

AVIATION ACCESS FORUM (AAF) – DRAFT RECORD OF OUTCOMES

Date:	Wednesday 1 November 2017	
Venue:	Qantas Meeting Rooms, Terminal 3, Sydney Airport	
Time:	10:00am – 12:00 midday	
Attendees:	Greg Madson	Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
	Peter Simpson	Physical Disability Australia (PDA)
	Tony Starkey	National Disability Services (NDS) (The Royal Society for the Blind)
	Emma Scanlan	Deafness Forum of Australia (DFA)
	Sharen Annand	Board of Airline Representatives of Australia (BARA)
	Tim Swan	Qantas
	Phil Silver	Paraquad
	Derek Trafford	Regional Express (Rex)
	Tasmyn Rose	Virgin Australia
	Murray Cobban	Virgin Australia
	Merrilyn Aylett	Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
	David Tansey	Australian Airports Association (AAA)
	Jim Wolfe (Chair)	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
	Nikki Swan	Department of Social Services (DSS)
Apologies:	Kate Grindal	Tigerair
	Karen Crook	Tigerair
	Peter Little	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Will Tootell	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Marcia Kingston	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Kim Thurbon	Qantas
	Vesna Vinski	Qantas
	Rania Jones	Qantas
	Joanne Percy	Jetstar
	Rachel Holt	Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
Secretariat:	Krishneel Narayan	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
	Lachlan Symonds	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

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.

The Chair confirmed AAF membership was designed to represent a cross section of disability group representatives but also recognised the need to have a workable sized group with the opportunity for all to contribute. The AAF agreed that the current membership adequately represented people with disability.

The current AFDO representative advised this meeting was their last with a new representative replacing him at the next AAF meeting who would be confirmed before the next meeting. The Chair thanked Greg for his valued contribution to the Forum.

b) Previous meeting of the Aviation Access Forum – outcomes and action items

Members endorsed the record of outcomes from the 3 May 2017 meeting of the AAF. Action items from that meeting were discussed as follows:

Action Item 1

AAF Secretariat to draft a definition of mobility aid for comment by AAF members.

See Agenda Item 2 - Disability Discrimination Act 1992 - Disability Aids

Action Item 2

Virgin Australia to provide information on its Airport Ambassadors Programme

Virgin Australia advised that successful trials were run in late 2016/early 2017. Virgin also advised that the Airport Ambassadors Programme was now being undertaken by specialist contractors at Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane airports, with positive feedback from passengers. Staff at other ports have been internally trained to provide this service.

Virgin Australia is considering expanding the Programme to include assisting people with disability at taxi ranks, short term car parks and check-in desks, subject to operational and security requirements.

Virgin Australia advised it has updated its internal operating manuals to reflect its revised procedures and processes, and this will be reflected in the next Disability Access Facilitation Plan (DAFP) update.

The representative from PDA voiced concerns at the difficulty in safely transferring at drop off points due to the absence of adequately designed roadside kerbs at airports. The AAA advised that it would seek input from airports on whether they have dedicated drop off points for people who use wheelchairs.

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'.*

Action Item 3

Qantas to provide information on which specific airports had utilised its Q Ramps

Qantas advised that 28 airports in total have access to Q Ramps, including at the five major capital city airports.

Action Item 4

AAF Secretariat to follow up items on the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia feedback related to aviation access.

The AAA had examined the airport-related items raised by the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia, and will send through the response to the AAF Secretariat by the end of November 2017.

The representative from the AFDO suggested that several of the issues the AAA is responding to have been addressed and that more effective communication on already established airline and airport policies should be explored within the disability community.

ACTION ITEM 2: *AAA to send response to airport-related queries raised by the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia to the AAF Secretariat, for distribution to members.*

Action Item 5

The AAF Secretariat to send the link to the Premises Standards Review Report and Government's response to AAF members.

Completed. The link was sent by the AAF Secretariat on 25 October 2017.

Action Item 6

AAA to report back to AAF on any other airports that provide information to support passengers with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The AAA advised it is not aware of other airports that provide specific information to support passengers with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The AAA did advise that it understands Brisbane Airport is considering including specific information on support for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder as part of an updated DAFP.

Action Item 7

Members to provide comments to the AAA about the possibility of introducing lanyards for passengers with disability who travel.

While supportive of initiatives to support people with disabilities, members expressed the view that any lanyard program should be voluntary and suggested some in the disability community would be averse to using such a program.

Action Item 8

AAA to obtain further information on similar programs to the Gatwick Airport lanyard program and report back to AAF

The AAA advised that a representative visited Gatwick Airport where they received a briefing on how the program is undertaken and implemented.

The AAA advised it would obtain further feedback from Gatwick Airport regarding how the program is progressing and provide an update on the number of people with disability using the lanyards.

ACTION ITEM 3: *AAA to obtain information from Gatwick Airport on the implementation of its lanyard program for people with disability and provide feedback on the number of people with disability using the lanyards.*

Agenda Item 2: Disability Discrimination Act 1992 - Disability Aids

The Chair advised that the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) definition of ‘mobility aid’ was deliberately broad to be as inclusive as possible and that changing the DDA definition would likely be a difficult task. Airline representatives discussed ways in which they work within the current definition and endeavour to be as accommodating as possible.

Airlines indicated despite an increasing trend in the request to carry segways, and larger and heavier wheelchairs, there have been minimal issues encountered regarding the carriage of mobility aids, and any issues are usually resolved at an individual level. Airlines however had to ensure that particular aids did not create safety or operational issues.

Regional Express (Rex) advised a representative from Australian Dangerous Goods Air Transport Council (ADGATC) will be meeting with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) regarding the safety concerns in carrying mobility aids with batteries that are rated at 300kWh or greater.

Rex also advised there was a proposal to place blue labels on wheelchairs to indicate they can be carried on public transport and questioned the progress of this proposal and whether something similar can be applied within the aviation industry.

The representative from the AHRC mentioned it had not received any complaints regarding the carriage of mobility aids on aircraft.

ACTION ITEM 4: *AAF Secretariat to provide an update on the progress of Standards Australia’s blue label proposal.*

The AAF Secretariat has developed draft guidance on the carriage of disability aids on aircraft that was distributed to all Members on 20 October 2017.

The Chair sought feedback from all Forum members with a view to publishing the guide on the AAF website before the end of the year. Early feedback from members suggested they were supportive of the guidance material.

ACTION ITEM 5: *Members to provide feedback on guidance material on the carriage of disability aids on aircraft.*

Agenda Item 3: Airline approaches to peanut and other allergies

The Chair advised that this issue arose from recent reporting of incidents where passengers suffered anaphylactic reactions to peanuts being served to other passengers. The Chair advised this agenda item also relates to a recent information the Department received that indicated a passenger had an allergic reaction to an assistance dog on a flight.

Virgin mentioned it cannot guarantee an allergy free environment. However, if the passenger notifies Virgin in advance it can wipe down adjacent seats and conduct additional cleaning to best accommodate the passenger. Virgin also stated that it encourages passengers with nut allergies to carry their own food on-board as their food may contain traces of nuts.

Qantas also indicated that it cannot guarantee an allergy free environment. However, Qantas has removed the serving of peanuts as a snack on all flights and from Qantas owned and operated lounges. Qantas emphasized it cannot guarantee the food served is nut-free given the large-scale commercial kitchens in which the food is prepared.

The representative from the Deafness Forum of Australia (DFA) mentioned that DAFPs are great resources that need to be better utilised by both operators and passengers to improve the overall travel experience for airline and airport operators as well as people with disability. The DFA representative emphasised the importance of people with disability communicating with airlines as early as possible to convey the assistance they would appreciate.

The representative from NDS questioned whether airlines have a section where passengers can indicate they have an allergy on their online booking systems.

Qantas and Virgin both stated they do not have a section where passengers can give an indication of allergies. However, the airline websites have dedicated pages that outline the policies and processes passengers should follow should they have an allergy.

Rex advised it does have a section where passengers can give an indication of allergies.

Agenda Item 4: Airline processes for seating people with disability

The Chair advised the context of this issue relates to feedback received by the Department seeking advice on airline seating policy for people with disability.

The representative from Paraquad indicated they viewed the window seat as the most appropriate location to seat people with disability, which was also the view of the representative from PDA.

Qantas indicated it initially seats people with disability in the aisle seat. However, if the passenger is able to self-transfer then it will seat them in the window seat.

Virgin indicated it initially tries to seat people with disability where the passengers requests. However, in economy, standard practice is to seat people with disability in the aisle seat unless it is not practical or possible to do so.

Rex emphasized it determines where to seat people with disability on a case-by-case basis, and tried to seat the passenger where they request to be seated.

Agenda Item 5: Access to Aircraft Lavatories for People with Disability

The Chair advised that the current requirements of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 only require that wide-body, twin-aisle aircraft to have accessible lavatories. The Chair asked airlines to discuss the support they provide to passengers with disability when they have to use the lavatory.

The PDS representative also mentioned that whilst it would be beneficial to have larger lavatories on-board aircraft for people with disability to use, it would be unreasonable to request airlines make those spaces big enough to accommodate larger wheelchairs.

The representative from PDA indicated that whilst airline seat maps show that wide-body aircraft have wheelchair accessible lavatories, it is still difficult for people with disability to use these lavatories.

Qantas mentioned that the lavatories on their wide-body, twin-aisle aircraft are designed to be accessible to the aisle wheelchairs on-board the aircraft. Virgin mentioned that making lavatories on wide-body, twin-aisle aircraft 'more accessible' will be difficult to implement noting that it would be a matter for aircraft manufacturers to implement.

Qantas and Virgin both indicated that their procedures for assisting people with disability, when they request to use the lavatory, involves transporting them to and from the lavatory door only.

The representative from PDA suggested the idea of height adjustable aisle seats on aircraft to airlines. However, the Forum recognised that seat design was again an issue for aircraft manufacturers.

The Chair requested airlines to see if there was information available on international standards to which their wide-body, twin-aisle wheelchair accessible lavatories are designed.

ACTION ITEM 6: *Airlines to provide information on the international standards to which their wide-body, twin-aisle wheelchair accessible lavatories are designed.*

Agenda Item 6: Member Update on Programmes and Initiatives

Travelling with an Assistance Animal

Qantas and Virgin agreed to provide updates to the next AAF on how their requirements for travelling with an assistance animal are progressing, noting Qantas had flagged new requirements at the previous meeting and Virgin advised it has drafted guidance on travelling with assistance animals which was currently being reviewed prior to publication.

ACTION ITEM 7: *Qantas and Virgin to provide feedback on how their requirements for travelling with an assistance animal are progressing.*

On-board aisle wheelchairs

Virgin advised almost 100 per cent of its fleet (only three aircraft remaining) now have on-board aisle wheelchairs.

Sydney Airport's hearing augmentation system

The Chair asked the AAA to follow up Sydney Airport on the progress of their hearing augmentation system.

ACTION ITEM 8: *The AAA to provide advice from Sydney Airport on the progress of their hearing augmentation system.*

Agenda Item 7: Update from Brisbane Airport on New Accessible Bathrooms

The Chair advised the AAF Secretariat will invite Brisbane Airport to the next AAF meeting

ACTION ITEM 9: *The AAF Secretariat to invite a representative from Brisbane Airport to attend the next AAF meeting.*

Agenda Item 8: NAPTAC Update – Modernisation of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

The AAF Secretariat indicated a working group has been set up and is currently conducting a review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002. The Chair undertook to keep the AAF informed as work progresses.

The AAF Secretariat advised comments on the *Whole of Journey Guide: A guide for thinking beyond compliance to create accessible public transport journeys* were provided to the consultant compiling the review and the AAF will be kept informed as work progresses.

Agenda Item 9: Assistance Animals Update

The Chair, in the absence of CASA, provided an update on the development of Part 91 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998. The Chair mentioned that Part 91 is progressing with CASA aiming to release a draft for public comment by mid-2018. The Chair indicated that elements of Part 91 that relate to assistance animals may not differ greatly from current regulations.

The Chair requested the AHRC provide feedback to members on the progress of work on a National Accreditation Scheme for Assistance Animals, as it progresses.

ACTION ITEM 10: *The AHRC to provide an update to members on progress on the development of National Accreditation of Assistance Animals.*

Agenda Item 10: Other Business

The Chair noted the media article regarding the banning of children's sleeping devices by Qantas and Jetstar on long-haul flights, discussed at the AAF meeting on 3 May 2017.

Virgin indicated it is currently evaluating the carriage and use of children's sleeping devices on-board aircraft and will be announcing its position on this issue in the coming weeks.

Agenda Item 11: Next AAF Meeting

The Chair advised the tentative date for the next meeting is Wednesday 2 May 2018, beginning at 10:00am.

1 November 2017 AAF Meeting Action Items

Action No.	Action Item	Responsible Agency
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'.	AAA
2	AAA to send response to airport-related queries raised by the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia to the AAF Secretariat.	AAA
3	AAA to obtain information from Gatwick Airport on the success of the lanyard program for people with disability and provide feedback on the number of people with disability using the program.	AAA
4	AAF Secretariat to provide feedback on the progress of the blue label proposal.	AAF Secretariat
5	Members to provide feedback on guidance material on the carriage of mobility aids.	All Members
6	Qantas to provide information on the design standards to which their wide-body, twin-aisle wheelchair accessible lavatories are designed.	Qantas
7	Qantas and Virgin to provide feedback on how their requirements for travelling with an assistance animal are progressing.	Qantas and Virgin
8	The AAA to follow up Sydney Airport on the progress of their new hearing augmentation system and provide feedback to the AAF.	AAA
9	The AAF Secretariat to invite Brisbane Airport to the next AAF meeting.	AAF Secretariat
10	The AHRC to provide an update to members on the progress of National Accreditation of Assistance Animals.	AHRC