

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

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 3 May 2017	
<b>Venue:</b>	Qantas Meeting Rooms, Terminal 3, Sydney Airport	
<b>Time:</b>	9:00 – 11:00am	
<b>Attendees:</b>	Greg Madson (part)	Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
	Peter Simpson	Physical Disability Australia (PDA)
	Tony Starkey	National Disability Services (NDS) (The Royal Society for the Blind)
	Peter Kerley	Deafness Forum of Australia
	Sharen Annand	Board of Airline Representatives of Australia (BARA)
	Kim Thurbon	Qantas
	Vesna Vinski	Qantas
	Joanne Percy	Jetstar
	Derek Trafford	Regional Express (Rex)
	Courtney Olden	Virgin Australia
	Murray Cobban	Virgin Australia
	Merrilyn Aylett	Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
	Peter Little	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Jim Wolfe (Chair)	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
	Nikki Swan	Department of Social Services (DSS)
Sylvie Hale	Department of Social Services (DSS)	
<b>Apologies:</b>	Kate Grindal	Tigerair
	Phil Silver	Paraquad
	Will Tootell	Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
	Emma Scanlan	Deafness Forum of Australia
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Adelaide Jones	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
	Erin Gale	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 the apologies, and the draft agenda for the meeting was agreed.

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

Members endorsed the record of outcomes from the 17 November 2016 meeting of the AAF. Action Items from the 17 November 2016 AAF meeting were discussed as follows:

##### *Action Item 1*

*Virgin Australia to advise AAF members when the capability to send a ‘what to expect’ email to passengers requiring assistance is finalised.*

Virgin Australia advised the ‘what to expect’ information for passengers requiring assistance is being considered as part of Virgin’s review of its Guest Accessibility Action Plan.

*Action Item 2*

*Virgin Australia and Qantas to look into adding information into their Disability Access Facilitation Plans (DAFP) about the option for passengers to request individual briefings if required.*

Virgin Australia advised that it is updating its Guest Accessibility Action Plan, and this task will be considered as part of that process.

Qantas requested further information regarding this action item. The AAF Secretariat agreed to provide Qantas with previous meeting briefs relating to the issue.

*Action Item 3*

*Members to provide feedback to the AAF Secretariat on the updated staff training and guidance materials for the carriage of mobility aids for passengers and for airline and airport operators by 2 December 2016.*

The Chair noted the ongoing opportunity for feedback from AAF members to the Secretariat.

*Action Item 4*

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

*Action Item 5*

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

Given the absence of the AAA these items will be discussed at the next meeting.

*Action Item 6*

*BARA to encourage member airlines to develop DAFPs at its next meeting to be held in December and report back to AAF members at the next AAF meeting.*

BARA advised that it continued to encourage international airlines to develop a DAFP.

The Secretariat advised that it will check the existing website guidance documents of international airlines without a DAFP to see where there is broader access guidance.

*Action Item 7*

*Qantas and Virgin Australia will look into the possibility of making DAFPs and the information available in DAFPs available in an app for smart phones.*

Qantas advised that before a decision was made it would have to gain more understanding of the benefits of a process like this, as well as being sure the app was available in accessible formats. Qantas indicated its focus is to ensure that the DAFP is accessible and up to date.

Virgin Australia advised that this consideration is forming part of its update to its Guest Accessibility Action Plan.

*Action Item 8*

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

This item was held over until the next meeting.

### *Action Item 9*

*Deafness Forum of Australia to update members at the next AAF meeting on the progress of updates to the hearing augmentation system at Sydney Airport.*

The Deafness Forum of Australia representative advised he did not have an update on the hearing augmentation system at Sydney but would come back with information at the next meeting. The Secretariat will also check with the airport.

### *Action Item 10*

*CASA to provide guidance to members about correct handling and loading procedures relating to E-Motion electric wheels for manual wheelchairs.*

This information was forwarded on by the Secretariat as part of the meeting papers on 27 April 2017. Thanks to Peter Little (CASA) for preparing the information.

### **Agenda Item 2: Disability Discrimination Act – Definition of Disability Aids**

Rex advised that at a recent meeting of the Australian Dangerous Goods Air Transport Council (ADGATC), the definition of ‘disability aid’ in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) was discussed. This follows an increase in passengers requesting carriage of items such as segways, skateboards and various other items claimed to be their primary mobility aid and threatening discrimination action if the item is not carried.

Members agreed that the legislative frameworks relating to mobility aids should be examined given technological change and that a new, more refined definition would be of benefit acknowledging the challenges of amendment to the DDA.

Members discussed possible approaches to ensure that the item was a disability aid including requiring credentials such as a letter from a medical professional or the possibility of accepting an aid similar to someone who had a disability parking permit.

CASA advised that its regulations do not extend to mobility aids, but they do provide for restrictions to lithium batteries in the form of dangerous goods regulations.

Members suggested incorporation of a definition into the Disability Standards, rather than changing the DDA might be a more effective option for now, or an Advisory Circular that could be made available to airlines was also possible.

**ACTION ITEM 1:** *AAF Secretariat to draft a definition of mobility aid for consideration by AAF members.*

### **Agenda Item 3: Access to Aircraft Lavatories for People with Disability**

The Chair advised that the context of this issue relates to the current requirements of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, requiring that only wide-body, twin-aisle aircraft, such as the Airbus A330, be fitted with accessible lavatories and that assistance be provided to support passengers with disability to the lavatory door. Other single-aisle, narrow-body aircraft, which are most commonly used by airlines on Australian domestic routes, are not subject to this requirement.

The Chair asked airlines to provide advice on policies relating to this issue. Qantas advised that it has included procedures in its DAFP on this issue and it complies with all applicable standards. The policy includes assisting the passenger to the lavatory door.

Virgin Australia advised that all of its wide body aircraft (A330 and Boeing 777) have accessible toilets and on narrow-body aircraft (Boeing 737 and Embraer E190) its policy is to assist the passenger to the door of the lavatory. Virgin also advised that it is currently rolling out on-board wheelchairs, which will be fitted to all Boeing 737's by the end of July 2017 and all E190's by the end of 2017.

Jetstar advised that its Boeing 787's were fitted with on-board wheelchairs and that staff are able to assist passengers to the lavatory door.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) representative advised that the Australian Standard 1428 – Design for Access and Mobility is not applicable to aircraft toilets.

The Physical Disability Australia (PDA) representative advised of a range of practical challenges, such as the aircraft not having transfer boards and no circulation next to the pan.

The Chair noted the importance of advice on access being updated in airline DAFP's, including the extent and availability of assistance and wheelchairs on board, and that disability sector organisations should convey these sites to their members.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Leg Hammocks and Other On-Board Comfort Items**

The Chair advised that the Department had received correspondence from the creator of an on-board passenger comfort item, 'Fly Legs Up' expressing concern that some airlines will not permit the item to be used by passengers on aircraft. The Chair asked the AAF to discuss if any on-board comfort items would be useful to those with a disability, and also whether the item in question would be subject to CASA's aviation safety legislative framework.

CASA advised that consideration is given to whether the item inhibits takeoff, landing or taxiing. He also advised that the 'Fly Legs Up' item is not categorised as an aircraft modification or an aeronautical product and would therefore not be subject to the regulations. In this instance it becomes a matter for the aircraft operator.

Virgin advised that it had not been formally approached by the creator to consider the item. However, it does have a formal process and criteria to consider on-board comfort items, including safety, engineering, guest facilitation and impact on other passengers.

Jetstar confirmed that it formally assessed the item and did not permit the item on board its aircraft as it would block egress and create discomfort for the passenger in front.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Member Update on Programs and Initiatives**

##### Travelling with Service Dogs

Qantas provided the AAF with details of its new policy for travelling with service dogs, following a review of arrangements. The policy provides for more standardised requirements, in particular that a service dog should not weigh more than 45 kilograms or exceed 129 centimetres in length and also must not exceed the applicable length limit for the particular

aircraft cabin. In economy class, if the Service Dog exceeds 86cm in length, additional travel conditions may apply.

Qantas consulted with training organisations about the changes and was told that the new requirements should not exclude most service dogs from travelling. The length requirements relate to the width of the aircraft seats and satisfy the airline's aviation safety obligations.

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) representative expressed the view that there needs to be better education on the changes for passengers, training organisations and airline staff for the guidelines to be applied consistently. He advised that he would follow up with training organisations to ascertain what guidance material was distributed following these policy changes.

Virgin Australia advised it is currently developing new guidance material and is not yet known whether specific length and weight requirements for service dogs will be included.

#### Airport Ambassador Programme

Virgin advised that it would provide an update on the Programme at the next meeting.

#### In-flight Entertainment

Regarding the new flight system interface, Virgin advised that it had been very well-received and tested by Phillip Chalker, an advocate well-known to Virgin.

#### Q-Ramps

Qantas also advised that it would seek an update from various airports on utilisation of Q Ramps, and that it had updated its DAFP in March 2017.

**ACTION ITEM 2:** *Virgin Australia to provide information on its Airport Ambassadors Programme.*

**ACTION ITEM 3:** *Qantas to provide information on which specific airports its Q Ramps were being operated.*

#### **Agenda Item 6: National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee (NAPTAC) and Accessible Public Transport Standards Update**

The Chair advised that the Department is progressing two projects arising from recommendations of the second review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards). These are:

- modernisation of the Transport Standards; and
- development of whole-of-journey guideline for accessible public transport planning.

Regarding modernisation of the Transport Standards, the Chair advised members that a working group consisting of representatives from the Australian Government, each of the states and territories, peak transport bodies and the disability sector, is examining the Standards to address practical application issues, and AAF members will be able to comment on a consultation draft for the Transport Standards during the second half of this year.

Regarding the Whole-of-Journey Guideline, the Chair advised that members are encouraged to comment on the draft which is open until 31 May 2017.

The Chair advised that the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia (DFA) had prepared a feedback handout on the draft whole-of-journey guideline. The DFA representative was invited to talk about the handout.

The handout listed a range of issues related to access to terminals, procedures for support people, and lighting and security issues. It was recognised by members that many items in the handout were related to airport operators rather than airlines.

**ACTION ITEM 4:**     *AAF Secretariat to follow up items in the feedback handout related to aviation access, and indicate who is responsible, which items have or are being addressed and ascertain those items that are outstanding.*

#### **Agenda Item 7:       Premises Standards Update**

The Chair advised that the Australian Government has released the Review of the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 Report and the Government’s Response to the Report. The Government’s response sets out reforms to be made to the Premises Standards to improve their effectiveness and clarity, as well as new measures to assist with their application and evaluation by government and industry. The Review also includes a number of recommendations relating to public transport buildings.

The Chair advised that the Review Report, and the Government’s response to the Report can be accessed at the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science website. The Chair informed members that the AAF Secretariat would forward on links to the report.

**ACTION ITEM 5:**     *The AAF Secretariat to send the link to the Premises Standards Review Report and Government’s response to AAF members.*

#### **Agenda Item 8:       Updated AAF Website and Materials**

The Chair informed members that the AAF Website and the various AAF Guidance materials that sit on that website have now been updated for both AAF Members and members of the public to use and thanked Qantas and Virgin for their input.

#### **Agenda Item 9:       Other Business**

The Chair updated the AAF on a range of correspondence items to the Minister.

The Chair updated the AAF on the project currently being undertaken by Dr Paul Harpur and his team at the University of Queensland regarding assistance animals. The Chair encouraged members to respond to Dr Harpur to assist him with his study.

**Agenda Item 10: Next AAF Meeting**

The Chair advised the tentative date for the next meeting is Wednesday 1 November 2017, beginning at 10:00am.

**3 May 2017 AAF Meeting Action Items**

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1	AAF Secretariat to draft a definition of mobility aid for comment by AAF members.	AAF Secretariat
2	Virgin Australia to provide information on its Airport Ambassadors Programme	Virgin Australia
3	Qantas to provide information on which specific airports had utilised its Q Ramps	Qantas
4	AAF Secretariat to follow up items on the Deaf-Blind Association and Deafness Forum of Australia feedback related to aviation access.	AAF Secretariat
5	The AAF Secretariat to send the link to the Premises Standards Review Report and Government's response to AAF members	AAF Secretariat
6	AAA to report back to AAF on any other airports that provide information to support passengers with Autism Spectrum Disorder.	AAA (from previous meeting)
7	Members to provide comments to the AAA about the possibility of introducing lanyards for passengers with disability who travel.	All members (from previous meeting)
8	AAA to obtain further information on similar programs to the Gatwick Airport lanyard program and report back to AAF	AAA (from previous meeting)