

When alpha-numeric plates were first introduced in 1967 the Registrar of Motor Vehicles (Registrar) enabled those with numeric plates allotted to their vehicles to retain the plates as long as the vehicle was owned and registered in their name.

Alternatively, owners could previously purchase rights for the numeric plates allotted to their vehicles. Two types of rights were available at the time, namely:

Restricted Rights, which gave partial rights; and Proprietary rights (now known as class specific rights), which give full rights to the numeric plate.

Therefore, the advice provided to a person will depend on whether they hold Restricted Rights, Class Specific Rights, or no rights to the numeric plate.

Restricted Rights

Numeric Plates with Restricted Rights:

allow for a numeric number to remain with a vehicle regardless of whether the registration on the vehicle lapses, and are not transferable to another vehicle or owner.

Restricted Rights only apply to numeric number plates and no other class of number plate.

From 1 January 2011, restricted rights to numeric plates are no longer issued, except in certain deceased estate situations. If a vehicle with a plate that has restricted rights is left to someone as part of an Estate, the Registrar allows the beneficiary to take out a new agreement in their name. If a vehicle with a restricted rights numeric plate allocated is sold, the number is resumed by the Registrar.

Class Specific Rights

Class Specific Rights to numeric plates are only available through public auction or if an agreement is transferred from one person to another.

The holder of a Class Specific Rights agreement to a number has the permanent right to display that number on a registered vehicle, as the identifier for that vehicle. In addition, the holder is entitled to:

transfer the number between vehicles registered in the same name, and
sell the number at any price to any individual, registered company or business.

The purchaser inherits the same rights as the previous owner on payment of the appropriate fee (10% of the new or last recorded value of the plate, whichever is higher).

If the registered owner of the vehicle holds Class Specific Rights to the number, they will retain the rights to the number regardless of whether or not the registration is current.

If a person is a beneficiary of the numeric plate agreement under a Will, they are not required to pay 10% of the value of the number as transfer fee in order to retain the Class Specific Rights and the agreement can be taken out in their name.

No Rights

If the owner sells the vehicle to which the numeric plate with no rights is allotted, the number is resumed, and a general issue number plate is issued to the vehicle.

If a person fails to renew the registration of the vehicle within 120 days of registration expiry, the numeric plate is to be resumed by the Registrar. However, a numeric plate with no rights does not stop the owner from nominating seasonal registration for their vehicle. While seasonally registered the client is not required to surrender the numeric plate provided the registration is renewed after 90 days and within 12 months of the previous expiry date.

Where a numeric plate holder has passed away and the plates have been left to a person in a Will, if the deceased held no rights to a numeric plate, the number is resumed by the Registrar after 120 days of the expiry of the vehicle to which the plates are allotted. If the vehicle is transferred out of the deceased name prior to the 120 days, the plate is then resumed.

Further Information

Rights for numeric numbers not previously granted a class specific right agreement, are only offered by the Registrar through public auction.

Public auction aims to ensure the public is fully satisfied that due process has been followed in the realisation of a fair market price for the sale of public assets. It is considered to be a method that stands up to the accountability demanded of the State Government when realising the value of public assets, which over time have increased in value.

A person is able to register their interest for a numeric plate to be available at a future auction by completing this form and emailing it to DIT.PlateEnquiries@sa.gov.au.