

DDA Transport Standard Review

Response by Queenslanders with Disability
Network Inc (QDN)

August 2007

Questions for all Stakeholders

1) Has the accessibility of public transport improved since the introduction of the Transport Standards?

- **How has accessibility to conveyances changed? Can you provide examples?**

There are far more accessible buses, trains, taxis etc than were previously available.

- **How has accessibility of information changed? Can you provide examples?**

Little change seems to have occurred in hardcopy publications. Some websites are more accessible.

- **How has accessibility of infrastructure changed? Can you provide examples?**

Bus stops, rail stations, ferry pontoons etc are being steadily upgraded. Taxi ranks are not.

2) Have these changes matched your expectations of the implementation and uptake of the Transport Standards?

- **Do you consider that the changes have matched (1) the compliance requirements and (2) your expectations?**

Compliance requirements are being exceeded, met or not met depending on operator and location. Expectation of uniform progress is not being met.

- **If the changes have fallen short of your expectations, can you provide examples?**

Taxi ranks are largely untouched. Rural facilities are also under treated. Airlines seem intent on not meeting the Standards wherever possible.

3) Do you consider that the level of compliance require at the end of the first five year period is sufficient to have an impact on accessibility?

No. In that 25% compliance is unlikely to give a continuously accessible journey. Numbers of people with disabilities cannot rise until they are able to complete a journey. This has multiple components that will not be address with only 25% compliance.

4) To what extent do you consider current data on accessibility are reliable? Can you provide problems with data that you are aware of?

Data tends to be subjective. Further, circumstances continually change making databases outdated rather quickly.

One specific example that QDN has recently become aware of, is data that is reported by the taxi industry as per Schedule 1 Part 1.2 of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*. The requirement clause of this section states: "Response times for accessible vehicles are to be the same as for other taxis."

A passenger would understandably assume that the term "response time" as applied in the context of waiting for a taxi would mean the time the passenger ordered or called for a taxi until the time the taxi arrives for pick up. The taxi industry however, defines "response time" as being the time the taxi receives the job from the dispatch system until the time the person is picked up. The difference in wait time between these two definitions is very significant.

Depending on whether an accessible taxi is close enough for a driver to accept the job, a passenger can wait hours after ordering a taxi until the driver accepts the job and the taxi receives the job from the dispatch system. This wait prior to the dispatch is not recorded in the accessibility data, nor would it provide any accurate and realistic picture of the actual wait time endured by people with disability.

5) How could reporting of accessibility data be improved for future stages of the implementation of the Transport Standards?

It would be better to require access data calibrated clearly against the Transport Standards and be provided as part of customer service by transport operators. In the case of taxi data, rewrite the standard (Schedule 1 Part 1.2) to ensure "response time" is clearly defined as the time the passenger ordered or called for a taxi until the time the taxi arrives for pick up.

6) Are you aware of examples where improved accessibility to transport has lead to increased patronage?

No. Until all or most of a transport network is accessible it cannot be used. An inaccessible break in any part of a journey will make the entire journey unfeasible.

Questions for Public Transport Users

7) Has the introduction of the Transport Standards helped you better understand your rights as a public transport user? If yes, in what ways has it done this?

Some parts of the Transport Standard are clearly articulated. These are informative. Other parts reference inaccessible Australian Standards. Most people have no recourse to Australian Standards.

8) Are the Transport Standards and the accompanying guidelines a sufficient source of information on your rights as a user of public transport, or have you needed to consult other sources? What other sources have you consulted? How did you find out about these sources?

The Standards and Guidelines are poorly coordinated. Parts in the Standard do not correspond with similarly numbered Clauses in the Guidelines. The HREOC website has a great deal of useful information, far more so than the Guidelines. The HREOC website is well known to the cognoscenti but perhaps not others.

9) Are you aware of other users of public transport who appear to be unaware of their rights or obligations? How could this lack of awareness be addressed?

Most people with disabilities are vaguely aware that they have a right to public transport. However, most have no idea as to the extent of those rights. Use of the general media rather than websites might better inform the teeming masses.

Questions for Public Transport Operators and Providers

10) Has the introduction of the Transport Standards clarified your obligations as a public transport operator or provider? If yes, how have they done this?

N/A

11) Are the Transport Standards sufficient or have to needed to consult with other sources? What other sources have you consulted with? How did you find out about these sources?

N/A

12) Are you aware of other operators and providers of public transport that appear to be unaware of their obligations? Can you provide examples? How could this lack of awareness be addressed?

N/A

Questions for all Stakeholders

13) Are there areas of the Transport Standards that you consider unclear in terms of the adjustments operators and providers need to make? Please specify.

Tidal ranges for pontoon ramps are not specified. Are they astronomical, spring, mean or neap tides? Equivalent access is continually mention but who can determine or certify the efficacy of the equivalence? Providers have little incentive to innovate and thus seek exemption from the prescriptive requirements. Also please refer to questions 4 and 5 concerning the taxi industry's interpretation of the taxi standard.

14) Have the exemptions allowed under the Transport Standards reduced the clarity of obligations under the Transport Standards?

Exemptions have clarified requirements but only for the period of the Exemption. If justified Exemptions are sought and compliance is not likely to ever be achieved, amendment is required.

15) To what extent do the Transport Standards allow operators and providers a choice of ways in which they can demonstrate compliance?

The lack of certainty over the compliance of equivalent access eliminates flexibility. Litigation is a constant fear for many large operators so that compliance with the letter of the Standard is their preferred outcome.

16) Where Australian Standards or other Technical requirements are specified, are these appropriate?

In most cases Australian Standards can be met on new infrastructure and premises. Existing structures are often difficult to bring to compliance. Some dimensional requirements are not achievable in new or existing conveyances. This

results from applying a building standard (AS1428) to the space constrained structure of a vehicle.

17) Are there requirements that have proved to be impractical or difficult to implement? If so please specify.

Meeting many requirements on older structures or conveyances can be daunting. They are too numerous to mention. New structures should have no issues, though even some new conveyances may struggle with access path width, hearing loops, visual indicators of announcements, and so on. Also please refer to questions 4 and 5 concerning the taxi industry's interpretation of the taxi standard.

18) As a public Transport user, are there areas of public transports were you consider a more specific requirement for compliance would improve accessibility?

The Standards are fairly specific. Areas of silence such as restraint of wheelchairs in buses would assist safety and accessibility. Also please refer to questions 4 and 5 concerning the taxi industry's interpretation of the taxi standard.

19) Do you consider that the requirements of the Transport Standards have been applied consistently across different modes of public transport?

No. Some smaller operators, eg rural bus and taxi services, are unaware of the Standards existence. Further the local authorities controlling the infrastructure these services use are equally ignorant.

20) Will any current areas of inconsistency be addressed through the future stages of implementation of the Transport Standards?

Hopefully.

21) Do you consider that the current exemptions granted are appropriate? Should these exemptions be reduced over time?

Exemptions are granted after consultation with the disability sector and industry. This approach is sound. Hopefully as the Standards mature the need for exemption will decrease.

22) In implementation of the Transport Standards, have the requirements lead to a relatively consistent standard of compliance across all modes of public transport? If not, where are the major differences of approach?

The prescriptive requirements leave little room for inconsistency. However, it is doubtful if all operators and providers have reached 25% compliance. Previous examples concerning rural operators are typical of failure to adhere to the Schedule of Compliance.

23) To what extent do the requirements in the Transport Standards address all of the accessibility requirements for people with disability? Are there gaps in the coverage of requirements?

Safety requirements in conveyances are not covered. Passengers in buses are subjected to the same forces as those in taxis but have no means of being secured.

Passengers using wheelchairs frequently report feeling endangered when their wheelchairs move while buses are cornering.

24) Does the compliance timetable provide for a gradual improvement of accessibility over the 30 year implementation period? Are there aspects of this timetable that present compatibility problems? How could these requirements be improved?

Yes. However, safety components such as TGSIs are not at 100% by 2007 and restraints in buses are not required. Gradual improvement will probably mean transport networks remain largely unusable until at least 2017.

25) Are providers meeting their obligations across all aspects of accessibility, which ensures compatibility?

Mixed. Some modes of public transport tightly integrate with others and work together to provide seamless service. Others work in isolation and make no effort to even consider a passenger's whole of journey experience.

26) Do the requirements of the Transport Standards need to more explicitly recognise the potential other regulatory constraints that impede the capacity of transport providers to deliver the objects of the Transport Standards?

Workplace Health and Safety legislation potentially restricts the level of direct assistance given. This needs to be clarified.

27) How well are the current arrangements for making complaints about accessibility understood by the public?

Mixed. Some members of the public are very articulate and effective self advocates. Others are totally unaware of complaint mechanisms or their rights. The bulk of people fall between these positions.

28) Are the current processes sufficiently responsive to complaints, or requests for information or advice on the transport standards?

If people are aware that they can be informed or complain, they usually can access services reasonably quickly. Exceptions occur if they are seeking technical information such as Australian Standards. These are only available by purchase and are quite expensive.