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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP

**REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS
FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**HEARING CONDUCTED AT: CROWN PLAZA HOTEL
DARWIN**

DATE: 7 AUGUST 2007

MR BELL: Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen, my name is John Bell and I've got with me Jessie Goldsmith who is helping me today on this hearing. We're here on behalf of the Commonwealth Government's Minister for Transport and Regional Services, to do this first five year review of the standards, as they relate to public transport, and this is really to assess progress to date. Some of these standards have up to 25 years for their implementation. This is the first milestone check. I think some of you will be aware that there is a little discussion or issues paper around. There's some copies at the back of the room. We also have established a web site which is mentioned in that paper, www.ddatransportreview.com.au and on that website we are posting transcripts of the hearings.

Now, let me explain why we're doing this. Obviously, there are a lot of people who are interested in this review but who are not able to get to one of these hearings. Even people who come to a hearing like this one will want to see what was said at other locations. So, that's why the transcripts are up there, go up about a week after the hearing. So you will be able to see that in about a week. This is one of a set of hearings. We're doing hearings in all the capital cities and in 10 regional centres, so tomorrow we're going to Alice Springs. In fact, tomorrow will be the last hearing because we're hoping that a number of you will be providing us with some written comments and written submissions close on 24 August, which is not far away. So, as I said, tomorrow at Alice Springs is the last of these hearings.

Now, we're going to make this very informal. We have a schedule of people who have indicated they would like to talk. Occasionally, we will be able to cope with a question or a comment from the audience but I will need to race up to you with a microphone in order to make sure that that is recorded. So, I think that you've discovered the tea, the coffee and the water and so we'll get started. Joyce, I think you're on first. So, can you move up to one of these. There you go how's that?

MS DEERING: It's fine.

MR BELL: So, it's Joyce Deering, and Joyce, you're treasurer of Integrated Disability Action; is that right?

MS DEERING: Yes, that's correct.

MR BELL: Great.

MS DEERING: Yes, I spent quite a few years as a member of the Disability Standards Project until the Federal Attorney General decided we no longer needed to have disability standards. But we did get the education and we did get the transport through, so that was one good thing.

MR BELL: I should tell you that we did some work on the education standards, as well.

MS DEERING: Yes, and that was great to get that through, but - - -

MR BELL: And I think there we are starting to see some quite good progress, although the issues are in some ways more difficult there, but they're certainly different.

5 MS DEERING: That's right. I guess in some ways, I'm a little bit different than some people. I am able to drive a motor vehicle and do so regularly. I am not able to access our current buses. I did take the experiment one day when they were having a free day and went out on the bus to the University and then we started on the inbound journey and local people would recognise the roundabout there by
10 University and we decided to go round that roundabout and I nearly finished up in the roundabout. That was the first, last and only time I have tried to use an accessible bus.

MR BELL: So you were on your wheelchair?
15

MS DEERING: I was on my wheelchair. I had my breaks locked on but the camber of the road and the camber of the bus just didn't suit. So the buses were not to my taste.

20 MR BELL: So there was space for your wheelchair on the bus?

MS DEERING: There was a small space there, but there was no rail, nothing to attach.

25 MR BELL: Nothing to hang on to?

MS DEERING: Nothing to hang on to, nothing at all. So, I rolled and nearly rolled completely, but fortunately someone was able to stop me. That's my first
30 experience, first, last and only experience of buses. There are other people who are quite able to use buses when they are on the road, and when it's a good time. Maybe I'll ask Bill to have a bit of a comment about that.

MR KERR: You want me to comment on - - -

35 MS DEERING: On the buses.

MR KERR: The buses are mostly low floor up here now. Two bus companies charter them. They still have a couple of high floors. One still needs to ring up and they've put rails where Joyce said - now you've got something to actually grab on
40 to. I think the buses are all right. I think the drivers sometimes need a bit of education. They take corners far too fast, at times.

MR BELL: Now, Bill, when you said you have to ring up, is that to make sure that there will be a low-floor bus?
45

MR KERR: Yes.

MR BELL: Or do they put a low-floor bus on if you ring and say you want a particular service.

MR KERR: You can book a low-floor bus.

5

MR BELL: Really.

MR KERR: But it is getting to the stage now where there are more low-buses. In fact, there's only about four or five buses with steps but that's no good. I got caught last Thursday on the – my residence is on the hospital run, and I tried to catch the 10 8.30 bus and low and behold, what comes along, a bus with bloody steps on because I didn't check on it. So, one still needs to make sure. I thought that was a bit – that they put a step bus on the hospital run, with ladies with prams, and people with newly broken legs and things like that.

15

MR BELL: Yes, because it's not only people in wheel chairs who benefit from these low-floor buses.

MR KERR: No, no, and I don't ever – that is my thing about – you know I can't 20 walk at all. But there are people with very limited mobility, you know, with walking frames and things, and they find the steps hard too.

MR BELL: Yes, I guess we should comment that at this stage in the adoption of the standards, a lot of bus companies still have older buses, as you know buses can 25 last 20 years. So, to have a high percentage of low-floor buses in the fleet, it is definitely a big plus.

MR KERR: Look I acknowledge that, from five or six years ago, or maybe seven, where you actually had to request a low-floor bus because they were nearly all high 30 floors. To, to date when I mostly take the chance they will be low floor and 99 times out of 100, I'm right. So, yeah, I take your point, John. They can't just scrap them all and replace them, it's too expensive, but I think they're getting there. I think driver education is now the thing that we need.

MR BELL: Bill, you were telling me something else about the difficulties of getting up the ramp into the bus. Do you want to say something about that?

MR KERR: Do you want me to do that now?

MR BELL: Let me just ask, Joyce, do you want to go back and then we'll hear from Bill some more later.

MS DEERING: Yes, yes, it will all sort of mix in, that's right. I'd like to read an article that was in a disability magazine that I subscribe to and a fairly recent article 45 done by one of their journalists who obviously came to Darwin and has assessed, or assessed rather, the public transport.

5 *Due to the vast size of the Northern Territory, accessible transport is concentrated around Darwin and Alice Springs. In Darwin, there are 45 buses on the public bus network. There is also one ferry, which operates between Darwin and Mandurah. In Alice Springs there are three buses all operated by the Alice Springs Town Council. According to the Director of Public Transport, George Timpson, all of the buses in Darwin and Alice Springs are the low floor easy access type. There are a few spare buses that are the high floor type, used occasionally when the main fleet buses are being maintained. Our bus stops, shelters and interchanges have various levels of accessibility.*

10 *He added that bus drivers are trained in the correct use of ramps and other accessibility features of buses, and receive training specific to the needs of people with a disability. We are working towards meeting the compliance milestones under the disability standards for accessible public transport. Priority is given to addressing any accessibility concerns that a passenger may have. However, Vicky O'Halloran, Somerville Community Services, Chief Executive Officer said their clients were unable to use public transport, due to the lack of restraints on buses.*

20 *There are limited public transport options for people with disabilities, who are supported by Somerville. We currently provide supported accommodation to 45 people with severe to profound disabilities. Each of their wheelchairs is specifically tailored to suit the individual and as such cannot be adequately restrained within the current public transport buses in Darwin. We use taxis or our own buses.*

And she goes on to say:

30 *We are pleased the Minister for Family and Community Services has recently picked up responsibility for the portfolio of Transport. Another person who has been working in the disabilities sector since 1980 doesn't use public transport as it's too hard to access, mainly due to the infrastructure. We can't actually get to them.*

35 She also agrees with Mrs O'Halloran regarding restraints:

From a person in a wheelchair's perspective, it can be a fairly hairy ride, as there are no restraints.

40 And there are two things there that I would like to comment on, and one is that all of the buses in Darwin and Alice Springs are low floor, when Bill has said that that isn't so. We know that they are improving all the time, but whoever wrote this just didn't get it quite right, or else the information wasn't quite right.

45 MR BELL: Is there a date on the article?

MS DEERING: Yes, April 2007.

MR BELL: Okay. Thanks for that.

MS DEERING: So it's fairly recent.

5 MR BELL: It's recent, yes.

MS DEERING: As I read it, I thought, yes, that's a pretty good article to expand on. I guess I don't use buses because I can't use buses. I do have the occasional time to use taxis, like this morning. And I did ring, and I decided not to ask how long,
10 because that's not a very good question to ask, because when you are told, "It's on the way," that could be half an hour later - within 15 minutes, which, perhaps, isn't too bad as I don't live too far out of town. But I think, to us, the fact that there are no wheelchair cabs on the night run for many people who want to go out at night time, that's one of the hardest things.

15 And in the small group that I belong to, mostly MS people, that is the main complaint that keeps coming to us, that, "We can't go out at night, because - we can go out, but we cannot get home." And that has been a constant complaint for quite a long time, and has not improved over the last - any time that I - in fact, we feel it has
20 got far worse, and people are not venturing out at night. Lots of people like to go out and have dinner down at the wharf or many other things like that, but it just is not possible for that to happen. You can go down to the wharf, but you might have to sleep down there.

25 MR BELL: So what time do these taxis disappear?

MS DEERING: 6 o'clock is a time that has always been told. We can't get a cab after 6 o'clock.

30 MR BELL: That's very early.

MS DEERING: Very early for up here, when it's daylight still till 7 o'clock, anyway.

35 MR BELL: Yes. Do you know how many taxis they have here that are - - -

MS DEERING: Accessible cabs? I don't know the specific number, but they have been added to. It's only a matter of months when there were - another 10, I think, were put on. But they may have the licences, but they're not always on the road.

40 MR BELL: On the road. In some jurisdictions these cabs are popular because when they're not taking people with a disability, you can use them to put a group in.

MS DEERING: That's correct.

45 MR BELL: Especially a group that has got a lot of luggage. So, in some cities you do see them on the road at night. I wonder whether there are some regulations that limit that here.

MR KERR: There are now Darwin Radio Taxis, which is not the mob Joyce is talking about. They do have some on at night now. However, you've got to be very careful that you tell the driver you go with, will he pick you up. See, you're right, John. Where the problem is - they can be changed into six-seater taxis, right. Now, any - if you take six or more passengers, you get 50 per cent extra on the fare. Now, they will do the Mitchell Street nightclub run, and they can earn a lot of money on that. Whereas coming all the way, say, from the city - I live quite a way out of town - to pick me up to come back into town, they could have got three or four six-seater fares by that time. And I'm not saying that's in all cases, but that's where you run into trouble in the night. But you can now get them.

MR BELL: So the problem is, there's an incentive for them to use the taxis for other purposes - - -

MR KERR: Purposes - than wheelchairs.

MR BELL: - - - and that may also, of course, impact on their availability. Yes, well, we've seen this same problem elsewhere. And it's quite a difficult one to address, because the operator that has one of these special cabs still needs to be able to collect regular fares when there's not somebody with a wheelchair that wants to use it. So it's not an easy issue. We're still thinking about how best to address this. But thanks for that comment, Bill. Sorry, Joyce.

MS DEERING: It would seem that there's no priority, and yet we have been told that wheelchairs are priority. So somewhere along the line that priority has been cast aside. And people say, if you go out to the airport - we have most irregular hours when planes arrive and depart from here, as you may know or may not know.

MR BELL: We've noticed.

MS DEERING: And they do stuff them in, and so if you want a wheelchair cab at a reasonable time even, you cannot get it because that's a different - there is no priority system. If there is a priority system, it does not seem to work for people who really need to use the cabs, and for - the cabbies do get a discount or a rebate, if you want to call it, on their registration, and they're not really holding to that particular thing.

MR BELL: Joyce, can I ask, in Darwin, when you've got children with disability who are going to school, are the taxis used for that purpose as well?

MS DEERING: They are in the mornings and they do again in the afternoons.

MR BELL: So that again creates an availability issue?

MS DEERING: Yes, yes. They're standard contracts.

MR BELL: We're seeing the same problem in other cities, where they're stretched to meet the demand before and after school, and that means that other users can't get a booking at those periods. Again, you know, it's a difficult issue here. Obviously

we want the kids to get to school, that's very important, but handling peaks in demand is always going to be a challenge.

5 MS DEERING: If you were a regular user of taxis, you know when the kids go to school; you know when the kids get picked up, so you try and avoid those times and know what's happening, so I think that was an issue that raised when this meeting was first announced, and said, "Look, we just can't get a taxi at that time." And, fortunately, you've been able to work around it. So, there was just that need.

10 MR BELL: Now, you've mentioned the buses in Darwin, in the city, but what happens if you want to go, say, to Katherine.

MS DEERING: Beg your pardon?

15 MR BELL: If you want to go to Katherine.

MS DEERING: Well, you would possibly catch one of the - is it Ansett or Greyhound or one of those - - -

20 MR BELL: Greyhound.

MS DEERING: Those sort of things.

25 MR BELL: Are they able to get you on the bus?

MS DEERING: I would think not. I would think not. In fact, I'm sure. I'm very sure. That just brings another point to me. Many years ago, in our wisdom, we had a transport meeting and there were a lot of people there; there were a lot of tourism people there. And I, in my funny way, asked the people, who were the tourism people, "Please, are there any coaches which I could on a tour?" Then there was dead silence. So I asked the question again, and there was still dead silence. And I think if I asked that question again, and went around to the Tourism Commission today and asked that question, I would still be met with dead silence.

35 MR BELL: I was talking to Bill Kerr about this before, because with the ageing of the population, Bill and I were just wondering whether there's an emerging market opportunity here for somebody to establish a service. After all, some of these services, even out in Kakadu, are now wheelchair accessible.

40 MS DEERING: That's true.

MR BELL: And maybe there's a market opportunity here to set up a new service that caters for people - or can take some people who are in wheelchairs because - - -

45 MS DEERING: We just - we haven't done it. We haven't reached it. I think we've done marvellous things with our parks and gardens, and they are all accessible. Litchfield, Kakadu, you name it; we can get around. There's no problem with those

things. But it's getting there. It's just getting from go to whoa, and that's the whole thing.

5 MR BELL: So, tell me, how is your experience in getting on and off airlines?

MS DEERING: Do you really want to know? If I'm travelling Qantas, no problem. Travelling Jetstar, I'm not so happy.

10 MR BELL: So do you tell Qantas in advance that you are coming?

MS DEERING: Always. Well, it's on my membership card, so that's no problem. But I think the difference there is Darwin is a small place, and they know you, so they know your wheelchair and everything. I stay in my wheelchair until I'm ready to board and so they know that; they pop it down; there's no problem. Because
15 we're just a small community, they know us. Even if they don't know us personally, they know we've travelled before. "Okay, you've got to do this for this person." As far as I'm concerned, there's no trouble, no hassle. And I only have a small sized wheelchair. I, fortunately, don't have one of those big back ones, so I don't have that trouble.

20 MR BELL: And are you able to get yourself out of your wheelchair and into a seat?

MS DEERING: Yes.

25 MR BELL: Okay. So that's a big help, too. So Qantas gets a tick. They will be very pleased to hear that.

MS DEERING: Definitely. Definitely gets a tick, yes.

30 MR BELL: And what sort of problems have you had with Jetstar?

MS DEERING: I think their spacing inside the thing, and they weren't - I don't think they had enough staff around the place. I've only come up once with Jetstar, and the thing that appalled me when we got to the end, "Would everyone please pick
35 up their rubbish and put it aside. We just need to turn around this aircraft as fast as we can." Obviously they don't have cleaners. I didn't pick anything up.

MR BELL: Well, it is a discount airline. I guess the concern that has been expressed to us in some centres has been that, with the introduction of Jetstar, there
40 have been fewer Qantas services and so there's actually less choice for people with a disability. In some centres you actually have to take Jetstar because there's no Qantas service.

MS DEERING: We have no option for some routes.

45 MR BELL: Yes.

MS DEERING: That's our trouble. But Qantas have always been good. And the last couple of weeks we've had a former person, who used to live here, come back, who is not able to do anything for herself, with really a high-backed wheelchair, electric wheelchair. She had to wait for a different flight because the wheelchair
5 couldn't get on that one. But that was fine; she knew that before she left. But she said they cared for her and attended to her very carefully. She had to be transferred manually, and she had no problems. She said, "Qantas any time." So that's good.

10 MR BELL: Some of those big wheelchairs present some real challenges.

MS DEERING: That's correct.

MR BELL: Not only to the airlines, but also to the taxis and the buses.

15 MS DEERING: That's right, yes.

MR BELL: I mean, they're great vehicles if you want to get around, but - - -

MS DEERING: That's right. But they don't always accommodate everybody.

20

MR BELL: No.

MS DEERING: That's probably all I - - -

25 MR BELL: Joyce, look, those are very useful comments. We've got a minute or two up our sleeve, so to speak. Bill, is this a good moment to ask you - because I wanted to get Bill's comment about getting up the ramp into the bus.

30 MR KERR: Can I go to the table - - -

MR BELL: Yes, of course you can.

MR KERR: I wanted to pull out a bit of paper if I can.

35 MR BELL: You're most welcome to come to the table.

MR KERR: I was going to sit down later and recall all I've got to say about - it's just that I wrote to our Minister about this subject, and I just want to refer to the letter which gives me the dot points that I made. My problem is with the new - one
40 company here has new buses that have got manually deployed access ramps for our chairs. Now, I've talked to you before and a lot of companies are going this way with the manual deployed chairs, and we all know why because the hydraulics on the others break and blah, blah. But these particular buses I have trouble with because they come out of a slot in the floor in the foyer of the bus and they come out to the
45 road. Now when they hit the pavement, or the footpath - when they come out they've got a lip on them, a couple - three centimetres high, so if you're in a manual chair like Joyce and you're trying to get on, the front wheels of - these little front wheel of the chair, go this way.

MR BELL: So this lip is at the outer edge?

MR KERR: Yeah, at the outer – where it comes out and goes, boom.

5

MR BELL: Yes, it's the point that touches the ground.

MR KERR: Yeah, so you know, it goes boom like that, so I observed somebody on one of these had to turn around and actually try and pull themselves up backwards to get over the lip. The ramps themselves are narrower, which sort of doesn't – it cuts down your room for error. They're wide enough. They are wide enough, but they're not as narrow. The place they come out of to deploy, is again a three centimetre indent, right, which goes right around the foyer. That's lined with aluminium. So, if I'm getting on, on the scooter like this, I reverse on, because I can't turn when I'm on the bus and I've been doing this for years, so I'm fairly good at it, and I've got to get my left hand back wheel very, very close in the lobby, so I can get the swing to come around, right.

MR BELL: The turning circle, yes.

20

MR KERR: What happens is, I come up this ramp after hitting this bump and being thrown off a bit and then even if I can correct it, I've got to make sure because it's narrow, this front wheel doesn't go over the side of the ramp. Then when I hit this indented thing lined with aluminium, it will skew. I will slip one way or the other, which then we're all in trouble, because I'm sort of – I've missed the turning circle, and I've either got to do one of two things, the bus driver or somebody has got to come and lift me around, just this much, eight or 10 inches, sorry, metric yet. Or alternatively, I've got to go back down the ramp and start all over again. There's no guarantee that I'm going to get it right the second time. Now, with a hydraulic ramp, I've never missed it yet. I've never missed it yet. So it's this indent thing and the lip that's my concern.

I will go along – they're going to use manually deployable ramps from now on and there's nothing wrong with that but there needs to be a better design, and there must be. The only ones I can comment on are the ones in Darwin because it's the only ones I have experienced. I believe in Adelaide, they pull them out from under the bus, right. So, you haven't got this indent into thing – now, I can't say that for sure. If the bus driver, after I've got on or Joyce or somebody, doesn't put that ramp folded back in again, and other able bodied passengers get on and I've observed it, they trip over this lip. They're giving the bus driver the money. They get the ticket. They're not looking. They swing around and boom. They trip. So, that's nearly all I wanted to say about that. There's got to be a better way.

MR BELL: A better design.

45

MR KERR: I wrote to my Minister, the Minister for Transport about that and she wrote back a nice letter saying it meets standards. It meets disability standards and

that's all it's got to do. Like that's probably right. It does meet disability standards, but it is hazardous. It is hazardous.

5 MR BELL: Okay, Bill, thank you for that comment. Obviously, as time goes by we hope that the bus or the people who build these features for buses will learn from each other and see clever ways to do this and some of these problems can be eliminated because clearly, that's an undesirable situation. So, thank you for drawing that to our attention.

10 MR KERR: Okay, can I make a comment on taxis from Joyce?

MR BELL: Please do.

15 MR KERR: Last Friday, I was going to have lunch with some friends. I live out near the hospital in town, which is about five or six kilometres out. I ordered a taxi at 8.30 for 11.15. That is two and three-quarter hours' notice. 11.30, I rang, "Trying to find you one Bill." 11.45, "Trying to find you one Bill." 12.05, "Cancel it. I've missed my lunch. The people have got to go to the airport."

20 Now, following on from what Joyce said, they get an \$8000 subsidy from the government, or off their registration, right, and part of the deal is that disabled taxis have - wheelchair accessible taxis should give priority to wheelchair people, right? You will not convince me that in all that time one of those 12, 15, 16 taxis on the road was not - did not become vacant and couldn't pick me up. The Darwin Cup
25 visitors were in town, weren't they, and there's much more money to be paid running people from hotels like this to the racecourse than there is picking up Bill Kerr in his wheelchair at Tiwi. Thanks, John. That's all I have to say.

30 MR BELL: Right. Well, thank you for that, Bill. That's very good. Okay. Well, now, Joyce, you're finished?

MS DEERING: Yes. I think so.

35 MR BELL: Thank you. Well, thank you very much and thanks for coming along, Joyce. I think the next person I've got on the list is Tracey McCurrie. Hi, Tracey.

MS McCURRIE: Good morning.

40 MR BELL: Now, Tracey is from the Somerville Community Service.

MS McCURRIE: That's correct.

MR BELL: Just grab a seat, Tracey.

45 MS McCURRIE: First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be addressing here this morning. So, I can talk really loudly.

MR BELL: It's just we're recording it.

MS McCURRIE: Okay. My plan this morning is to talk specifically regarding Somerville Community Services clients and some of the issues that we've had around transport. Having said that, they do mirror, I guess, stories that we've already heard from Joyce and Bill this morning. So, a little bit of history about Somerville so
5 you have a bit of a background. Joyce just gave us some, but, yes, our disability services program provides supported accommodation to 46 clients across 10 homes. We have two homes in Katherine, one home in Tiwi, one home in Howard Springs, which is down the track a little bit, and the rest are in the northern suburbs of Rapid Creek. All of the clients that we support have severe to profound disabilities. It's
10 either a combination of physical and intellectual, or autism, or acquired brain injuries.

As Joyce did mention in her paper, a number of the clients that we support with physical disabilities have profound disabilities, meaning they cannot access a regular
15 wheelchair, that they do need to have quite large, modified wheelchairs that are very unwieldy and, you know, very hard to be moving around, which means that we very much do rely on being able to access specifically, I guess, taxis. We've learnt very quickly that it's quite hard to get those sort of wheelchairs onto things like buses for obvious reasons - again, turning circles, and you can't get them on and things like
20 that.

So we recognise that there have been improvements across the services. I would like to say that, first off, specifically around the bus fleet. Unfortunately, again, we just can't access it. For our able-bodied clients or clients who have, like, the sort of other
25 sort of wheelchairs, yes, we have begun to access them. We also have an understanding that, you know, we can ring up and say, "Look, is there going to be a bus on this time on this route?" and if it's not, that they'll arrange, if possible, to put one on; if not, they'll let us know. So those sort of systems are in place.

I'm not sure about Katherine. I don't believe that that's in place in Katherine, which is an issue for us having, you know, 10 clients down there. So, they very much have to rely on vehicles that Somerville purchase and, again, we're a non-profit, non-government organisation. We're not funded to have a vehicle fleet and run that fleet, so that basically means we've got to try and find someone out there with good will in
30 the community to provide us, you know, with a \$70,000 vehicle by the time you buy a bus and put a ramp on the back, and we use internal ramps to overcome some of those issues that Bill was talking about with the external ramps.
35

The biggest issue for us is around taxis. As much as possible, we try and schedule taxis, so we've got clients who have regular activities in the community, and once I
40 know what they are, one of my roles is to liaise with the taxi company and set up, you know, a schedule, so that we know every Monday that Fred is going out at 10 o'clock, you know, and he needs to be picked up at 9.40 so he can get to his venue on time. His return taxi is booked for midday and, yes, that should be the way it works. Unfortunately, time and time and time and time again, those vehicles are late.
45 And I can cite examples where taxis have been over an hour late, which means that we've had a client left out in the community with support from the other agency, but

that then makes that person late for their next activity, or they're late being able to knock off to go home because it's the end of the day.

5 A specific example I can cite is we had a client who had to be picked up from
Nightcliff and dropped back into Rapid Creek. Okay, it's only, you know, a five
minute journey but it's an important journey for that client so he can get home again.
The other organisation that we work with rang me to say, "We can't get a vehicle
there. What can you do?" So I rang my contact in the taxi company and said,
10 "Look, what's going on?" basically, and she said that, "The driver is just refusing to
go. He is just refusing to take that job." So my question to her was along the lines
of, "Well, this is a regular booking. How can he refuse a job? Can't you give it to
somebody?" and there's an - you know, "There's one taxi here. There's one off the
road. There's one out at Howard Springs, and this guy is just flatly refusing."
15 Eventually he did go, because I sort of said a few things, and, yes, we got that there.
But that is happening more and more often and, you know, it's almost every week I
can cite that sort of example occurring.

And the belief is, and as has already been said, it's easier to pick up a non-disabled
20 person. It's a quicker, cheaper fare, and why go through all the hassle of having to
strap somebody in and all those other sorts of things. Again, our issue, is after hours
and weekends. You know, you just can't get someone out and about, which means
that they're not able to be an active member of their community. They can't go to
concerts. They can't go to Sunset Jazz, you know, which is a great thing this time of
25 year. They can't go to sporting fixtures. You cannot book a taxi for a weekend. So
if I wanted to go somewhere on a Saturday morning and I needed a multipurpose
taxi, I just can't book it. I've got to ring up on that morning and just hope that they'll
come and pick me up. But the thing is, yes, can I get home or am I going to be stuck
here, or is someone going to have to push me 10 K home or whatever it happens to
be.

30 Again, we have issues around the training of drivers, specifically around the use of
restraints. Obviously there are standards about people having to be restrained in the
back of vehicles. We hear horror stories time and again by either our staff or other
agency staff, where our clients have been loaded onto a taxi and then, yes, the correct
35 restraint is not used or we get them home and, you know, there's not lap belts, or it's
only been restrained at one point, and we're told time and again that, "Yep. Look,
we train our drivers, we can't - but they're basically rogues once they're out and
about. We have no control over them."

40 Taxis in Katherine, there's one - one multipurpose vehicle, and out of the 10 clients
that we have down there, five of them are in large, modified wheelchairs. Plus, I
don't actually have stats, I don't know how many other people there would be in the
community, but they can never access that vehicle. I was talking to the staff who
work in Katherine knowing I was coming here this morning and asking them about
45 access to the Ghan, because I know that there have been concerns since it started
running about people not being able to get on and off the train. Now, we've not tried
to get our clients on there because it has been an issue, plus the cost is prohibitive for
people to actually - being able to afford a ticket.

But when I was talking to the staff down there, they were saying that they don't believe that you could get one of our modified wheelchairs onto that train because you've actually got to go across the tracks and then you can't - you don't physically get it up onto the train. But that's also restrictive for our people who may be more
5 mobile but have got mobility issues even though they are mobile. I mean, how do you get someone up four sets of stairs, or something, you know. So, yes.

One of the other issues I would like to raise this morning is the permanent exemption that has been granted to small aircraft. Given that 67 per cent of the clients who we
10 support are of Aboriginal descent and are from remote communities such as Ramingining or Maningrida, which are, you know, in the middle of nowhere, they have no way of getting to their home communities. To drive is impossible. It would mean taking one of the - like, the Hi-Ace buses. You need - you know, you need a four-wheel drive to access, so you can't get a wheelchair into the back of a four-
15 wheel drive. We can't take our buses out there, because they just wouldn't make it.

The issues that we have, obviously, are - those vehicles cannot carry the wheelchair to start with, which means that we can get someone on to the plane if we're happy to overlook all the OH and S stuff around and manual-handling somebody up, you
20 know, these little sets of stairs and this tiny little aisle-way, so, yes, we've got clients who have not been home - you know, they are 30-odd years old and haven't been home since they were five or six years old and they were of a more manageable size, for want of a better term, which we find extremely sad. So that's the issues. What I did when I looked at what you guys had up on your website and asking for was to
25 have a look at the questions that you had asked and I haven't answered all the questions because I just ran out of time.

But you asked questions about data, etcetera. And I would just like to say I actually have no idea about how data collection occurs and I would actually be interested to
30 know, because I don't believe we've ever been asked to participate in providing data on the standards and how it's all working, so - - -

MR BELL: Well, we are starting to - - -

35 MS McCURRIE: I know that is what today is about, but five years later - - -

MR BELL: No, we are starting to get some data.

40 MS McCURRIE: Yes.

MR BELL: And it's quite interesting, so - for example - let me give you a couple of examples. Somebody from one of the cities in Western Australia came along and told us that they had never stopped to count the number of bus stops they had and, in particular, how many of them would be DDA compliant. Some other - another
45 jurisdiction has told us that they have data on taxis, so the taxis are required to report the delay time in meeting client's needs.

MS McCURRIE: That would be interesting data - - -

MR BELL: So if we can get our hands on some of this data it could be quite interesting. Well, for example, in the Dubbo hearing we were given a time for delay on accessible cabs, which I must say sounded not too bad and that was from the taxi operator. He actually had the data himself. So - - -

5

MS McCURRIE: But, again, how reliant is that, though?

MR BELL: Well, that's true, but I understand that the New South Wales Authorities do some auditing, so we're optimistic and Dubbo may just happen to be a particularly interesting situation. Finding data is a challenge and we wouldn't have expected an organisation like yours would sort of have the time and resources to be collecting data on how long you wait for a taxi, for example.

10

MS McCURRIE: It would actually be quite easy to do, though, because we hear it. I mean, it's every day – it is every day stuff.

15

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: It wouldn't actually be that hard to track it and set up a system.

20

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: But, yes, I just find it really interesting that it was one of the questions and it got me thinking that – well, we don't actually keep data.

25

MR BELL: No.

MS McCURRIE: And I don't know about, you know, the bus companies or the taxi companies or the train companies – or whoever it is and, you know, what the requirements were. So that was just something I wanted to earmark as a point of interest.

30

MR BELL: Well, one of the reasons why the data is important is because the standards have set some targets to be met at this five year point. We're five years into – in some cases what is a 25 year process. And so we are trying to quantify how well those targets have been met. And that is quite a challenge, so we're on the hunt for data.

35

MS McCURRIE: Yes. Look, I understand that. I guess it's just a shame that it hasn't been from the beginning, so that it would be something that is mapped and compared over time and – because, I mean, that would give you some of your answers to how well have the standards been implemented. There was a question around the introduction of the standards and has it helped me understand my rights as a public transport user and – when I say me I sort of looked at it as an organisation perspective, as I have done with the other questions.

45

And, again, it just got me thinking that if I didn't work for an organisation such as I did I probably wouldn't actually know that transport standards existed and I think it

probably – it would depend – you know, if you were a member of some – one like IDA or, you know, National Disability Services or something, that information is sort of getting to one particular level, but I sort of questioned how public that information is getting. And I just don't believe I saw anything as a public person when the standards were implemented. And I just sort of, again, wanted to put that on the table as a way of – you know, of just raising it - you know, what is done?

MR BELL: No, I think that's – I think that's a very interesting question, because compliance with the standards rests in a number of different places. You know, the airlines, for example, have some responsibilities - Local Government, State Government, Territory Governments, so I think that's a very interesting point. We will give that some careful thought.

MS McCURRIE: Thank you. And that was pretty much it. Yes.

MR BELL: Okay. Well, look, there are some interesting information issues here and it's not so much – it's not so much of what you're entitled to have, it's really how do you get to read a bus timetable if you've got a visual impairment and things like that. Let me ask you a couple of questions?

MS McCURRIE: Please.

MR BELL: In the territory does the Territory Government give financial support to help some of your clients, for example, to get to medical appointments?

MS McCURRIE: Clients who are eligible can access taxi vouchers through the taxi subsidiary scheme.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: And that can be used to attend appointments, go on community access or whatever it happens to be. I mean, that is at a set amount depending on what your specific needs are. So if I look at Somerville clients just about all of our clients have access to taxi vouchers because that is their only mode of transport.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: And some of the issues we have are, I guess, around accessing – I notice the bus link gentleman sitting over there. Accessing the buses is – okay, we can't get our modified wheelchairs on there, but we've also got clients who may have aggressive or assaultive behaviours, so we can't again put the public at risk by putting them on a bus.

MR BELL: On a bus, yes.

MS McCURRIE: And if something was to happen – so, again, they use taxis.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: So a lot of my experience is around taxis versus using buses. We've only really used buses for clients who we've had in our service who have been attending school and, you know, they have been picked up each morning and taken to school each morning on a bus.

5

MR BELL: Now, you also mentioned that you had a house in a settlement that is a little way away from Darwin?

MS McCURRIE: Howard Springs, yes.

10

MR BELL: Howard Springs is the place I was thinking of. How do people in Howard Springs with a disability get to Darwin?

MS McCURRIE: They just don't. No, you need to basically have your own vehicle. We've got one vehicle that is permanently located out there, because otherwise – yes, they would never go anywhere. They wouldn't be able to attend appointments. There would be no such thing as doing personal shopping. There would be no such thing as going to the show or whatever it happened to be. It's just impossible and the cost of a fair – I mean, you could use a taxi and taxis will go out there, but again it's like can you get one when you want one. And, yes, it's just the cost. It's just cost prohibitive.

15

20

MR BELL: What would roughly be the distance from Darwin to Howard Springs?

25

MS GOLDSMITH: 30 K.

MS McCURRIE: Yes, is it?

MS GOLDSMITH: About 30 K.

30

MR BELL: 30 kilometres.

MS McCURRIE: I was going to say it takes, like, 40 minutes, so 40 minutes - - -

35

MR BELL: Yes. Well, I mean, that's actually not very far in some ways. I mean, if you think about the size of the territory.

MS McCURRIE: No, compared to down south - - -

40

MR BELL: I mean, some of your other clients need to actually go much further afield and that's a relatively close distance. So for your other clients they are really – there's really not much option for them.

45

MS McCURRIE: They are isolated out there basically. And, as I said, if it wasn't for us being able to fundraise and keep those buses on the road, then they just – they would be stuck there the entire time or spend their entire pensions, which are extremely small anyway, on a taxi fare once every now and then.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS GOLDSMITH: Sorry, I noticed earlier you said that you had started using the buses for some users.

5

MS McCURRIE: More of our mobile clients - - -

MS GOLDSMITH: More of the mobile - - -

10 MS McCURRIE: - - - who don't have, I guess, aggressive or assaultive behaviour.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS McCURRIE: Yes.

15

MS GOLDSMITH: Is that – I got the impression, and maybe incorrectly, that that was something that has changed recently. Have you increased the amount of reliance you place on the buses or - - -

20 MS McCURRIE: We don't use them a lot, no, simply because a lot of people just can't wait and – I mean, I used to catch buses all the time when I was – you know, first in Darwin as a student and everything and, you know, I must admit they are really good about running on time – or I believe that they were. I don't know what it is like now. But, again, we just can't have – our people just don't understand to wait.
25 You know, "It's going to be here in a minute. It's going to be here in a minute," but it actually might be caught up behind an accident somewhere and it's still, you know, about 20 minutes away.

30 So we tend not to use them, but it's just – I guess, I get – when I was talking about buses it's more around the information, I think, that – particularly like the Darwin Bus and Bus Link have been good about letting us know that if we want a specific bus on a specific route at a specific time that you can ring. And, you know, we've got access to the timetables and we've got – we know what the route maps are, so we've got access to that information. So, I guess, that's why I raised it as a bit of a
35 tick for them.

MS GOLDSMITH: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes.

40

MS McCURRIE: Because, you know, they have taken that time and energy to get that information out to us and make sure that it is known.

MS GOLDSMITH: Okay, thank you.

45

MR BELL: Well, thank you very much for coming.

MS McCURRIE: You're welcome. Thank you for having me.

MR BELL: Thanks for all that. That's very helpful. I don't know whether you heard the bit at the start, but we're going to produce a transcript and it will be on the web.

5 MS McCURRIE: Yes, I've got the address, thank you.

MR BELL: So you'll be able to see it on the web in about a week.

MS McCURRIE: "I didn't say that." Thank you.

10

MS DEERING: Can I just add one thing to what Tracey said?

MR BELL: I'm sorry, Joyce, we need to get the microphone to you.

15 MS DEERING: Just to do with the trains, I understand that Robyn Bouge has been working with the train people, to try and make it possible for people in wheelchairs and not so able people to get on the trains. And in contact with one of the people down in Adelaide, they were trialling a lifter - now, I don't know where along the line it was, it may have even been in Adelaide, to see how well that worked, and if it
20 was working properly then they were going to try and put a few more along the line so that - for those people here in Darwin, and if you haven't - if you fine folk from down south haven't seen our railway station, we would recommend you go and find it and see what it's all about, and then have a ride on our train. But there is a possibility that in whatever future that there could be a lifter available, and that's one
25 of the best news we've heard about the rail.

MR BELL: I'm just a little surprised that some of the infrastructure for The Ghan, which is relatively recent, hasn't been designed with people with disabilities in mind, because when you consider what has been spent on that line, the additional cost for
30 the access wouldn't have, I thought, been all that much. I mean, I think it's a great train and, you know, I hope it will continue to be a great success, particularly for the Territory. It's got all sorts of economic benefits, but I have heard that there are some access issues, and certainly trying to get across tracks in a wheelchair doesn't sound to me like a - terribly accessible. And we may well take your recommendation and
35 go out and check this train station for ourselves.

MS DEERING: It's worth it.

MR BELL: I've never seen a train that's a whole kilometre in length. All right.
40 We're going to stop for 10 minutes because I'm keen to have a cup of coffee, and if the rest of you would like a cup of coffee or indeed tea, there's some out the back. So we'll start again just in 10 minutes.

45 **ADJOURNED**

[11.48am]

RESUMED

[12.01pm]

MR BELL: If we could resume, we've now got – it's Aaron Blasch and Terry Morgan from Buslink, is that right?

MR BLASCH: That's right.

5

MR MORGAN: Correct.

MR BELL: Okay. It's all yours. Tell us about Buslink.

10 MR BLASCH: We'll start with Buslink. Buslink are a private, family-owned company that operate throughout the Northern Territory, providing bus transport – I'm sorry. I'm Aaron Blasch - - -

MR BELL: This is Aaron speaking now. Thank you.

15

MR BLASCH: And Terry Morgan next to me.

MR BELL: That's all right, we just needed to know who was who. I got everything else right, except that.

20

MR BLASCH: Yes. So we both work for Buslink, a family-owned, private company that subcontracts public transport, urban work from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning through the Public Transport branch. We operate urban buses, we operate school buses, and we also operate special needs school buses. And in that we also do charter work so people can charter our buses to school excursions, through to a five day tour around Kakadu and, you know, we do transfers from The Ghan into town and back again regularly, so we have quite a broad spectrum of work that we're involved in.

25

30 With our urban fleet we've got 24 buses in our fleet and another one on the way. All of those buses are what we call low floors, so they've all got ramps. We've got - 10 of those have got automatic ramps and the other 14 have got the manual ramps which fold out like – I think it was Bill was talking about earlier. So the only time we don't have on our runs an urban low floor is in the case of a breakdown or an emergency situation, and we would revert back to one of our older, high-floor buses which do have the steps.

35

I guess we're here because there's a couple of issues that have popped up lately to do with mobility aids on our buses and with our drivers, where they haven't been able to fit onto the bus physically, and customers have had to be left at bus stops.

40

MR BELL: This is because they're in a big scooter - - -

MR BLASCH: Yes.

45

MR BELL: - - - that's either too heavy or too large?

MR BLASCH: Too large to fit around the corner, or the entranceway to the bus. We've had one instance where a driver assisted a person in a mobility aid and ended up injuring their shoulder and was on workers compensation for a little amount of time – helping that person on an off the bus. We had another instance where one of
5 our buses was damaged because of the mobility aid running into the bus while the person on there was trying to get on. And the other instance where someone had to be left behind because of that – because the mobility aid was too large to fit on the bus.

10 MR BELL: There seems to be a little problem with some of these larger scooters, that there's no sort of standard or dimension. So, you have to meet a certain - - -

MR BLASCH: Yes.

15 MR BELL: - - - standard in terms of your dimensions, but some of the people who are selling these scooters don't seem to tell their clients what those – what the dimensions are meant to be. And you can sort of understand that some of these very big scooters are attractive because they have a capacity to go over bigger distances, they're probably more comfortable - but what is the weight limit on your ramp?

20

MR BLASCH: Our ramps have a weight limit of 300 kilograms.

MR BELL: Yes, that's fairly standard. And that's the person plus the chair?

25 MR BLASCH: That's the total weight on the ramp at any one time, yes.

MR BELL: That's the total weight, yes. And have you managed to buckle any of them yet?

30 MR BLASCH: We've had two.

MR BELL: Two?

MR BLASCH: And – yes, their replacement cost is over \$1500 a piece.
35

MR BELL: Yes. The bigger problem is that if, as a result of buckling the ramp, you can't get passengers on and off the bus, there's an inconvenience to other users.

MR BLASCH: Yes. Fortunately that has never happened. When the ramps have
40 been damaged, the driver has picked that up at the time and we've managed to swap it out with a different bus before, you know, someone was stuck on the bus or unable to get off the bus. And the other problem is that if the ramps don't sit flush on the floor, the bus has an interlock braking system so that it won't move, and that can also cause a problem. So if the ramp is bent up - there's two points that need to connect.
45 If they don't connect, the bus won't move.

MR BELL: Won't move.

MR BLASCH: So then the bus is rendered immobile.

MR BELL: How do you get on with the footpaths and the points at which the bus
5 stops to let people on and off? Are the footpaths in reasonable condition around
here?

MR MORGAN: The majority are. There's a couple that aren't, and that's – we had
problems there at one stage. The one that Aaron was alluding to, where we had to
10 help a person on, and that's where the driver hurt his shoulder on that, because there
was too much of an angle for the ramp to go down. And obviously that puts extra
stress upon the ramp as well.

MR BELL: Do you get sympathy or interest from the local Council, in terms of
15 addressing some of these sorts of problems?

MR MORGAN: I'm not quite sure. Yes, we do, but sometimes, I suppose, it's a
matter of priorities as well for the council. But certainly, yes, they're open to any
20 suggestions that we may give them and, to be honest, we don't have a lot of those
problems there, but there are a couple of points around Darwin where these problems
do occur.

MR BELL: And is the bus interchange constructed by the Darwin City Council or –
I mean, you don't build your own bus - - -

25 MR BLASCH: No.

MR MORGAN: No, we just utilise them.

MR BLASCH: All of the interchanges, to the best of my knowledge, are the
30 responsibility of the public transport branch up here, and all of the interchanges that
we use – there are three main interchanges: Palmerston, Casuarina and Darwin. All
three of those four, the purpose of using the wheelchair ramp are quite fine. There's
no problems with any of those. They've all got gutters that are high enough to allow,
when the ramp goes out - - -

35 MR BELL: It's pretty well - - -

MR BLASCH: - - - for there to be, you know, a good angle for the wheelchairs or
40 prams, in a lot of cases as well, to use.

MR BELL: Yes, because we're talking about general accessibility here.

MR BLASCH: Yes.

45 MR BELL: It's not just an issue for wheelchairs and you're right, prams are a major
consideration.

MR BLASCH: Yes, at all the interchanges they work well.

MR BELL: Sorry, did you want to make a comment?

MS BURFORD: Can I just comment on the footpath?

5 MR BELL: Yes, can we get your name, please?

MS BURFORD: Oh, Jane Burford.

10 MR BELL: It's on? It's on, yes.

MS BURFORD: Yes, I'm sure the footpaths by the bus stops are all quite good and acceptable, they've made sure of that, but for someone, especially with a physical disability in a wheelchair – particularly, I mean, I notice around my neighbourhood, some of the footpaths are in an atrocious state and certainly wouldn't want to be even
15 pushing a pram down some of the footpaths. So I think work needs to be done on that sort of accessibility.

MR BELL: Yes, Joyce raised this point this morning: that the low-floor buses are fine, but if you can't actually get to the bus then there's a whole other issue about
20 footpaths and so on, and this is an issue that's come up in other hearings too. It's also – they are also issues around this for people who have visual impairment, so that there are difficulties in even finding the right bus stop for those sorts of people, but let me come back to our colleagues here from Buslink. So you must have actually quite a young fleet of buses, by Australian standards? There wouldn't be many bus
25 operators who would have such a big percentage of low-floor buses in their fleet?

MR BLASCH: Yes, I think you would be hard pressed to find a fleet of urban buses that, in its entirety, would be more up-to-date or more modern than ours. The 14
30 buses with manual ramps are nearing their second birthday. Generally – we took delivery over about six months of all of those buses and that's coming up to around two years, and the 10 with the automatic ramps are coming up on nine or 10 years, depending, again, on build completion and delivery date. But all of those buses are, yes, well under 10 years.

35 MR BELL: And you have a contract with the Northern Territory government to provide the service. Can I ask, what's the period – length – of the contract?

MR BLASCH: Again, I don't deal a lot with the contracts, but, to the best of my
40 knowledge, it has another – about two years to run, I think.

MR BELL: But you don't know the total length of it?

MR BLASCH: I think it was an eight year contract.

45 MR BELL: Okay. An eight year contract would be quite good. Let me explain why this is an issue. If you're investing in buses, you want to know that you're going to be able to get a return on your investment over the life of your contract, and we've heard in jurisdiction, problems that the remaining time was too short and

people were unwilling to make investments in new buses, because they were uncertain that the contract would be renewed or even the terms on which the contract would be renewed. It seemed to have reverted to a year by year basis. So I don't really want to get into matters that are commercial in confidence, but let me just ask:
5 how much of the detail of the contract that you have with the Northern Territory government is on the public record, do you know?

MR BLASCH: No, sorry, I wouldn't know.

10 MR BELL: It's all right. We can explore that with the Territory folk later, but it seems that somehow they've got the formula a bit better here than in some other jurisdictions, because – and that's reflected in your investment in these low-floor buses. Do you have trouble driving them around Darwin? Are there places where
15 the roads are not – for example, in Dubbo, we heard that there's a floodway and you can't drive the low-floor bus across the floodway, because the angle of the road is too sharp and you would scrape the underside of the bus.

MR MORGAN: Not so much on the urban runs, because they're pretty well set
20 now.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR MORGAN: And have been for quite a few years. We certainly have some issues for our special needs buses. We have a fleet of special needs buses – school
25 buses. We go from house to house to pick children up and take them to whichever school they go to, whether it Henbury or Nenarluk or one of the others. They're a low floor as well and they have ramps also and we've also got lifts inside to lift the wheelchairs and stuff like that. Certainly, some of the areas that we have to get the buses up to, as in cul-de-sacs and places like that, it's very difficult, which means
30 that we have to reverse in a lot of areas, which we try not to do. It's not a good idea, trying to back a bus in a tight area. But on the urban, no, they're all pretty good.

MR BELL: Yes. So what about services outside the city of Darwin? Are you
35 providing those sorts of services?

MR MORGAN: We provide services through to Palmerston - - -

MR BELL: And that's really – that's sort of - - -

40 MR BLASCH: Yes, that's - - -

MR BELL: - - - an adjacent area, isn't it?

MR MORGAN: Yes, and then Tsoukas Bus Services then take people from
45 Palmerston out to some of the rural areas.

MR BELL: To the more distant – but they would be high-floor buses?

MR BLASCH: They're high-floor buses.

MR MORGAN: I believe so. Yes, they don't have any low floor, no.

5 MR BELL: No. So you're not operating buses in the, sort of, 100 kilometre per hour zone or - - -

MR MORGAN: No.

10 MR BLASCH: No. No, we don't go out – the Stuart Highway between Berrimah and Palmerston is 100 kilometre and hour zone.

MR BELL: Yes, that's right, but that's a short distance.

15 MR BLASCH: You wouldn't – it would only about four or five kilometres of that with two or three bus stops in the 100 kilometre an hour zone. The rest of it is all 80 kilometres and, you know, fairly urban areas.

MR MORGAN: One area that I did forget, we do go out to one rural area on what
20 we call our "446 run", and that's – from Palmerston, it's probably another 20 k south, I suppose.

MR BLASCH: Yes, it's just out past the Arnhem highway. It starts out on Gulnare
25 Road.

MR MORGAN: Yes, and then comes back towards Palmerston.

MR BELL: Okay.

30 MR MORGAN: And we have a low floor vehicle on that.

MR BELL: Okay. And with these buses, you're just relying on people in a wheelchair, for example, to have brakes on their wheelchair to hold them - - -

35 MR MORGAN: Yes.

MR BLASCH: Yes.

MR MORGAN: There's no restraints on an urban bus - - -

40

MR BELL: There's no restraints?

MS GOLDSMITH: Has that caused any problems similar to what Joyce was talking
45 about, that you're aware of?

MR BLASCH: I can recall one situation, where somebody in a motorised mobility aid did fall out of their mobility aid as the bus had to brake suddenly when it was cut off at a T-intersection. But again, that's one pretty freakish set of circumstances to

have happen, but that's the only time I can recall anything like that. As far as I'm aware, a couple of years ago, I can recall a brochure being published by Public Transport for the disability – or the special needs access – disability access buses, and in there it said something along the lines of, you know, “People in wheelchairs should try and face backwards, because it provides better stability.” But that is the only real guidelines that the public would have and we, you know – our drivers get instruction to make sure that if they see someone in a wheelchair or a mobility aid that needs get on the bus that they make sure that the area designated for that is clear, and that's about all that, you know, you can do, at this point.

10 MR BELL: So who builds your buses?

MR BLASCH: All of our urban buses are built by Volgren.

15 MR BELL: Okay. Sorry, how do you spell that?

MR BLASCH: V-o-l-g-r-e-n.

20 MR BELL: Thanks. Somebody mentioned that the other day and I didn't know how to spell it.

MR BLASCH: Yes, so they're all built in Melbourne in the Dandenongs and then they're driven up here by Volgren and we take delivery of them in our depot.

25 MR BELL: Okay. And in terms of picking people up of the Ghan, do you ever encounter people with wheelchairs and mobility limitations coming off the Ghan?

30 MR BLASCH: There have been a couple of cases where there have been people in wheelchairs, but they have not been totally incapacitated.

MR BELL: Yes, so they've been able to - - -

35 MR BLASCH: They've had a limited range of movement. The buses that we use do have a kneeling capability. They are coach style buses, so they do have bin space underneath, but they do have the leaning ability. So once the bus pulls up next to a gutter and leans – or kneels – it's about 10 centimetres to the first step and then, you know, the driver makes sure the front two seats are free for that person. There's handrails in the stairwell and they get on and off like that. But we've never had someone who has been completely restricted to a wheelchair that I'm aware of.

40 MR MORGAN: Just on that, all the urban buses have the kneeling capacity as well.

MR BELL: How long does it take to get it down to the - - -

45 MR MORGAN: Five seconds.

MR BELL: It's very quick. Yes.

MR BLASCH: And then, before the bus moves off, it will raise itself up again and that's just part of the features to do with the air suspension that all the buses have got.

5 MR BELL: Yes. Okay. Since we're talking about buses, how do you help people who have a visual disability to understand your timetable? Do you know if your timetables are - you know how people who have a visual impairment have this software that can read down the columns on a computer screen, are your timetables readable with that, or you don't know?

10 MR BLASCH: I am not - I don't know about that. Buslink don't produce timetables.

15 MR BELL: You don't do timetables?

MR BLASCH: What our role is, is we get given - public transport produce the timetable, and then there's our company and another company by the name of Darwin Bus Service that both contract the work out. We get given what specific runs we're going to do at what time, and we get those in driver shift boards so that we know we need 21 buses or 22 buses to cover this allotment of work. And we do that. The buses and the drivers working to that timetable that we've been - that part of the timetable we've been given are our responsibility. Producing the timetables, maintaining the general infrastructure such as interchanges and bus stops is out of our scope and it comes back to public transport. So we have timetables available on the buses. That's about as far as our role goes with that area.

MR BELL: Okay. Somebody over here wanted to ask a question.

30 MS BAUMEN: Yes. Can I just make a point on the visual impairment part, I guess?

MR BELL: Sorry, what's your - - -

35 MS BAUMEN: Just in relation to the visual impairment and the timetables.

MR BELL: Yes. What's your name, sorry?

40 MS BAUMEN: Sorry. My name is Rhyannwen Baumen. It's spelt R-h-y-a-n-w-e-n, and I am from the Darwin Community Legal Service where I work as the disability discrimination advocate. I have had quite a number of clients that have had issues with accessing public transport and I'm thinking at the moment of a client who's got a visual impairment. And in terms of how she gets to know what the timetable is, it seems that transport and works are the appropriate government department. It just sends her a very large printed timetable. So they're a normal timetable but they just increase the font size.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS BAUMEN: But, in terms of her experience with buses, she says that it's very difficult because she can't see the bus coming in time to hail it, and she's got herself in a situation where she's frustrated with her experience of buses not stopping for her, and I think on time - at times has given a piece of her mind to the bus drivers.

5 They then get to know who she is because it's Darwin and they sometimes make the choice of driving past her, because they see her there, know she can be a bit of trouble and drive on by. So that's one of the complications that she experiences.

MR BELL: The difficulty for people with a visual impairment is that they can't see
10 the bus coming, so if the bus driver is expecting them to indicate that they would like the bus to stop - and that happens on some route where you have multiple buses using the one stop - the bus driver can't understand that. A bus driver can't look at somebody on a bus stop and work out that that's what the problem is.

15 MS BAUMEN: Yes.

MR BELL: And then, of course, the second problem is that if there are multiple buses using the route, the person with the visual impairment doesn't know which bus is coming. So it may be that the wrong bus has stopped and then it turns out that it's
20 the next one, or the other one pulls in behind and then passes.

MS BAUMEN: Exactly.

MR BELL: We've heard about some of these problems. There are some interesting
25 technology solutions, but the way I read it here is that perhaps these are outside the responsibility of the bus operator, and they may perhaps be something that's more to do with the people who provide the timetable and those sorts of features.

MS BAUMEN: This particular client, she has approached the Minister and the
30 department, and one of the - I don't know if it's a solution - but one of the approaches they were looking at taking was getting the buses to basically stop at every stop where there was a passenger. But I know that would create problems for you given that it will mess with, you know, your timetable and how you run, if you're stopping if someone is there and they're not trying to catch that particular bus.
35 So I don't know if that would be a long term solution.

MR BLASCH: If I can? That is actually what we do now.

MS BAUMEN: It is.
40

MR BLASCH: Starting the - officially starting on 23 July, the policy changed where there's no longer a need for any public transport customers to signal for a bus. As long as there is someone in the bus stop, that bus will pull up at the bus stop to make sure that nobody is missed. And you're right, that does cause a few flow-on
45 problems. Whereas, in the city, leaving from the Darwin city terminal around about 4.25 through to about 4.35, there can be upwards of about 10 buses leaving on different routes of travel, and when you've got people waiting at - there's five or six bus stops that all of those buses will go past in that short period of time, and you

have all of the buses having to pull up at those bus stops, whether they're required to or not.

5 Because there's nobody signalling for the bus, it causes a large backlog of traffic which then causes, you know, traffic problems in the whole of the city. So that's something that, again, as bus operators, we can't do - specifically Buslink, we can't do a lot about. We've been asked to do this, and that's what we do now. That's what all of our drivers are instructed to do, but there are flow-on problems with that. Fortunately they have been very few and far between at this stage. But at one of the
10 bus stops in question, I know that with six buses that the buses - if they all happen to be behind each other, will be queuing across traffic lights, you know, and - - -

15 MR MORGAN: I can vouch for that. It happened to me the other day. I was actually driving one of the buses. I was the fourth one in line and I was actually across a major intersection.

MR BELL: Yes, that's - this, of course, comes down to where you position bus stops as well, because that's another issue. But, I mean, there are no easy solutions to any of this. At the interchange, are there audible announcements saying, "Bus 426
20 will be leaving from bay 13 in two minutes," or - - -

MR MORGAN: There is at Palmerston.

25 MR BLASCH: There is at the Palmerston interchange, there's an audible computerised system.

MR BELL: It's a computerised one?

30 MR BLASCH: Yes.

MR BELL: That's good.

35 MR BLASCH: And there's also LED signboards up there as well. However, at Darwin interchange and Casuarina interchange, there's no audible signals telling people what buses will be departing when. There's a PA system, but that's used for general announcements by the customer service officers, but there's no regular announcements of departures or arrivals.

40 MS GOLDSMITH: If there was, would that mitigate some of the problems associated with those centres?

MR BLASCH: I don't think it would, because the problems are not at the interchanges. At the interchanges the buses have - - -

45 MR BELL: Their own bay.

MR BLASCH: - - - their own bays that they'll pull up in to drop off - - -

MR BELL: Yes. It's when you get down the street.

MR BLASCH: - - - and arrive. It's when you get to the second or third stop along the way and the buses have changed positions. They don't all follow in the same
5 order. So, on Monday, the first bus might be a route 10, the second bus might be a route 8, and the third bus might be a route 4. The next day, that order might change to an 8, a 4, and a 10. So the passengers waiting at the bus stop can't even stand in a specific area. They just have to mill about a, you know, 15 metre long platform hoping that the bus will pull up for them where want to. So, again, that's another
10 problem that's occurred from that.

MR BELL: Yes, running a bus company in this age isn't such a straightforward affair, is it? I think that's all really rather interesting. I mean, I think you are obviously working hard to address some of these issues and I think that's
15 commendable. Okay. Well - - -

MS DEERING: Can I make one observation?

MR BELL: Yes, that's all right. We'll pick you up, Joyce.
20

MS DEERING: I noted that you've got a fairly new fleet, as John also said, but I also noted in your comments with your kneeling buses and with some of your charter people, I guess, that you help people onto the bus. So that means they're not accessible for people in wheelchairs. Is that so?
25

MR MORGAN: Sorry, say that again?

MS DEERING: Your fleet is fairly new and you said you had a lot of kneeling buses. Is that so?
30

MR MORGAN: Yes.

MS DEERING: But somewhere along, you said that you helped people onto the bus. So does that mean that there are still steps and that wheelchairs are not accessible – sorry, other way around – it would not be accessible for wheelchairs?
35

MR MORGAN: On the Ghan, when we use the coach-type buses, that's correct.

MS DEERING: Yes, so that this - - -
40

MR MORGAN: Certainly around the urban area.

MS DEERING: So it's still – so we're still in the position, as I said before - - -

MR MORGAN: One of the things with the Ghan is that we can only use the buses that the Great Southern Rail wants us to use. We certainly can't use urban-type buses there, because we can't fit luggage underneath. With - - -
45

MR BELL: So you're taking a bus there that has the luggage lockers underneath.

MR MORGAN: That's right, yes.

5 MS DEERING: Underneath.

MR MORGAN: Which is why we use the coach-type buses, and they're generically called a "high floor". I suppose that's the easiest way to put it and, yes, they do have steps going up.

10

MR BELL: But they don't have - - -

MS DEERING: That answers my question.

15 MR BELL: - - - a low floor section at the front of - - -

MS DEERING: No further on.

MR BELL: Where you get on?

20

MR BLASCH: No, there are three steps that still need to be - - -

MR BELL: Straight up.

25 MR MORGAN: The coach type ones, yes.

MS GOLDSMITH: And there's no hydraulic or electric lifts - - -

MR MORGAN: Not in those, no.

30

MR BELL: On those.

MR BLASCH: Not fitted on those buses.

35 MR MORGAN: No.

MR BLASCH: But that being said, we do have five buses that we use for the special needs school runs that can also be chartered for groups and there's a group we regularly do charters for, the University of the Third Age, who will request these buses, because they have people in wheelchairs that want to go on their field trips of their excursions. So they specifically ask for us to put one of these buses on their charter and we do do that, which means that we do have buses available for charter for people that are in wheelchairs or have special needs.

45 MR BELL: And you could take one of those buses to Kakadu, for example?

MR BLASCH: It would be possible. The problem that you encounter then is that the primary purpose of those buses is a school bus contract, so if it was during the school holidays - - -

5 MR BELL: You could do it.

MR BLASCH: - - - and you wanted to go out to Kakadu, we could possibly do that for you. But just, if you wanted to go out to Kakadu during a school term then we would not simply – we couldn't do it. There would be no way that that would be possible.

10 MR BELL: And on those buses, how many wheelchairs can you take?

MR BLASCH: Those buses are able to be configured so that there's anywhere between eight wheelchairs and zero wheelchairs.

15 MR BELL: Okay.

MR MORGAN: If I can just add to that? We can fit eight wheelchairs if they're the regular size.

20 MR BELL: Okay. Yes. No, I understand.

MR MORGAN: You know, some wheelchairs people have legs out and stuff like that, and that obviously takes two spaces.

25 MR BELL: So if the University of the Third Age wants to do a trip to Kakadu, they should obviously talk to you about doing it on the school holidays?

30 MS DEERING: I'll go back and talk to them about that. It sounds like a good idea.

MR BELL: Yes, I think we've got the making of an opportunity here. I think we have. All right. Well, look, is there anything else that you wanted to add?

35 MR MORGAN: I don't think so.

MR BELL: That's been very - - -

40 MR MORGAN: The only thing I just wanted to get across is: the public transport, as in buses, has to have a set of standards that we have to abide by, but it seems to me – and you alluded to it before – that people making mobility aids and that don't have a set of Australian standards and is not going to mix and match and there's going to be problems otherwise, and I'm not quite sure how to get around that.

45 MR BELL: No, we've discussed this problem at some of the other hearings. There are issues about lack of standard anchor points on wheelchairs and mobility devices. Some of these devices are not even stable; the three wheeler ones or the ones with the two front wheels close together, intrinsically unstable. So if you went around

that roundabout out the university at any decent sort of speed, I'd be confident you would tip over. And there's obviously a range of issues that we need to address. On the one hand, you don't want to set a standard for wheelchairs that says, "They have to be this by this by this," because everybody is different and these wheelchairs – no
5 two wheelchairs seem to be quite identical.

On the other hand – and the standards already have this – they have some dimension provisions, which you obviously meet with your buses. The trouble is that there are some devices around that don't fall within those parameters and that's where the
10 problem arises. How we best address that, we're still thinking about. I think one of the things that's important for people when they buy one of those things is to know whether or not they're going to be able to get it on the bus, and so there's an information issue here, because I imagine most of these devices are not made in
15 Australia.

MR MORGAN: I don't know.

MS DEERING: A lot of them are.

20 MR BELL: Are they?

MS DEERING: Yes.

MR BELL: Well, certainly, Bill's one, I was looking at this morning, is made in
25 China, and so we – there seems to be a need for more information out there. But certainly, you're doing exactly what's required and we may figure out some cleverer way of anchoring them in the bus. But the trouble is: your bus driver doesn't want to have to get out of his seat and have to put clips on.

30 MR MORGAN: Well, they just don't physically fit through the door.

MR BELL: Yes, well, that's the biggest problem, but even the ones that do come through the door, it would be nice to have some way of ensuring a little bit more security for the rider. But it's not straight forward, because you can't put rails and
35 things in. You've got to have the scope to turn.

MR MORGAN: Yes, with the special needs buses that we – the school buses that we have for the special needs kids, they have anchor points all the way along and when a wheelchair comes in, not only do they have to be strapped in themselves to
40 the chair, but we also then strap them to the points.

MR BLASCH: So all of those have four anchor points that we use for them, as well as lap sash seat belt if there's not one fitted to the chair. So we can, you know, fully secure someone safely in the bus.
45

MR MORGAN: Because the other thing – and I think you alluded to it before or the lady from Somerville did – in a lot of cases on public transport, the people can't sit by themselves either, because – for whatever reason. And therefore, like, on the

special needs buses, you have an escort as well as a driver. But of course, on a public bus, that's a little bit hard to do.

5 MR BELL: No, I understand that. All right. Well, thank you very much for your time. We're very grateful, having come along. I think Jane Burford is next. Jane? Sorry to keep you waiting, Jane, but the discussion was going so well here.

MS BURFORD: I didn't expect to start this early, so that's good.

10 MR BELL: Now, Jane, you're from the Epilepsy Action Australian Organisation?

MS BURFORD: That's right, yes.

MR BELL: Yes.

15

MS BURFORD: And look, I've worked with people with epilepsy in different capacities, not just in this role, for a long time now – probably, oh, gosh, since early 90s, so I'm quite familiar with a lot of issues for people with epilepsy, and transport is actually a major issue for a number of people with epilepsy. I'll try and explain myself as best as possible and represent people with epilepsy as best as I can. Transport may be an issue, short term or long term, and the reason for this is: most people with epilepsy, when they're first diagnosed – I mean, usually, they're leading a relatively normal life before they're diagnosed. But when they're first diagnosed they lose their drivers licence. Sometimes this may only be for three months, but sometimes people need to be seizure free for two years, so it could be an indefinite time. Even if someone is having one seizure a year, they can't drive.

20

25

So losing the licence, of course, can affect – I'll just talk about how it can affect people first and then we'll discuss the issues with transport, but it certainly affects their employment and it restricts the employment they can get. So a lot of people can lose their job or get under-employed and, you know, then financial difficulties can be a problem. Certainly, it isolates someone, losing their licence, particularly up in these regions, and, you know, due to more expensive travels costs and limited finances, they usually only have essential travel only, and it does increase dependence upon other people. So they often are unable to rely on public transport or taxis – sorry, they do rely on that or family and friends for transport.

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35

So that's the main effects. I mean, I could go into it a lot more, but you don't need to know that today. Importantly, someone may also get their licence back, but if another seizure occurs they lose it again. So it's quite unpredictable and, at the moment, I guess, some of the issues for transport; epilepsy, unless the condition is severe or quite disabling, it's not recognised as a disability. So it varies greatly, in many degrees.

40

45

But, I mean, something consistently that happens is people can't drive a car. It's frequently unpredictable and prognosis is difficult to determine so, therefore, in some situations with Centrelink they say you have to be able to prove that you are going to be incapacitated for two years. Well, they can't often do that, because they don't

know, they are never sure. And, you know, it creates difficulties with other different types of benefits from Centrelink. And a lot of the current standards apply mainly to people with a physical disability. I'm not quite clear on that. Joyce – talking to Joyce in the break, she said the taxi subsidy scheme has been recently reviewed, so there's some more positive changes for people without a physical disability.

But certainly from my experience with clients approval of either mobility allowance or taxi subsidy scheme is very inconsistent and hard to predict who is going to get it and often relies on a very compassionate letter from their doctor, but most of my clients have not been able to get mobility allowance at all. So that's a problem of cost. Moving on there's – well, up here there's often poor accessibility to public transport, particularly in the rural and remote regions and, of course, taxis – even subsidised taxis are quite costly. Okay. Yes, so that means, you know, people often can't get to work or take their children to school or attend medical appointments or recreational activities.

Infrequent and inconvenient services as well, taxis and buses, often result in people waiting for public transport for long periods of time and a short trip in a car might take two hours if you're going by public transport. And heat is an issue for people with seizures as well so, you know, being out in the heat can certainly be a problem for some people. And also safety, I guess, with public transport and I'm also thinking of trains, which aren't here, well, except for the Ghan. From my experience of working in Sydney people who had seizures at train stations – it was quite a risk. There was a couple of clients who fell on to the train tracks and others, due to probably people's negligence or – not negligence, but not understanding epilepsy, the Police were called and these people were taken away by Police.

There's one bus experience, not up here, but one fellow had a seizure on a bus and when he came to the whole bus was empty and the driver was very angry with him for clearing out the bus. So – and he didn't know what was going on. Okay. But, yes, I mean, I think the main problem we encounter for people with epilepsy in transport is costs and access. So costs – costs in not being able to get the allowances available to a lot of people with a physical disability and certainly they – people with epilepsy do encounter more costs once they are diagnosed, just – well, doctors and drugs they have to buy and loss of employment, as I mentioned before and increased dependence on taxis.

So that's my summary but, I guess, a lot of those above factors also impact in other ways and a lot of our clients do report feelings like depression and uselessness due to the inability to continue employment or get around or be dependent upon others, so it really impacts their life. You know, if there was more access I think their lives would be more normal. And I guess some of the gaps – it would be nice to see some of the hidden conditions, the ones you can't physically see, to be recognised more as a disability when the condition isn't, you know, severe. But that's Centrelink. You have to have a severe form of epilepsy. Yes, that's about it. I do have some recommendations, I guess, but I'm going to put in a submission.

MR BELL: Yes, that would be good. Obviously we're very keen to receive submissions - - -

MS BURFORD: Yes.

5

MR BELL: - - - and that will be helpful. I think the point that you make about the importance of access to public transport to be able to keep a job for people with epilepsy is really quite an issue. And, of course, it's difficult because of the unpredictability of attacks. And perhaps a lack of understanding is the other thing - a
10 lack of understanding on the part of the public - - -

MS BURFORD: Oh, for sure. Yes.

MR BELL: - - - about this problem.

15

MS BURFORD: It's a very difficult thing to educate people about epilepsy because it's so varying, like I said.

MR BELL: Yes.

20

MS BURFORD: There is a lack of education everywhere.

MR BELL: And knowing, you know, how to deal with it. So – because when you have those people travelling on public transport there's obviously a chance that that
25 will happen.

MS BURFORD: Absolutely.

MR BELL: More than a chance. So those are some quite – some quite difficult
30 issues.

MS BURFORD: Yes.

MR BELL: And keeping a job is, of course, very important for some of those
35 people.

MS BURFORD: Yes.

MR BELL: If you can get the employer to understand the issues that makes the
40 difference between having somebody who has got a productive role in society or not. All right. Well, look, we will look forward to receiving a submission.

MS GOLDSMITH: I just had a question. You've referred to buses and trains, but
45 you haven't talked about planes. Do people with epilepsy – I mean, obviously there is a chance that people will have a seizure while they are on a plane. Is that more problematic these days given increased levels of security and some of these local carriers with less people?

MS BURFORD: I mean, I have encountered occasionally difficulties when people have had seizures on planes, but a lot of the flight attendants have had first aid training or - - -

5 MR BELL: Yes.

MS BURFORD: - - - nurses tend to have - - -

MR BELL: Qualified.

10

MS BURFORD: Yes. So planes aren't as big an issue. Some people don't disclose they have got epilepsy before they board.

MS GOLDSMITH: Okay.

15

MS BURFORD: It depends on the likelihood - - -

MS GOLDSMITH: Is there any - I'm aware that some of the low cost airlines have been requiring some people to take - to pay for carers to go with them. Is that - - -

20

MS BURFORD: Oh, right.

MS GOLDSMITH: - - - an issue for people with epilepsy at all?

25 MS BURFORD: Not usually, unless their condition is severe.

MS GOLDSMITH: Okay.

MS BURFORD: Yes.

30

MR BELL: Yes, sorry.

MR.....: Could I just make the point that it is a requirement that flight attendants are first-aid trained.

35

MR BELL: Thank you for that.

MR.....: A senior first aid certificate is a mandatory pre-requisite.

40 MR BELL: Yes.

MS GOLDSMITH: Okay, thank you.

45 MR BELL: So the aircraft situation is a little bit different where you do have people who are in a position to help. I mean, as opposed to a bus where the bus driver is supposed to be driving the bus.

MS BURFORD: That's right.

MR BELL: And you don't – I mean, these days we don't have bus conductors any more.

5 MS BURFORD: No. As I said, I think the main cost – main points for people with epilepsy are inaccessibility sometimes to the transport itself and also inaccessibility to any welfare benefits or taxi subsidies and things that - - -

10 MR BELL: Yes - which is an added problem for them. All right, well, look, thank you for that, Jane. That is very helpful. We will look forward to getting a submission from you. Just let me check, is there anybody else in the audience who wants to say something, because here is your chance. We've got a few minutes.

MS BURFORD: Can I just ask a quick question, John?

15 MR BELL: You can ask it.

MS BURFORD: Do you have a template for the submissions or we just write them?

20 MR BELL: No, no, no, you can just send us a letter.

MS BURFORD: Okay.

MR BELL: That will be fine.

25 MS BURFORD: Thank you.

MR BELL: So we're getting quite a variety of submissions in different formats, but it doesn't matter. We will deal with that, that's fine.

30 MS BURFORD: Yes.

35 MR BELL: No one else? All right. Well, look, thank you all for coming. It's very nice to talk to you. I think I've spoken to some of the people who haven't actually spoken at the hearing this morning, but that's fine. We look forward to receiving submissions. I think some of you obviously were going to use today's hearing to – instead of putting a submission in. We understand that fully. It's all on the record, so we can work from that, that's fine. And we will be getting on analysing submissions after 24 August and preparing a draft report. Thank you all for coming.

40 MS DEERING: When will the final report draft come out?

MS GOLDSMITH: That's the responsibility of the Minister, I think.

45 MR BELL: Yes. I think it's up to the Minister as to when the final report gets released, Joyce, but it's towards the end – the Minister gets the report towards the end of the year.

MS DEERING: The beginning of next year.

MR BELL: Well, we will have to wait and see what other events may intervene.

MS DEERING: Oh, yes.

5 MR BELL: But rest assured we will be on the case and that's one of the reasons
we're keen to get the submissions in by the 24th so that we can get this job
completed as quickly as possible. But it will take a little time because I am expecting
that there are hundreds of pages of text from these sorts of hearings to analyse.
There are probably thousands of pages from the submissions because some State
10 Government and Territory Government authorities have sent us – or are threatening
to send us quite detailed material. And that's good. I mean, that is what we are paid
to do. So – and then, of course, we are doing some research of our own to try to
ascertain how much progress has actually been made. And that's also quite difficult.
15 I mean, if you're trying to work out whether 25 per cent of the bus stops in Darwin
are compliant in terms of the requirements of the standards that would be a challenge
in itself and to do it across Australia is probably not possible, but we're certainly
going to give some careful thought to just how much progress has been made and
that will be documented. Okay. Thank you very much.

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ADJOURNED

[12.48 pm]

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