

Digital Licences can be used as VOI documentation, but proper precautions must be taken

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An emerging part of the ongoing digital revolution is the availability of digital passes and licences. The SA Government, through the mySA GOV app, now provides a number of the passes and licences it issues on-line so those documents can be viewed using a smartphone or a tablet. The app is encrypted and protected by a mandatory PIN and optional fingerprint protection.

The licences displayed by the app (for example Drivers Licences-Provisional, Full and Heavy-, Learner's Permits, Driving Instructor Licences and Driver accreditations) are in real-time, so if there are any changes to the licence those changes will be reflected on the digital version.

Once a mySA GOV account and PIN are created, any current licences held by the account holder will be able to be displayed. Both sides of the licence are able to be displayed by a "tap" on the Details or Overview tab in the app, so that any conditions attaching to the licence, as well as any organ donor and demerit point information, are available.

So, why would this be relevant to lawyers? Well, Law Claims has received queries from practitioners as to whether the production of a licence on a smartphone is acceptable for the purpose of Verification of Identity.

Having considered the material published by the SA Government as to digital licences the answer appear to be "yes", as long as proper precautions are taken.

The mySA GOV website states that "Digital passes and licences displayed in the mySA GOV app are an electronic form of your existing physical licence and are valid credentials". The Frequently Asked Questions on the website contains this Question and Answer:

"Can my digital pass or licence be used as documentation to meet the 100 point proof of identity and proof of age?"

Yes, digital passes and licences can be used as documentation to meet the 100 points of identification"

The app also contains additional security measures which should be utilised by any practitioner who is using a digital licence as part of a VOI process. These are

"Screenshot Protection

A "shake to animate" feature has been added to the app, which will animate the screen and display the current time and date when your phone is shaken to show that it is not a screenshot. and

One-time barcode

Every time the app is accessed, and for every 30 seconds it is in use, a one-time barcode will be generated for validation purposes, to prevent fake digital passes and licences from being used."

It should be noted that digital licences may have more than one screen so all screens will need to be checked for relevant VOI information, for example, the expiry date of the licence, which needs to be checked to ensure that the licence is in fact current.

Ironically, however, the website also says that standard physical licences and passes will remain in use for the foreseeable future and will still be provided to all licence holders and that while digital passes and licences are being introduced in South Australia, some organisations and businesses may not yet be set up to validate your digital pass or licence so it is recommended that licence holders



continue to carry their physical licence with them just in case.

At the moment therefore, the availability of both the digital licence and the standard physical licence offers an opportunity for the prudent practitioner to cross check the identity details from one form of licence with the other.

In any event, the "shake to animate" feature and the one-time barcode feature (itself preserved by a screen-shot) should be used to ensure that the digital licence is authentic and to prove the steps taken by the practitioner to check this, especially where a standard physical licence is not available.