

AVIATION ACCESS FORUM (AAF) – DRAFT RECORD OF OUTCOMES

Date:	Tuesday 13 November 2018	
Venue:	Qantas Meeting Rooms, Terminal 3, Sydney Airport	
Time:	10:00am – 12:00 midday	
Attendees:		
	Peter Simpson	Physical Disability Australia (PDA)
	Tony Starkey	National Disability Services (NDS) (The Royal Society for the Blind)
	Sharen Annand	Board of Airline Representatives of Australia (BARA)
	Phil Silver	Paraquad
	Derek Trafford	Regional Express (Rex)
	Zoe Giffard	Virgin Australia
	Murray Cobban	Virgin Australia
	Marcia Kingston	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Angela Brook	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Nici Swan	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Kate Grindal	Tigerair
	Peter Little	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Darren Collins	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Kim Thurbon	Qantas
	Rania Jones	Qantas
	Joanne Percy	Jetstar
	Aditi McManus	Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
	Andreas Marcelja (Chair)	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
	Laura Bew	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities
	Apologies	
	Emma Scanlan	Australian Hearing
	Samantha Leighton	Australian Airports Association

KEY DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item 1:

a) Welcome, apologies and acceptance of the draft agenda

The Chair welcomed AAF members, noted apologies, and the draft agenda was agreed.

b) Previous meeting of the AAF – outcomes and action items

Members endorsed the record of outcomes from the 1 May 2018 meeting of the AAF. Action items from that meeting were discussed as follows:

Action item 1

AAA to obtain further information on which airports have dedicated drop off points for people who use wheelchairs; in particular, drop off points with specifically designed roadside kerbs that are 'wheelchair friendly'.

Via the Chair, the AAA apologised for the delay in responding and indicated that there have not been enough responses from airports to collate the information. The AAA will provide a response to their outstanding agenda items as soon as possible.

Action item 2

AAA to seek further information from Gatwick Airport as to what staff training is undertaken as part of the lanyard program, noting staff may not know specifically what disability the person who presents with a lanyard has.

The AAA is awaiting approval from Gatwick airport to share their training program, and will provide the response to the AAF Secretariat upon receipt.

Action item 3

Virgin to provide AAF with information about the changing of terminology and references to a person with a disability.

The Forum discussed the terminology used for carers who assist with feeding, medicating and lavatory use on flights - with Rex indicating that industry standard terminology would provide clarity for passengers. Various terminology is currently used, including interchangeable use of the terms disability/safety/travel assistant.

Airlines discussed the difficulties in standardising terminology across Australian airlines when operating internationally, and when different criteria is used by Australian domestic airlines to determine who meets the role of an inflight "disability assistant".

There was also mention that the term "safety assistant" is not ideal as it may create confusion with the role of cabin crew.

Paraquad, commented that standard terminology would be highly desirable. As a result, AAF members agreed that this discussion could benefit from more consideration and sought for it to be added on the forthcoming agenda.

ACTION ITEM 1: *Airlines to report to back to the AAF on the terminology settled referring to a carer/disability assistant/safety assistant/travel assistant etc.*

Action item 4

AHRC to provide advice to the next AAF meeting on efforts to progress national accreditation of assistance animals.

Department of Social Services provided an overview of the work underway by the states and territories towards the national accreditation of assistance animals. Whilst DSS are not the lead in this work, they are assisting to facilitate discussions between the states and territories to progress it.

In June 2016, Western Australia and Victoria agreed to develop a scoping paper to analyse consistent approaches across the states and territories and look at national accreditation options for assistance dogs. The scoping paper has been finalised and a teleconference in late November will collate views before progressing it to the working groups who sit under the COAG Disabilities Reform Council for consideration. DSS will be in a position to outline the progress of this work at the next AAF meeting.

AAF members reiterated the pressure airlines felt to make an assessment on the validity of animals presented for carriage in the cabin, and sought for national accreditation to be progressed more urgently. The AAF Secretariat undertook to advocate for action by states and territories on behalf of the group at the forthcoming discussion.

ACTION ITEM 2: *AAF Secretariat to advocate on behalf of the Forum at the Assistance Animals teleconference.*

Action item 5

AAA to provide update on whether there are plans at Australian airports to improve access to Flight Information Display Systems and improvements around hearing and visual cues after the screening point.

The AAA will provide a response to their outstanding agenda items as soon as possible.

Action item 6

AAF Secretariat to provide advice to the next AAF meeting on the availability and role of disability consultants providing advice to airports and airlines.

The AAF Secretariat provided an update on the availability and role of disability consultants and members discussed the various experiences they have with consultants.

AAF members sought further advice from the AAF Secretariat on which disability consultants were best to engage. The Chair advised that whilst we are not in a position to promote a certain group of disability consultants over others, we may be able to share a list of disability consultants that have been engaged by the government.

ACTION ITEM 3: *AAF Secretariat to see if there is a list of disability consultants that have been engaged by the Government and can be provided as a reference for AAF Members.*

Action item 7

AAF Secretariat to provide AAF members information about the ADGATC meeting, in Brisbane on 24 July 2018.

Provided to AAF Members via email after the May 2018 meeting. More information on the meeting outcomes discussed under Agenda Item 5 – *ADGATC outcomes following AAF feedback Paragolfer.*

Action item 8

AAF Secretariat to distribute International Airport Transport Association lithium battery guidance to AAF members.

Provided to AAF Members via email after the May 2018 meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Issues Paper – Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT)

The Chair advised that the Issues Paper for the Third Review of the DSAPT, which was distributed to the AAF via email, is accepting submissions through until 30 November 2018. The Chair encouraged the AAF to submit input on issues relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards, and outlined that the paper is divided into sections for operators and providers, as well as the disability sector.

AAF members indicated that they were considering making a submission and noted the due date.

Agenda Item 3: Consideration of Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA)

AAF members were invited to consider a request from Mr Tony Jones, Advocacy Services Manager, SCIA, to join the AAF. AAF members indicated their support for Mr Jones to join the AAF, and commended him on his work advocating for people with spinal cord injury and other similar disabilities in Australia.

The AAF agreed to formally invite Mr Jones to join the AAF, and look forward to his participation at upcoming meeting.

ACTION ITEM 4: *AAF Secretariat to formalise Mr Jones (SCIA), membership in AAF.*

Agenda Item 4: Member Update on Programmes and Initiatives

CASA updated the group on the annual review of dangerous goods (DG) for the period October 2017-18. Within this period, there were 674 DG occurrences and CASA sought to identify patterns within the data that might be helpful to the AAF. The bulk of occurrences related to lithium batteries, with 36 wheelchair related. CASA also advised that it will be updating the “Can I pack that” app in the near future.

Airlines indicated that they will use the information provided on DGs to train crew, ensure ease of information access and consistent messaging.

A discussion emerged about E-motion, a device that attaches to and powers standard wheelchairs. CASA raised that the battery pack should remain on the device and wheelchair when transported on an aircraft. E-motion product advertisements show an individually removing the battery pack and carrying it in to the aircraft cabin, which may confuse customers about the correct process.

Virgin advised that a new type of car seat has been approved for use on all flights in addition to the two existing types approved for use. Qantas advised that the manufacturer has also approached them, and the airline will make an assessment on its suitability for use in due course.

Agenda Item 5: ADGATC Outcomes following AAF feedback on ParaGolfer

The Chair thanked Paraquad and Physical Disability Australia for providing feedback through the AAF Secretariat to the Australian Dangerous Goods Air Transport Council regarding the ParaGolfer.

Disability organisations were asked to consider the ParaGolfer, an all-terrain wheelchair that raises the user into a standing position, to allow for a more conventional golf swing. Airline Operators held concerns about transporting the ParaGolfer, as it weighs in excess of 200 kilos and presents significant issues for narrow-bodied aircraft and OH&S issues for ground crew loading and offloading.

The Forum’s feedback held the view that the ParaGolfer should not be considered a mobility aid in the same context as a wheelchair, but considered in the same manner as sporting equipment. Virgin indicated that they have carried them as a mobility device and will use the advice of this forum to review Virgin’s acceptance of the ParaGolfer as mobility aids.

Agenda Item 6: Senate inquiry into regulation for mobility scooters

The Chair provided an update on the now finalised Senate Inquiry (the Inquiry) into the need for regulation of mobility scooters.

The scope of matters for investigation by the Inquiry were broad and included the number of deaths and injuries attributed to accidents involving mobility scooters, the cause of these accidents, an examination of Australian regulatory requirements and a comparison with international standards.

The Inquiry received 133 submissions from various individuals, government agencies and advocacy organisations. The Committee released its final report on 20 September 2018.

The report included two recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: that Austroads has adequate funding to undertake research and consultation to inform the establishment of a nationally consistent regulatory framework for motorised mobility devices.
- Recommendation 2: that Austroads take into account the Committee's report for the purposes of establishing a nationally consistent regulatory framework for motorised mobility devices.

The Chair advised that the government is currently considering the recommendations.

Agenda Item 7: Standards Australia – Blue Label proposal

The AAF Secretariat provided information about the finalised Standards Australia Technical Specification that specifies requirements for the designation of powered wheelchairs, including mobility scooters, for use on public transport.

'Blue label' compliant indicates that the powered wheelchair or mobility scooter is suitable for use on footpaths and/or road-related areas, as well as compatibility with public transport access that is consistent with Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002. Blue label compliance means a powered wheelchair will have met a series of technical specifications, including manoeuvrability performance, maximum safe slope, maximum speed, dimensions and mass.

A 'White label' indicates the powered wheelchair or mobility scooter is suitable for use on footpaths or road-related areas (not public transport). This is intended to help inform consumers purchasing mobility aids.

The Technical Specification captures aircraft as a public transport conveyance within the proposed Standard. However, due to the nature of commercial aircraft and requirements around the carriage of batteries, most powered-wheelchairs are unlikely to be able to travel with the passenger in the aircraft cabin, with or without a blue label.

The AAF Secretariat assured that there is no reference to preventing non-compliant mobility aids or mobility aids without blue labels from using public transport in the specification.

Rex asked if weight specifications were on the label itself, and the AAF Secretariat advised that it would report back to the group on this.

ACTION ITEM 5: *AAF Secretariat to advise if weight information is displayed on the blue and white labels.*

Agenda Item 8: Civil Aviation Safety Regulation Part 91 – update in relation to assistance animals

CASA provided an update on the changes to the Civil Aviation Safety Amendment (Part 91) Regulations 2018 that will take force in March 2021 and relate to the carriage of assistance animals. The changes consolidate more than one hundred documents, such as regulations, orders, supporting instruments and exemptions, combining them into just two documents.

The Chair mentioned that the new regulations provide more flexibility to industry as opposed to a more prescriptive approach, particularly around the powers of the Pilot in Command to make decisions on the carriage of assistance animals.

Rex indicated that domestically there are already very similar procedures in place across the airlines, particularly in relation to the carriage of assistance dogs. Virgin added that the primary difficulties relate to the decision made around the carriage of assistance animals other than dogs. Qantas discussed that a global standard of accreditation would be ideal, however there are roadblocks for some providers in meeting the Assistance Dogs International standard. As discussed under action item 4, the Department will advocate for swifter progression of national accreditation of assistance animals.

Agenda Item 9: Other Business

The Chair outlined that the Department received correspondence from the Chair of the Community Engagement Advisory Council (CEAC), NSW Government, in which she compares the facilitation of passengers with a disability in Australia and Europe.

In Australia, decisions on how the needs of passengers with a disability are accommodated on a particular flight are determined by individual airlines, taking into account the operational and safety requirements of the aircraft.

CEAC outlines that in Europe, facilitation of passengers with a disability is the responsibility of the airport, for which the airlines pay a small fee similar to other airport charges. CEAC explains that in Europe:

- in many cases, handlers are experienced para-medical trained staff with specific training and experience to meet the needs of those with a disability;
- handlers have access to the right-hand side of the aircraft, normally via the rear door, making the entire 30 minutes of turnaround time available and alleviating the pressure that in some cases limits the number of wheelchairs per flight; and
- passengers can use their wheelchairs from the tarmac all the way to the rear right door due to the regular use of a scissor lift vehicle.

The Chair advised that the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities has asked that the AAF consider the European case study provided by CEAC, and provide him with views and advice accordingly.

ACTION ITEM 6: *AAF Secretariat to provide European case study to AAF, AAF members to provide views to AAF Secretariat who will consolidate on behalf of the group.*

Rex outlined the benefits of GovDex as a resource for sharing information and proposed that a GoxDex page be set up for the AAF. AAF Members were supportive of this approach for sharing materials as opposed to email.

ACTION ITEM 7: *AAF Secretariat to explore options to establish a GoxDex page for the AAF.*

Agenda Item 10: Next AAF Meeting

The AAF flagged that the next AAF meeting will be held in mid-May 2019.

Closer to the meeting, the AAF Secretariat will check members' availability and confirm the date.

13 November 2018 AAF Meeting Action Items

Action No.	Action Item	Responsible Agency
1.	Airlines to report to back to the AAF on the terminology settled referring to a carer/disability assistant/safety assistant/travel assistant etc.	Airline representatives
2.	AAF Secretariat to advocate on behalf of the Forum at the Assistance Animals teleconference.	AAF Secretariat
3.	AAF Secretariat to see if there is a list of disability consultants that have been engaged by the Government and can be provided as a reference for AAF Members.	AAF Secretariat
4.	AAF Secretariat to formalise Mr Jones (SCIA), membership in AAF.	AAF Secretariat
5.	AAF Secretariat to advise if weight information is displayed on the blue and white labels.	AAF Secretariat
6.	AAF Secretariat to provide European case study to AAF, AAF members to provide views to AAF Secretariat who will consolidate on behalf of the group.	All AAF Members
7.	AAF Secretariat to explore options to establish a GoxDex page for the AAF.	AAF Secretariat

Outstanding action items to be reported offline prior to the next meeting

From May 2018	AAA to send collated response regarding dedicated drop off points to the AAF Secretariat for distribution to members	AAA
From May 2018	AAA to seek further information from Gatwick Airport as to what staff training is undertaken as part of the lanyard program noting staff may not know specifically what disability the person who presents with a lanyard.	AAA
From May 2018	AAA to provide update on whether there are plans at Australian airports to improve access to FIDS and improvements around hearing and visual cues after the screening point.	AAA