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2012 REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

SUBMISSION FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Response to questions for State and Territory Governments outlined in
Issues Paper, November 2012:

Has the accessibility of public transport within your jurisdiction improved since 2007?

Yes, there have been significant improvements to public transport
accessibility in the Territory since 2007. Improvements to the bus and taxi
fleets have increased accessibility with 100% of the public bus fleet in Darwin
and Alice Springs now compliant and 19 % of the taxi fleet wheelchair
accessible.

In Darwin 50% of the bus shelters and stops are now compliant (840 stops and
shelters) and there is an ongoing program to upgrade and replace shelters to
reach full compliance. In 2011 the Department of Transport acquired the Alice
Springs bus network from the Alice Springs Town Council and there is an
ongoing program to replace and upgrade bus infrastructure in Alice Springs.
To date 18 new shelters and 11 bus stops have been upgraded to be
compliant.

Bus stop information has also been significantly improved with the
introduction of compliant bus stop totems which are gradually being

implemented across the bus network in Darwin and Alice Springs through a replacement and upgrade program. The totems provide timetable information and maps and a Braille section which provides a phone number for information.

In regional and remote areas a number of regional bus trials have been undertaken. Over the last 18 months regular bus services have been provided to and from regional centres and remote communities where there were previously no services including 5 services to Alice Springs, 6 to Katherine one in Nhulunbuy. New vehicles provided through the trial are accessible and significantly increase transport accessibility in these remote communities. Most of these services operate on a passenger collection from home/destination system and in most remote communities there is no bus stop infrastructure.

How has accessibility to conveyances (eg trains, buses and coaches, trams, ferries, wheelchair accessible taxis and aircraft) changed?

Buses: 100% of the bus fleet in Darwin and Alice Springs is now low floor.

Special needs school bus services: the NT Government provides transport assistance to and from school for eligible Pre-School, Primary and Secondary students with special needs. Students who have been approved for special needs transport are picked up from their nominated location, by either taxi or a special needs bus and taken to and from school. The buses are crewed by a driver and a transit carer.

Taxis: NT Standards for wheelchair space allocation in taxis is now consistent with the Accessible Public Transport Standards. The Rectangular Prism standard has been implemented for wheelchair spaces in Multi Purpose Taxis. Braille labels have been introduced on all passenger entry points for taxis and minibuses.

Remote Bus Trials: regular bus services between Katherine and Alice Springs to remote communities have been trialed for the last 18 months. All new vehicles provided through the trial are accessible.

Coaches and aircraft are operated privately in the Northern Territory and are not regulated by the Department of Transport.

Have compliance targets been met?

Generally, compliance targets have been met in the Northern Territory or significant progress is being made in meeting targets.

Can you provide examples?

100 % of urban buses are compliant. On road compliance audits of taxis are conducted throughout the Northern Territory.

What are some of the reasons for not being able to meet targets?

The significant costs associated with complying with targets is an ongoing issue. In some remote areas and in certain locations, physical issues such as landform, make compliance difficult.

How has accessibility of infrastructure (eg any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on a public transport service) changed? Can you provide examples?

Buses: 50% of bus stops in Darwin and Alice Springs are now compliant with the Accessible Public Transport Standards. There is an ongoing program to replace and upgrade bus stops to comply with the Standards.

Significant improvements have been made to major bus interchanges in Darwin and Alice Springs and new 100% compliant park and ride facilities have been provided at Coolalinga and Howard Springs in the Darwin Region.

Taxis: New taxi and minibus totem poles to be implemented at ranks across the Northern Territory are currently in the design and consultation phase. Information provided on the totems will include the location, a map, Braille, booking phone numbers, police contact details and the Department of Transport's website. An audit of taxi and minibus ranks in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine is currently being finalised. The audit will be used to develop a proposal to upgrade ranks across the Territory.

Remote Bus Trials: Most services operate on a home/destination collection system. Therefore, there is limited or no compliant infrastructure in remote and regional areas.

Coaches, aircraft and associated facilities are operated privately in the Northern Territory and are not regulated by the Department of Transport.

Have you been able to improve the collection and reporting of reliable, current data on public transport accessibility within your jurisdiction?

An audit of compliance with the Accessible Public Transport Standards at taxi and minibus ranks in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine is currently being finalised. An audit of bus stop compliance is undertaken regularly.

Information on public transport accessibility is available through the Department of Transport's website.

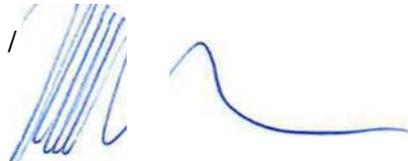
Are there any other initiatives and actions in relation to removing discrimination from public transport services, that do not come under the above, for which you can provide details?

The Taxi Subsidy Scheme provides assistance to permanent residents of the Northern Territory who have been assessed as having a disability, or significant mobility restriction, that prevents them from being able to use public transport to access the community. The Lift Incentive Scheme has been increased from \$10 to \$20 per trip for Multiple Purpose Taxi drivers and use of Lift Incentives has been mandated to ensure drivers receive the incentive. The total number of Lift Incentives has been increased from 120 to 180 per year.

The Department of Transport is currently testing a Bus Interactive Voice Response system which is planned for introduction in 2013. The system will provide information on the next three departures for the selected route of travel.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the submission phase of the 2012 Review of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport and I look forward to this Department's ongoing involvement in the Review.

Yours sincerely



MARCIA OFFMANN
A/Chief Executive,
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23 April, 2013