permit 12345H 10-10-2014

5. Save the photos for easy retrieval

- a. There are MANY photo gallery options to choose from and I would suggest that if you already have a good one that you are comfortable with then consider using it for this purpose too, using a gallery and folder structure to suit.
- b. However, whatever choice is made consider the fact that this information is required for many years to come, and needs to be transferrable from one computer to the next, or from one user to the next, so using a fancy gallery package installed on your PC for the last digital camera you purchased may not be a great choice in the longer term.
- c. Alternatively, just use a simple folder structure to save the 5 or so photos together in a single folder with subfolders per vehicle. For example, the following folder structure could be used to keep the 5 photos together
 - i. CPS Permit Photos
 - 1. Member No 123
 - a. Permit 123456H
 - i. Photos 1-5

- b. Permit 654321H
 - i. Photos 1-5
- 2. Member No 345
 - a. Etc
 - d. Once they are saved in this way they can be easily retrieved, copied onto CD for another CPS officer to take over the job or, preferably saved instead into a Dropbox folder that can be shared online with other Club personnel (refer to my original article discussing the benefits of internet based file sharing systems like Dropbox)
 - e. If the files are saved into a Dropbox folder using the folder structure described above, it is also a simple matter to send an email to Vicroads with the link to the folder with the required vehicle photos

In order to simplify this task even further, especially for Clubs with large memberships, an automated process is preferred, and a carefully written .CMD or .BAT script can speed up the task considerably. The currently available car club membership database referred to above now includes such a .cmd batch script. It can be used to automatically rename all photos in a specific input folder, before saving them in a new suitably named sub-folder, together with a text file containing prompted inputs for member No/name, permit date and other relevant information, reducing the processing time required for archiving the photos to less than a minute. It also avoids needing to annotate the photos by including the information required in the renamed photo and associated text file. Windows users should consider using this automated script (called PhotoRename.cmd and located in a folder called PHOTO INPUT), even if you can't/don't use the rest of the database.

Saving 5 photos does not sound too hard, but if it is done without much forethought it will become a burden, and of poor value to the club in fulfilling its obligations to Vicroads. These photos are only intended for one purpose - CPS identification as required by Vicroads, and should not be confused with a gallery of Club vehicles for public internet access. There should therefore be no problem reducing the photo size and adding text watermarks to create a more useful record for the intended purpose. By maintaining good record keeping you will be supporting the integrity of the CPS, making it easy to confirm unambiguously what the vehicle looked like at the time the application was processed and, in turn, enhancing the Club's reputation as a responsible partner in the CPS.

I hope these suggestions help all clubs implement simple processes to save the required CPS photos. If you have additional suggestions on processes or software options, why not share them.

NB: If you use an Apple mac, try free software such as Preview (which can resize and annotate photos one at a time) or Skitch (which can annotate), but if you are an Apple Mac user, can you recommend better software options for non-Windows users?