

#### AVIATION ACCESS FORUM (AAF) – DRAFT RECORD OF OUTCOMES

<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 1 May 2018	
<b>Venue:</b>	Qantas Meeting Rooms, Terminal 3, Sydney Airport	
<b>Time:</b>	10:00am – 12:00 midday	
<b>Attendees:</b>	Debbie Kennewell	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)
	Colin Stewart	Brisbane Airport
	Phil Silver	Paraquad
	Derek Trafford	Regional Express (Rex)
	Tasmyn Rose	Virgin Australia
	Murray Cobban	Virgin Australia
	Samantha Leighton	Australian Airports Association (AAA)
	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)
Jim Wolfe (Chair)	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities	
Melissa Cashman	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities	
Laura Bew	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities	
Giorgio Beames	Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities	
<b>Apologies</b>		
	Alison Davies	Attorney-General's Department
	Vesna Vinski	Qantas

#### 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 November 2017 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’.*

AAA apologised for a delay in responding to this item and have now contacted and is awaiting information from airport operators. The Chair confirmed for security reasons, it may not always be possible for drop off points to be directly outside terminal entrances or to allow taxi drivers to leave vehicles unattended to escort passengers inside the terminal.

**ACTION ITEM 1:**     *AAA to send collated response regarding dedicated drop off points to the Secretariat for distribution to members.*

### *Action item 2*

*AAA to send response to airport-related queries raised by the DeafBlind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia to the AAF Secretariat.*

The DeafBlind Association confirmed that the response completed by the AAF Secretariat had been distributed to members.

### *Action item 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 presented information received from Gatwick Airport on the uptake of the “hidden disabilities” lanyard program. The program commenced in May 2016 with approximately 8000 lanyards issued to date. The program is currently operating across 13 airports in the UK.

The program’s aim is to discreetly alert airport staff to people with a disability, in order to sensitively tailor service delivery.

The AAF Members expressed interest in whether a similar program in Australia was being considered by airport operators preferably with a nationally consistent approach rather than different “identifiers” being established at different airports. Brisbane Airport advised they were considering introducing a bracelet system for passengers with a similar “hidden” disability but would work with AAA in looking at a national consistent approach.

**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.*

AAF also noted changes in terminology being used by airlines about passengers with disability and removal of terms such “special” and “carer”, with the term “carer” being replaced with “safety assistant”.

**ACTION ITEM 3:** *Virgin Australia to provide AAF with information about the changing of terminology and references to a person with disability and their support persons.*

*Action item 4*

*AAF Secretariat to provide feedback on the progress of the blue label proposal.*

The Chair gave an update on the blue label proposal: Standards Australia are proposing a new standard to specify requirements for the designation of powered wheelchairs, including mobility scooters, for use on public transport. Under the proposal, a ‘blue label’ compliant powered wheelchair will have met a series of technical specifications, including manoeuvrability performance, maximum safe slope, maximum speed, dimensions and mass. The scheme is intended to help inform consumers purchasing mobility aids.

Mobility aids that are non-compliant with the Standard will be issued with a yellow label. There is no reference to preventing non-compliant mobility aids or mobility aids without blue labels from using public transport in the draft standards.

The AAF Secretariat to continue to watch progress of the blue label proposal. The Chair undertook to keep the AAF informed as work progresses.

*Action item 5*

*Members to provide feedback on guidance material on the carriage of mobility aids.*

The Chair clarified the intent of action item 5 was to provide feedback on the broader guidance for mobility aids. Members expressed desire for clarification on the definition for ‘mobility aids’. The Chair noted the definition was for discussion under Agenda Item 5.

*Action item 6*

*Qantas to provide information on the design standards to which their wide-body, twin-aisle wheelchair accessible lavatories are designed.*

After liaising with engineers, Qantas advised that the lavatories are designed by lavatory manufacturers to adhere to the United States Department of Transport (DoT) 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 382 Final Ruling - Non Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel. Qantas have provided the relevant regulations to the Secretariat to distribute.

*Action item 7*

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

Qantas confirmed that its Service Dog Policy was introduced in March 2017 and that it was designed to comply with the Civil Aviation Regulations (including CAR 256A) and CASA permission, other requirements including customs restrictions and operational constraints. Qantas confirmed that the policy is working well.

Virgin confirmed there were no new developments since the last AAF meeting and they would not wish to see Australia get into the difficulties being experienced in the United States with DoT anti-discrimination regulation seeming to allow animals on board which were questionable as to whether they were assistance animals.

The AAF urged the AHRC to help progress a national assistance animal accreditation scheme to help passengers and industry alike.

**ACTION ITEM 4:**     *AHRC to provide advice to the next AAF meeting on efforts to progress national accreditation of assistance animals.*

*Action item 8*

*The AAA to follow up with Sydney Airport on the progress of their new hearing augmentation system and provide feedback to the AAF.*

The AAA advised Sydney Airport had provided an update on the progress of the hearing augmentation system. Following an internal review in 2013-14, Sydney Airport started the implementation of a hearing augmentation system throughout its terminals. In areas where hearing augmentation systems have been installed, adjustments are being made to improve performance issues.

A traffic light audit will determine how each loop is performing, due for completion by September 2018, with outcomes of the review consolidated in a final report. A floorplan will be available in a brochure at information desks for people with hearing disabilities.

*Action item 9*

*The AAF Secretariat to invite Brisbane Airport to the next AAF meeting.*

Mr Colin Stewart from Brisbane Airport attended the meeting and gave a presentation on disability access initiatives at Brisbane Airport (Agenda Item 6).

*Action item 10*

*The AHRC to provide an update to members on the progress of National Accreditation of Assistance Animals.*

Discussed under Action item 7 above.

## **Agenda Item 2:     Access to Flight Information Display Systems (FIDS)**

The AAF Secretariat had been advising of difficulties faced by passengers trying to read the FIDS at an airport. The primary concern was the speed at which the FIDS rotates.

The current requirements of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 require that words or numbers on electronic notices must be visible for at least 10 seconds.

The Chair invited feedback from AAF members on their experiences with FIDS.

Members raised concerns regards the height and placement of FIDS (usually too high) and that information such as a change of gate is usually only displayed on-screen and not accompanied by audio announcements.

In some airports, FIDS are only displayed in a central location and passengers are required to walk back from their gate to get necessary information. It was suggested best practice is combining audio with good, multiple FIDS, and keeping scrolling to a minimum.

Qantas advised a good resource is the Qantas app, which advises in real-time when check-in opens; any gate changes; and which baggage carousel luggage arrives at.

The Chair noted terminal upgrades provided opportunities for airports and airlines where applicable to use disability groups to advise them of particular infrastructure that would assist passengers with disability.

**ACTION ITEM 5:** *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.*

**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.*

### **Agenda Item 3: Member updates on programs and initiatives**

#### Rex

Derek Trafford invited members to attend the upcoming 24 July 2018 Australian Dangerous Goods Air Transport Council (ADGATC) meeting to communicate the perspective of mobility scooter users with regards to lithium batteries. Mr Phil Silver and Mr Murray Cobban expressed interest in attending the meeting.

**ACTION ITEM 7:** *AAF Secretariat to provide AAF Members information about the ADGATC meeting on 24 July 2018 in Brisbane.*

#### Virgin

Virgin advised of a number of developments since the last AAF meeting including:

- its Virgin Accessibility Plan, a document that follows the passenger journey and what passengers need to do to reach their destination, as well as services and assistance the airline can provide (This plan is on Virgin's website);
- introducing a disability concession fare on April 6 2018 - a 50% discount (applied to the base fare) for a safety assistant's airfare. The fare is designed to facilitate the travel of guests who are required by Virgin to travel with an assistant under the airline's Independent Travel Criteria; and
- implementing a new structure in the Office of the Chief Customer Advocate focussing on the experience of all customers particularly those with disability.

**Agenda Item 4: Update on Standards Australia blue label proposal**

See action item 4.

**Agenda Item 5: Update on Senate Inquiry into the need for regulation of mobility scooters**

The Chair gave an update on the Senate Inquiry. On 6 December 2017, the Senate moved a motion to investigate the need for regulation of mobility scooters and motorised wheelchairs. The Inquiry was referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (the Committee).

The scope of the Inquiry is broad but includes 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 Committee is due to report by 20 September 2018.

In relation to the carriage of lithium batteries the AAF noted that the International Air Transport Association (IATA) had issued an updated technical guidance document on the transport of lithium batteries. The Chair agreed to distribute the guidance to members.

**ACTION ITEM 8:**     *Secretariat to distribute IATA lithium battery guidance to AAF members.*

**Agenda Item 6: Update from Brisbane Airport on disability access initiatives**

Mr Colin Stewart of Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) gave a presentation on the initiatives it had taken to improve disability access, which exceed what is required in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport.

BAC engaged an Access Consultant in 2010 to undertake a gap audit of its terminals and an upgrade of the terminals followed advice from this audit. An Airport Accessibility Reference Group was also established to provide advice on how to make BAC a more inclusive airport. BAC has also recently updated its Disability Access Facilitation Plan.

BAC has installed assistance animal facilities inside domestic and international terminals; added audible signage technology, which can be controlled through smartphones; installed a 'Changing Places' facility which provides a dignified facility for people with severe disability and their carers; upgraded a variety of passenger infrastructure, including stairs and ramps, pedestrian crossings and paths, and aerobridge ramps and handrails.

The AAF welcomed BAC's initiatives to enhance disability access throughout Brisbane Airport.

**Agenda Item 7: Civil Aviation Safety Regulation (CASR) Part 91 – Update in relation to assistance animals**

CASA advised that the public consultation period for the new CASR Part 91, which includes provisions on assistance animals, has now closed.

The regulatory package is expected to be finalised by the end of the year and operable within a 12 to 18 month period. CASA would keep the AAF Secretariat informed of progress with the regulation so AAF members can be advised.

**Agenda Item 8: Other Business**

The Chair noted the media article regarding the emergence of fake assistance animals, essentially pets, attempted to be passed off as assistance animals for free uplift. Industry members indicated that so far, this appeared to be more an issue overseas but they would advise the AAF if it became a concern in domestic Australian travel.

The Chair noted the AAF Secretariat received an email from the public regarding whether a presentation could be given to the AAF, regarding a product intended to assist people with disability get up or lay/sit down, which could be modified to assist with transfers into an aircraft chair.

The AAF supported the Chair's view that rather than have product demonstrations at AAF meetings that the AAF Secretariat would provide the link for members to look at which demonstrated the product for their information.

**Agenda Item 9: Next AAF Meeting**

The AAF agreed a tentative date for the next meeting of **Tuesday 13 November 2018**.

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

**1 May 2018 AAF Meeting Action Items**

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1	AAA to send collated response regarding dedicated drop off points to the AAF Secretariat for distribution to members	AAA
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.	AAA
3	Virgin to provide AAF with information about the changing of terminology and references to a person with a disability.	Virgin
4	AHRC to provide advice to the next AAF meeting on efforts to progress national accreditation of assistance animals.	AHRC
5	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
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.	AAF Secretariat
7	AAF Secretariat to provide AAF Members information about the ADGATC meeting, in Brisbane on 24 July 2018.	AAF Secretariat
8	AAF Secretariat to distribute IATA lithium battery guidance to AAF members.	AAF Secretariat