

# Integration Down Under

**Louise Parfitt** talks to Angelique Mentis, President of Parking Australia, about the changes in the Australian parking industry, sustainability, and urban versus rural challenges

**1** fell into parking because I was looking to solve my own frustrations with it.’  
Angelique Mentis came to parking after 20 years as an international corporate finance attorney, with a sideline in property development. It was the latter that led her into parking.

‘When developing residential apartment buildings, I came across so many challenges with people parking in the wrong bays. I decided to solve the problem and started my own parking bollard company, thatmyspot.’

Fifteen years later, the company’s clients range from individuals to shopping centres, and Mentis is now President of Parking Australia.

‘Parking Australia is my way of giving back to the sector,’ she says. ‘When I first joined, in 2019, the industry was progressing well, but Covid hit the Australian parking scene particularly hard. From that, we saw customers demanding things such as contactless ticketing

to minimise spread of disease. The industry had to get creative – and it did. We’ve seen a lot more technology-based solutions focusing on software to supplement hardware solutions.’

## Wider engagement

Parking Australia has also been actively engaging with a broader stakeholder community.

‘If you think about it, any property asset where there is a parking spot has an interest in parking – airports, shopping centres, residential buildings, hospitals, universities, local councils,’ says Mentis. ‘Then there are aligned associations in property and internationally, such as your wonderful BPA. And, of course, drivers. Over the past few years, Parking Australia has been very proactive in expanding our membership, as well as diversifying our community demographic across gender and culture.’

As a result, the membership of the Association is much more diverse now, and that is something of which Mentis is proud.

‘Parking Australia’s role is to share knowledge, keep members informed, and engage in policy formation. Also, importantly, to foster and grow relationships among our membership community and adjacent associations. We ask our members what they need and then deliver it. It takes time and effort, but it’s vital that we give value to the whole community. From the feedback we’ve had, coupled with significant growth in our membership base, it seems to be working.’

The vastness of Australia and geographical differences are among the challenges the Association faces in being able to represent its members. Expanding its membership base allows Parking Australia to have representatives across local communities – for example, the National Roads and Motorists’ Association (NRMA) has recently joined. It is actively engaged in providing a national electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure backbone, particularly in outlying rural areas. ‘NRMA operates across Australia. It’s really important with the size and scale of Australia that we have visibility in and support those regional communities.’

## Paradigm shift

The parking industry is moving towards satisfying customer demand – and that is a paradigm shift, according to Mentis. Drivers and the parking asset owners want the parking and charging experience to be seamless, and are looking at solutions that can integrate easily into an entire system. ‘This is where user experience is driving how the



Rachel Yoka, (left) from the International Parking and Mobility Institute, Mentis, and Anjna Patel, chair of the BPA Board, at the Parking Australia conference in November



Parking Australia Board members (from left): Jeremy Irvine, CEO; Daniel Hitchcock; Mosstyn Howell; Emily Carson; Gary Byrne; Mentis; James English; Joe LaRosa; Bart Staines; Pete Tarrant

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technology is used and applied – how capable it is,’ says Mentis. ‘We have the solutions and resources to deliver a seamless outcome: it’s about pulling them together like Lego bricks and ensuring the different providers can come together collaboratively in a friendly playground!’

Mentis is also aware, however, that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. For example, she says a strategy for EV charging – one of her specialist subjects – for a high-population urban centre will be very different from one for a regional area. At a recent Parking Australia event in Sydney, three city councils presented very different EV charging strategies.

‘When looking at a more remote regional town, there are very different considerations. For example, in some small towns, if you wanted to install two DC chargers, you’d need to consider whether both being used at the same time would it cause a “brown out” [reduced power supply] to the rest of that town.’


## Vision for the future

Mentis cites the Affordable and Sustainable Transport UN Sustainable Development Goal as a motivation for the sector to become more sustainable. She believes parking is one component in delivering an integrated holistic transport mobility platform: ‘It’s one cog in the wheel, but it is an important one.’

With urban populations set to grow (the UN predicts that, by 2050, 68 per cent of the world’s population will live in a city, an increase of 13 per cent from 2018\*), Mentis says the sector is moving towards embracing its role in delivering smarter transport in more sustainable cities. ‘We need to make our urban assets work a lot better. Autonomous vehicles are already here; it’s just a matter of time till we have mass adoption levels. They will still need somewhere to park and to charge. Having a vision with those integrated platforms is inevitable.’

Mentis cites international examples of collaborative parking platforms, such as the Dutch Nationaal Parkeer Register and the UK’s National Parking Platform. ‘They recognise that parking is part of a bigger picture. Again, I think that parking is part of an integrated and holistic transport mobility policy, and it’s about smart cities, user experience and liveability.’

Supporting EV charging is another key focus in the move to more sustainable transport systems. Parking Australia is working with state and local government in Sydney to negotiate a concession on the New South Wales congestion levy for city parking spaces that are fitted with EV chargers.

‘We’ve got an exciting and forward-thinking opportunity to be quite transformational in this rapidly evolving transport technology landscape,’ she says. ‘That is what drives me in our vision for Parking Australia. That, and working with a fabulous Board, CEO and parking community.’ 

■ Find out more about Parking Australia at [parking.asn.au](https://parking.asn.au)  
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\* [bit.ly/PNJune24UN](https://bit.ly/PNJune24UN)

