

Submission for the  
Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible  
Public Transport

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Thank you for the opportunity to make my submission. As a person with a physical disability, I find many benefits to using our public transport system, however on occasion I encounter some difficulties. While for the most part the system works smoothly, I feel that I need to take this opportunity to point out when it doesn't. I am no expert in the standards that govern public transport, but I do have day to day experience in what happens on the ground. Hopefully my experiences can in some way contribute to how others shape future public policy and standards in this field.

### **Trains:**

Trains for me are normally completely accessible for how I need to use them. However, there are some exceptions. The station I am using needs to have lifts, they need to be working and all staff need to be aware of the needs of all passengers.

I have been using trains intermittently over the past 18 months. In that time:

- I did not get on trains twice due to station staff not getting the boarding ramp out even though I had notified them that I would need it.
- I have been left on a train once due to poor communication between station staff and a change of shift between guards meaning nobody was aware that I was on the train and needed to exit.
- I have nearly been left on trains at least ten times and have had to yell out to other passengers to get the guard to stop the train departing.
- I have had to change travel plans due to broken lifts at least ten times. Most platforms have only 1 lift, and it can be broken down regularly. If this occurs I have to go to the next accessible station, wait for another train and come back to the original station, providing that the train is going to another platform at the station. If the station only has 1 platform and 1 lift, then I am no longer able to use that station and I have to pay for a taxi out of my own pocket. As you can imagine, this takes a lot of time and money, and can also make me extremely late.

## **Busses:**

When I started going to TAFE, I caught the bus quite regularly, however, due to large gaps in the system for users with a physical disability, I now find it impractical to use busses on any sort of regular basis. Accessible busses are hard to find normally, but during peak hours it can be almost impossible to find one, with the route near me being almost entirely made up of older style, non-accessible busses. Even when I find an accessible bus in the timetable, I often have issues.

- I have not been able to get on busses twice due to broken boarding ramps.
- I have not been able to get on busses twice due to the driver ignoring me. Once he drove past without stopping despite me clearly signalling, the other occasion the driver let all the other passengers at the bus stop aboard, but then drove off without me. I can only assume that timetable pressures made the drivers decide not to take the time to let me on. The busses were clearly not full at the time.
- I have had one incident where a non accessible bus replaced an accessible bus without any notice and I was left at the bus stop unable to travel.
- I have found busses unsafe at times, with my wheelchair slipping around the bus as it goes around corners or roundabouts despite me having breaks on. Bus design for the safety of wheelchair users (and those standing nearby) needs to be improved.

All of these incidents have occurred in the relatively few times that I actually bothered to try and use the bus system.

## **Taxis:**

While expensive, taxis are the most reliable form of public transport that I use. In saying this, I do have some issues when I use them.

- The majority of drivers do not know how to properly use wheelchair restraining systems in their vehicles, leading to significantly longer times waiting – with the metre running or my wheelchair not being properly secured as per current standards, obviously a massive safety issue.
- Modern taxi design needs to be immediately reviewed as the newer design of taxis are inadequate, the standard Toyota Tarago, a so-called “accessible” taxi is especially inadequate as the spaces are not big enough for a standard electric wheelchair, they are also impossible to see out the front due to the row of seats in front making navigation more difficult and leading to increased travel distance due to the driver not finding where I am going and I am unable to direct him.

### Improvements:

While some of these issues may be fixed by changing or better enforcement of standards. I realise that some of my issues fall outside of these standards scope. However, I do have some very basic ideas as to how my use of public transport could be improved.

- All staff could be regularly reminded of and better trained in their responsibilities to users who have a disability.
- Procedures should be reviewed to try and find a more reliable system for communicating between stations that I am using a train and will need someone to meet me to get me off.
- Maintenance standards could be improved and targets set to reduce the risk of failure such as lifts breaking down, ramps on busses not working and all of the other equipment that I need to access public transport equitably.
- Procedures should be put in place or improved to insure that accessible buses are scheduled evenly throughout the day and among routes and to continue to increase to proportion of accessible busses in the fleet.
- Bus design should be reviewed to ensure that it meets best practice standards for those with a disability both in terms of safety and usability.
- I generally find that manually operated ramps do not fail on busses, while mechanical ones often do.
- Standards regarding wheelchair taxis should be reviewed to ensure that new vehicles can fit all standard types of wheelchair.
- Better training in the use of wheelchair restraints in taxis should be provided.
- The fee structure of taxi use should be reviewed, especially in regards to the benefits of having a flat fee for securing a wheelchair rather than the drivers leaving the metre running.
- Feedback should be given regarding the outcome of serious complaints.
- Discrimination should not be tolerated.

Overall I find trains have been good and simple to use; most of the station staff and train guards are excellent and very professional and should be commended. Overall buses are less effective for me to use and there is still a lot that can be done. Most of the drivers are excellent and professional, but there are still areas that can be improved along with the rest of the public transport network.