



## National Ethnic Disability Alliance

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Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport  
The Allen Consulting Group  
GPO Box 418  
Canberra ACT 2601

### **NEDA Submission to the Review of *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards)*.**

Dear Madam / Sir

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

NEDA actively promotes the equal participation of people from NESB with disability in all aspects of Australian society. It manages a range of projects relating to NESB and disability communities and works closely with its state and territory members to ensure that its policy advice reflects the lived experiences of people from NESB with disability. In states and territories where no NESB-disability advocacy agency exists NEDA undertakes development work to establish a structure that can support people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

I write to provide information to the review of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards)*. NEDA works closely with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and is pleased to endorse the AFDO submission to this review.

In addition, I wish to provide the following information relating to people from NESB with disability:

1. NEDA estimates that one in every four people with disability is a person of either first or second generation NESB, representing approximately 1 million people across Australia.
2. People from a non English speaking background are likely to have experienced discrimination and barriers in accessing transport services that are not faced by those from an English speaking background. In particular, it can be expected that people who are not proficient in spoken English with disability will face *significant* barriers accessing connectivity to employment, education, services and social and recreational activity.<sup>1</sup>
3. The availability of signs and information in an accessible format on public transport services is an important issue for people from NESB with disability. Inconsistencies in signage and displays, complexity of information on how to use public transport and timetabling, the poor availability of standard information in community languages, and unclear procedures in the event of service change or disruption, will compromise the ability of people from NESB with disability to access safe and reliable services. For example, complex ticketing systems that rely on strong English language proficiency will be disadvantageous to many people from NESB with disability. Similarly, in many jurisdictions, some people from NESB with disability will be discouraged from providing feedback about poor service because the relevant complaints mechanism may be complex to navigate and rely on an English proficiency. NEDA believes that the application of cultural competence principles to transport providers would assist to remove the cultural barriers faced by people from NESB in accessing services.
4. People from NESB who are wheelchair users – like other wheelchair users – have generally experienced poor response times for booked wheelchair accessible taxi services. At present many wheelchair users will seek to make private arrangements with drivers in order to avoid using a booking service. Because of cultural and linguistic barriers, a private arrangements may not be available to all people from NESB with disability, with social isolation an effect for those who are not able to easily access a car or mass public transport, and must rely on a taxi booking service for connectivity to jobs, services and social networks.
5. In most Australian jurisdictions there has been an increased presence of transit police on public transport services to regulate both fare evasion and passenger behavior. In some jurisdictions, there is a community concern that some passengers have been unfairly targeted by transit police, with implications for people from NESB with disability who use public transport services. For example a report by the NSW Homeless Persons Legal Service found that “homeless people, people with disabilities, young people, Indigenous people, recent refugees and migrants appear to be easy targets for public transport fines.”<sup>2</sup> If transit police continue to be a feature of revenue protection and passenger behavior management for Australian public transport operators, NEDA would strongly

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately 44% of people who are not proficient in spoken English and do not have access to a motor vehicle to drive are more than twice as likely to face difficulty getting to the places they need to than the general population: see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *General Social Survey 2006*. The survey finds that 55.8% of people over 18 years of age from a non English speaking country who are not proficient in English have access to a motor vehicle they can drive, compared with 86.1% of the general population. The survey further finds that 11.0% of people who are not proficient in spoken English are unable or face difficulty getting where they need to go, in comparison to 4.3% for the general population. .

<sup>2</sup> Homeless Persons Legal Service / Public Interest Advocacy Centre, *Not Such a Fine Thing! Options for Reform of the Management of Fines Matters in NSW*, April 2006, p1. See also Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, *No Home, No Justice? The Legal Needs of Homeless People in NSW*, July 2005, pp105-8.

advocate for appropriate training for enforcement to ensure that people from NESB with disability (and other groups) are not unfairly targeted. Arguably, the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards)* have a role to play in ensuring non-discriminatory practice in this area.

I trust that the above information will be taken into consideration in the review of the Disability Standards for Public Transport. For further information on this submission, please contact Dinesh Wadiwel on 9687 8933 or email [office@neda.org.au](mailto:office@neda.org.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dinesh Wadiwel', is written on a light-colored background.

Dinesh Wadiwel  
Executive Officer