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Dear Sir or Madam

The Physical Disability Council of Australia Ltd (PDCA) is pleased to present our submission into the Five (5) year review of the DDA Transport Standards.

For any further information, please contact the writer, on the email address or telephone number provided.

Yours sincerely

Sue Egan
Executive Officer
Physical Disability Council of Australia Ltd (PDCA)

Physical Disability Council of Australia Ltd (PDCA)

Submission

to

**Review of the *Disability Standards for Accessible
Public Transport 2002***

September 2007.

PDCA Recommendations:

Question 1:

Ports: Harvey Bay Port steep ramp access should be addressed

Airport facilities:

- Older airports need to upgrade facilities to be consistent with changes throughout Australia at major airports. People with disability are also visitors to airports, not only as passengers.
- Dropping off bays need to be available at all airports

Question 2:

Trains:

- Designated spaces for those who remain in a wheelchair need to be allocated
- Station Indicators need to be corrected or implemented so that all passengers can be sure of getting off at the right stop
- Aisle widths on trains need to be addressed
- Sydney airport trains/station needs level entry
- Light rail options need expanding
- Allocate specific places on monorail

Buses:

- Mechanical ramps need to be replaced as they are continually breaking down making buses totally inaccessible
- Adopt consistency in routes for reliability
- Expand the routes as new buses become available
- Allocate specific spaces on country buses with grab rails.

Trams:

- Expand routes on trams in major cities

Taxis:

- Taxi meters to be on display to passengers at all times
- Security tie downs should be mandatory in every taxi with drivers being fined when not using them, as is the practice for seat belts
- No additional bonus for picking up people with disabilities. This is the role of those who receive a special license and If not using the specified taxi license to pick up persons with disability, then the license should be taken away from owners.

Ferries

- Provide more space on ferries to enable movement on the ferry itself.
- More grab rails to be placed on ferries

Aircraft:

- Airlines should not receive exemptions for carrying people with disability under any circumstance
- Aircraft renewal should take into account the standard sizes of wheelchairs and equipment
- Increase ground staff levels to original provision. As the population ages, more people are

travelling, and therefore more people need assistance.

- Virgin airlines and Jetstar should be forced to carry people with disability and therefore make available cheaper airfares as other Australians are able to access.
- Implement a National Airline Reference Group with all domestic airlines as participants and people with disability input, meeting at least 3 times per year
- Airlines should update equipment on board airlines e.g. on board wheelchairs
- Damaged mobility items to be either replaced or repaired by the airline concerned, or offer low cost insurance to people with disability to recover these costs.
- Online booking for all passengers, regardless of disability, as well as telephone options
- Stop the practice of airlines calling for a Carer to travel with all people with disability who are able to travel alone, unless the airline is prepared to meet the cost of that persons travel

Information:

- Information centres and booths to be more readily available to all passengers
- Maps to be provided by electronic media at stations and departure points
- Provide alternative methods of information for those with hearing impairment
- Booking service staff to be trained in disability awareness

Question 3:

- Increase compliance with DDA Transport Standard across all areas of public transport
- Broken equipment should not be a reason for non compliance
- Taxi services should be asked to prepare Action Plans for compliance

Question 4:

- Bookings for accessible transport should be honoured and a fine established if not met
- Improve information about rights and complaints mechanism for all passengers

Question 5:

- More people with disability consulted at the national and State/Territory level
- Action Plans for all public transport providers to be mandatory with input from people with disability.
- Accessibility and compliance under the DDA Transport Standard should become part of all government contracts and mandatory follow up also implemented.

Question 6:

- Routes of reliable accessible public transport to be advertised and available to people with disability at all times.

Question 7:

- Rights of all public transport users to be made available in all formats including braille and audio as well as internet and published data
- Complaints about taxi services to go to a National Independent body and not individual taxi companies or drivers

Question 8:

- The DSAPT to be made widely available to all customers with a disability through distribution to disability organisations.

Question 9:

- National disability organisations to be funded to provide training, knowledge and information about rights and obligations under the DSAPT
- More publicity on accessible transport to come from transport providers and widely available

Questions 10/11/12 – not applicable

Question 13:

- Address the lighting of all public areas of Railway platforms, toilets and other areas where the public has access.
- Improve the quality of auditory announcements on station platforms (clarity particularly)
- Train staff in what assistance is to be offered and available
- By way of training in disability awareness, improve the attitudes and awareness of disability in transport service providers and staff
- Advertise complete access routes and the knowledge that a particular journey can be made without problems with access.
- Implement the 'marriage' of accessible public transport with Access to Premises Standards when implemented

Question 14:

- Insist on back up coverage when transport is to be used for children and school instead of their being no public transport available during school hours
- Increased compliance with all small aircraft
- More accessible coaches to connect major cities and country areas
- Address the issue of the complaints process and how this is particularly disadvantageous to people with disability.

Question 15:

- More consultation with people with disability by providers of transport across Australia
- A National complaints mechanism to be set up to take complaints and to research and review the compliance of the taxi industry in Australia

Question 16:

- Recommendation to the Federal Government to commence discussions with stakeholders in relation to Access to Premises Standard and DSAPT.

Question 17:

- More information to transport providers on their responsibilities under the DDA and the DSAPT in order to enforce and record compliance.

- A Public compliance mechanism that informs the public on accessible transport and who is doing what, or not.

Question 18:

- More emphasis to be placed on Action Plans to provide frameworks on compliance and intentions by transport providers

Question 19:

- Address the Taxi industry and confront them with their continued and flagrant abuse of obtaining licenses cheaper than a regular license in many instances, yet not providing the service the license was intended for.
- Address the Airline industry and confront them with their flagrant abuse of the DDA and their compliance – across all airlines
- Address the Bus and Coach Industry to provide consistency across Australia and to advertise their achievements under DSAPT across Australia.
- Initiate the modal groups under APTNAC to allow for a central and controlled approach to the application of DSAPT,

Question 20:

- Instigate Codes of Practice among transport providers, and encourage best practise across Australia in transport provision.\

Question 21:

- Aim to reduce the number of temporary exemptions in this next period of compliance

Question 22:

- Encourage more interaction and approaches between providers and the disability community with an emphasis on advertising when compliance has been achieved.

Question 23:

- PDCA believes there should be an immediate call for a Standard in Active and Passive restraint for passengers with disability on all public transport conveyances in line with the review of Australian Standard AS2904 restraint seat belts in taxis.

Question 24:

- PDCA believes the compliance schedule should be reduced to address the reality of transport usage and need.
- PDCA believes that the monitoring of compliance should not be tied to the number of complaints lodged, for the reasons stated elsewhere in this document.

Question 25:

- Develop APTNAC to provide a national forum to co-ordinate services, issues and compliance achievements
- Local Government authorities to be invited to join this national forum

Question 26:

- Address the safety issues that have been raised in this and other submissions, such as:
Restraints and tethering systems for wheelchairs
Securement straps on taxis and coaches
Level crossings and the continued deaths and accidents involving people with disability
Consistent staff responsibilities and awareness
Consistency across boarding devices used

Question 27:

- Address and strengthening of the complaints mechanism currently in place.
- Hold a National forum for providers in the taxi industry addressing their role in accessible transport provision

Five year Review Response.

The Physical Disability Council of Australia Ltd (PDCA) is the national peak disability organisation representing the interests and views of people with physical disability across Australia. As a national peak, we are proud of our history as one of the few national organisations run by and for people with physical disability.

The people we represent:

Physical disability is one of the largest areas of disability in Australia, which is supported by the following research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in their 1999 report which follows:

"In 1993, there were 1,726,200 people, or 9.8% of the Australian population, with a disability (using the ABS broad definition) who reported a physical main disabling condition (Summary Table 3).

Of these, 423,100 people, or 2.6% of the Australian population aged 5 years and over, also had a severe or profound handicap, meaning that they always or sometimes needed personal assistance or supervision with activities of daily living (selfcare, mobility or verbal communication). " (AIHW 1999 - Definition and Prevalence of Physical Disability in Australia).

Mission Statement and Values:

PDCA's mission statement is as follows:

'PDCA exists to convince governments to mandate laws and rules that enables the full participation of people with physical disability.'

Values:

PDCA's actions are based on:

- The personal experience of disability
- Information from across Australia
- A Social Model of Disability
- A powerful belief in the capacities of people with physical disabilities
- A determination to effect and initiate change through monitoring, pro activity and creativity

PDCA's response to the DDA Transport Standard – Five Year Review

PDCA would like to acknowledge all of the people with disabilities throughout Australia who have:

- lodged complaints with HREOC
- contributed to accessible public transport committees at local, state and national government level
- designed and conducted lobby campaigns about accessible public transport with Federal, State and local Government
- researched practical solutions for implementation problems of DSAPT
- attended meetings with consultants about accessible public transport
- discussed, negotiated and trialled conveyances of the design, layout and operation of conveyances, information and infrastructure
- instructed staff about unfamiliar procedures
- written submissions for reviews, exemptions, Regulatory Impact Statement

All of this input has been done on a voluntary basis to achieve the best practical

outcomes from the DSAPT and the most equitable public transport for all Australians.

PDCA endorses the statements in the *Allen Consulting Group Issues Paper* which states:

Access to public transport is important for the quality of life of people with disability. Such access provides people with disability with a means to participate in the community (e.g. to undertake employment, attend cultural or sporting events, to visit friends or family, or to go out to restaurants).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that in 2003, there were around 4 million Australians with a disability — some with more than one — and of these 4 million, approximately: 875,700 required assistance from a carer in relation to transport; and 512,400 used an assistive device or aid for their mobility needs.¹

The Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for the Draft Transport Standards found that people with disability are less likely to share in the recreational and social life of the communities in which they live.² While not the only reason for this trend, the lack of sufficient accessible public transport is a contributing factor. People with disability are more likely to have to rely extensively on more expensive modes of transport, such as special bus services, taxis and private car travel as a passenger. This reliance is due to people with disability being much less likely to have a driver's licence than people without disability, and difficulties in accessing public transport.³ A reliance on more expensive modes of transport limits the opportunity to travel — a higher average cost per trip will mean that people with disability will tend to limit themselves to essential travel.

In addition to issues concerning the physical accessibility of modes of transport (such as being able to get on and off a bus or train), accessibility also relates to:

- physical accessibility to train stations and bus, tram or ferry stops;
- accessibility of timetable information, public address announcements and other signs, alarms or alerts;
- prioritisation of booking requests, such as for accessible taxis; and
- the ability to transport and store mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and guide dogs.

PDCA regrets the loss of life of campaigners for public transport and the public transport users at level crossings and on railway platforms and believes that these events highlight the need for safety and best practice in all aspects of public transport. Many of these people were people with physical disability.

Response to Questions in the Issues Paper:

1. Has the accessibility of public transport improved since the introduction of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport?

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, Australia, 2003*, cat. no. 4430.0, AusInfo, Canberra.

² Attorney-General's Department, *Regulation Impact Statement on Draft Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport*, Canberra, January 1999, p. 11.

³ Ibid.

Accessibility of public transport has been improved since 1992 because of the series of complaints under the DDA 1992 throughout Australia about accessible conveyances (namely buses that were being purchased by State governments). Accessibility has occurred as a result of discussion, problem solving and collaboration among all stakeholders and in particular government regulators, operators and people with disabilities.

DSAPT 2002 introduction was the legislative structure that gave a consistent approach to the development of accessible public transport for all Australians including parents with strollers and the aging population where there is a higher incidence of disability.

Examples of changes to accessible conveyances.

a. Trains

- Suburban. Perth to Fremantle. Ease of boarding, maneuvering space is good, allocated spaces are beside seats where you can sit with friends/colleagues, grab rails are appropriate and train movement is minimal.
- Light rail Sydney: Central Station to Darling Harbour. Easy boarding. Good maneuvering area, allocated space adequate and stop indicators
- Monorail. Level access to cars. No allocated space but reasonable maneuvering space. Ease of boarding.
- Regional. NSW Countrylink. Ramp needed for boarding. Tie down allocated space, good accessible toilet on board, opportunity to sit beside family member in seat. Food is delivered from the dining car.
- Airport trains. Brisbane. Easy boarding at the airport, allocated spaces are combined.

b. Buses

- Route buses- free service around Perth. Front entry, manual ramps, carpeted area with good grab rails and half bus has no seat so there is the opportunity for larger mobility aids.
- Airport shuttle in Melbourne. Ease of boarding and good grab rails. Small bus with hoist from city bus terminal to hotel.
- Buses/Coaches as adjunct to Rail service. Countrylink. Hoist to centre of coach with allocated space and tie-downs. Seat belt required.

c. Coaches

- Queensland. Hervey bay to Maryborough train. Same as NSW Countrylink.
- Canberra to South Coast – discussions are being conducted.

d. Trams-

Victoria – Collins Street, Melbourne - front entry and space.

South Australia _ All trams are now accessible, but not tram stops

e. Taxis

QLD- increase in numbers of vehicles, extra customer service.

Other states have also increased the number of vehicles

f. Ferries

- QLD- Brisbane River-easy access
- Hervey Bay Sight Seeing Boat-one specialized accessible boat..
- NSW-Sydney Harbour- steep access on ramps, need assistance to board, with good circulation space on board. Some with accessible toilets on board.
- WA- Swan River- excellent features. Toilets on board

g. Aircraft-International -same

- Interstate- only travel QANTAS. Virgin and Jetstar both require a carer to travel with persons with disability, many of whom have travelled independently throughout Australia for years.
- Regional- small aircraft has more difficult entry with many airlines refusing to carry persons with disability and seeking exemptions from HREOC.

A recent campaign about Accessible Airlines, which PDCA was a part of, resulted in PDCA receiving over 14 case studies from members regarding their experiences of airlines throughout Australia. The result of this campaign has been documented by Public Information & Advocacy Centre (PIAC) which will be made public and hopefully sent to Allen Consulting as part of this Five Year Review.

Examples of changes to accessible information.

Accessible information for public transport is the basis for the use of public transport by people with disabilities.

- Maps- each city has good access maps and those with gradient markings are excellent for manual wheelchair users.
- Timetable- the services marked with accessible services are helpful.
- Announcements- rail conveyances with upcoming station names is very useful but needs to be clearer to enable those with hearing constraints to determine the message.
- Booking Services-Difficulties with getting a consistent message about access features & requirements from different agents. Eg It took many phone calls to book Tilt Train.

Examples of changes to accessible infrastructure.

Without accessible infrastructure public transport cannot progress and its planning has to be done in conjunction with people with disabilities.

a) Stations-

WA-new station and train car level access, lifts to platforms

QLD- lifts to platforms at many suburban stations and airport and at the central transit station in Roma Street.

NSW- Olympic Park excellent

- b) Bus Stops- many shelters have been and are trialled.
- c) Coach Stations- good facilities for disabled travelers.
- d) Tram Stops in Victoria are ramped and wide and are appreciated by so many that there is a demand for them all to be the same.
- e) Ports- Hervey Bay-assisted ramp access (too steep),
- f) Piers- WA & QLD new tidal hoists & loading platforms are excellent.
- g) Airports-
Airport facilities are among the worlds best when new. Older facilities need to be upgraded. “eagle lifter” is useful for assisting the board of passengers with disability who cannot self transfer.
Security issues have meant that dropping off bays are now no longer close to the actual terminal in some instances (Brisbane domestic)
- h) Interchanges- QLD-Hervey Bay-Boat, Bus, Taxi, Coach. Staff were helpful.
- i) Toilets- Excellent standardized facilities.
- j) Waiting rooms- Airports have the best facilities.
- k) Food and Drink- Equivalent access provisions is best solution to problem areas.

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

Implementation of the compliance requirements and the uptake of the Transport Standards have occurred when operators or providers produce conveyances, information and infrastructure with the input from people with disabilities.

However there are areas of public transport that have not improved, and in actual fact have gone backwards. The airline industry for example and the wheelchair accessible taxis are the two most obvious areas where services have deteriorated rather than improved.

The booking services, interaction with staff, response times and safety in relation to tie-downs and tethering, the transferring out of scooters and costs are all features of the taxi service that cause problems.

While the airline industry’s purchase of new airlines has been used to explain the change in the carriage of the number and variety of electric wheelchairs, the many other cutbacks in services have not been satisfactorily explained. Naturally there has been a flood of complaints under the DDA 1992.

Examples of conveyances that do not meet requirements of Transport Standards.

- a. Train
 - Suburban- only 2 designated spaces in a car which are filled by strollers

- Station Identifiers not always clear or able to be heard.
- Regional-aisles not wide enough for wheelchair, direct assistance for toilet use.
- Airport trains at Sydney airport do not have level entry.
- Light rail- the system is not extensive enough.
- Monorail- no allocated space.

b. Buses

- Suburban-mechanical ramps are always breaking down so buses arrive and are not accessible.
- No consistency in routes so cannot depend on return journey being on accessible buses
- Charter/country bus- Hoist entry on stairwell but no allocated space with grab rails.
-

c. Coach

In Queensland a bus was built with an allocated space just inside front doorway which was bounded by side of bus and stairwell for other passengers to board coach.

limited routes available

d. Trams

In Victoria trams have limited routes.

e. Taxis

Single wheelchair taxis are like cattle trucks where the passenger is placed in the back with the luggage and no contact with fellow passengers, especially the flash cabs, which are often dirty, dangerous to load and full of tools and other paraphernalia, in addition to being placed in the noisiest part of the taxi and unable to communicate with the driver.

In many taxis, when the passenger has a disability and is placed in the rear of the taxi, you cannot see the fare or any other information, and are unable to hear the driver if he/she talks to you.

Taxi drivers make decisions at random about whether to attach security 'tie downs' to secure a wheelchair in the taxi. This is not based on anything other than the driver making a random decision. The writer has experienced this personally and also seen the results of an additional passenger in the same taxi, not having their wheelchair tied down, resulting in the wheelchair and passenger almost tipped out when turning corners, in fact the writer prevented this from happening by grabbing the wheelchair as it started to topple.

In the Northern Territory as in Victoria and other states in recent times, drivers are offered a bonus or incentive payment for picking up people with disability in wheelchair accessible taxis, when this should be the priority for wheelchair accessible taxis/drivers as their taxi license is granted on the basis of providing transport for people with disabilities.

f. Ferries

More space should be available for movement around the ferry, and also have more holding apparatus to secure yourself on the journey..

g. Aircraft

- Tiger Airlines has a policy of not carrying passengers with disabilities.
- Carriers requiring the size and weight of every wheelchair that goes onto the plane, as the newer aircraft are smaller in door size to baggage areas.
- Financial cutback by airlines has resulted in less ground staff to assist elderly and disabled passengers
- Virgin Airlines has restrictions to travel for passengers with disabilities and in many cases rejects passengers with disabilities or offloads them to alternate airlines, namely Qantas.
- Qantas is the only airline that has been working with people with disabilities in a consultative way, with a National Disability Reference Group. Other airlines have not consulted and need to start listening to people with disability.
- International airlines- staff's lack of knowledge of equipment & facilities.
- Wheelchairs and other appliances being damaged in transit resulting in delays to fix the wheelchairs
- Qantas and other airlines require people with disability to telephone rather than book air travel online as other Australians do. Often the lack of awareness by booking staff, results in inappropriate doctor certificates having to be obtained to prove the person is able to travel alone. Alternately the airlines insist on a Carer accompanying a person with a disability, resulting in double the cost of travel for many

Examples of Information that does not match requirements of the Transport Standards.

Information about accessible features of public transport is still produced in a segregated edition instead of being published as mainstream information. Delivery of information for people with sight impairment is not suitable or there is no equivalent delivery.

- i. Maps- There is difficulty in finding information booths that stock maps which can be easily understood and read. Need more use of electronic media for both maps and timetables
- ii. Timetable- Accessible services generally unknown or not advertised.
- iii. Announcements - There is not enough alternative information for hearing impairment.
- iv. Booking Services-Difficulties with getting a consistent message about access features & requirements from different agents. Eg It took many phone calls to book on a Tilt Train.

Examples of Infrastructure that does not match requirements of Transport Standards.

- a. Stations-
- b. Bus Stops-
- c. Coach Stations-
- d. Tram
- e. Ports-
- f. Piers-
- g. Airports-
- h. Interchanges-
- i. Toilets-
- j. Waiting rooms-
- k. Food and Drink-

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

PDCA believes that not enough compliance has been achieved at the end of the first five year period, and there appears to be an emerging reluctance to speed up this compliance.

At this early stage of accessible public transport it is difficult to make regular use of public transport because there is no surety of transport connections. For most people with physical disabilities there is not enough reliability in the public transport services provided to be assured that they can use services regularly.

Many people with physical disabilities use public transport while on holidays because they have less pressure on their time and in a more relaxed environment to try new systems. They are also part of the large volume of people with disabilities who take holidays where they need facilities to be accessible.

In country and regional areas there is little or no service provided.

Buses throughout Australia have had since the complaints under the DDA in 1994 to get their accessibility to level of compliance. Bus routes do not have complete accessible buses running regularly. Ramps on buses are often broken so people are unable to access ramps and there is no way of knowing in many cases whether buses will be accessible on particular routes.

Taxis have had many years to improve their services but remain in most cases, completely unreliable for most users.

Airline services have gone backwards with accessibility. People with disabilities have been turned away from airline services that they have planned and paid for.

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

- One source of data about accessibility is found on State Transport Departments websites and documents. There is also the opportunity in most States to make a phone call to receive

information about accessible routes and the likelihood that an accessible conveyance would be available at the time when the person would like to travel. Whilst this may appear to be adequate, many potential users of transport, do not have access to the internet and may be unable to communicate through telephone because of communication disabilities. Even if a bus is booked for a certain time, they may fail to appear, with no fore warning.

The information on the HREOC's website is not user friendly. It would be more likely that information about accessible features for potential passengers with disabilities is passed by "word of mouth" from one person with a disability to another.

In the preparation of submissions for this review people with physical disabilities are in the main dependent on their personal experience, and have no resources to gain input from more objective studies or commission further research to support their position. They are reliant on the poor data and information from transport providers to compile their submissions.

The lack of reliable data has undermined attempts to monitor progress against the Compliance Schedule in the DSAPT 2002. The provision of unreliable data makes undertaking a robust cost:benefit analysis impossible.

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

The reporting system in relation to the compliance with the accessible public transport disability standards is the worst feature of the process so far. The Australian Federation of Disability Organisation (AFDO) representatives on the Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee (APTNAAC) were excluded from the development of the national reporting scheme that subsequently appeared on the HREOC website. AFDO wrote to the Minister of Transport about the exclusion of people with disabilities from the development of the reporting system. To develop a more substantial reporting system it would be beneficial to have all stakeholders involved.

Action Plans from operators need to be developed in all areas and be in the public arena for everyone to monitor progress of the transport area. The HREOC website has always encouraged this approach to the development of accessible public transport.

Many private operators have government contracts where reporting of accessibility should be part of the contract.

6. *Are you aware of examples where accessibility of public transport has led to increased patronage?*

Training of people in the use of public transport would increase patronage as would reliable routes being determined completely accessible and advertised as such once achieved. Public transport was totally inaccessible for many years so its use was not an immediate option that people with disability would rush to use it. People will need to be certain that a complete journey can be achieved before this becomes an everyday occurrence in society.

PDCA believes that there has been an increase in patronage of public transport, as can be evidenced by the number of older persons using transport every day and today many people with physical disabilities use public transport while on holidays because they have less pressure on their time and in a more relaxed environment to try new systems. They are also part of the large volume of people with disabilities who take holidays where they need facilities to be accessible.

A recent example comes from the writer of this submission (who uses a wheelchair for mobility) on

holiday in Sydney for the first time in many years.

Access to trains at Circular Quay, connecting to the Monorail and Ferry meant that accessible transport was available, reliable and enjoyable during days in the city.

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?*

PDCA believes that the rights of the public transport user are not immediately available from the DSAPT. There should be more information about the complaints services of taxis, trains and buses available to all users.

The nature of the taxi industry does not allow for complaint without retribution to the user in receiving a reputation for complaining and ultimately no service if complaining too much.

8. *DSAPT and guidelines as a sufficient source of information about rights of public transport user.*

Many people know the Australian Standards as it applies to their lives as people with a disability. The DSAPT and guidelines are a base guide from which to draw information about the likely use of public transport. However the exact configuration of the conveyance and infrastructure cannot be gauged from the DSAPT 2002 alone.

Innovative, practical solutions to the implementation of the DSAPT have come from people with disabilities who have had the opportunity to travel in other countries where they have experienced accessible public transport. They have also used the Internet to find other sources of information to assist with their negotiations and discussions with transport operators and government regulators.

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?*

Some State Transport Departments are better than others in making people aware of their rights. PDCA believes that this information should be mandatory on all transport service providers from the outset.

The best method of addressing lack of awareness for other users of public transport, is to fund disability groups to provide training and information about rights and obligations for people with disabilities.

There is a need for more publicity and information to be made available to the general public as well as to people with disabilities.

Questions for Public Transport Operators and Providers

10. N/A

11. N/A

12. N/A

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:*

- The Lighting of Railway platforms.
- The auditory requirements on station platforms (clarity particularly)
- What assistance staff are required to offer
- The attitudes and awareness of disability in transport service providers and staff
- The need for complete access routes and the knowledge that a particular journey can be made without problems with access.
- The interaction of accessible public transport with Access to Premises Standards

14. *Have the exemptions allowed under the Transport Standards, reduced the clarity of obligations under the Transport Standards?*

The original exemptions under the Transport Standards of school buses, regional aircraft, limousines and charter buses/vans have not been effective.

- In the ACT accessible buses are used as school buses all the time because of the composition of the fleet of ACTION buses and the demands of the services in Canberra.
- In many areas of Australia small aircraft are the only form of public transport so people with physical disability are often forced to use inaccessible aircraft and in some instances have been known to crawl up the stairs and down aisles.
- In country areas and rural Australia there are no accessible airlines and no accessible coaches to connect with major cities. There is no alternative to travel from Country to City except by private means.
- Once again in the ACT, limousines and charter buses/vans have to be used by local people with physical disabilities because the taxi service is so poor.

The process of temporary exemptions is an onerous task especially for people with disabilities. The provision of evidence and submissions to HREOC to refute the claims of exemption applications has added another layer of difficulty to a sector of the population already struggling with the provisions of the complaints procedure to monitor the implementation of the Transport Standards.

The Transport industry has to have a commitment to the implementation of the Transport Standards by the development of Codes of Practice so that there will be a steady increase in the development of accessible public transport.

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

The Transport Standards were written as a set of performance standards in which there was the opportunity for operators to have great flexibility in demonstrating compliance.

The obvious provisions of equivalent access, unjustifiable hardship, the guidelines to the Standards and the opportunity to present Action Plans to HREOC allow operators and providers to have a great many choices of ways to demonstrate compliance.

There are also recommendations for operators and providers to consult with people with disabilities so that the best, practical solutions to accessible public transport can be achieved in a local situation.

Queensland Rail has consulted nationally on accessible transport, however the same cannot be said of other State Rail departments.

The taxi industry has had consistent problems over the years and the DDA Transport Standard has not clarified the responsibility of the taxi industry to provide accessible public transport.

16. *Where Australian Standards or other technical requirements are specified, are these appropriate? Please provide examples where you believe the use of Australian Standards are not appropriate.*

Standards are vital to the development and implementation of accessible public transport because of the consistent approach and the retention of present gains. The standards form a basis for the complaints system and allow a benchmark from where possible negotiations can take place.

PDCA believes it is essential to have AS1428 for access paths, ramps, doorways, grab rails, allocated spaces, boarding devices, maneuvering areas, information, toilets, symbols, signs, TGSI's, controls, lighting, furniture and fitments, etc. because this set of Australian Standards have been tested for the A80 mobility aid and the dimensions of the Standards are well. In fact, there was a study of a larger mobility aid (A90) commissioned but the undertaking was never completed.

At one stage, the Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee (APTNAAC) contacted the Australian Standards group about the inclusion of a Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services representative on the Transport Standards Committee in the same manner as the Australian Building Code's representative on the Australian Standards for the built environment. However there was no follow up by the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services

17. *Are there requirements that have proven to be impractical or difficult to implement? If so, please specify:*

The DSAPT has the provision for equivalent access so in consultation with people with disabilities, there cannot be any requirement that is impractical or difficult to implement.

In the drafting of the DSAPT the Bus Industry Confederation was well represented because the BIC realized that it needed to have input into the process of development of the Standards. Other industries such as Airlines and Rail have only recently realized that it is necessary for them to comply with the legislation. The recent Australian Rail Association application for exemption from HREOC reflects the lack of industry's understanding of the DSAPT.

1. *As a public user, are there areas of the Transport Standards where you consider that a more specific requirement for compliance would improve accessibility?*

There needs to be more emphasis placed upon the development of Action Plans by operators and providers of public transport to provide a framework for accessibility rather than for a specific requirement of the Transport Standards. As these Standards were written as performance Standards, it is more important to have criteria such as Action Plans to achieve accessibility.

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

No we do not.

Taxis have been providing access since 1974 and have not improved customer service or attitudes, in fact it could be said that the taxi industry has gone backwards, with little goodwill and attempts to avoid carrying people with disabilities in favour of those without disabilities, especially at airports when multiple users can be carried in the one vehicle that would normally carry 1 person with a disability. This is consistent across Australia.

Hiring a taxi from the street is an impossible task, with taxis either ignoring people with disability or simply looking the other way.

Airline service has gone backwards since 1974. It was once possible to place people with disabilities into front seat of aircraft without all the present procedures. Now people are experiencing the indignities of being refused a flight at the time of checking in, as was experienced by one of our Directors who was offloaded to another airline at a different time from her travelling party.

Suburban buses have been improved since complaints in 1994 and trains and infrastructure have only started since 2000 when the Olympic Games in Sydney showed people with disabilities that it was possible to travel by rail.

The reliance on people with disabilities to lodge complaints as the only form of enforcement or regulation leads to uneven roll out of compliance.

The APTNAC needs to resume the modal groups to allow for a central approach to the application of the DSAPT.

20. *Will any current areas of inconsistency be addressed through the future stages of implementations of the Transport Standards? (see Appendix B)*

The implementation of the DSAPT is already well ahead of the 25% compliance schedule that is supposed to be achieved at this stage. Any areas of inconsistency can be overcome by the negotiation, problem solving and discussion of all stakeholders as well as well thought out Action Plans undertaken by all providers.

The development of Codes of Practice is a practical measure to overcome inconsistency in the future stages of implementation.

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

The temporary exemptions would only have been granted by HREOC after discussion with all stakeholders, but PDCA does believe that over time these should be consistently reduced along with the expectations of compliance rising.

Most of the recent exemptions are only of a temporary nature ie. 5 years. It is hoped that this time restraint will allow the relevant industry time to develop appropriate solutions to the problems.

The original exemptions were developed at a stage when there was limited knowledge about accessible transport and the possibilities of the DSAPT. With the increase in the numbers of accessible conveyances regional areas will be able to purchase suitable conveyances for school buses. E.g. ACT Action buses are sold to regional areas. Regional Airlines are already used with great difficulty because they are often the only form of transport and this is an important area of transport that should be addressed in the coming years.

It is hoped that the original exemptions will also disappear.

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

PDCA believes that there has not been a consistent standard of compliance across all modes of public transport because there is a different rate of replacement for conveyances across modes of transport. For example, a train carriage will be replaced every 20-30 years whereas a taxi will be replaced every 5-6 years.

In the same way some infrastructure is more difficult to upgrade than others. E.g. a rail platform and a bus stop.

The difficulties with accessible information stem from a general approach by public transport providers to information dissemination. Approaches by people with disabilities to Transport regulators and providers have not received the due consideration that is necessary.

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?*

The Transport Standards will only be as effective as the last piece of technology. As there are technological advances e.g. hearing loops on conveyances, the Transport Standards will need to adjust to the new technology. Hopefully the nature of performance standards will enhance this process.

PDCA believes that there should be Standards for Active and Passive Restraints for passengers with disabilities on all conveyances. At the present time there is a review of AS2904 which is the restraint belts in taxis. The present system is not safe for passengers with mobility aids.

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?*

PDCA believes that the compliance schedule is already outdated. The Compliance schedule should be shortened to recognise the reality of the situation where many areas of public transport are well in advance of the schedule because they began to comply from the time of the first complaints in 1994. Some areas are still struggling to comply but those areas have not been under the scrutiny of the complaints mechanism to the same extent.

Whilst ever the monitoring of the compliance schedule is still based on the complaints of passengers with disabilities as the only method of regulation, then there will be reluctance by the industry to develop planning that will gradually improve accessibility.

A complaints based system of ensuring compliance is extremely onerous for people with disability. Some of the negative effects of this system are:

- Stress from reliving the situation of discrimination in lodging
- Conciliation and Court
- Fear of reprisal
- Loss of finances if a complaint fails and costs are awarded against,
- Time spent
- Lack of legal representation (which business is able to do)
- Imbalance between capabilities of the complainant and the respondent (\$ and power) in favour of the respondent ensures that the complainant does not go to court and is therefore not resolved.

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

PDCA believes that providers are not meeting their obligations across all aspects of accessibility. Providers need to have the opportunity at a national level to co-ordinate their services. The APTNAC should be developed to provide the forum for this co-ordination. The local government authorities have been asked in the past to join this Committee however at that stage of public transport development they were unable to have their input.

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

PDCA believes that there are numerous safety issues for passengers with disabilities that need to be urgently addressed, including:

- restraint and tethering systems on conveyances
- securement straps on taxis and coaches
- level crossings
- emergency evacuation from conveyances and infrastructure
- Assistance by staff – varies from carrier to carrier
- Boarding devices used in all areas of transport need to be consistent to allow passengers with disabilities to know how and when devices will be used.

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

PDCA believes that the complaints mechanism currently in place is a system that is frightening to many users because of the involvement of the Federal Court and the possible expense that could be involved, including the loss of savings or their place of residence in funding the Federal Court process.

The recent complaints about the Airlines industry have illustrated the role that Advocacy Agencies are able to play in the understanding of the complaints mechanism, but again they are up against multi-national companies with huge resources available to them.

PDCA believes that the complaints process needs to be strengthened and more accessible to all people with disability, and not dependent on whoever has the biggest “cash bag” or the most resources.

28. Are the current processes sufficiently responsive to complaints, or requests for information or advice on the Transport Standards?

PDCA believes that the current process is not sufficiently responsive to complaints by people with disability. The record of the taxi industry in relation to complaints is very poor and piecemeal at best. There is no consistency in Taxi Companies across Australia and it would appear that the taxi industry itself believes that customer service is no longer important, it is the bottom line that is all powerful.

Many of the complaints made by people with physical disabilities have not been addressed and are either ignored, or completely covered up by taxi operators and companies. These can include such important issues as the abuse (verbally or physically) to some vulnerable people with disabilities (which the writer has witnessed) little knowledge on 'tie downs' (or not using them at all), the way in which people are loaded or unloaded from a taxi, the charges for loading a passenger in a wheelchair, yet the same charges do not apply to luggage or prams or car seats for children, or lack of awareness on disability to such an extent that individuals are treated in much the same way as luggage or a pram!

The only enforcement and policing of the Standards is still the complaints process under the DDA 1992. This position should be rectified by greater enforcement of the Standards by State and Federal Transport Authorities and a change in the way complaints are handled. Even though there is the possibility for infringements/loss of contracts to be imposed by State Departments of Transport, there have never been any sanctions imposed to our knowledge.

The recent arrival into the Australian Airline Industry of Tiger Airlines with a stated policy of not carrying passengers with disabilities, has not been addressed by the Federal Authorities. The DDA 1992 is not being enforced, and yet in other countries, such as the USA carriers are expected to adopt the Americans with Disabilities Act and comply with its contents. Australia should be expecting the same.

Additional Information

Below are some comments and suggestions relating to some of the ways people access information on public transport now.

Using the Telephone

- Too many options before you get to a person
- Once you get through to a person it is generally good
- Using the Internet
- Internet can be hard
- Timetable information is too small
- Using Timetables
 - Print too small on timetables, font needs to be 18 points or larger
 - Separate timetables on each line should to be displayed at train stations
 - Need a generic design all for timetables
- Self-advocacy groups in the United Kingdom have designed easy to read timetables which would be good to have in Australia

Services and Schemes

There is overall a lack of awareness about the services and schemes that are currently available throughout Australia, to assist people with disabilities to use public transport on a regular basis.

Currently many people with disabilities use taxis to and from work because there is no alternative for a continual journey or return transport.

This general lack of awareness of services and schemes was seen as attributing to:

- People who should have concession cards not having them, or not knowing about them
- Doctors not being well enough informed about how to fill out the required documentation for people to be eligible for assistance schemes
- People not having anyone to help them
- Least supported people being the most disadvantaged
- Misuse of concession cards by other people
- Not having information about the services available

Travellers Aid:

- Not available in all States or Territories
- Some had used Traveller's Aid, however others had not heard of the service.
- Some people said that they had found it hard to find Traveller's Aid.

Access Centre in Melbourne:

There are no signs from Federation Square to show you where it is

Multi-Purpose Taxi Program

- the recently introduced conditions placed on the scheme are difficult and unfair, including having to pay for a replacement card
- Non wheelchair users having a cap on the amount that they can receive at the half price rate
- That the scheme has no way of informing the user of how much allowance remains before their cap is reached.
- Confusion about whether users have to sign receipts.
- There were also reports of people experiencing difficulties when using their card such as drivers forgetting to give cards back and drivers making up stories about why they can't or won't accept the card.
- Confusion on whether a loading cost should be imposed which is in place in some states

Companion Card

- People who attended the forum had little knowledge of the national Companion Card scheme
- Few knew of anyone who used the card.
- Companion Card not across all States

a. Public Transport Ticketing

- Ticket machines were found to be too hard to use, with people preferring to buy their tickets directly from a person.
- Some people felt that the myki smart card ticketing system, about to be implemented throughout Victoria, will be better as people with disabilities will validate their tickets like everyone and won't be showed up as different.
- However, other people had concerns about the introduction of myki for people with disabilities and how practical it was going to be to use.
- Ticketing on V-line can be confusing for example, rules of return tickets
- Ticketing at some Sydney rail stations not able to be reached by wheelchair users

b. Experiences using different types of transport

Taxi

Taxi services were by far the biggest area of concern for people attending the forum. These concerns were expressed by both wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users. When asked whether people had any problems booking a taxi, people had mixed responses. Some people said they had experienced no problems booking cars while one person had experienced difficulty getting to the forum because of the current taxi system.

Some of the common problems experienced when using taxis:

- Booking is easy but cars were often late and often VERY late
- Multi purposes taxis usually have a 40 minute wait, with people having waited up to two

hours

- School runs taking taxis during peak hour periods
- Operators are sometimes rude and unhelpful
- Common to miss appointments due to waiting for a taxi to arrive
- No penalties for not turning up and incentives don't seem to work
- Sometimes drivers seem to go the long way around
- Being refused service and feeling blamed for needing help
- No courtesy call to say they are running late
- Some people at the forum stated that they do have regular drivers, but this is no guarantee of good service
- People felt that the service could be improved if there was a single point for bookings

Trains

- People reported that access and services at the two major metropolitan stations of Flinders Street and Southern Cross had improved since they have been upgraded.
- One ongoing issue that was identified was the lack of public information about how people in wheelchairs or scooters access the trains either in a brochure or on the platforms.
- The difficulties with the current system of wheelchair users having to go to the front of the carriage to enter the train via a ramp positioned by the driver are:
- There is no indication of which direction the train will be arriving from
- The length of the train in relation to where it will stop on the platform

Other issues raised in regards to train transport were:

- Pathways around and into stations were often in need of resurfacing
- Gap between train and platforms is too big and can be quite frightening for some, especially with small wheels at the front of manual wheelchairs which could get caught
- Level crossings were viewed as dangerous to cross if in a wheelchair
-

Trams

People felt that there was some improvement with the low floor trams but they were not operating on every line and there are only accessible stops sporadically placed mainly within the Central Business District.

Other Comments

- Some participants reported that they had flown and felt that the system of getting on the plane first and getting off last worked well for them
- Need to treat people with disabilities with more respect and dignity

- Van taxis most often do not provide a view of passing scenery or location for a passenger in a wheelchair
- People had experienced accessible toilets on train stations being locked with no idea who had the key or where it was located.
- Better lighting needs to be installed on all forms of public transport to assist people with vision impairments
- Better audio announcements including using digital media announcements

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