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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

O/N 60925

THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP

REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

HEARING CONDUCTED AT:

**HOTEL JASPER
489 ELIZABETH STREET
MELBOURNE**

DATE:

7 AUGUST 2007

MS SKILBECK: Okay. Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much for coming. This is a public hearing for the review of disability transport standards. I'm from the Allen Consulting Group. My name is Melissa Skilbeck. I'm one of the group who is doing the review and this is one of just about 15 hearings that we are
5 doing around the country in each of the capital cities and a regional centre in each state. The Allen Consulting Group is conducting this review on behalf of the Commonwealth Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Our report will be provided to the minister at the end of December. It's the first review of the standards since they were implemented in 2002. Our role is to assess the progress against the
10 standards just before the fifth year is finished since that implementation. There is a compliance timetable that goes from 2002 to 2032 and so we are looking at compliance that we know will be partial until the end of this year.

Our role is not to assess whether there will be standards or not. We are looking at the
15 extent to which the standards that we have been effective, and effective in the sense of improving access to public transport for people with disabilities. As many of you are already aware, we have a website that has all the material relating to the review as well as the transcripts from this and all of the previous hearings, or will have five days after this hearing, on www.ddatransportreview.com.au. Submissions are
20 welcome until 24 August and all of those will also be on that website when they are received. These hearings give us an opportunity to hear from people who are interested and are affected by the standards, an opportunity to ask questions where that's possible and an opportunity for you to hear from those who have agreed to speak with us.

25 A few matters of housekeeping. The microphones you see at the front of the room are here for the transcript only. They are not going to provide any amplification, but it's very important for everyone else who is not here to be able to pick up all the words that are spoken, so please when people are speaking, keep interruptions to a
30 minimum. If you would like the opportunity to speak toward the end of the scheduled timetable, please speak to myself or my colleague James who is at the back of the room and we can arrange a scheduled time so that we can ensure your words are on transcript. There are some copies of the review issues paper here if you don't have one with you. Tea and coffee are at the front of the hearing room. As
35 you are entering the room facing the entrance to this room, the toilets are on that left of that large space at the front and I think with that, the intention of the day is to keep the hearing relatively informal, formality only for the purposes of transcript.

40 We have started at 10 o'clock which is a little late so that we can ensure that we can have speakers for this morning. The schedule is Frank Hall-Bentick will speak first from Disability Australia Ltd. Lindsay Donahoo will speak from Sterling Group second. We have allocated 45 minutes for everyone. If you choose to use that or less is entirely up to yourselves. Our third speaker will be Patrick Moore from Cota
45 Victoria and that will take us to just after 12.00, and with that then, are there any questions about the proceedings today before we start? No? Okay. With that, Frank, please?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Thank you very much. My name is Frank Hall-Bentick and I have a lifelong disability. I live here in Melbourne. I have been involved with disability empowerment for the last 30 years. Since 1981 the international year of disabled people, I have been involved with disability rights movements at local, state,
5 national and with world organisations. For the past 15 years I have been involved with the United Nations in Bangkok as a resource person, invited expert, and more recently as an active member of the international disability caucus which has been developing a United Nations convention on the rights of people with disabilities and have been involved in both Bangkok and New York in developing that, so over many
10 years as my disability has progressed, I have used public transport in all its various modes and I have, not only as an activist, lobbied for the rights of others to use public transport, but I have also used it myself, so I have certainly got some definite opinions about what has happened and what should be happening. I have a few comments I will be making today and I will be following that up with a more
15 extensive submission.

MS SKILBECK: Great.

MR HALL-BENTICK: I suppose to start off with, I have just got the general
20 comment that when the Americans with Disabilities Act came out in the early 90s and Australians and people around the world saw for the first time there was an act to cover discrimination against disabled people, here in Australia we certainly wanted the same sort of coverage and the same sort of protections and in 92 when the DDA came out, it was hoped by all those people, particularly with disabilities, that this
25 would be a landmark in discrimination protection, and we at that stage pretty much thought that this act would certainly eliminate discrimination, disability discrimination, within a short period of time and at that stage we were looking far into the future of at least 10 years.

30 But one of the problems with the DDA and its watering down over the years has been that it has actually severely disempowered people with disabilities through the complexity of its complaint mechanisms and the fact that people need to take out individual grievances against specific discrimination, and the other point there is that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission which is supposed to be the
35 watchdog over the act and the standards has proven over the years to be very ineffective, mainly around the ability to support people with disabilities to take on cases and also to look at systemic advocacy and systemic discrimination.

MS SKILBECK: Frank, are you aware internationally of systems, I guess
40 complaints-based systems, that enable the systemic issues to be addressed?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes. There are a few that have come out over the last 20
years – sorry, over the last 15 years since our DDA came out, around the world there have been various disability acts that have come out that provide some protection but
45 it's pretty much service provision based and not rights based and there's a new disability act in the UK that has come out which is rights based but it hasn't been around for that long to judge how well that's going, so obviously when you are looking at the transport system, you are looking at a very entrenched inaccessibility

over many years and to bring that up to scratch is certainly going to take a lot of commitment from both governments and service providers but also funds to make sure that that happens.

5 One of the things that when the transport standards were first mooted, a lot of people with disability saw it as a way of actually delaying the end of exclusion and discrimination and in fact lengthening the time in which that was going to occur. As I said before, we expected the Disability Discrimination Act to solve those problems within a short period of time yet the transport standards and other standards, you are
10 talking, you know, decades rather than now, you know, up to 30 years and probably longer now.

So we saw that as a way of watering down disability discrimination – sorry, effective redressing of disability discrimination. One of the problems that we have had
15 constantly over the years is consultation and the representation of people with disabilities in any advisory committees and when the standards were first being developed there was representation of people with disabilities on the federal committee that was looking at that but, unfortunately, it was heavily outweighed by bureaucrats and other service providers who were very intent on not doing very much
20 to actually change the system and consequently the original target of 20 years was increased to actually 30 years and will probably go longer now.

So the problem being there that when people with disabilities who are needing those changes are in the minority, they don't get much of a say and so when it came to a
25 vote or even, mostly, consensus, I mean, their voice was severely outnumbered by people not wanting, you know, real change in the system.

MS SKILBECK: Frank, what's the basis for your view that - - -

30 MR HALL-BENTICK: Sorry?

MS SKILBECK: What's your basis for your view that the standards will take more than 30 years to implement?

35 MR HALL-BENTICK: After my observation of how much has happened so far in 5 years.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

40 MR HALL-BENTICK: I'll get to some of that later.

MS SKILBECK: Yes, yes. Okay.

45 MR HALL-BENTICK: You know, things like train stations and, your know, very - - -

MS SKILBECK: The long life infrastructure?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes. Over the last five years, many have been rebuilt but, unfortunately, haven't – still aren't as accessible as what they could have been. There seems to be no standard as to what news stations should – like, the height of new stations or - - -

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MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Then when you combine that with a hotchpotch of rolling stock from different overseas countries and different firms, then you have a problem of, you know, whether they're - - -

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MS SKILBECK: Consistency.

MR HALL-BENTICK: - - - they'll ever be roll on roll off, as they are in them countries.

15

MS SKILBECK: Right.

MR HALL-BENTICK: One of the things about the standards is that both the AS1428 and its various appendages and the actual transport standards are based on old access measurements and rigidly followed by transport services as the maximum they have to apply. This means that public transport will always be catching up and never planning for the future and that's one of the things that myself and others who have been on advisory panels have found is that it's been very hard just to push service providers and government just to implement the minimum standard, which they see as the maximum, instead of looking, you know, forward five, 10, 15, 20 years as to what you may need for transport then.

20

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Of course, one of the problems then being is that your standards are always based in the past whereas you're now dealing with a much more mobile population these days and, in fact, if we look at the standards and the measurements of today and what they might – the situation might be in 30 years, I mean, obviously there'll be a big difference in the number of people getting around using public transport and the size of the chairs and the electric wheel chairs, the manual chairs.

30

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MS SKILBECK: You are particularly thinking of the wheelchair dimensions that are in the standard?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, and, you know, a lot more elderly people are getting out and about these days. I mean, if we look at the big trend towards recognising global warming, we're looking at using more public transport. That means that more and more people will be using it, more and more elderly people will want to use it, yet the standards that we're basing it on are quite old standards even as at this day let alone – so if you bring in, say, rolling stock that conforms to the standards of today which are 10 years behind, then in 30 years when they're replacing them they'll be well out of date for any sort of usage.

40

45

Just now to go onto trams, one of the problems we've had with the trams was that here in Melbourne during the Kennett era, the government actually sold off the trams to private enterprise and we actually had two tram providers. As two good tram providers, they actually bought different rolling stock or different trams which has
5 meant now that we had two different – well, two different low floor trams on the system, each needing different, sort of, platforms to roll into.

The Yarra Trams which was certainly the most innovative of the two tram providers proposed that the 109 route, which is Box Hill to Beaconsfield or Port Melbourne, be
10 a model line and that they would do that up to show what was possible. Certainly it was a route that had all the different sorts of problems that they would encounter to place low floor trams in excess in Melbourne. I mean, it goes through a number of reserves but also goes down the middle of some quite busy streets such as Victoria Street in Richmond, which is quite narrow, and other streets. One of the problems
15 being is that the route only looked at places where it could install the actual platforms rather than looking at other ways it might be able to put the tramlines in.

Overseas, I mean, where – various places where they've put in these trams or the tram lines, they've actually decided to go down the side of the streets and to move
20 the tram lines away from the traffic. One of the things that we encountered very big problems with here is that Vic Roads, which is sort of the – has a major say over the roads, has been very reluctant to listen to any sort of alternative thinking about where trams might go, or putting different types of platforms in, in various street scapes and it seems to be that the rule of the car is still very predominant within our public
25 transport system. So it has been very difficult to convince people that we should be thinking about sending trams down the side – side to the road, or that you might be able to raise the actual road to meet the trams, so you can get off, or even looking at alternative trams that might have lifts on them.

30 There has been a real reluctance to look at a range of alternatives, rather than just one solution fitting all. So consequently and particularly on the 109 route, in the beginning there really was only the one city stop and Box Hill stop and a couple near Box Hill and then you didn't get off or get on the tram until you actually got to the old South Port Melbourne line and the best stop there was the Beaconsfield one
35 which was right at the end. So very much the providers and the department have dragged the chain on actually considering anything, other than what the status quo has been and that has presented real problems and meant that these changes have been very much delayed.

40 So one of the other problems that we've had, of course, is that the service providers have tended to, what they've called, their own consultation. They've gone out and they've talked to various people but the tram operators haven't really had committees involving people with disabilities, that have looked at maybe major routes and lines where we would propose that might be the next to consider and, you know, that
45 thinking has been very limited by the fact that the super-stop has, until very recently, been considered the only answer. So if you couldn't get a super-stop on the road, then you couldn't have an accessible stop at that point.

MS SKILBECK: Frank, do you participate in any other consultation committees, on mechanisms around public transport?

5 MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, I've been on the public transport advisory committee for quite a number of years now.

MS SKILBECK: That's coordinated by DOI?

10 MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, that's coordinated by DOI and it's under the Minister for Transport.

MS SKILBECK: Right.

15 MR HALL-BENTICK: Again, most of the transport providers have actually come to that for any advice, but I must say that up until fairly recently, it was more about them telling us what they're going to do rather than us being allowed to be at work in partnership in any meaningful way.

20 MS SKILBECK: Right, okay.

MR HALL-BENTICK: At times, you know, they asked us what we thought about this and that, but particularly those representative groups can't always say, well, you know, on the spot, well, yes we agree with this, or we don't agree with that and you need to consult with members. So particularly with the trams the way in which routes had been selected and work is being done. It has been, I think, very muddled and certainly hasn't involved a wide cross-section of disability organisations, or people with disabilities to determine, well, what are the best routes, where are - you know if we can't put it all in at once where can we - what can we make accessible and how is that going to meet the needs of people with disabilities in the short term?

30 Moving off trams and I go on to - before we go off that. One of the problems encountered is - and this is a general problem anyway with most of the transport providers, is that the tram drivers have - although are supposed to receive the training to put out the ramp, or the bridging plate, depending on which tram they're driving - it seems to get lost in the ether, as many times I've waited for a tram on a super stop, waited for the driver to put the bridging plate out, doesn't know where to do it, doesn't know where the button is. I've tried to get on only to find my front wheels disappear down the gap and then someone has got to lift me out of the gap. Of course, all the time worrying that maybe the tram is going to take off, with me stuck halfway in and halfway out.

45 So I think that there needs to be a lot more work done with tram drivers and other drivers of public transport. Not just an initial disability awareness, but to impart the idea of customer service and customer service is - drivers in particular haven't seen customer service as one of their responsibilities. They are there to drive, they stay in the cab and they don't get out and help and I think that the transport providers need to do a lot more training and emphasise that, even with drivers a lot more, that, you know, customer service is their responsibility as well. One of the other things with

the trams is that they accelerate very quickly and many times I've been on the tram which has taken off and see elderly people and not so elderly people almost stumble and fall when the tram has taken off and the driver doesn't seem to realise that, or give people enough time to actually grab hold of something before the tram actually gets going and they do take off quite quickly. To me it's another part of the customer service that is not happening.

MS SKILBECK: Do you have issues, Frank, with that movement in your chair as a practical matter?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Not so much in my chair, because in my chair it's got electric brakes, so that as soon as I stop it stops. But people in manual wheelchairs, again have to make sure they're hanging on, or wedge themselves against something, not to move quite suddenly when that acceleration that stops or starts.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Going on to trains, again trains were divided up into two companies under the current era, and again, it's again suffered from the different approaches to purchasing different carriages. With the two separate companies, again, Connex being more innovative than what the other trains were - - -

MS SKILBECK: Train.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, train company was, and getting on with a lot of changes much sooner than what the others did. The gap and height between the train and the platform has been problematic and still is. Again the purchase of different carriages meant that in many places their heights are different. Under the surface of the trains - with the trains the drivers are supposed to get out and provide a ramp for people with disabilities and wheelchairs to get up and down but the problem being that they only assist people in wheelchairs, so that a person must get themselves to the head of the train as quickly as you can, even in the pouring rain, and wait for the driver to come out and put the ramp out for you.

Of course, that means that if you're not there waiting, the driver is very reluctant to see - wait for you to get there and then get out and to put the ramp down for you. Some drivers are good about doing that, many drivers are quite abrupt and rude about having to get out and put the ramp down for you. One of the other things, of course, is that anybody who has ambulatory problems or uses walking sticks or crutches, whatever, finds it very difficult to get up over these gaps and the heights of the trains. Mostly people can't walk quickly or fast, so they're usually waiting around the gate where they come in, and they get on the train there, and quite often the gap and the height are quite substantial, so they have got to drag themselves up onto the train as best they can, and get themselves down off the train as best they can.

Some of the newer trains don't have handrails that people can reach in the door, when people can reach in and hang on to, and in fact, while the standards covers handrails and grab rails, it doesn't specifically talk about them in doorways, which

has been a problem in trying to address the problem in that, when this has been brought up, the service providers tend to say, “Well, you know, we’re complying to the standards.” You say, “Well, in the old trains we had grab rails and handrails in the doors where people could reach in and grab hold of them. They’re not there
5 where people can reach them now.” The providers have said that they’re not going to change that or provide any handrails where people can use. So then it comes back to whether you take out a complaint or not rather than the provider working proactively with – to try and address some of these problems.

10 MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Other things we’ve found is that although in a strict sense the internal circulation spaces in the trains often comply with the standards, because they comply with just the minimum, it’s quite often very difficult for people using
15 scooters or electric wheelchairs to actually get into circulation spaces or into spaces – or the allocated space, because of the narrowness of the actual passages that they need to get through. Just pardon me a second.

MS SKILBECK: Not a problem.

20

MR HALL-BENTICK: Another problem with the trains and stations are the actual platforms themselves, as I said before, with the different carriages, the gaps and the heights from the platform to the floor of the train can be quite significant. Another problem is that many of the stations, particularly up the head of the train, have been
25 extended to take the longer trains, but in those extensions, it was never calculated that they would need to put a ramp out to let people with disabilities out. So often the – and there’s quite a number of stations around Melbourne where when the driver puts a ramp out, it’s almost touching the fence, and so many people need to, as they’re turning off the ramps, actually have to go down the side of the ramp, because
30 they just can’t even get off the end.

So safety situations are quite a problem in those areas. Now, in theory, the driver is supposed to let the person know that where they’re getting off has that – there’s not going to be that room, but getting the driver to let you know that has been very
35 difficult, and also getting the driver to let you go to the next carriage down away from that is pretty problematic as well in that quite often most drivers don’t like to walk that far unless they really have to. Moving on to buses, buses in the metro area are probably the most further along with accessibility. The purchase – obviously the purchase of new buses has been far cheaper than the purchase of carriages or rolling
40 stock.

So we’ve got a good range of local buses now and they’re becoming more and more regular on various routes, which means that people with disabilities can then rely on or know when those buses are coming along, which, you know, helps, you know –
45 you don’t always want to have to plan where you’re going and when you’re coming home to the exact minute, you know, so when you know that every second or third bus may be accessible, it helps a lot more, rather than to have to ring up each time

and say, well, I'm going to be such and such a stop at 10 o'clock, is the bus going to – can you make the bus accessible.

5 So as those buses have come on, we've had more and more, their reliability is
certainly greatly improving, although unfortunately one of the problems with them is
that, as I was saying before with the standards, they're pretty much based on
outdated measurements and that standard, so one of the problems being that now
large electric wheelchairs and scooters are having problems actually coming in
10 through the front door because they have to do a sharp right hand turn just as you get
in.

15 One of the ideas that may be needed in the future is to actually have both the back
door and the front door accessible, where people can get in through the back door if
they've got a larger vehicle, or can't manage to get in through the front door and
having that sort of – because generally coming in through the back door you're not
passing between the front wheel arches, which restrict the space you have. Again
here getting assistance from the driver had been problematic. Again, you know, the
old issues, well, I haven't had the training, I'm not supposed to leave my seat. Just
20 some of the few excuses that people hear every day about when they need the driver
to either put the ramp down, or to assist in some way, ask people to move from the
disability spot, or whatever.

25 Of course, in the metro area as I said the buses are providing much better service.
However, in the rural and regional areas this is still causing quite a problem, in that
there are very few services and those services seem to hold on to their buses than –
their old buses much longer than we do in the city, whereas in the city we have
access to maybe trams, or trains, or many more accessible taxis. In the country,
particularly around some rural cities and also between cities, buses are their only
30 link, so that not having accessible buses actually really does restrict people's
movement in the rural areas.

35 Also, the fact that the buses used for school buses were originally exempted from the
standards, has meant that particularly in the country regions, where it's often the only
transport anyway, has meant that a lot of people with disabilities have had to find
other ways to get to school, other than on the normal school bus. It would be one of
the things that I would be suggesting that in the future that school buses no longer
need to be exempted from the standards and in fact that they just become the part of
the access provisions and be subjected to the normal timeframes that other buses
40 have been subjected to. That then gives operators the use of those buses, both for
school excursions, or school use, but also for other use as well.

45 So lastly, I suppose, just to sum up there, that with buses we need to be making sure
that there is probably more of a priority to get them accessible in the rural and
regional areas than what there is in the city. As I said we have other alternatives, but
we need an above standards push to get those accessible in the rural areas. Now,
maybe to go on to taxis - - -

MS SKILBECK: Can I ask a question Frank about buses?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, sure.

MS SKILBECK: What are your observations, or observations from your
organisation, on the information that's provided about which buses are accessible
5 and which are not?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Again, it has been quite a problem, the different bus
companies have come up with different solutions. The better of those now will have
a wheelchair symbol on their timetable, of which are accessible. In the beginning
10 many were asking people to ring the depot to request an accessible bus at a particular
time and they would try to provide it. One of the things is that bus providers have
been a bit reluctant to do is to provide timetables in any other format than what they
normally provide them in. So it has been very difficult to get things in larger print,
or in – I mean Braille has been almost impossible. One of the things there that has
15 helped quite a lot is that where the bus company has a website, that generally has
more and more been in accessible formats, but again that has been one area that
needs to be pushed as well, you know.

So the large print and other formats have been, again, a problem during that time to
20 get the bus companies to see that as part of their responsibility. Going on to the
taxis, in Melbourne accessible taxi schemes have been a hotchpotch of vehicles;
incentives, training, enforcement and is now split between two major taxi companies.
Over the years the Victorian taxi directive has made many changes to the scheme,
most of which have provided financial incentives to owners and drivers. However,
25 these incentives have often attracted people more interested in fast buck, rather than
providing quality, reliable services.

The BTD, which operates the accessible taxi system has been very slow to weed out
the bad drivers and owners, acting more like an old boys' club, than a regulatory
30 body. More recently the BTD has required all drivers, who drive wheelchair taxis, to
undertake disability awareness training, but it doesn't require sedan drivers of
ordinary taxis to do similar training. If you look at the fact that most elderly people
and people who don't use electric wheelchairs or scooters, travel in sedans, then you
find that they regularly encounter discrimination from drivers who won't help or
35 refuse to take a guide dog, or refuse to help get the wheelchair into the boot, or even
on occasions pull up close to a destination because a person can't walk all that far.

So again, as I said, the BTD have concentrated mostly on the wheelchair accessible
taxis and not on the sedans, or requiring any sort of regulatory, or overseeing of what
40 is happening to people with disabilities who use those services. So one of the things
that they should be doing in the future, is making sure that disability awareness
training is happening for all drivers that have a licence; not just wheelchair taxi
drivers. One of the problems at the moment is that we have two major companies
that you need to ring if you want to get an accessible taxi and although they have a
45 system where you can – they'll pass it on to the other taxi service, if they don't have
anybody within an amount of time, you quite often still have to wait hours for taxis
and in fact quite recently I had Saturday afternoon while I was getting a taxi and I
had two taxis turn up for me; one from one company and one from another company.

So there doesn't seem to be a lot of communication between the two as to when they're passing on the vacancies and in fact I've found at times rung one company and when the taxi hasn't come rung them back, only to be told by some of the operators that I have to ring the other company to find out what's happening because
5 they've passed it over. Then on other occasions I've rung the same company and the operators have rung the other mob to find out for me where the taxi is. So it seems as though they can do it, but there doesn't seem to be any consistency from the operators as to who does what and particularly if you're stranded out, you know, in the weather, you know, waiting for a taxi, you get quite anxious about whether one is
10 coming, let alone the time it is going to come.

As I said, a lot of people rely on accessible wheelchair taxis. When I said that there was a hodgepodge of vehicles and incentives, that's clearly what has happened. Over the years there have probably been about six or seven different types of
15 vehicles that have made up wheelchair taxis, most of which are still in service, some using commercial Hiace vehicles to some using quite extensively and expensively modified Chrysler and Mercedes, so there hasn't been any consistent approach by the VTT as to what is the general sort of vehicle that should be used, even stats and figures as to how long people have to wait for the taxis anyway. I mean, it's mostly
20 anecdotal from people have had to wait hours rather than the VTT being able to get any figures off the computers from the providers.

MS SKILBECK: Frank, in relation to the different vehicles that have been either modified or made wheelchair accessible one way or another, is there a significant
25 difference between vehicles as to how accessible they are? Are some of them better?

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, there is. I'm sure what the make of the vehicle is, but there's one where they've actually put the hoist at the side of the van. I specifically
30 request not to get those, because your ability to get on and off is very tight. The driver has to remove one or two seats, completely remove and carry them around the back, and generally they will only remove one, so it means that you've got a very limited area to manoeuvre around and twist and turn trying to get in, so I refuse to go in any of those cabs any more. I only get into rear entry vehicles. For me, I think the best of those are the Toyota Hiace, which is a commercial vehicle, prove, lots of
35 spare parts when they break down.

Some of the other vehicles have proved very problematic in that the spare parts to fix them have to be ordered from overseas. There's not a lot of firms around that do it anyway. I think that the VTT over the years have pretty much looked on it as a
40 private enterprise opportunity and pretty much let the drivers do what they like when it comes to vehicles or drivers or training or whatever. Over the last number of years they've tightened up a little bit on that, but again they've inherited a very hodgepodge scheme that really isn't as good as what it should be.

I suppose just to finish off, some of the standards that aren't covered here in Victoria and aren't being looked at are docks and ferries. There's ongoing discussion I've had with our friends from the PTAC and DOI. Because their DOI mandate is specifically public transport and the docks and ferries don't seem to cover that in

Victoria, that has been an area that hasn't been included in any sort of reviews or even looked at meeting standards, so consequently any of the wharfs or docks maybe along the Yarra, Station Pier, have had very little scrutiny about their actual compliance with the standards. At Station Pier we have the large ships coming in, so I think there has been a little bit more work down there, but certainly along the Yarra and, say, Williamstown or St Kilda where there are regular services, they're looked on more as tourist type than public transport so they've been discounted from having to do anything towards complying to the standards. That may be one of the things that the new standards needs to include in what it does. Any sort of tourist transport or private transport which has previously been exempt may need to be covered in the future under these standards.

MS SKILBECK: Frank, your point is more that DOI doesn't necessarily oversight that particular sector and the disability standards may well apply to it.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes. DOI actually does, but it's covered by I think parks and gardens.

MS SKILBECK: Parks Victoria.

MR HALL-BENTICK: Yes, sorry, Parks Victoria, yes. I think that's still a part of DOI, but it's not the part that looks at public transport, but I think that in the future we need to look at those things and make sure that they're all covered and it's brought under the wing of whatever work that's being done on the standards in Victoria. I suppose that's about it.

MS SKILBECK: Okay. Thank you very much, Frank. That's great. We will pause for a moment while we set up for our next speaker. Thank you.

ADJOURNED **[10.58 am]**

RESUMED **[11.06 am]**

MS SKILBECK: Okay, thank you everyone for that pause while we set up the PowerPoint.

MR DONAHOO: Hope it's worth it..

MS SKILBECK: Right, yes, Lindsay I hope it's gorgeous.

MR DONAHOO: It's not.

MS SKILBECK: Our next speaker is Lindsay Donahoo, from Sterling Group, so Lindsay please?

MR DONAHOO: Thank you. Could I have the first slide? I thought if I introduced myself first, some people here I've known and know me. I have a background as working in the metropolitan rail system in the days of the public transport corporation as managing railway stations, which is probably how I first got involved in disability access. I left there in about 1988 and set up a consultancy business and we consult to public transport operators on a whole range of issues, including disability access and you can see that since that time I've done work at over a number of operators – just about every operator in Victoria, and several throughout the country and my presentation will be probably more from a technical viewpoint on the difficulty of implementation of the standards as they present as a document.

I speak as an individual, not representing any of the companies that I've worked for. It's just out of my experience with the disability standards that operators – and operators – rail operators, light rail, heavy rail, throughout the country have to try and put these into practice and that's where the real issues are. If I could have the next slide please? I note that in the issues paper, appendix A, some of the things that the outcome of this review will produce, the Allen Group have been engaged by DOTARS Department of Transport and Regional Services, based in Canberra and they are overseen by a steering committee from that department and from the Attorney General's department.

The review will be along the lines of regulation impact statement, which is a statement of how any new legislation - the impacts it will have on a community as a whole. So it tends – this is a very, very formal, very political structure that we're in. I also note that Allen Group will assess each part of the transport standards, which is of particular note to rail operators, because there are individual parts of the standards that operators throughout the country and manufacturers of rolling stock have a lot of trouble with. There is also a concentration on the compliance requirements, the five year requirements at the end of this year and that they will draw on applications for temporary exemptions and throughout this I may well make reference to the Australasian Railways Association exemption application from earlier this year, of which all rail operators in the country were party to and a number of the leading manufacturers as well.

Nevertheless, whilst I have this apparent technical “represent the operators” view, I acknowledge that I'm not a younger person, as some people here are. I will age – hopefully I will age over the coming years and that I will probably have to contend with a loss of hearing, a gradual loss of sight and a loss of mobility and none of us throughout our lives know where we're going to end up. So for any of us to stand back and say, we don't appreciate these, we're looking at them in a certain way, is delusional and I certainly acknowledge that those of us in this room who don't have apparent disabilities at the moment, will most likely experience them to some extent throughout our lives.

I also note that the concept and Frank referred to it in a couple of ways, the concept of a whole of journey is not covered anywhere in the standards. The standards talk about the various trams, trains, ferries, in regard to rolling stock and infrastructure, but nowhere does it say the concept of this is to make a smooth journey possible for

people with disabilities and that's a challenge I guess for operators and the review to get. My view is that with respect to accessibility improvement most funding is still provided by the state government and to that end if we could have the next slide please? Okay, sorry that hasn't come up as well as we would have liked. It's lifted
5 from last Saturday's Age and it talks about the various people involved in provision of public transport in this state.

The first one is Yarra trams, for the tram network; Connex, who run the trains and Frank hinted on a couple of things about through the privatisation process, where we
10 had duplicate trams and duplicate trains coming in, with different qualities, different uses and ability to use in certain ways, was further exacerbated by the splitting up of the train – the existing Connex train fleet, so that we now, in effect, have two Connex fleets that run – that do not meet very well and are generally constrained to the lines that they run on for operational and maintenance reasons.

15 MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, the distinction there is that the Connex trains were refurbished, weren't they, a different way.

MR DONAHOO: They were refurbished under the original franchises of 1999, yes
20 and they were brought back together in around about 2004.

MS SKILBECK: Ish, yes.

MR DONAHOO: Ish, yes, thanks. Their line runs a regional network of trains and
25 coach services. VicTrack is the body, the state body that still holds the ownership of what is there. MetLink provides signage, information and a few other things.

COMMENT FROM AUDIENCE: Complaints handling.

MR DONAHOO: Complaints handling, thanks Graham. We have a new authority
30 called the Transport Ticketing Authority which is an arm of the Department of Infrastructure, that is overseeing the roll-out of the new ticketing system and that's a very interesting project that I'm doing a little bit of work on as well. We have 30 bus operators. We have Vic Roads, who don't really – who have a little bit to do with
35 tram stops and probably as little as possible. A public transport ombudsman, a public transport division. We now have a new coordinator of general infrastructure and I'm not sure where that person – that's the only one on there I don't really know much about and the public transport safety in Victoria, the safety regulator, that's also, I think, part of the DOI. So it shows that within Victoria it is a very, very
40 complex issue to address disability access and across all modes of transport. What I would like to address is some of the key review points from the issues paper. So if we could open the next slide? Okay. This question – has accessibility of public transport improved since the introduction of the standards? I think this is a clear
45 "yes". The introduction of the draft standards in '96 were the basis for all the privatisation bids in the first franchise of 1999. We, as a result, have new low-floor trams, new trains and buses now throughout Melbourne are generally constructed as low-floor, which are all vast improvements in accessibility.

Infrastructure-wise, we have improved access paths, handrails, accessible toilets, TGSIs along tram stops and rail platforms, better customer service by all operators, although we always hear about when those things go wrong, but the people manning customer service and all operators from what I've seen over the years has just improved and has a much higher awareness of accessibility.

Have the changes matched your expectations – I will take that as my expectations – on the implementation of the standards and do I consider the level of compliance required at the end of the first five-year period as sufficient to have an impact? My experience is that my expectations of where we would be have been met. Whether the compliance requirements have been met I think is a no. I will just touch on points throughout this presentation, and there will be a paper following up with more details. As I say, one of the glaring things is that there is no concept of the whole of journey in disability standards. As Frank discussed, route 109, which is the flagship route and probably outside the rail system the accessible route, there are stretches along Victoria Street, Cotham Road and I think it's High Street that are not accessible.

There are accessible stops on the white rail, there are accessible stops on the ex-white rail to Port Melbourne, which is an old heavy rail line, throughout the CBD down Victoria Parade, along Whitehorse Road and at Box Hill at the terminus and the extension, so there has been an awful lot of work done on that to give a route that can be accessed, but the whole of journey is still an issue. Another compliance requirement difficulty is in lighting. The ARA exemption at the beginning of this year raised lighting as an issue. Two or three years ago, the ARA developed a new standard through a consultant in Queensland, and that looked at all things lighting and said, "Here is a standard that is achievable and practical."

Now, that has now been implemented in several states of Australia. Fortunately Melbourne in the metropolitan rail network had a very high lighting level on rail stations and already met that standard. The existing standard is based on lighting in this room. If you put that at rail stations you will see them from the moon, if you put them at tram stops you will blind drivers as they drive into it, so currently the standard for tram stops isn't met, because there is no achievable, practical standard. Now, if this review does not address issues like this, then Jessica and the rest of the BCA can just charge straight in and have the Federal Court sort it out, is what my particular view is, because tram stops do not have a standard for lighting. Regional stations are gradually implementing it, but at the moment I would suggest that they're not 100 per cent compliant and probably will not be by the end of this year.

MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, do the comments by the ARA also include within rolling stock lighting?

MR DONAHOO: I'm unsure. I have it there and I could look at it and I could let you know later on.

MS SKILBECK: Yes, if you could take that one on notice, that would be great.

MR DONAHOO: All new rolling stock meets the standards that are there, but existing rolling stock doesn't necessarily meet what this current standard is because it's an internal standard. Waiting shelters are another issue at tram stops. Waiting shelters should be 100 per cent compliant. The figures say they are all compliant
5 because most tram stops don't have shelters, but those that are, are compliant in regard to seating, seating heights and lighting, as they were intended to be rolled out. I'm quoting from a paper of the Department of Infrastructure in the latest action plan. For the record, I'm getting some shaking heads sideways - - -

10 MS SKILBECK: There's merriment in the audience.

MR DONAHOO: - - - from the audience to say that may not necessarily be the case, which reinforces what I say. There are difficulties in the compliance. Boarding of trams: if I have a low floor tram at a platform stop, that would be considered fully
15 accessible acknowledging the issues that Frank has raised earlier. However, if I have a standard tram at a low floor stop, is the stop accessible, or if I have a low floor tram at a standard stop where it has a step up of around about 300, is that accessible? A question: are they or aren't they? It comes back to this issue of journey, but if an operator says, "We now have approximately 25 per cent of our tram fleet accessible
20 with new low floor trams." The number of stops that they can be operated at we have approximately 6 per cent, I think. There are roughly 100 out of about 1700.

Most of this information I've just picked straight off the Department of Infrastructure Website, so I'm not speaking out of turn with a lot of things that I'm saying. That
25 boarding of trams is certainly an issue on how do you measure that level of compliance. I'm working a couple of sets of notes here which makes it difficult. I could also have ramps that are one in eight. They may come up from a subway under track to a railway station. There are about 30 to 40 stations like this in the metropolitan area, and it's not practical to replace a subway and the ramps to the
30 subway. There's a cost and it's probably very prohibitive at the moment.

If I install a lift or longer ramps or a path that would be considered accessible to the standards, then that station would still not be considered accessible, because I have
35 an inaccessible pathway that does not meet the standards, so I see an issue with that. I don't think in the process of implementation of the standards – whilst access can be improved where we have footbridges and subway ramps and the like – that people would be considering shutting them off just to make them not compliant. I've combined two here.

40 *To what extent do you consider the data on accessible as reliable with examples?*

And:

45 *How could the reporting of data be improved for future implementation stages?*

I've done a number of audits for a number of different authorities. The first thing I do is take the standards, and then I put an interpretation on the standards. I say,

“This is what we would consider is compliant in terms of, say, lighting or in terms of information,” because under MetLink and the way our information has been rolled out here, the advice I understand, again from the DOI Website, is that our information provided in public transport in Melbourne, trams and trains, would be considered accessible. Some of us may be able to pick some holes in that if we want to, but by and large it’s accessible. If I as an independent auditor say that, I leave myself open if I don’t make certain interpretations. Lighting as well. If I’m going to say, “The lighting on Melbourne’s railway stations is compliant,” I have to say it’s compliant to the report that the ARA had done two or three years ago.

10 MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, your key source other than the ARA report, do you have other sources for that interpretation as a matter of practice?

15 MR DONAHOO: Discussions with operators generally. I mean it will be – I will do a report for an operator and I’ll – we will discuss and I will suggest that, “Here is a way that this can be judged to comply or not comply.” Do all access paths to a railway station – do they have to be accessible? I say provided there is an accessible path to the station then it’s feasible that that could be considered compliant. If we want to go along the lines of every railway station that has an inaccessible path, then the figures, again that are in the present action plan in Victoria, would be – would be greatly reduced I would think.

25 Again, I might say that without sort of checking and everything – but there is certainly in some of these – some of these things are issues we have. The improvement – the improvement is probably at an operator operation level of reporting of the data that has better interpretation of the standards. This could be put into the guidelines, some of it the guidelines do provide some – some help on making some of these decisions, and whilst the guidelines are not part of the legislation, if there is – as I understand, if there is a complaint made to HREOC, use of the guidelines can assist – can be – can assist in the defence.

30 Next one please? Examples of improved accessibility of public transport has increased patronage. I think anecdotally route 109 where we have low floor trams is certainly a case where there is improved accessibility. All low floor trams – also this would apply to because people with a pram, if you’re pushing a pram a pram can now get on to a low floor tram because a pram can generally be pushed up to the 300 mil high step or if it’s two people you can lift it up one reasonably – far easier than you could lift it up the three or four steps into an existing tram through a narrow doorway. So that’s one example I think across the system as stations are improved, Laburnum Station was rebuilt as part of the Middleborough Road project. Stations to Craigieburn and to – to Craigieburn and Wilby and to Water Gardens are accessible in regards to ramps, handrails, tactiles and probably most of the stands. If we went out there and went over it with a fine tooth comb I’m sure anybody could pick a hole somewhere in it but we’re not, we’re really about trying to make this process work.

45 The next question I’ve addressed – oh, I’ve put three together. These were the questions for public transport operators and providers, so:

Has the introduction of the transport standards clarified obligations as an operator? Are the transport standards sufficient or have you needed to consult other sources? And are you aware of other operators and providers of public transport who appear to be unaware of their obligations.

5

Again, the introduction of the standards has clarified obligations. Operators now know and know more widely what is expected for them to meet the standards. Anything that is now built is compliant, and the retrospective fitting to get up to the – to the milestones of 2007 – Sep 2007 is certainly at the foremost of the minds of most operators. The 2001 – 2012 has got them scratching their heads and by 2017 I'll be in to the father mode of my life where I'll be really pushing to get the standards implemented. So – because it will be quite – quite a – quite a challenge. There are other standards that have been – that I've consulted and I know other operators – Britain has very good resources on – that you can get online or order. Canada has a transportation service that has a website link that deals with a lot of disability issues across all modes of transport.

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MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, who are the providers of that information in the UK and Canada as far as you know?

MR DONAHOO: I don't know, but it's not hard to get. I can note that in the submission, okay?

25

MS SKILBECK: If you could note that in your submission that would be great. Thank you.

30

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MR DONAHOO: Because it's things that if – if somebody else has done the work and has come up with the answer then it's – if that's already done then it saves an awful lot of work because there's a lot of issues in public transport that are not easy to – easy to do. Other operators that may be unaware of their obligations. If I look at tram stops, and this would apply to bus stops and also coach stops, and I'll talk about coach stops later as distinct from bus stops, but certainly local government, who own the majority of tram stops and bus stops throughout this state, are unaware of what their obligations are. I think we've got someone from Wellington Shire so I'll be very careful about – I'll keep it to metropolitan. Probably they don't have funds, there is – there is gradually increasing – I think they're increasing obligations and they're becoming aware of them.

40

The exemption I talked about for lighting at railway stations doesn't apply to tram stops, that work still needs to be done and I'm certain that if owners of road lighting were approached to provide them lighting at tram stops that's required, there would be a difficulty, I don't even know whether it's been approached. That issue's further – further exacerbated by the next question.

45

MS SKILBECK: The next slide.

MR DONAHOO: The next slide, sorry, I should say slide rather than question. In areas that are unclear in terms of how operators and providers need to make –

everyone will – most people will probably be aware that bus stops have a compliance – a compliance of 25 per cent, 55 et cetera over a number of issues such as waiting areas, lighting, signage, symbols, information, and there's probably one I've left out, one or two I may have left out. That – that does not apply to tram stops, I have
5 advice from the Attorney General that even though – because the standards refer to a tram stop as having a reduced compliance schedule that because it says bus stops it only applies to bus stops and not to tram stops, and for the same reason as a bus is different to a tram but operates in a similar manner for its stops, I would suggest that that would also apply to coach stops. So that will be in my finding as well because a
10 coach operators inter-urban whereas buses operate on an urban system. Buses are low floor, coaches aren't low floor. So there is an issue that probably by the end of this year unless there is a change to the standards that all tram stops and all coach stops throughout this country should be 100 per cent compliant in those – in those issues to which will make it a very interesting – very interesting situation.

15 Have the exemptions allowed transport standards – have they reduced the clarity? They certainly haven't reduced the clarity, and I think it's probably the question that was put the wrong way. They've actually improved the clarity. The initial exemption that I did – had some input into was on TGSI's along platforms that was
20 initiated by Queensland Rail, and with the support of most other rail operators in the state because whilst the AS1428 talks about – talks about TGSI's along the edge of the platform there was – there were issues with mobility impairment groups about trying to move mobility aids over and around tactiles on platforms.

25 The outcome that was negotiated by Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission between BCA, the Physical Disability Counsel of Australia and the operators is a good outcome, and that outcome with – we would – operators I'm sure would hope would become part of the standards in this review, as would some of the issues in the ARA exemption where I think around about 60 exemptions were
30 granted for a period of three years, that included lighting, access paths and a range of other things that make – that are in the very difficult to interpret parts of the standards. Go to the next slide, please.

35 Where Australian standards or other technical requirements are specified are they appropriate and are there requirements that have proven to be impractical, or difficult to implement? Any Australian standard that has been applied to rolling stock, is very difficult. The two that are very easy to understand are toilets, to build an accessible toilet on a train is almost impossible. In Victoria it was almost done on the new Velocity and it's been signed off as acceptable, but the access path on the new
40 Velocity beside the toilet is just wide enough over just enough length. It just meets the standard.

45 MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, would that be for a standard – well, a manual wheelchair?

MR DONAHOO: A manual wheelchair, I'm fairly certain, can fit down beside that, yes. I'm getting a nod from the back of the room, thanks Emilio, he's tried it, yes. I'm certain we were down there. But there's not a lot of room to spare and there was

a provision because an accessible toilet takes up such a large width across the car, then the seats – I think there were temporary seats were going to be put inside that area that have since been taken out.

5 COMMENT FROM THE AUDIENCE: Not the they're still there.

MR DONAHOO: They're still there? I'm not sure, they're fold down seats. But they're probably good knuckle crunchers, nevertheless. But had – within the Australasian railways exemption application was the request to make it a performance specification along the lines of an accessible toilet on a train will be able to be approached, used and exited within the confines of the train. Because the way the current standard is narrow gauge trains in Queensland will not comply unless they put at the end of the car that you cannot get past, the drivers have to squeeze through a fairly narrow gap, if you've ever seen that. On standard gauge in Sydney it's a compromise that's already been negotiated through.

So that is certainly one issue. I keep talking about lighting where lighting at stations has required a separate standard. That is not an Australian standard, it's taken from a range of Australian standards and guidelines to develop and in that document it references where all its information has come from. Tram stops along with bus stops and coach stops need the same work done, because there is a way around it and it just has to be worked out from a technical view that meets the requirements of the Act itself. Booking counters. We took out of AS1428.2, which is a 1992 document, booking counters, counters that are used as booking counters and that is an extremely difficult standard to meet.

Queensland rail were doing them at a cost of per booking window it was, I think, may have been one to \$200,000 was a figure I may have heard of, in order to get a booking counter low enough to meet this counter and the use of direct assistance to provide a equivalent access is an issue that most operators would deem as the way to get past to tick off that standard as compliant. I think that's enough. Yes, that covers those two questions. Go to the next slide please? Okay. Do I consider requirements of the transport standards have applied consistently across different modes of transport? Will current areas of inconsistency be addressed through future stages of augmentation of the transport standards? The various milestones.

Do you consider the current exemptions are appropriate and should these exemptions be reduced over time? The requirements being consistent across all modes is really around bus stops having a reduced compliance timetable and my memory suggests that that was because of the interaction with local government and a range of other authorities that would have input into the way a bus stop is set up. The fact that trams and coaches are incumbered by having 100 per cent compliance to waiting and lighting areas, signage, symbols, information, etcetera, as I said before, is certainly an anomaly that operators would hope will be removed in this review.

45 Will any current areas of inconsistency be addressed through future stages? The ones that I've talked about and several others, I think not, because the stages of implementation just increase, so that anywhere where there is an inconsistency unless that's addressed in the review, that won't be, I suppose until we get to 20 –

what is it? 2022, at 100 per cent for infrastructure. Do I consider current exemptions are appropriate? From an operator's point of view they are. They have added certainty which is what operators are trying to do whenever an application has been put in, it is always why - in order to try and reduce the uncertainty in the standards,
5 operators have not looked at unjustifiable hardship, although there is an unjustifiable hardship probably acknowledged in the fact that the trains use ramps to board and that a train – for a train to have every door accessible is not – doesn't happen at many stations.

10 It might happen where you have level access, but the level access might help a young, fit accident victim who is now in a wheelchair who can just sort of jump his wheelchair across the gap, but for a lot of users, as Frank described, where the front wheel can still drop down there and then you need assistance. So there's an acknowledgment that it's an unjustifiable hardship to get the level of a platform and
15 the level of a vehicle the same when you have different loadings and wear on wheels can make that up to about 50 millimetres and Frank and I are probably going to have a chat about this later, by the smile on his face. So the exemptions are there in regard – that have been granted. Operators use that exemption in order to progress works.

20 If once the lighting report that ARA did a couple of years ago - if operators hadn't have started to do something then there would be nothing done to lighting outside in states other than Melbourne. They're using that standard that has now been acknowledged and accepted by HREOC and by the jurisdictional committees. They have said that's okay. So we would be expecting that that, amongst most other
25 exemptions certainly won't be reduced over time, but will be implemented into the standards as practical outcomes.

MS SKILBECK: Can I ask you to pause there, Lindsay, while I check with the audience and see – is there anyone here from COTA? No, I'm just checking to see if
30 our next speaker is available. If not, I think Lindsay please continue on.

MR DONAHOO: Okay. Could I have the next slide please, which means we're getting towards the end. Now, I get to say what I really feel. Okay. I suppose one of the real drawbacks that I've seen over the years is that disability sector
35 representatives don't have a good technical knowledge of the standards. Some do and some don't. Queensland rail have a – or Queensland transport, I'm not sure if it's the rail or the Queensland transport – have an access committee that they discuss with and over the years they've walked them through a lot of the issues from the very ground up, so that they understand where the standards are. It certainly helps to
40 address complaints and on reading some of the hearings on your website over the last couple of - - -

MS SKILBECK: Transcripts.

45 MR DONAHOO: - - - days, the transcripts, you see that people have individual issues that I would suggest are not necessarily in contravention of the standards. Because the standards do not have this whole of journey concept and they have a compliance schedule that, if you read the guidelines, can be chosen by the operators.

Generally, it has been chosen by the operators to achieve the compliance they have. So if work could be – how the disability sector which is poorly funded at the best time, to get a technical resource into them.

5 There are a handful of people who have that and they just get consulted time and time again. If they leave, then the sector has a lot of trouble in sort of defending itself against an operator who is trying to improve things. Operators are not trying to say we don't want to meet these. Operators are trying to say we will meet these. We want to know how to meet them now so that when – so that in 20 years time,
10 whatever they have implemented, still works. We have a tram fleet in Melbourne that is running around without boarding ramps because the trams were made overseas.

The standard for external boarding ramps says one in four with assisted access. If
15 anyone here – I know a fellow in Yarra Trams is – in a trial we did out at Scope at St Albans, tried to push some of the wheelchairs up a one in four ramp. It is fairly onerous. Train drivers and some of the V/Line conductors do it where there are low platforms. By and large we are fortunate that whilst we have a gap on platforms in railways stations in Victoria, it is not – it runs out generally at about one in six. So,
20 we don't have occupational health and safety issues with that.

MS SKILBECK: Lindsay, is that an accident of platform design or is it actually a working standard for the refurbishment of stations, one in six?

25 MR DONAHOO: No, there is no standard. There is generally – there is a set standard from track to platform level on existing platforms.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

30 MR DONAHOO: That is checked on a regular basis so that if there is low spots, those low spots get put into work programs and, depending on funding, all those things will be rectified. There is a major change happened in V/Line recently where Pacific National who were the operators of the track is now back part of V/Line and the one authority now has control of the platform, the platform needs and the track. I
35 think those issues we see in the regional areas will probably improve far greater than they have been – at a far greater rate than they have been over the last four or five years. A personal view again.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

40 MR DONAHOO: With V/Line people, I hope I haven't spoken to committed you to anything that I shouldn't have. As I said at the start, they are all personal views.

The last thing I really want to talk about is costs. Costs here have all been generally
45 assumed from websites. The original regulation impact statement on the draft standards in January 1999 had a quantifiable cost of \$3.7 billion. That is \$3,700,000,000 is the figure. I might just put that on the board. Don't go away. The same document then said there were quantifiable benefits of \$2.6 billion. That left a

cost of implementation of the standards in 1999 terms of around about \$1 billion. So, everybody runs away and says, isn't that great. \$1 billion and we will have it sorted. I have yet to see a treasurer deliver a budget, federally or in state, that ever talks about quantifiable benefits as being an excuse to lower what the expenditure has to be. Now, note that is a figure that is seven or eight years old but I have just established a few figures. Also in that report, the one I could establish easily in Victoria, said to retrofit trams excluding W class trams would be \$68 million and infrastructure would be \$13 million. So, that what we now see as Yarra Trams would have a compliance cost over the full life of the standards of \$81 million. A new 04 tram, my guess is, around about \$3 million. We have about 300 more of those to go. So, I question, even if we want to double the figures from the original impact statement, their accuracy. You can do the same thing with – a three car train set is around about 8 million. I figure my – I am probably about 30 per cent either way on these so they are fairly rough. It costs around about a quarter of a million dollars and I see everyone – I hope people are writing all these figures down. You will find them in the transcript. A quarter of a million dollars to upgrade a pedestrian crossing from what we would call a standard crib crossing to an automatic crossing with the rubber strain units that minimise the flange gut.

20 MS SKILBECK: Sorry, this is a railway crossing, isn't it?

MR DONAHOO: A railway crossing. No four tram stops – I am not sure again but taking figures that I can flesh out of the website, I guess around about a third of a million, \$300,000 per stop, one side of the road only. Not the other side of the road. So, you do both sides, you are over a half a million dollars. DOI on the website, by their own admission, outside of their major projects, so outside of things like Laburnum and North Melbourne and other upgraded stations that are being done as part of the transport – meeting our transport challenges, I think is the document, has \$250 million over ten years to spend on accessibility. I note that the standards were promulgated, initiated by the Australian Transport Council which is the group of all transport ministers, state and federally. So, that they have all put their hand up about ten years and said, let's go with this. This is what we are going to do. Well, if you look at the figures that I have just roughly thrown about, nobody is admitting what the true cost will be.

35 I would like to draw a quick graph for you. I apologise to those who are reading it as a transcript. What I have actually shown there is I have gone across the bottom scale and I have shown five yearly intervals of 02 when the standard were first promulgated, where we are now at 07, 2012 – 2007 and 2022. I have just drawn on there that 07, where we think we are now. Transport operators would think they are within reach of that 25 per cent compliance mark. You will see that the graph grows in its slope as you go up to get 55 per cent and then 90 per cent over the next ten years. Bearing in mind that when 2002 clocked over, we probably would have had a compliance level of, I am guessing, ten per cent. It could have been a bit higher, a bit lower. So, you will see that we have really – we can all – operators can say we have met – we have by and large met this first milestone with a few things that aren't quite right. What they have had to achieve is probably about 15 per cent and they have done it on the easy locations. They have tackled the train stations and trans-

stops where you can actually get your access. The next phase over the next five years will really show where this process is going. I think if you then try to project the next five years, then will the skill shortages that we have in this country at this particular time, even if governments said here is the money, I think we would have a lot of trouble delivering that. So, I will leave you on that note.

MS SKILBECK: On a positive note.

MR DONAHOO: Thank you.

MS SKILBECK: Thank you very much, Lindsay. Now, we were scheduled to have a third speaker this morning who has not appeared. We have time on our schedule until 12.15, which was our scheduled lunch time. Of anyone who is in the audience currently and is not scheduled to speak, is there anyone who would like to? A bit of an invitation without notice.

MS FORD: Just to let you know who is here.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MS FORD: I am Frances Ford. I was down for 1.45.

MS SKILBECK: Wonderful.

MS FORD: Garry Hammer is not far away.

MS SKILBECK: Excellent. Thank you very much for that. Thank you.

MS FORD:

MS SKILBECK: So, our first two speakers after lunch are not far away or here. If no-one else would like to take up the invitation, I think we will break for lunch and reconvene as scheduled so people know when we are starting again at 1pm. Thank you.

ADJOURNED **[11.57am]**

RESUMED **[1.11 pm]**

MS SKILBECK: Welcome back, everyone. We're setting up some technology here for you, which we've done unsuccessfully, I'm afraid, but we will make do. For our session between lunch and afternoon tea we have three speakers scheduled, Garry Harmer and Frances Ford from Wellington Shire, and then Carla Anderson from Able Australia. The first cab off the rank, so to speak, is Garry Harmer. I have you down as Wellington Access and Inclusion Group, Garry.

MR HAMMER: Correct.

MS SKILBECK: Go for it.

5 MR HAMMER: Yes, look, my name is Garry Hammer, not Harmer.

MS SKILBECK: Hammer, sorry.

10 MR HAMMER: Yes, I am from the Wellington Access and Inclusion Advisory Group in Gippsland. I will just say a little bit about myself. Since a car accident about eight years ago, it has left me with a disability and unemployed. However, on a positive note, it now affords me lots of time to participate as a volunteer in many sectors of the community, like being here today. I don't drive any longer so I need to rely on the public transport system. That's another reason why I'm here today. Via
15 a short video, I would like to highlight some of the barriers people with a disability encounter, particularly from a rural perspective. I've got a three-minute video I would just like to show you.

20 MS SKILBECK: Just to explain, unfortunately we haven't been able to get the video to show up on the screen, so we're going to have to turn it around and have you all watch a very small computer screen, which is not the best way to go, but for the purposes of at least having some of us see it we will do it that way, with apologies.

25 MR HAMMER: Don't hesitate about gathering round.

MS SKILBECK: Yes, come forward and gather round.

30 **VIDEO SHOWN**

MR HAMMER: As I've pointed out in my video, being able to get suitable transport at the times I need to travel is one of my biggest issues. I live in a small
35 rural town with a population of about 200, 30 kilometres from a major regional centre. There are buses, but no accessible buses with low floors servicing my needs, and if there was, there are no accessible stops with footpaths and kerbs to allow them to stop to enable me to enter and exit the bus safely. Add to this I never go where and when I want, like meeting trains at the time I wish to travel. There are only two
40 buses each way a day, one on Saturdays and none on Sundays, which is very limiting.

V/Line state they will supply a taxi if an accessible bus is not available, but it is very off-putting and degrading having to ring and ask for special circumstances every
45 time you need to catch a train. Most people just don't bother or find an alternative at their own cost. When I travel locally or need to link with a train to Melbourne, I need to rely on the availability of Maxi Taxis. Taxis are unavailable in the peak periods. For instance, from 8 to 9.30 in the morning and 3 to 4.30 in the afternoon,

they are tied up doing school runs, so at 2.30 if I want to go home, it takes me an hour return trip. They won't take me home until they finish the school runs at 4.30, so that's two hours I have to sit there and wait.

5 Often when I go to a meeting I'm forced to leave home early or wait up to several hours just hanging around town with a carer. This only further adds to my disadvantage, as I also have to pay for my carer just to wait until we can go home. These are some of the things people with a disability encounter over and above that of the rest of the community. The cost of a fare to town in a taxi for me is about \$48
10 each way, but if I need to travel to the doctors, 18 kilometres in the other direction, I either incur a \$30 surcharge or the meter is switched on, which is approximately \$40 depending on the driver. The meter starts on the outskirts of town to travel to my place first, then to the doctors and home again. For this service I incur a charge of about \$120 to go 36 kilometres. This is a common occurrence for those living
15 outside of any major towns that have a taxi service.

Metropolitan users never incur this surcharge or financial burden. It's the most expensive form of transport matched to the most disadvantaged sector of the community who more often than not live on the outskirts of town or the
20 neighbouring towns due to housing affordability. This often makes taxis cost prohibitive for many within the rural regions to use, even if it is the only form of public transport available. Personally, I find these taxis discriminatory, inappropriate, unsafe and outright frightening. These vehicles are not designed to carry passengers like myself, rather they have been crudely adapted from a parcel
25 van, hence the often harrowing ride, particularly when there is a strong wind. I always feel we're not going to make it around corners or we're going to be blown off the road. It's probably quite different being in the country when you're travelling down open roads in some of those Hiace vans. They're very light vehicles and they just get blown all over the place.
30

By the time I arrive at my destination I'm usually feeling tense, stiff and feeling very uncomfortable due to the need to brace myself and hang on to counteract the unnerving swaying of the taxi, not to mention the lack of vision, as the top of the windows are below my field of view, which forces me to bend over in order to see
35 out. Sitting in the back of these taxis, it is very noisy and it makes it extremely hard to converse with the driver, something normal taxi passengers never need to or would never put up with. When I come to Melbourne, I try to avoid using taxis as I find them extremely unreliable, often with either untrained or non-caring drivers who don't know how or just don't bother to safely fasten the wheelchair security. In the
40 country we've got more reliable drivers.

It is one of the benefits of being in the country, you have face to face with the drivers. You see them on a regular basis. They do secure you in securely. They always come when you book them and they are always there on time. If you need to
45 meet a train, they take that responsibility and make sure they arrive on time to get you to the train on time. So you end up developing a really personal working relationship with most of the drivers. It's one hell of a ride when the straps to hold you firmly in place are loose, leaving you to freely roll about, facing forward one

minute, then backwards the next; all the while you are trying to get the driver to stop just to do his job right. This is something that has personally happened to me several times, once with my family on the way to the zoo and another time returning to my motel after a conference; terrifying, as you can imagine.

5

In Melbourne I have missed my train home due to taxis not arriving on time, the reason being I only needed to travel a short distance. I am sure if I was going to the airport it would be different and, like I said before, in the country, drivers would take responsibility to get you there on time, even if it is only a short distance. Just want to touch on some of the solutions. We actually need better train drivers and I thought maybe no training, no lifting fee. There is a lifting fee of \$10 charged for all wheelchair users – that is fair – but the drivers only receive 50 to 70 per cent of this. The taxi company receives the rest. For what I ask. If the driver received all of the lifting fee, as he is the only person doing the lifting, they would be more inclined to pick up people with a disability, and of course we should be really aiming for a universal taxi that suits everybody's needs, and I always quote the London cabs.

We need to waive the out-of-town surcharge and we also really want appropriate wheelchair accessible taxis, especially when the government are supplying subsidies for those operators to buy new taxis. With some personal conversations with some of the drivers that have bought better taxis, they have found that they actually attract more business. In fact, some of them have attracted business people coming and wanting to sit in their taxis and do business on the way to a meeting, or whatever.

25 MS SKILBECK: Garry, what sort of taxis are the better ones in that particular example?

MR HAMMER: Most of them from my experience have been the Mercedes types vehicles. They feel much better to ride in, from my point of view. They are easily accessible for me. I can actually see out of the vehicles. They are much quieter, so you can be closer to the driver. You can have a conversation. They are much more friendly to use.

35 MS SKILBECK: Are they the converted people mover vans?

MR HAMMER: Yes.

MS SKILBECK: Yes. Okay.

40 MR HAMMER: In fact, I have actually just been to Sydney in the last two weeks and I found the taxi drivers up there much more friendlier with a much more positive attitude but I noticed - it was noticed to be much less those Hiace-type vans on the road. They use more Kia-type vans and Toyota -type vans, you know, those people movers, and there was lots of them. So they seem to have been keen to take that up.
45 I will move on to trains, and I touched on a few points on my video about some of my experiences in a train. In my area I believe there are only about 11 accessible V/line carriages available which can be used on long haul journeys, but usually on my Gippsland line to Bairnsdale there is only one carriage always available and for a

distance of approximately 350 kilometres, there is only one designated area for a wheelchair and a carer. This means if more than one person in a wheelchair is travelling, it's off to the goods carriage again or being placed in an awkward place in a carriage with no access to a toilet or other facilities.

5

There's usually an assumption that regular wheelchair users know about limited spaces and rolling stock changes or, you know, rolling changes in carriages, and that we are accepting of that. Sure, no-one else has to put up with that. Yes, we now have new accessible fast trains which is great. However, these only go to Traralgon, half the entire journey, then it's back to using the old system with only a few trains scheduled, requiring long waiting periods for the Bairnsdale train. We have heard about a retrofit for some of the old trains as part of the V/line carriage refurbishment but there has been no press releases or written information confirming this as yet. We are still expected to sit out the toilet - and we are still expected to sit outside the toilets on the Sprinter trains, as I pointed out in my video. Everyone sits in the bulk of the train but people with disabilities sit right outside the toilets, no heating; just it's noisy, it's cold and rather smelly sometimes, as you could imagine.

20 There are no late night V/line trains beyond Traralgon. So this often means a stop overnight, which is just another cost that people with disabilities incur. Buses. In Gippsland, Latrobe City has 19 accessible buses, which is my adjoining shire, which mainly service local routes and school bus routes, but my adjoining shire, the Wellington Shire, has only recently required its first one. None of these accessible buses within the region link with adjoining shires or Melbourne, and I just go to a little thing that I try and explain that, for instance, if you require medical services, you can have an X-ray in Sale but you need to go 45 kilometres to Traralgon for a CAT scan, but if you require an MRI, it's off to Dandenong, 200 kilometres away, or another 50 kilometres in the city if you require further services, and all that is fine if you live along the regional corridor of Gippsland but the problems are incrementally greater the further you live from the main centres, and not everyone lives near a shire of I think 10,000, is it Frances, 10,000 square kilometres? We cover an area from the coast to the mountains and a lot of the plains. There's a lot of areas in between that – apart from that straight line.

35 Many bus operators receive exemption when replacing old buses, using low patronage as the reason, but of course no one uses them. We can't get on, so why would you line up for a bus anyway. Back to some of my solutions. All new buses are to be accessible; no exemptions whatsoever. We obviously need more accessible stops. We could also do with some accessible shelters. We need more incentives needed for operators to change over to universally accessible vehicles and of course all of the issues I have raised today are not new. For instance, the video I showed you, I made over two years ago and all of my concerns then are still relevant now. In fact, the only thing that has changed is, in Wellington, that we now have one accessible bus, thanks to the hard work by our transport connections project officer, and of course we have the fast trains which are much better and are accessible for a number of people to use at once but that is only to Traralgon. That's only half the journey.

Unfortunately, I feel that the focus is usually only on the issues in metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria has totally different issues requiring different solutions, and of course we have strengths. There are actually issues in Melbourne but no one ever seems to notice that. It's always a metropolitan focus. I think I might leave it there.

MS SKILBECK: Garry, can I ask, just for the towns that you access closest to your home, what the physical facilities are like to access those few accessible buses, as in the stops, the information, timetable information and route information for those buses? Can you give us some observations about the state of the whole service?

MR HAMMER: On some of the rural ones, there is – the timetable is quite obvious. It is freely available and understandable. They say they will have an accessible bus if it is required but that usually doesn't happen.

MS SKILBECK: Which township is - - -

MR HAMMER: That would be from leaving Traralgon to go to Sale.

MS SKILBECK: Right.

MR HAMMER: That would be going to Glengarry, Toongabbie, Gower, Hayfield, Maffra to Sale. They pulled out an old railway line and that was why the – it has only a V/Line bus that runs through way both ways but in most of those towns there is not the infrastructure, like kerb cuts and footpaths, for those buses to actually work properly if there was an accessible bus. So, 99 per cent of the time there is no accessible bus and if there is, it can't be used in those sorts of places. Except, you know, the larger towns.

MS SKILBECK: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR HAMMER: Thank you.

MS FORD: We might have more luck with technology this time. There is only three slides including a map. So, can we move that along?

MS SKILBECK: James will push the buttons.

MS FORD: Yes. It is only a couple of maps to get people's bearings.

MS SKILBECK: You just need to keep near the microphone, Frances, yes.

MS FORD: So, stay sitting there?

MS SKILBECK: Stay sitting there will be great. Okay. Thank you very much. We are all set up. Our second speaker this afternoon is Francis Ford from Wellington Shire Council. If, Francis, you could start by describing your role and the scope physically as well.

MS FORD: Sure.

MS SKILBECK: Great.

5 MS FORD: Thanks for the time today. I appreciate the opportunity. My name is Frances Ford. I am Rural Access Project Coordinator with Wellington Shire Council. We are about to show you where Wellington Shire is. Until I moved to Gippsland, I had no idea, and I often get asked conferences if I am from New Zealand. So, we will show you where Wellington Shire is in a moment.

10

The rural – for people that don't know about rural access, and it is a Victorian thing. I am not sure how many people here are from other states. Rural access is a community development program funded by Department of Human Services to assist the access and inclusion of people with disabilities in community life. So, it is a whole of life approach but obviously you can't look at projects and partnerships to do with employment or housing or recreation or just about anything without coming up against the barrier of transport. I am one of 27 rural access officers across country Victoria and there are also metro access and deaf access officers employed as part of the building inclusive communities program. So, that is rural access.

20

I am also the chairperson of the Let's GET Connected Transport Connections program. The GET part in the title is Gippsland East Transport. Our program covers the shires of Wellington and East Gippsland. We might move on to the next slide. This shows you the initial pilots for Transport Connections. There were nine pilots working over the last three years, starting in 2003. The Let's GET Connected one is obviously over in the east corner. You can see the two shires of Wellington and East Gippsland between them cover about a seventh of the state. We are talking 30,000 square kilometres throughout two shires, so they are two of the largest three municipalities in Victoria. The next one is just a close up of that. Thank you.

30 Wellington and East Gippsland. So, some of the towns that Garry referred to in his presentation, Wellington is the green part on the left. Apologies to people reading the transcript. As Garry said, it goes down nearly towards to Wilson's Prom., up into the high country past Licola where we have no roads at present due to the floods. Just getting over the fires and we have been hit with the floods. So, that is the two shires.

35

The purpose of the Transport Connections program is to assist communities across the state to develop and oversee local transport solutions to meet local needs. The program was developed in close consultation with community organisations, with transport providers and peak bodies. There has been four state government departments involved in the development of Transport Connections projects. That is Department of Infrastructure, Department of Victorian Communities, abolished the other day, but replaced in another form, Department of Human Services and Department of Education and Training.

40

The program is currently overseen by the Department of Victorian Communities. Well, its successor department. Our steering committee currently includes 17 stakeholder organisations. We commenced late in 2003 and we have recently been

45

refunded for another three years. The origins of our Let's GET Connected program go back to something called the Wellington rural transport partnership in 2003. I mention this because that the same year that the disability transport standards were proclaimed. The new established rural access program had picked up that transport
5 was the biggest challenge for a wide range of services and individuals and community organisation and yet no-one seemed to be tackling transport in a systematic way. On the one hand it was seen as an incredibly important issue. On the other, nothing much was being done about it because it was just all too hard.

10 So we began the Rural Transport Partnership with the saying, "We know the problems, let's work on some solutions," and that commitment to community capacity building and problem solving has continued ever since. As I said, it was in the same year the disability transport standards were adopted and we've followed
15 events since then with great interest. There has been over 200 stakeholders engaged in the course of the last three years with transport connections and there are many, many projects that have stemmed from that project that has been successful working across government, building relationships and strong partnerships with local communities, and by focusing on solutions rather than responding to single issues in
20 isolation. I will leave a copy of the annual report. This is really just context for our approach to disability standards.

We all know that the challenge with transport is to go beyond identifying the problems and to try and work out some flexible local solutions. One of the aspects of Let's Get Connected has been a focus on disability access to transport. We're very
25 conscious in Wellington and East Gippsland shires of the aging of the population. When a population analysis was conducted recently, it was clear that both Wellington and East Gippsland are experiencing what's called the triple whammy when it comes to aging. By this I mean we don't just face the general demographic changes that are facing Australia, but we're also losing young people who depart for
30 jobs and education, and we're also gaining older people who move to these areas in retirement or pre-retirement for their sea change or tree change experience. Sometimes they get a rude shock. They may be very okay for transport when they arrive. Fifteen years they can't drive and they don't know what has hit them.

35 The focus of this inquiry is very much the DDA Transport Standards, but we can't really look at them and explain how they're experienced in our area without some description of our context of very, very poor transport infrastructure. As Garry mentioned, and I won't repeat all the things Garry has told you, we have three train services a day to Sale, which is a population of 15,000. It goes on to Bensdale, a
40 population of 12,000. There's a six-hour gap between services during the day. Even though Sale and Traralgon are two of the largest centres in Gippsland, the connectivity is simply not there. If you live in Sale, you want to get to Traralgon for a meeting, a doctor's appointment or to go shopping, you've got two options; leave at 7.15 in the morning and arrive before anything is open, or arrive at 10 past 2 and
45 you either hop on a train 20 minutes later to go home or you wait six hours and leave at 8.33 pm. Not much good for a doctor's appointment or a meeting. So that's our context.

We have three buses a week to the postal community of Locksport which is 60 kilometres from Sale on the Ninety Mile Beach. We have three town bus services during the day in the town of Sale. Most other towns get no bus services at all or they might get one service a week; Stratford, for instance, even though it's only 15
5 minutes away. We're not talking remote villages, we're talking about most of the population of Wellington living within half an hour car journey of Sale. So how does that all relate to the disability transport standards? The main message I want to get across today is that the trickle down effect is not working for us. The compliance program is making good progress in Melbourne, as far as we can tell, and to the area
10 within the fast train network. If we go back to that big map of Victoria, when I talk about – sometimes we call it the magic circle, we mean the area bounded by the edges of the fast train network, so that's Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon.

I would like to acknowledge here the effort and the expenditure that has gone into the
15 improvements that have occurred in Melbourne and in areas like the Latrobe Valley, they have made a major difference to people's lives, but once you go beyond that magic circle, if I can call it that, defined by the fast train network the picture is very different. There's no formula for ensuring that progress occurs across the whole of the system across the state equitably. I realise it's already a very complicated matrix
20 if you look at the Department of Infrastructure progress chart. It would be another dimension on that matrix to try and get a sense of progress across Victoria looking at it geographically.

On the one hand, we can understand that concentration of expenditure and effort in
25 the areas of highest population. It makes sense on one level. The danger is that improvements in rural areas beyond the fast train network are left until last. People with disabilities in rural Victoria do not want to have to wait until 2030 to be able to travel on an accessible bus or have good access to a train service. We had a meeting yesterday and a couple of people said, "I will be dead well before then. I don't want
30 to wait until 2030." Bus companies in Wellington Shire and East Gippsland took delivery of their first accessible buses just last year, 2006, one in each shire. That's two to cover the 30,000 square kilometres. Clearly we have a long way to go.

But we're not just here to whinge. The buses we do have have been greatly
35 appreciated, and apparently patronage figures have lifted significantly for the obvious reason that many of the people who need to access public transport have mobility issues and find it difficult or impossible to board a conventional bus. We often hear people say, "They put in a wheelchair bus in so-and-so a place and hardly anyone with a wheelchair has ever used it." What they don't seem to realise is that
40 most of the people who need to use wheelchair accessible buses are not actually wheelchair users. They may have arthritis, they may have had a hip replacement, they may be pushing a stroller, whatever. I think sometimes the impact of those wheelchair accessible buses has been underestimated.

I mentioned the aging of the population. Across Victoria the number of people over
45 80 years of age is expected to increase by 60 per cent by 2021. However, in Wellington and East Gippsland this group will increase by 90 per cent. A high percentage of this group will have limited mobility and will no longer be able to

drive. What this means for us in a nutshell is that the areas where you have the highest proportion of people who need accessible transport are the areas where the smallest improvements have been made. A commitment to improving accessibility must be accompanied by a commitment to some basis minimum levels of service.

5 Obviously these minimums would need to be negotiated depending on the context.

Three services a week to a small outlying township might be appropriate, twelve services a day for a local town service in a major centre might be appropriate or six services a day connecting major centres and East Gippsland to the Latrobe Valley and thus to Melbourne, but if these commitments are not followed through there's a danger that access standards may be used to reduce and even eliminate services to people in rural areas. I will come back to that issue later.

15 Just a few points on some specifics. V/Line issues: Garry has spoken eloquently about the impact on him and others that he knows of travelling on V/Line services as a wheelchair user. For many years the focus of our campaign has been on the fact that people in wheelchairs still have to travel in the baggage car on long-haul trains; no seat for carer, no windows, no air-conditioning and no access to toilets. Truly substandard conditions. It's good to know that that's about to change, in part due to 20 the advocacy efforts such as Garry's film. However, there are still many issues of concern. I came down this morning. I left about 8 o'clock. I've been in a car on a V/Line service on a city loop train and on a tram to get here by lunchtime, but I travelled down this morning in the same carriage as a gentleman in a wheelchair who was sitting in the only possible spot, right next to the toilet. No-one was able to use 25 the toilet without disturbing him and asking him to move. On a train from Traralgon, that's pretty poor.

These are the new Sprinter trains, so our question is: how can that happen? We know that in the old trains retrofitting is complicated and has taken a long time to get 30 organised, but when we're talking new services, how can this be? An issue that I think has been raised in a number of your hearings to date judging by the Website is the V/Line ruling in 2004 that the wheelchair access ramps cannot be used by people who are not in wheelchairs but who can't manage the gap and the step between the carriage door and the platform. Now, that was for safety reasons, but surely it can't 35 be too hard to design a ramp that is safe for both wheelchair users, pedestrians and V/Line staff and is still light enough to be lifted. Many people with disabilities have given up using trains because it is simply too hard to step on and off. This needs urgent attention and it really can't be too hard. We need a ramp that can't collapse regardless of weight distribution.

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The next area I'd like to look at is mobility scooters. I know this issue has also been raised by a number of others, but the lack of accreditation and labelling for mobility scooters that are permitted on public transport is an ongoing scandal. There is still lots of confusion and ignorance about the fact that there are restrictions on what 45 types of mobility scooters are permitted on trains, buses and taxis. On a positive note, there is now a lot more material available about this issue, and there's been a number of brochures produced. Last year, we seemed to have an abundance of

brochures looking at the issue of mobility scooters. That's one people may have seen, Using Mobility Aids on Public Transport.

5 There's also one produced by Rural Access in Bendigo, called Stay Safe, the safe way to use Motorised Scooters and Wheelchairs in the Community. Both of these have detailed information about the specifications, on what's permitted and what's not. There's also material on the V/line website. But it's still not widely known in the community, there are still many, many health professionals who are doing assessments of people and looking at scooter – moving to using the scooter. Many of those occupational therapists do not know the specifications on what's permitted on transport, what's not, so the questions are not asked, about what purpose will you be using your scooter for, and people are still buying scooters from suppliers who don't have that information or don't share that information, and of course, people are still buying scooters second hand and getting no information.

15 So that's an area that really requires work urgently. I realise scooters are produced by many, many companies and many of them come from overseas, but it really shouldn't be too hard for suppliers to stick on a – put on a sticker that says, "Suitable for use on public transport." There's only a few dimensions that have to be measured, that's the weight, the footprint, etcetera. People need to be informed at 20 the point of purchase whether their scooter can or can't be used on public transport, and then they can make an informed decision. Another one with scooters and chairs, is the lack of restraints and anchor points. Lack of anchor points in buses has been a major safety concern, that's not addressed by the standards, and a lot of scooters are being made, I understand, without the other bit, you know, if you've got the anchor points on your scooter, but they're not there on the bus, you're not going to be able to secure yourself and vice versa.

30 Access to school buses, now we realise that a permanent exemption has been granted for school buses under the transport standards. The impact of this may not have been fully understood at the time, and there have been some major changes since this exemption was granted. You will not be getting submissions about this issue in most of your public hearings, for the obvious reason that in almost every state in Australia, there is not a separate school bus network. In other states, students travel on public transport that can also accept fare paying passengers. So if the public transport fleet improves, this has obvious spin-offs for school students. In Victoria, however – and I apologise for all the Victorians who know all this stuff, for reasons that go back 35 many decades, we have a dedicated school bus fleet that in rural areas often comprises the bulk of our public transport infrastructure. When I say the bulk of our infrastructure, I'm not joking. In Wellington Shire, we have 60 school buses, that's 40 6-0. We have two route buses. So 60 of our 64 buses are school buses. Does that make sense?

45 MS SKILBECK: Are these buses literally just used for school runs?

MS FORD: Yes. Now, that is slowly about to change. We have had a three year project to allow TAFE and post school travel on school buses.

MS SKILBECK: Right.

MS FORD: Until recently, if you were going to high school, and the next week you became a TAFE student, you could no longer travel on the same bus you had been
5 going to school on for the last six years. That's how rigid the system has been. Now, we have got this project now about enabling TAFE students to travel on school buses, and that's being rolled out across Victoria.

MS SKILBECK: Who have been the partners to that project?
10

MS FORD: It's been an initiative of Transport Connections, but we're very glad that it was picked up by the Regional Managers Network, which is basically regional heads of government departments and CEOs of local government in Gippsland. So they've given it a real – and the other major partner has been the local learning and
15 employment networks who have been very active in it, but with a lot of cooperation from the Department of Education and Department of Infrastructure. So that's about TAFE and post school students, in terms of residents of remote areas travelling on school buses, that's been a hard nut to crack, but it feels a little bit two steps forward, two steps back. There has been a principal approval given and there are supposed to
20 be new instructions to principals being sent out. We're not sure when, they have been ready to go for some time, and these will be giving principals the information on the new procedures and the new frameworks for travel on buses in remote areas.

MS SKILBECK: So this is setting out some sort of priority for the youth on the
25 bus?

MS FORD: It's basically an approval process.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.
30

MS FORD: The principals still have – under the system as it is now, principals have to give consent to individuals who wish to travel, so it could be about people putting in an application. So we have the 62 school buses, we have two route buses and we have the V/line replacement service that Gary mentioned that hasn't changed its
35 timetable for 40 years. That's our infrastructure. So we have this school bus flexibility project that's now been taken up and promoted by the Gippsland Regional Managers Forum, and that's about setting up the approval processes in conjunction with the Department of Education and local principals so that where seating capacity allows, residents in remote areas may apply for permission to travel on the school
40 bus. The sky won't fall in when that happens.

For some transport disadvantaged people, this will make all the difference in enabling them to access services and facilities and to maintain social connections with their communities. However, it's likely that many of the same people who are
45 transport disadvantaged will have difficulty accessing the conventional school bus for access reasons. The people that need to use it are the very people who can't struggle up the three steps to get on. There are also many students who are unable to use conventional school buses. Most students with disabilities attend mainstream

schools not specialist schools, and schools and families often have extreme difficulty in catering to their transport needs.

5 Just two incidences to share with you. A member of our Access Inclusion Advisory Group spent six years driving her daughter 100 kilometre round trip to mainstream secondary school five days a week for the duration of secondary school, because she was unable to access the school bus in her wheelchair. Another example, we've been approached by a local primary school seeking advice on how to meet the needs of a boy who wears callipers and is unable to get up the steps of standard school buses for such things as going to school swimming lessons with his class. This child has been isolated from his classes as special arrangements have to be made each time, eg being taken to and from the pool by the school principal in his car. Imagine what that feels like if you're 10 years old.

15 It became clear several years ago that by far the cheapest way to run a new route service, of which we need many, was to use a school bus in its downtime, ie when it's not being used for school runs, say between 10 and 2.30. Given that all new route services are supposed to be accessible under the standards, we now have a situation where people advocating for new town services in rural areas are being told, "We can't allocate a school bus to that run because it's not accessible, therefore you won't have any service at all." If you can't have an accessible bus, you'll have no bus. I suspect that was not the intention when the transport standards were drawn up. It wasn't supposed to lead to a reduction in service.

25 I don't know if it's within the terms of reference of this inquiry to challenge the permanent exemption, but we would really appreciate it if the issue could still be considered so that some long term strategies can be developed. This issue is too important to be left in the too hard basket for another 10 or 15 years. I was going through – I have a list of all the school buses that existed across Gippsland as at 2004, and they range between one year old and 20 years old. So it's quite an aging fleet, and obviously nothing is going to happen overnight, but if we don't change the rules, we're not talking 20 years till things change, we're talking 50 years. There are many other exemption that limit the outcomes of the standards, but I can't go into them all here. The permanent exemption on school buses is the really big one for us.

35 The next issue we would like to address - and I realise we're changing through a fair bit here, we've been saving it up for years probably - is DDA compliant bus stops. On the one hand, it's encouraging that the need to improve accessibility of bus stops has been recognised as part of ensuring a continuous path of travel and a safe and accessible journey. In the interim, we have situations where an accessible bus stop may exist, but not be serviced by accessible buses, and where accessible buses can't be used fully because of difficulties with bus stops. I'm sure others are familiar with those situations. However, there have been significant concerns raised about the implementation of this improvement plan. There are no easy answers, but a one size fits all approach is not going to work in rural areas.

45 Trying to install a fully DDA compliant bus stop in areas where there may not even be sealed roads, proper footpaths or curbs and channels, is problematic to say the

least. The low floor ramp equipped bus solution for mobility device access, and we've got a picture of our one and only much beloved low floor bus, but you probably know the sort I'm talking about, is only effective at bus stop locations where there also compatible works on the actual roadside bus stop, it's the next one
5 after that, leaving aside the pace of installation and upgrading those locations. Emerging innovative uses of public buses such as dial a ride, demand responsive, area service bus routes, are not restricted to a fixed set of pick up and set down points, instead they endeavour to service the public in a very flexible way with pick up and set down at locations where people need them, maybe very close to your front
10 door.

These services are increasingly common in parts of Europe and are being developed in some parts of Australia. They're seen as especially important, given the aging of the population, and these flexible services are much more likely to be used by the
15 people who need them the most. If the weather's shocking you're not going to try and get to the nearest bus stop which is a kilometre and a half away, but you may manage to get 50 metres to where the dial a ride will pick you up very close to your front door.

20 However, a major concern has now emerged, the latest advice from Department of Infrastructure is that DOI will no longer consider funding these new and innovative models of transport because they don't use DDA compliant bus stops and that where these flexible transport models have been funded in recent years that funding will now be withdrawn for the same reasons. It would be a retrograde step if the
25 development of flexible transport options is stymied in this way. Surely there are other ways that the objectives of safe, flexible and accessible transport can be achieved.

30 MS SKILBECK: Frances, as a matter of course, in the Wellington Shire, how many of these services have actually been implemented? How many are being affected by the recent decisions?

MS FORD: We haven't got dial a ride services, we have entered into partnership agreements with one – sometimes in conjunction with taxi services.
35

MS SKILBECK: Right, okay.

MS FORD: So this wouldn't apply to use of a taxi. One example, using a large 10 seater cab to take visitors to the prison at Fulham, that's an example, so that wouldn't
40 be affected because it's not a bus, a DDA funded bus – sorry, a DOI funded bus. Does that make sense?

MS SKILBECK: It still qualifies as a taxi.

45 MS FORD: But if we're talking – if we're talking public transport, as distinct from community transport, and I'm not going to go into community transport today because that needs a whole inquiry of its own. If we're talking public transport, the

advice we've been given is that DOI will not fund flexible dial a ride type services if – because they don't use standard bus stops.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

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MS FORD: The question was asked before about – sorry, so more work needs to be done on design options and researching solutions that have been developed in other parts of the world. Ideally the total access solution would be self contained within a bus and not dependant on a high degree of physical work services at the road side. I mean there's got to be a common sense solution to this and we're about finding solutions, we're not just about naming problems.

10

A couple more quick ones, information and timetables were mentioned before. Many people find information on the V/Line website inaccessible or difficult to use. We still have no access to large print timetables or timetables in other formats. Local bus timetables vary dramatically depending on the operator, some operators have gone to a lot of trouble to make their timetables clearer and easier to read, others barely promote their services at all and their timetables are an extremely well kept secret, let alone accessible in a range of formats.

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Bus operators are expected to promote their services and provide good timetable information as part of their contract and subsidy arrangements with government, however it seems these requirements are rarely enforced. As in so many areas, some bus operators are innovative and responsive to customer demand, others are resistant to any positive change, even with substantial government subsidy support, and there are companies that I won't name which remind me of a Yes Minister episode where it's really a lot simpler to operate your bus line if you have no passengers, and you get the same amount of money from the government as if you had passengers, so there's no incentive to carry people at all.

20

There are lots of issues to do with driver training, to do with standard of vehicles. Gary's touched on some of those issues with taxi design and I won't cover that. But I want to support Gary's comments on taxis and just add a couple of points. The multi-purpose taxi scheme continues to be problematic in Victoria. The impact of the annual cap imposed on large numbers of people with disabilities depending on diagnosis, not on need, has been enormous in rural areas, though at least the cap has now been increased to \$1,030 per year up from \$550 and the half price subsidy is up to \$30 per trip.

25

Many people in rural areas are still restricted to one subsidised taxi journey per week or per fortnight to do shopping or go to the doctor. For some they are basically then trapped at home until the next week or fortnight. Many people are very reluctant to ask for help from family and friends even if that's an option, they really want to be independent. There are other taxi issues in rural areas that negate the effect of the taxi subsidy. The surcharge of \$30 for a taxi moving into another zone is a classic example. In Wellington Shire we only have two accessible taxis based in a member of our advisory group who lives in Stratford, 15 minutes away, and wants to travel to Maffra, only a 10 minute trip, will have to pay the \$30 surcharge on top of

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his fare, totally eliminating any benefit from the taxi subsidy. This is a barrier not faced by taxi users in Melbourne.

5 I'd like to finish by passing on a bit of feedback from recent meetings of people with disabilities and carers in the Wellington East Gippsland Shires. One of these meetings was held just yesterday in Bairnsdale. I won't dwell on the issues I've already covered in some detail but I'll just read out some of the dot points they sent me last night:

10 *The standards are solely around physical access, it will have limited affect on accessibility for people with intellectual disability and mental health issues who may require personal staff assistance. There's no mention of training for providers on disability awareness, alternative forms of communication and mental health first aid. Though Bairnsdale Train Station are good at this, so*
15 *there's a vote of thanks to Bairnsdale Train Station staff there. It's too easy for transport services in rural area to gain exemption under the standards. The reasons for which exemptions are granted, e.g. cost, lack of infrastructure, geographic factors, resources available, are part and parcel of life in rural communities. Also, who monitors these exemptions?*

20

Another one:

25 *There's no seat for disabled people on the Bairnsdale line, people have to sit in the storage section. There's no room for carer's either, this is a gross form of discrimination. Timetables are not in accessible formats for buses and trains in East Gippsland. Standards are unclear about who is responsible for infrastructure around public transport, whether it's DOI, councils, transport providers, this needs to be clarified to ensure action.*

30 Next one:

People in East Gippsland are not aware of the standards, nor their rights, nor complaint processes.

35 Another one:

The departure location might be accessible but arrival location not accessible. Many reports of people not using public transport because of this reason.

40 A positive one:

All East Gippsland people present were happy with the waiting times for taxis.

45 As Gary's already mentioned, often the customer service with taxis in rural areas is much, much higher because you've got the personal contact and the personal relationship.

Reports of a number of disability groups not using buses, the blind don't as there's no space for guide dogs, people with intellectual disabilities don't because of the delays and lack of support given to them.

5 Next one:

You have to book at least 24 hours ahead of time to access a bus or the train in East Gippsland, even though on the train you still sit with the luggage. This is difficult if you have to get somewhere fast or medical appointments change.

10

Next one:

Ongoing disability awareness training for public transport staff is a must. The majority of feedback from East Gippsland was that staff in the country are much more disability friendly and aware. Many stories of staff in Melbourne not so. A story shared of taxi in Melbourne that refused to have a guide dog. Infrastructure upgrade to Bairnsdale Train Station has led to ease of access, yet not increased use as the train is still not accessible.

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20 Near the end:

One of the main reasons people are not using public transport is because the infrastructure and service is still unreliable. If the Bairnsdale train is delayed there are no accessible toilets, more than three hours is a long time to wait. A story shared of a person getting to Melbourne and the station lift not working, had to wait many hours before it was fixed and they could escape from the railway station. Why are they still manufacturing buses that are not accessible?

25

30 And finally:

Everyone felt that the standards are vague, they had had no impact on accessibility and that 2030 is too long to wait.

35 So that's probably a good place to end it, but just recapping my main point, the rural areas where you have the highest proportion of people who need accessible transport are the very areas where the smallest improvements have been made. A commitment to improving accessibility must be accompanied by a commitment to developing and maintaining some basic minimum levels of service, and if this is not followed up
40 there's a danger that access standards may be applied in such a way that services to people in rural areas are reduced or even eliminated. Thanks for your time.

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MS SKILBECK: Thanks, Frances. Can I ask a question of the Transport Connections Group more broadly, do you have an opportunity as a group of regional managers across the state to get together and share – share lessons both good and bad?

MS FORD: The Transport Connections roll out is well underway to stage 2, there are 30 projects being funded for the next three years, until June 2010. I think just about all of those specific projects have now been announced and there's an induction session happening for all stakeholders, all those 30 projects, on 23 and 24 August.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS FORD: So that will be the first state-wide session. The idea is that there will be regional get togethers in every region of Victoria, probably every couple of months so that the new projects and the old projects have a chance to share their experiences and to learn from each other.

MS SKILBECK: Okay, all right. The group that provides you with the dot points, how is that connected with – the status of that group with your - - -

MS FORD: I've put out a call for – because I was doing this presentation today, I had some input from – we have a Disability Access To Transport Working Group which is linked to the Wellington Access Inclusion Group that Gary chairs, so we had some input from that group.

MS SKILBECK: It's primarily a volunteer based group?

MS FORD: Yes, it's a group of people with disabilities, carers and service providers and also has two counsellors from Wellington Shire Council. The group that I mentioned from Bairnsdale, that was a group called together, connected with the Rural Access Program, to start work on a submission which they'll be sending in to this inquiry.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS FORD: So that's linked to Transport Connection and to Rural Access.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS FORD: They work closely in partnership.

MS SKILBECK: Excellent. Thank you very much, Frances, for clarifying that for me.

MS FORD: Any other questions? Sorry I talk to fast.

MS SKILBECK: No, no, you're fine, thank you.

MS FORD: When I made the appointment I told them we wouldn't need that long.

MS SKILBECK: Because you're on fast-forward. Okay, I think we'll take a brief pause I think for about 15 minutes until 2.30 when our next speaker is scheduled to

commence. We need to locate our Auslan interpreters, among other things. So we'll reconvene here at 2.30.

5 **(PLEASE NOTE: Frances wanted it noted her disappointment that the public hearing did not include lunch for those travelling long distances and volunteers giving their time to the hearing.)**

10 **ADJOURNED** [2.13 pm]

RESUMED [2.47 pm]

15

MS SKILBECK: Okay, welcome back everyone, our next speaker is Carla Anderson from Able Australia and she had the 45 minutes allocated before morning tea, but it's up to Carla how she uses her time. Please Carla.

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MS ANDERSON: Okay, thank you very. Hi, I'm really happy to be here and nice to see you all, I'm Carla – Carla Anderson, I'm a deaf person myself and so I'll sign and I'll have this interpreter voicing for me. Unfortunately, it's a male voice and they can't have a sex change, but regardless – so, yes and I am a woman obviously. Sorry to be a bit rude, anyway, I was hoping to have two deafblind people with me today, but one person couldn't come, she has university commitments and I was waiting for the other one at the train station and she didn't seem to arrive, so hence I'm running late. So in Able Australia we have a deafblind advocacy committee and we meet every two months and the purpose of that committee is to discuss issues that may arise affecting their day to day living, as deafblind people.

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One of the biggest concerns of their everyday lives, or their day to day lives, is the announcements of public transport usage and so this is a good opportunity, or good platform to publicly sort of declare those issues that they have and one of those issues is – well, I'm not speaking from personal experience, but I'm actually speaking on behalf of these people. Deafblind people experience – well, issues in relation to communication, they like to travel alone but say a train may be stuck for some reason they can't see the scrolling messages that may come up on the train, you know the LCD lit message that is announcing what may ever be the problem.

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They can't actually see that, so they're needing to try and find out and communicate in some way, like perhaps get the person sitting next to them to write on their hand, or to write in large letters and other problems may be, you know, that the train driver may be a bit unaware of how to communicate with a deafblind person and you know, a bit afraid of communicating with them, so perhaps that's just training that may be needed for those drivers, or tram drivers, so they can communicate with deafblind people. So are you getting the gist of what I'm saying?

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MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MS ANDERSON: So should I keep going or did anyone want to sort of throw any questions in? Or how would you like it to work?

5 MS SKILBECK: I'll throw in questions, certainly as we go. Can I ask before a deafblind passenger gets on to a train, how do they access the information to know how to access the train and the timetable?

MS ANDERSON: Okay, yes, that's a good question. There's a number of things I wanted to sort of flag, but that was one of those things and I'll answer that now.
10 Deafblind people rely – well, they organise their transportation well in advance, or prior to their travel, they have to make contact through the National Relay Service, or the NRS, are you familiar with how that works?

MS SKILBECK: Yes, through the telephone text, is that right?
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MS ANDERSON: Yes, that's right, so it's the National Relay Service, yes and so the person at the other end of the phone doesn't have a TTY or a text phone, so they have to go through a third party, which is the National Relay Service to enable that communication.
20

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS ANDERSON: Or they may just look up stuff on the Internet, you know, and find out the sort of timetabling information in that way and so they're very well
25 organised and they know the timetable – or they know their schedule well and it does work beautifully when the train is running on time, or the tram is running on time. There's no problem in that. But, as we know, it's happened a few times, a good example of something that happened to me, this morning I caught the train from Camberwell and it was saying the city loop train was departing from this platform
30 and I jumped on the train and I was with another deaf person, we were heading towards the city and then it stopped just before Flinders Street station and a scrolling message came up saying a direct service to Flinders Street and I was a bit puzzled, or a bit stumped as to what happened to the city loop.

35 I asked a person sitting next to me and they said, "Well what happened to the city loop" and the loop's been shut they tell me, so you know, luckily I can, you know, communicate with that person that's sitting next to me because I can see, but a deafblind person, you know, it's just another barrier to that communication, which makes it much more difficult. In that situation a deafblind person will probably sort
40 of nudge the person next to them and perhaps gesture in that way and then they'll spell it out on their hands and get their information that way and some people are willing to communicate in that way, but other people just turn their back and don't know how to cope in the situation. So deafblind people, you know, in that situation need to be assertive, and perhaps go stand by the door, wave their cane and hope that,
45 you know, someone may come and help them and enable that communication to take place.

Some deafblind people who have some vision, you know, who are able to see in certain sort of frames of vision that they – I think there's a new scrolling message system on trains which will show – and the different televisions at the train stations which show the various stops and I think that's greatly improved, but the text is not
5 actually big enough for deafblind people to see and so when the train does actually change, for whatever reason that may be, they actually have to go to the office, to find out that extra information, or additional information that they may need to know and then in that they're faced with communication problems too, so I think a general sort of knowledge, or basic training for the staff at the offices just in perhaps writing
10 in large letters and things as such.

MS SKILBECK: Okay, okay.

MS MEEHAN: Can I ask a question?
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MS SKILBECK: One moment. I have to do the microphone.

MS MEEHAN: Thank you. I understand because I am a person working with people not speaking English and they face challenges because they can't speak
20 English and people don't understand what they're saying, or people don't have patience and I can relate very much. My name is Effie Meehan.

MS ANDERSON: Yes, that's a really good point and thanks for raising that. You know, deafblind people and also deaf people are faced with challenges like this and
25 it's not too dissimilar to, you know, from foreigners who come here with a thick accent, you know and you know, perhaps they may not know how to mime properly. Deaf people they rely on these visual cues, you know, and so many people from overseas may not – or for example be used to that sort of communication and so that's another reason for communication breaking down. Another issue that I'd like
30 to bring to this forum is, it's happened a few times to deafblind people and this person who lives in the country and often they'll catch a train and that will be delayed, or they'll be fixing the line somewhere and so an alternate bus service will be provided, which will arrive to a particular location that may be in the dark of the evening and because of that changed service, they've had to arrive in the evening and
35 so that person can't actually get from where – or get to where they need to be because it's dark.

So they need some means of support in that transportation and I think that also raises the issue which I've discussed earlier which is training staff and perhaps, you know,
40 giving them – or perhaps in that instance giving them a taxi voucher, where in that particular situation giving them a tax voucher so they can actually get home without having to actually incur the costs themselves.

MS SKILBECK: Aside from information provision, are there physical limitations to
45 using trains? Let's talk about trains for the moment.

MS ANDERSON: In deafblind – in relation to deafblind people, most deafblind people have quite good mobility and they have that training, so they have the

sufficient training to use the cane or they have a seeing eye dog which will guide them obviously. They're pretty good, you know. You know, walking down the street, most people know that if someone is walking the street with a cane to just – to be aware and move out of the way but there was one situation where a deafblind

5 person was walking with her cane – or with her cane waiting for the train doors to open and she was talking to someone else and they walked off and she was just about to get onto the train but she thought the doors were still open, but in actual fact the door had closed and her cane was stuck in the train and she had to let go of her cane.

10 That happened not that long ago, just recently, actually, so – so that's something I think to keep in mind because in the past – I don't know if you remember in the olden days they had a person, the conductor who would observe everybody, you know, as being safely clear from the platform and then the train will depart but that doesn't happen any more.

15 MS SKILBECK: Yes, true. True. Through your organisation, Carla, have you observed any improvements in accessibility of public transport in the last five years?

MS ANDERSON: I'm not here as a deafblind person but I know deafblind people would say that there has been no improvement, there's no major improvement. It's been, you know, no huge shifts but there's been a small shift in, you know, the staff understanding about disability but then that goes back to, sort of, like a communication and that's – but that's just a universal thing and I think it's just a

20 general sort of understanding of how to communicate with those people.

25 MS SKILBECK: We've spoken a bit about trains. Are there any particular issues with trams and buses in metropolitan Melbourne?

MS ANDERSON: Deafblind people generally despise trams. They're not comfortable in using trams because they're too confusing and they're too difficult to navigate where you're going, where you're to get off, all those sorts of things. They would prefer the comfort of a train who – where they can go to a location, meet a person and, you know, be guided from that location or they're familiar with their area and have had a sort of succession of training and, you know, so that they can get

30 from the train station to their home quite comfortably. Yes. So with that training, they're able to do that, but as far as trams, the only time, I think, we use a tram is, you know, through – when we have a recreation program at work and we organise outings and as a group we travel on the tram. We need, you know, a number of support workers to sort of negate that.

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40 MS SKILBECK: What are the key barriers to accessing trains in a practical sense – trams, sorry, trams in a practical sense?

MS ANDERSON: I think communication with the tram drivers because, you know, deafblind people can't actually get to the tram driver, you know, because they're in their own little, sort of, room. I think one deafblind person did try to get a tram from Box Hill to the city – yes, that's right. She has a card which has both brail and print on that card and so she will feel the – she'll have a series of cards and it will – you

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know, she'll be able to see what her message is and she'll show the driver the message saying, "Can I please get off at stop 45, can you please notify me when we get to stop 45". So when the tram arrives, the deafblind person will walk up to the tram, walk up to the door and show the driver their card and ensure that – just wait a
5 second for an acknowledgement and that doesn't happen. You know, so a tap on the shoulder would be some sort of acknowledgement and so if they correctly read this notice, they would give that acknowledgement and so this deafblind person was waiting for that acknowledgment.

10 MS SKILBECK: Yes, yes.

MS ANDERSON: So I think that comes back to, you know, the training of staff to understanding and meeting the different requirements or needs of deafblind people. Does that answer your question?

15 MS SKILBECK: It does. It does. Thank you. Buses, how do they fit into the transport plan?

MS ANDERSON: Buses, we have had a few clients from the country come to
20 Melbourne by bus but I think, you know, again, you know, the same issues sort of arise but there's no major crises that have taken place. So it's been quite a good, smooth sort of – an easy process. I guess it really, you know – if the person knows, you know, the whole series of events are going to take place as they should, you know, then it will be fine but if there is, you know, a crisis of some sort then, you
25 know, it always goes back to communication and how to manage that.

MS SKILBECK: Okay. So in a practical sense, deaf and blind people who are members of your organisation accessing the train stations via friends and family or are they using taxis?

30 MS ANDERSON: From home to the train station?

MS SKILBECK: Yes, yes.

35 MS ANDERSON: It's varied, you know, depending on each individual. If a deafblind person lives near the train station they have O and M training to – they, you know, get that training to be independent or they organise something, you know, perhaps with a family member where they may get led to the train station and then they find their own way from there or some people have access to a taxi with an M40
40 card and they use that.

MS SKILBECK: Sorry, M40 card, is that the multipurpose taxi program?

45 MS ANDERSON: Yes, that's right.

MS SKILBECK: And O and M?

MS ANDERSON: Orientation and mobility training.

MS SKILBECK: Thank you. I was thinking operations and maintenance.

MS ANDERSON: Sorry, I should have made that clear. Forgive me. I just assumed that you knew of O and M.

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MS SKILBECK: Sorry.

MS ANDERSON: Thanks for asking that question. Yes. With the taxis, it's half price.

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MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MS ANDERSON: So some people use that sometimes but I think generally deafblind people, because they know – they travel independently from their home to the train station.

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MS SKILBECK: Are there any - - -

MS ANDERSON: Did you want to add anything?

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MS SKILBECK: Okay. Jessica is speaking later.

MS ANDERSON: Okay.

MS SKILBECK: I don't have any further questions. Does anyone in the audience have a question you would like to pose? Jane? No. Okay.

25

MS ANDERSON: I just wish that the two deafblind people with me – because they have so many great stories and anecdotes to tell. Unfortunately, you know, if there is – you know, the next opportunity – I am wondering if this room has a loop in it or - - -

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MS SKILBECK: It does.

MS ANDERSON: Okay. Because I have told another deafblind person to come tomorrow and it was dependent upon whether there was a loop.

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MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MS ANDERSON: So, hopefully they will come tomorrow. Do I need to make a special time for that person to come or - - -

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MS SKILBECK: If you can just advise us so we will make doubly sure that the deaf – the hearing loop is working well. Other than that, no. It is set up to accommodate. Thank you very much. Thank you, Carla, for your time.

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MS ANDERSON: Great. No problems. Thank you.

MS SKILBECK: Thank you.

MS ANDERSON: So, what happens from here in? Do we have to submit a report or anything like that?

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MS SKILBECK: It is up to you largely. We have taken a transcript of your evidence today which we will use. You have the option, if you would like, of also making a written submission to our hearing. We are accepting those until 24 August. We have a website, ddatransportreview.com.au.

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MS ANDERSON: Yes.

MS SKILBECK: All the transcripts, the issues paper, the submissions, our draft report when that comes around, will all be on the website. You might choose to make a submission in response to our draft as well.

15

MS ANDERSON: Okay, yes. Another thing that comes to mind with deafblind people - - -

20

MS SKILBECK: Certainly.

MS ANDERSON: - - - they are very concerned about the new system which is My Key.

25

MS SKILBECK: The new ticketing system?

MS ANDERSON: Yes. There is big concerns being sort of brought up with My Key. I think it is very important that we have the appropriate training and also how, you know, we can – you know, resolve a few issues with the access to the station, you know, with the new My Key.

30

MS SKILBECK: Is that primarily around the information provision or the access to the tickets or both?

35

MS ANDERSON: Both, yes. I think – and also when you go through the turnstiles.

MS SKILBECK: The validators.

MS ANDERSON: Yes, the validators. Thank you. They can't see well enough to actually know whether they can actually – or whether that swipe has activated their ticket to go through.

40

MS SKILBECK: Right. Okay. Yes,

45

MS MEEHAN: I am in a committee and we are looking about the ticket and some people said have to have a picture on the ticket we are not very happy because we

want to be like equal in the community. I didn't know the deafblind people, especially blind people, have to pay any ticket on transport.

5 MS ANDERSON: Yes. No, deafblind people pay – don't pay anything for their tickets. You know? They get free transport. They get a travel pass which is free to them. It is more about being able to see that they have actually activated their ticket for that ride.

10 MS SKILBECK: So, the important thing is the physical access to the station is permitted. Is that true?

MS ANDERSON: Yes, that is right.

15 MS SKILBECK: Okay. Thank you.

MS ANDERSON: Also, one more thing which came to mind. Some deafblind people are saying that improvements have come – the tactile bumps on the train station which is a great improvement and which is being rolled out, you know, in more and more train stations. That is a great improvement.

20 MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS ANDERSON: Okay?

25 MS SKILBECK: Excellent.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you.

30 MS SKILBECK: Thank you very much.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you all for your time and thanks to the interpreters.

35 MS SKILBECK: We will have afternoon tea now until – I think what we will try to do is reconvene a little bit earlier. Sort of at 25 past 3. We have two further speakers: Collette O'Neill from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and Jessica Zammit from Blind Citizens Australia and also Brian from Ballarat has a few words to say. We will do that this afternoon following 3.25. We will see you soon.

40 **ADJOURNED** **[3.10pm]**

45 **RESUMED** **[3.27 pm]**

MS SKILBECK: Welcome back, everybody. Let's start our last session for today. First off we have Jessica Zammit from Blind Citizens Australia who will speak. I

understand Carla may make a few more comments during your presentation. Then we have at least one further speaker, Brian from Ballarat, afterwards. Jessica, when you're ready.

5 MS ZAMMIT: Thank you. My name is Jessica Zammit. I'm from Blind Citizens Australia, which is the peak national advocacy people who are blind or vision impaired. We've got a presentation tomorrow by Leah Hobson, who is our national policy officer, so rather than take all of her glory and steal all of her wonderful points, I will be elaborating from the Victorian perspective on some of the issues
10 which have been raised in relation to the disability standards for accessible public transport on a national level, but providing a very Victorian context in relation to that.

15 Firstly, one of the questions within the review is in relation to the awareness of the disability standards by people with a disability. I think that's a really hairy question to answer, because unless you work for a disability organisation, are closely aligned to a disability organisation or are a transport provider, I don't think you would readily come across the disability standards, so in terms of that I think to a certain extent people with a disability are aware that they have rights in relation to transport
20 usage, but not necessarily whether a grab rail is available or whether there should be TGSIs or whether there should be, you know, information in another format. They may be aware that it has been provided previously, but they're not actually distinctly aware of whether it is within the standards and to what extent it should be provided, so one of the challenges that we face as an organisation is that we are tackling issues
25 that are raised by members that may not necessarily be covered by the standards but are no less about human rights. I guess that's the first point.

In terms of that, I mean, raising awareness of the disability standards in relation to transport wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing because it just means that the
30 expectations that are out there are actually founded on a piece of legislation. In terms of that, I think one of the points that has been missed in relation to the hearings that have passed is that prior to five years ago we actually didn't have standards in relation to transport. It's really easy as an organisation and as people with a disability to critique the standards because you don't actually see that there has been
35 a lot of progression in the transport network in five years. To a certain extent that's fair enough, but I don't think any organisation from a disability perspective would say that we shouldn't have standards to begin with.

I think it's really important to acknowledge that there have been improvements in the
40 system but that perhaps within a five-year period we haven't actually seen the full extent of what those could be and that definitely there's room for growth. I'm not dismissing that in any sense. So there have definitely been huge positive steps. In terms of that, from a Victorian perspective, there has been increased safety at pedestrian railway crossings, so there has been work to ensure that there are TGSIs,
45 which are tactile ground surface indicators. They're the tactile bumps that Carla was indicating. They're evident at pedestrian railway crossings and they're being implemented progressively around the state.

There are other TGSIs running along the access path on travel, when you are crossing a pedestrian railway crossing, which indicates that you're nearing the edge so be a little bit careful in your progression. In terms of that, there have been TGSIs along the edge of railway platforms, and that has been particularly important and that
5 has been a really important development. That was something that Lindsay raised earlier.

10 MS SKILBECK: Jessica, from your point of view, to what extent has the TGSI rollout occurred throughout Victoria? Do you have a sense of the spread?

MS ZAMMIT: Well, in terms of metropolitan stations it has been done quite well. I know most stations within the metropolitan region bar a few have actually been upgraded, but this is something that I will be raising later. In regards to modes, it's very difficult to actually nut down and to actually have a consistent approach, so
15 whilst metro train network has been phenomenal in rolling these out, TGSIs at your local bus stop is another thing entirely, as are TGSIs at tram stops. If it's a new tram stop then definitely, yes, but if not then it's hard to measure, but definitely in the metro network quite good. I know V/Line are progressing along the regional network as well. So definitely in line with that there has been increased accessibility.

20 One of the things that comes out in this type of review is that there's a focus on the financial outlay. Naturally there needs to be. You know, we're not presuming that the financial outlay isn't important, but it is difficult to place a cost on increased accessibility and/or to measure increased patronage by people with a disability. As a
25 speaker earlier, I think it was Frances, aptly indicated, you know, low floor buses, they're looking at wheelchair patronage, but it's not necessarily just wheelchair users who are using that bus. It could be Mrs Smith from down the road who wants to go up to her local shopping centre but uses a walking stick, so in terms of that it may mean that people with a disability are not able to travel further, travel independently
30 or use their local bus route which they were unable to do so before, so the success of these standards needs to look beyond just the financial to the fact that people are using the services more, but it may not be captured in specific disability.

35 That's important to note, that these adaptations to the network also benefit a whole range of groups, including tourists, older citizens, people with mobility restrictions. This is more so important considering that aging and blindness and invariably related, so this is going to be more important as time progresses. In terms of that, there are a number of areas where DSAPT can be improved. One of the things that we maintain is that the guidelines and legal instructions provided meet the needs of
40 people with disabilities but are also clear, precise and easily understood. The first point that I would like to make is that it's difficult to accurately assess accessibility, so it's hard to characterise the success of the standards by measuring accessibility.

45 I take the point Lindsay made earlier about Yarra Trams who have undertaken a great deal of work in relation to making their super stops accessible and also introducing low floor tram, but you have the example where you will have a low floor tram running along a route that's not accessible and therefore is it compliant? That raises another issue so even extending beyond that if you have a low floor tram

which is technically accessible but there's no audible announcements, is it still compliant? The issue in that is you've got the accessibility of infrastructure versus the accessibility of the conveyance. For a person with a disability, they would argue that for the most part it's still inaccessible, because they may be able to access part of the journey but not all of it or even just the tram but not the stop or vice versa.

If you actually look beyond that to intermodal compliance, so if you're travelling from Altona North to perhaps North Melbourne, you need to do a bus and a train, if the bus is not accessible but the train is, you have that issue. There's definitely that push within Metro Melbourne for this intermodal use, but that's something that once again Lindsay picked up as a whole of journey is not really covered with DSAPT but yet we're pushing public transport usage in terms of meeting our transport challenges and other policy documents.

The next point is consistency. There are about eight points underneath this that I will very briefly touch on. In essence, as an organisation, we would maintain that there be a minimum level of access which is consistent from one place to the next, so the first point: accessibility may not translate in all aspects of the journey. There may be the TGSIs at a metro station, but for a person travelling to a regional station there may not be enough locational cues to provide a continuous safe journey. There has to be a greater focus on ensuring that compliance has been met. For the most part this has occurred in the easy cost effective locations. I know this is particularly true with Yarra Trams in the sense that they are going to choose locations which are easier to retrofit and make super stop because it's not necessarily more cost effective but it's just an easier location. There are not as many challenges.

Definitely I understand that from a transport provider perspective, but if you're looking at a set of disability standards, then you need to look at areas which are of high use to people with a disability as well. Accessibility is not necessarily consistent between modes. As an example, 27.4 of the standards states that there is a requirement to provide access to information about the location. Once again, this is evident on trains. However, there is no set equivalent on buses unless a person is to rely on direct assistance, so you need to have a very nice bus driver and actually ask him to announce when your stop is coming. Now, that's reliance on the bus driver. I mean, we would hope that they would fulfil their charter and do that, but it is that reliance on the human interface, and that's where the problems sometimes happen.

There are inconsistencies between states, and that's where we would recommend that there be some level of consistency between states as well. Particularly for a person who is blind, does travel interstate, we would want to ensure that they would be able to travel independently without too much difficulty.

MS SKILBECK: Jessica, what are the key areas you see as needing that sort of consistency across jurisdiction?

MS ZAMMIT: Well, for example, TGSIs are one whereby, in Victoria, they've actually been implemented quite well. But for example, in Sydney, there are TGSIs which run along the length of the platform, but they're obstructed by obstacles, so it

kind of defeats the purpose of having them there. Mainly it's about the provision of information, whether it be location or way finding based. I mean, that would be some of the issue, but as well as the layouts of stations, and just looking at some of those issues, so just off the top of my head.

5

MS SKILBECK: Thank you.

MS ZAMMIT: Looking at accessibility versus usability, going back to the example of provision of information about location, there are instances where the system is actually in place, it is technically compliant but it doesn't work, so in relation to definitely Victoria, we do have audible announcements on metro trains, and for the most part, they do work. But there are instances where they don't work, where the sound is distorted, where they may transmit incorrect information regarding the approaching station, or they're turned off. So once again, it comes down to is it compliant because it's there, or is it compliant because it's working, and that's I guess the difference in terms of it's all well and good if it's actually there, but for a person who is vision impaired, if it's not working, it's just as useless as it not being there in the first place.

20 Guidelines are not always clear, and this is particularly so for transport providers. I actually had a conversation with one transport provider who said to me that they are required to consult Building Code of Australia, the Australian Standards and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, and then use their own judgment to see where they fit into the mix. So I guess it's really important – I mean, it's all well and good for all of us to say, well, you need to meet the standards, but for a transport provider, there are certain difficulties. If the Australian Standards are not clear, or if there's no set reference point to actually look at.

30 In terms of forward planning, there are issues which crop up for people who are blind and vision impaired and which are not necessarily covered by the standards. These standards are a 30 year document, and essentially mandate what needs to be done and what has been identified as issues that need to be covered. So for example, there may be urgent safety considerations which need to be included, or there may be actually technology available that might assist people with disability in terms of forward planning their journey or travelling more safely. So in terms of actually having a look at a process where these issues can actually be incorporated with DSAPT, or there would be a consultation process whereby things could be included.

40 Consultation – that leads me onto my next point regarding consultation. The standards are obviously a really good baseline to meet compliance, and that is what we use in terms of ensuring that compliance is met. In some instances, the guidelines are open to interpretation. In these instances, there should be a focus on seeking consultation from peak bodies, and peak disability bodies regarding the specific needs of people with disabilities. This supplements the theoretical – this is what you need to do with the actual practical experiences of people who understand the disability and actually are able to consult on a range of issues.

45

There are some requirements within the DSAPT that do not cite reference points, that's going back a little bit to what I was just saying, so for example, I'm giving one which is actually quite unclear, 17.4 of the standards refers to destination signs being visible from the boarding point. In this instance, visibility is not defined, which not
5 only compromises consistency, but also makes it extremely difficult for the provider to be aware of what their obligations are and how to fulfil them. This is also based on signage being viewed at a static aspect, so you standing stationary and watching it as opposed to you being in a moving vehicle. So in this instance, there is no single point of reference, so states and territories can interpret it however the like.

10 This also presents an issue to people with disabilities in knowing what their specific rights are, and whether a conveyance is compliant or not to begin with. Leading on from that, there's also fairly vague terminology within the DSAPT, and that's something that we would recommend that the guidelines and requirements be as
15 clear as possible, and as consistent as possible in their language with reference to appropriate current terminology. An example of that is in terms of the tactile ground service indicators, the current standards say that they should be colour contrasted, which is not necessarily correct. Most providers are aware that TGSIs need to be luminance contrasted, and for those who aren't aware of what I'm talking about,
20 luminance is measured by the CSIRO, it's a 30 per cent contrast, and in terms of that, it ensures that they are more easily accessible.

Something that was raised within the Allen Consulting paper was in regards to reporting and the fact that there's no consistent compliance reporting mechanism for
25 states and territories. So this actually makes it difficult to gauge both the true level of compliance and the degree of inconsistency between states and territories. From our perspective, it's as important to implement the DSAPT with as little variation as possible. There are a number of issues in relation to this. The first is the lack of consistent equipment, it means that using the same mode of transport on different
30 routes will cause different issues. Another is the inconsistent staff awareness can lead to inconsistent effectiveness.

Now, that's not to say that all staff on all public transport aren't aware of disability. That is not at all, we have many stories of quite useful staff who are able to assist
35 people with disabilities. But in some instances, staff are not actually aware of the changes that are happening because of DSAPT in the system, and an example of that is there is currently a retrofit happening in local government of bus stops where – this was spoken about earlier, where they're actually putting in shelters and waiting areas and it's disability compliant, and they're putting tactile ground service indicators,
40 which should lead to the front of the bus.

Now, in some instances, these TGSIs are being placed in the middle of the bay, so if you've got a side bay off the main road which a bus can pull into, and there's a flag
45 right at the front, and they're putting the TGSIs right in the middle. Now, if you were to follow that, you would walk right into a bus. It defeats the purpose. So in terms of that, the bus driver in most instances, and particularly if they've been in the industry for a number of years and may not have had renewed disability training,

would not know what they're there for. In my job, I've found a lot of people say that TGSIs are there for grip, they're not aware of what they're there for.

5 So it comes back to actually providing this level of information to all staff, not just providing it to the technicians or to the technical engineers or to the manufacturers, but providing it throughout the chain so that when it's actually implemented, and you've spent, you know, \$150,000 retrofitting a bus stop that is actually being used by the people it's designed for.

10 In terms of areas that are of specific concern who are blind or vision impaired there are probably five areas that would really cut it. The first would be access paths. So, access paths leading to platforms and metropolitan railway stations in most instances have been fitted with stainless steel arches which are aimed to minimise misuse of these areas by skateboarders and bike riders. You can see these throughout the metro
15 network.

In many instances these arches do not meet luminance contrast as luminance has been achieved by painting these points with bright paint which has faded or has not
20 been treated to meet luminance contrast in the first place. So, due to their nature, these can pose dangerous obstacles for people who are blind or vision impaired. Examples of these are Newport where they have been treated in the first place and they are stainless steel against concrete – against a concrete wall, or Laverton Station in Melbourne which has faded poles which have little patches of yellow paint on
25 them.

MS SKILBECK: Which station is that one?

MS ZAMMIT: Laverton. Our recommendation is that there should be a recognition
30 that an area covered by TGSIs, where there is the edge of a train platform, a parallel path created by an access path diverging, or some other navigatable area is an access path. Areas covered by TGSIs should have the same standards applied as those outlined in part 2 of DSAPT.

35 Signage is another issue. At the moment the standards state that if you do provide raised tactile and Braille signage that it should be – well, essentially that there should be raised tactile and Braille. It is not necessarily mandatory or compulsory. It is just basically a measure of goodwill currently in the standards. Because of this many people who are blind or have low vision do not have equivalent access to information. So, I mean, there has been, you know, common stories that Braille
40 readership is quite low and that may well in fact be because most people who read Braille don't necessarily read books or novels but actually will have a basic understanding of Braille in terms of numerals and be able to read. So, it is important that we need to look at these sort of issues.

45 Once again, looking at TGSIs, which would be the third main point, as stated earlier, the need for luminance contrast is extremely important. Secondly, while DSAPT provides for situations when TGSIs should be used, it does not clearly how they should be placed. So, we recommend that the DSAPT be less ambiguous in terms of

when TGSIs should be used. We state that it should be compulsory for all exits and customer service areas to ensure the safety of people who are blind and vision impaired.

5 On that note though we state that TGSIs should not make up for poor design. We don't want over-proliferation. We want TGSIs to actually be useful. If you have to indicate every single hazard there would be at a station, then essentially you are providing a level of confusion.

10 So – and that is where we would state that it also outlines where it is inappropriate to use TGSIs but also that the use of TGSIs should be considered in conveyances as well, especially at the top of stairs. That would be, for example, buses.

Alarm systems are another area. So, at the moment it states that:

15

People who are blind or vision impaired should be able to locate the exit path in the event of an emergency.

It doesn't actually state how you do that. So, we need some sort of clarification here. That is particular important. There was a recent case in New South Wales where a person in a wheel chair was left stranded on a train because of a train break-down. That just made it more poignant that there isn't actually provision at the moment to actually examine what is done for a person with a disability in terms of evacuation. I think that is extremely important to note.

25

In terms of information, we need to look at how information is provided. For the most part if you do call a provider and ask for information in an alternative format, for the most part they are happy to provide that. In terms of that, currently the DSAPT doesn't cover access to information including websites. That is another area that does need to be looked at for our members. We do have members who use screen reader software which provides audible output of information. Particularly as we are moving more and more into technology, accessible websites and accessible information is becoming increasingly important.

30

35 In relation to deafblindness, visual displays in buses may not be useful and the person may be unable to see or hear the bus arriving. In addition, communications staff and other travellers may be difficult. One system that I know Carla is aware of that is being used internationally is a card system which a person who is deafblind holds up their desired route number on a piece of card when they are at a bus stop for route. When a person who is deafblind gets on the bus with assistance from the driver, the driver can take another card from the person with information about where they need to alight. This is a system which has been used successfully in Seattle. So, we are looking at, once again, DSAPT doesn't actually take into account the issue of deafblindness. It is really important that a person who is deafblind is not just lumped into the blindness category. The issues are not necessarily the same. There are some level of consistency but there are specific issues that need to be look at individually.

45

In terms of issues that are not currently covered by DSAPT, and I have covered a few already, but essentially I reiterate what Carla was saying earlier. The importance of communication of staff when travelling using public transport. One of the comments that I received from sighted friends is that they are reluctant to use the system
5 because it is not actually easy to use independently and they will say that, you know, they are not sure of what station to depart from or where the bus, 432, might be going to and they will have to actually communicate with the driver to get that information. This is becoming – obviously this is more of a problem for people who are blind and vision impaired or deafblind because they are very much reliant on the information
10 and on the contact.

Rather than go through some of the other points which I am very sure that Leah will be covering tomorrow, the main gist of it is that whilst the DSAPT has definitely increased accessibility, in the short term where people actually see the changes is
15 another thing entirely. One of the comments that I made to Emilio from the Department of Infrastructure is that a lot of people aren't aware of what is actually happening in their own community. So, for example, you know, there may be low floor buses being instituted on certain lines but unless there is the information provided at a local level, many people would not be aware of what this means. So,
20 the real importance is on showcasing the work that has been done and showing the changes that have been made. By doing that, hopefully we can actually show an increase in patronage. I think it is a little bit deceptive at the moment because it just appears that there hasn't been this huge uptake of the transport system. I think that is extremely incorrect. I think it is that people are progressively using the system or
25 extending their travel or perhaps being able to travel independently, but there is no way to capture that information.

MS SKILBECK: Can I ask a question, Jessica, about Blind Citizens Australia's
30 Victorian branch role.

MS ZAMMIT: Yes.

MS SKILBECK: You are obviously well aware of progress that – happening within
35 the metropolitan Melbourne area to make the transport system more accessible. To what extent do you have lines of communication to advise the blind community of those improvements?

MS ZAMMIT: Yes. In terms of that, our organisation is affiliated with a number of
40 organisations throughout Australia. So, that could be service providers as well as other organisations who share our core values and advocacy focus. So, in terms of that, I sit on the public transport access committee - - -

MS SKILBECK: Right.

45 MS ZAMMIT: - - - as does a representative of Vision Australia.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MS ZAMMIT: Which is one of the largest service providers in Australia.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

5 MS ZAMMIT: So, in terms of that, information is distributed to our members through our publications.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

10 MS ZAMMIT: Vision Australia also has a radio station that they provide information to. It would rely on the distribution of information through those channels. Going back to what I was saying earlier, I think that is a little bit limited to just expect that people should just receive those information through those channels. Obviously we could say that, you know, there has been, you know, work done in a
15 certain area but unless that person lives in that area, it is not going to be of direct relevance to them. So, I think it is important to broaden the information but definitely we do distribute through our channels as well.

MS SKILBECK: Okay. All right. Thank you very much, Jessica.
20

MS ZAMMIT: I know Carla wanted us to add a point regarding the pedestrian railway crossings.

MS SKILBECK: Certainly.
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MS ZAMMIT: I didn't mention it here but one of the things that I know Leah will talk about tomorrow is that there are – there is a need for additional safety measures at gated level crossings. So, currently for someone who is deafblind, they cannot hear a high frequency warning and/or see the gates closing. So, there is a chance that
30 there is a safety risk there and I know Carla wanted to add to that.

MS SKILBECK: Carla, would you like to make a comment?

MS ANDERSON: Okay, there was a situation that happened to a client of mine he
35 had Usher's syndrome, very limited vision and they were walking in a certain location at Epping and there was no tactile on the ground or anything like that. I think that this person probably walked the wrong way, but they were crossing the railway track and the booms went down and unfortunately the boom landed on that person's head and that's how they found out that there was a train coming because
40 the boom landed on their head and they walked back. So again that reiterates that there needs to be more O&M training for deafblind people to make sure that they're confident with their safety when they're travelling.

MS SKILBECK: Is – I'm just going to ask a question Carla, is the main response to
45 that situation training of people with deafblind disabilities or are there other solutions that you're aware of that relates to the actual equipment?

MS ANDERSON: It's more related to O&M training, I think. The more of that then the more safe people can be when they travel. So again the problem is O&M – there isn't enough interpretative provision for the training, so O&M instruction and Auslan because there are not enough interpreters available to provide that. So I think that's probably a need that needs to be met.

MS SKILBECK: Right, okay. Thank you. And thank you Jessica very much.

MS ZAMMIT: Pleasure.

MS SKILBECK: Now, I understand we've had people from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations arrive, so if you would come up and speak to the microphones which are set up to ensure we capture your words in transcript. Okay, when you're ready to start, if you could introduce yourselves first and your roles and then please address.

MS S. JENKINSON: I'm Samantha Jenkinson, the Acting CEO of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. This is Maurice Cochrane, who has been a representative of AFDO on the transport advisory group and Collette O'Neill is supporting us today, who is the policy officer from AFDO.

MS SKILBECK: Lovely, thank you.

MS JENKINSON: Thanks for the opportunity to come along today and discuss the progress that's been made towards implementing the standards and I guess I'd like to just start off by introducing what AFDO, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations is.

MS SKILBECK: Please.

MS JENKINSON: And give a broad overview of some of the things that we're going to raise and then I'll hand over to Maurice who'll go into a little bit more detail.

MS SKILBECK: Thank you.

MS JENKINSON: So the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations is the peak organisation for bodies – peak body for organisations of people with disability. So our members include all the national peak bodies, representing people with a broad range of disability. People with disability from non-English speaking background and women with disability and we also have state based cross-disability member organisations.

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS JENKINSON: Access to public transport is, of course, an issue of crucial importance to people with disability and to AFDO and its members and I would like to state at the outset that we think that the introduction of the standards has been

integral to improving the lives of many people with a disability. Transport is something which is obviously very important for all people in the community, it is what keeps us connected to the community, especially for people with disability it's actually about, you know; can we get to a job, can we be involved in our community in all ways. So it actually underlies and is the link for participation in the community for people with disabilities and I really want to stress how important that is.

You know, we often stress to many other of the areas of government how there needs to be a whole of government approach and that part of that is about accessible communities and accessible transport for people with disabilities to actively participate in their communities. I think that there is no doubt that more people with disability can use public transport today than they could five years ago and more people can travel independently and it's also the case that some people with disability who used public transport prior to the introduction of the standards now do find it easier and safer to do so and I want to give some examples of that. The introduction of local buses has opened up that level – that way of transport for people with mobility impairments.

The oral announcement of waiting times at tram stops means that a person with vision impairment can know, with certainty, which tram to enter. Increased use of signs and written information means that people with impaired hearing can more effectively navigate public transport and I would like to give a couple of examples of where we know there has been improvements. One of the AFDO board members, who lives in Melbourne, Janet, has cerebral palsy and can't walk any long distance and uses an electric scooter and recently she attended a meeting in the city representing AFDO and needed to travel from Spring Street to Swanston Street and the accessible tram stops on Collins Street, an accessible tram on that route meant that for the first time in her life she was able to independently use public transport to make that trip.

Another example, is Brenda who works in the AFDO office, she is vision impaired, she has always been a regular user of public transport, but has told us that her ease of using public transport has increased since the standards were introduced. She uses the colour contrasting on stairs on the edges of platforms to navigate around the platform and station and since they've become more consistent, particularly in the major stations, she finds that she can move around with a lot more confidence and less fear that she'll injure herself and it also means that she can walk more quickly than she felt she was able to previously, also the installation of platform number signs that have large clear font have made it much easier for Brenda to find the right platform.

She is finding that these improvements have made a real difference to her because she can make her way between platforms more quickly; make connections that she previously would have missed. So as these examples show the transport standards have made a real difference to people with disability and we think also that they have benefited the entire population. Parents with young children and people with shopping trolleys have appreciated not having to negotiate steps as they get onto a bus. Improved announcements about waiting times have helped all people using

trams, particularly those who use trams infrequently, such as tourists and signs and symbols are taken for granted by people using headsets to listen to radios or MP3 players.

5 AFDO and the predecessor, the Disability Caucus have been involved in the development of the disability standards for many years. AFDO was formed in 2003 and became fully operational in 2004 and AFDO has basically replaced what used to be the Disability Caucus, which was an incorporated body made up of the peak disabilities bodies funded by then under departments of family and community
10 services under the national secretariat program. The Disability Caucus and then AFDO ran the DDA standards project and the DDA standard project was an important initiative that was funded by the Federal Attorney General's department.

15 The role of the project was to support and coordinate the involvement of people with disability in the development of the standards under the DDA and the work of the project was primarily undertaken by a project officer. The project also paid for some of the costs associated with supporting disability sector representatives to take part in standards development, such as travel and teleconferences. The project officer
20 during the period that the transport standards were developed was actually Maurice, so he is very knowledgeable of this area. He was also one of the three disability sector representatives for the transport standards.

The other representatives were Margo Hodge and Kevin Murfitt and Margo and Maurice both continue to represent the disability sector in the Accessible Public
25 Transport National Advisory Committee. Many of our member organisations, such as the one previously, have already presented at a public hearing, or are going to present about the particular issues faced by their members. So it is not our intention to cover that same territory, or that detail. Rather we want to concentrate on procedural issues; such as reporting, consistent application of the standards and gaps
30 in the standards coverage and also to look at the efficiency of the standards, particularly in relation to the costs and the benefits.

One of the most important issues we want to stress is the need to effectively include people with disability in the development and ongoing monitoring of the standards.
35 The DDA Standards project actually provided a really good model for supporting people with disability to be active and equal participants in the standards process but the funding for that ran out in 2004. Since then we've not received any dedicated funding to support work in this area, despite the fact that we believe it's urgently needed in relation to the access to premises standards, the education standard and, of
40 course, the ongoing monitoring of the transport standard.

As Maurice will discuss in more detail, we think that this has seriously disadvantaged the disability sector. This disadvantage was particularly noticeable during the hearing of consideration of the Australasian Railways Association
45 application for an exemption from the standard and we would think that it has impacted on the capacity of the sector to contribute to this review of the standard.

Some of the things we'd particularly like to highlight today – so I'm just giving the overview here – in terms of need for improvements would be the introduction of an effectual reporting framework that incorporates a research agenda; the lack of reliable data has very much undermined attempts to monitor progress against the standards and will make doing the cost benefit analysis very difficult and near on practically impossible. Improved enforcement measures, particularly in relation to air travel and also greatly expanding the community education programs to tell people with a disability about their rights and the introduction of training for people with disability and transport provider staff.

Lastly, a recommitment to meaningfully including people with disability in all standards relating to processes, from national advisory committees to local initiatives to improve responsiveness. Before I hand over to Maurice to discuss these issues in more detail, I'd like to just also put on the record our concern and disappointment with the inclusiveness of the consultation measures used by Allen Consulting Group. We believe that a public hearing process such as this is actually inaccessible to people with intellectual and cognitive impairments; it's very formal and very alienating for most people with these conditions to feel confident and able to contribute to the discussion being held, especially at such a high level and we feel that many people would not be able to follow it.

We think it's also disappointing that a plain English version of the consultation paper was not released at the same time as the other consultation papers and that a plain English version was not prepared until we'd actually complained about the lack of one. We also believe that the Allen Consulting Group should have conducted additional forums aimed at people with cognitive and intellectual impairment. We don't think that it's something extra for people with disability but actually levelling the playing field.

AFDO and the Victorian Council of Social Services have actually been fortunate enough to obtain a small grant from the Reichstein Foundation to hold such a forum in Melbourne which we will be doing but we don't believe that's enough as that's going to be only in one state and in the absence of equivalent forums held across the country, the voices of many people with a disability won't be heard. People with cognitive and intellectual disability will rightly feel that they'll be excluded from this process.

I'll hand over to Maurice now to go into some of the details around – thank you, Maurice.

MR CORCORAN: Thanks, Sam, yes. Okay, thank you. Our apologies for being late. We had trouble getting over some of the kerbside infrastructure on the way here, unfortunately. As Sam said, the benefits to the standards are obvious but we still have a long way to go. You heard about Janet who could travel between tram – travel by tram between city stops but the small number of accessible tram stops means that tram travel is not a routine option for her. The progressive introduction of accessibility measures by necessity means that the full benefit of the transport standards will not be realised for another 25 years – in other words, the full transport chain needs to be addressed.

In effect, I know this is – we’re talking about a five year review of the standards, but in fact the standards have been in place since 1996. The Australian Transport Council first approved those, the ATC approved them at their meeting in 1996 as technically feasible and I provided a background document to your colleagues
5 yesterday in Adelaide that highlights some of the key decisions that were being made progressively since work started on the standards by a taskforce in 1995.

I believe many of jurisdictions have started to comply with the standards since that time. So progress within and across states and territories and across transport modes
10 has been patchy though. There are gaps in the consistency and the coverage of the standards. In some jurisdictions general servicing decisions such as to reduce the number of customer service staff employed have also acted against the improvements brought around by the introduction of the standards and I think that’s particularly the case in the airline industry. The increased accessibility of public transport
15 infrastructure and systems has not been matched by increased accessibility to the built environment. It’s worth noting that the access to promised standards has been stalled now for almost two years while it awaits a final decision.

Data reporting, substantial delays in the states and territories providing reports to the
20 Human Rights Commission. Now this is one of the things, when we’re developing the standards right from a very early point, there was general agreement that there would be a real commitment to highlighting and reporting on the progressive realisation of those standards. As an AFDO representative sits on the national committee, we’ve expressed significant disappointment to both the Federal Minister
25 for Transport and Regional Services and the Federal Transport – and the Federal Attorney General, as well as the Human Rights Commission.

The reporting process and the development of that reporting process with the accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee has been to the exclusion
30 of people with disabilities. It’s been to the exclusion of representatives of the private transport industry and the Human Rights Commission. It was done only with the state and the commonwealth jurisdictions and that’s completely against the spirit and the way that these standards were developed and it’s something that - again, I tabled correspondence that we’d sent yesterday with your colleagues about our
35 disappointment in that.

The reports also that are placed on the – although jurisdictions have provided some updates of progression or initiatives to the Human Rights Commission on their website, the content, the format and the reporting period all varies. If you wanted to
40 try and do a comparison, see how your state is actually doing, it would be very difficult to actually ascertain that by looking at those reports. We think the reporting – and the fact that only the public sector, the bureaucrats on the national committee were involved in trying to reach agreement with the reporting process and couldn’t do so and ended up with this scattered approach, it’s really
45 disappointing and I hope that you are able to have a critical look at that and make some clear recommendations about how that could be addressed in the future.

Adequate reporting cannot and should not be limited to reports from state and territory governments also. The fact that it's excluded and doesn't include the private sector, doesn't include local government in terms of the progressive realisation of bus stops etcetera, is really disappointing. Effective regulation of the transport standards requires a full and robust reporting regime. We are talking about subordinate legislation to the DDA and regulatory legislation at that. There needs to be a reporting regime that is commensurate with the importance of that.

So we recommend that a consistent approach for reporting be developed and agreed to by governments, the Human Rights Commission, the public and private transport industry and representatives of people with disability. The standard report should include quantitative and qualitative data, should cover an agreed upon reporting period and be presented in accessible formats. Standardised reports be provided to HREOC by jurisdictions within agreed time frames.

MS SKILBECK: Maurice, among the current reporting that is done, in your view is there a particular jurisdiction that gets close to the standard that you would expect relative to others?

MR CORCORAN: Look, I think if – one of the things that I would highlight was that there was a great deal of work done by one of the people who has been on the APNAC and has been very committed, a person from one of the jurisdictions, and it was a really thorough piece of work that would have clearly shown incremental changes and developments of that, but it couldn't get agreement by the jurisdictions and we weren't even given the opportunity to comment on that which, again, is really disappointing, and I just want to stress that when the standards were being developed, we - you know, there were mock-ups of buses built, for instance, and engineers and people with disabilities and their representatives jointly problem solved and tried to work out the best sort of design facilities, et cetera.

So that early work was a collaborative approach with all parties and that is not happening, certainly not happening any more. Sorry. I have just been handed a note which I am – telling me the time. I have got a plane I have got to get.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MR CORCORAN: Sorry. Yes.

MS SKILBECK: That is okay. I won't interrupt.

MR CORCORAN: So does that answer – yes. So I think – and a consistent application of the standards. There has been no national study of the consistency of the interpretation and the application of transport standards. Reports from members suggest differing interpretation of elements of the standards at a state and territory level affecting national consistency. Despite national consultations coordinated by the Human Rights Commission, the consistency of installation of tactile ground surface indicators at train stations remains a concern, and, you know, if we compare ourselves with the UK or Canada or the States, the UK - for instance, UK

government commissioned Professor Philip Oxley to develop a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure and that contained specific guides, guidance on the application and use of TGSIs, and our submission will provide the links, et cetera, to this other work that is being done.

5

So there has been very little work done also on codes of practice to - you know, the standards were developed as outcome-based, performance-based standards so that we promote innovation and new ways of doing it in an industry that was rapidly developing and technology that was rapidly developing. When the transport standards were first established, there were modal committees set up with the aim of developing modal specific guidelines with representation from those relevant industries, the taxi industry, the bus industry and the rail and train industries, but the squabbling that went on between the states and the Commonwealth about who was actually going to fund the actual developing of the publications and the resources that would do that meant that nothing further happened, and that was really disappointing.

So our recommendation is that the review identifies areas where codes of practices are needed to assist with consistent application of the standards and that the Commonwealth Government industry body provide appropriate funding to the commission to commission the codes of practice identified in the review, and you don't have to look far overseas to see some really great examples of how this can be done. Arguably one of the greatest advantages of the standards - sorry. The clarity and certainty of rights and obligation. The standards arguably provide guidance for that but there is increased clarity at a community level not replicated at an individual level. The effect of the timetable of having a compliance schedule gives providers a bit of an out on individual need and there is an emphasis - sorry. We believe that there is a need for operators and providers to have effective consultative mechanisms in place around as they shape their services.

30

Sorry. I think my taxi has arrived. I will just finalise the key things that I would like to say and Sam might just want to tidy up finally on that. I guess one of the critical aspects that I would like to say is that I think it is a great shame that the implementation committee that has been established to oversee the implementation of the standards which AFDO has supported and been involved in with all the states parties - state and Commonwealth parties, as well as the Human Rights Commission and industry representatives and the airlines. I think it is totally unrealistic to see that two meetings a year is adequate. If we do a comparison again with overseas, with the UK and their committees that oversee the implementation of such important standards and codes of practice, that it - regular monthly meetings and the resources put into developing, you know, the codes of practice and the information that needs to be there for the different modal areas to implement the standards in a very consistent manner.

I would also say that there are two specific areas that it's been - I think have not made very - we have made very little progress in, and that is in relation to accessible taxi services in most jurisdictions, with the exception of Queensland who we think have got a very good model and we would encourage you to look at their policy

decisions and the way they have implemented up there, and the airline industries. With the competitive airline industries and the low cost cutting of airlines, we now have airlines, such as Virgin Airline, which will not carry people like myself independently, and so in order to try and enforce my rights as a person with a
5 disability to be able to travel independently, I have had to take out Federal Court action and there is a cost jurisdiction in that process which means that in order for us to try and push the rights of people with disabilities and ensure that providers do comply with these standards, individual are actually putting themselves at financial risk in taking on providers and I think that those sort of issues where large providers
10 are deliberately thumbing their nose at the standards, there needs to be more pressure exerted on them on compliance, other than pressure that is exerted by people with disabilities.

We have a new airline that is coming into Australia, Tiger Airlines, and I would
15 encourage you to look up their policy and procedure for carriage for people with disabilities. In it, it states that they can refuse to carry a passenger with a disability if they think that that disability will offend other passengers. It is that blatant and I would challenge anyone to say that they are complying with the disability standards for transport, and I had better – or I miss my transport option. Sorry.

20 MS JENKINS: I will just fill in some of those gaps, if that is okay. I think Maurice has essentially, you know, covered most of the things. I think some of the key points are around the exemption processes, not being accessible to people with disabilities and not being able to be involved in those processes, around complaints and
25 enforcement in terms of, as Maurice had highlighted before, the monitoring of performance across types of transport.

So there are areas where there has been obvious improvement and areas where they are still way below performance. Some of those things would be waiting times for
30 accessible taxis and provision of personal assistance and, as Maurice was saying before, some of the gaps in the standards being around air travel, around coaches being not targeted and no data about their compliance; other gaps being around ticketing, safety and also training for people with disabilities about using public transport and promotion of it.

35 MS SKILBECK: Sorry, can I ask you to clarify the points around ticketing and safety in particular, as to in what way they would be gaps?

MS JENKINSON: Ticketing sales and inaccessible buildings.

40 MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS JENKINSON: Automatic systems that are inaccessible, and safety – talking
45 about restraints and tethering on conveyances such as in buses, taxis and coaches, level crossings, some of the things that have been highlighted previously. Also just in terms of assessing the costs and benefits, wary of an attempt to try and do that, given the inconsistency of the data, also the impossibility of determining the value of

safety and dignity and independence, and I think this has, you know, obviously been highlighted before, and I stress that again.

5 The actual cost of exclusion and isolation from the community that lack of
accessible transport means for people with disabilities, and what the cost and benefit
is if you can actually, you know, you can get off the bus but then you can't go
anywhere else because the built environment is inaccessible. A caution against
placing too much emphasis on increased patronage numbers as evidence of whether
10 the standards have worked or not, particularly if, you know, I think it's been
highlighted before about the promotion of access as well. I think one of the other
things that we wanted to highlight was around the companion card as well, a
consistency of use of that sort of thing.

15 MS SKILBECK: Is that consistent across jurisdictions, the existence of it, and the
use?

MS JENKINSON: No, it's not. We also had – wanting to table for your
information the role of consumer representatives from the DDA Standards project as
an example of how people with disabilities can be better involved in the process. But
20 yes, I'm afraid we're going to have to go as well. One of the reasons that we would
have liked to have been here earlier was actually that the accessible tram access is
only down one street and we were coming from the wrong end of the city.

25 MS SKILBECK: Okay.

MS JENKINSON: So we pushed all the way.

30 MS SKILBECK: Thank you very much for your effort in coming here and for your
comments too. We'll take that table document as well, thank you very much, and
look forward to your written submission.

MS JENKINSON: Yes, there's a lot more examples in the written submission with
links as well to overseas.

35 MS SKILBECK: That would be wonderful, thank you very much for that
contribution. I think we have one final speaker, it's Brian who is at the end of the
room. Would you like to come up? Brian, if you could just note your full name,
sorry, and to the extent you have any affiliation or - describe your use of transport so
we understand the context.

40 MR KILEY: Okay. Brian Kiley, I reside in Ballarat and as one of the roles I've got,
I'm a secretary of the Disability Consulting Access Committee in Ballarat, I also
wear the hat on a Community Visitors Program Victoria in both the health and
disability area, and a couple of other things in a business centre and a sports plus
45 Engineers Australia, in fact I was a civil engineer once upon a time, in the water
industry in local government, but 10 years ago things changed a bit and I moved into
a disabled operator, perhaps. Turning to the public transport and a number of the
comments I've got have probably already been remarked on today, taxis, they are

obviously available, but not on call 24 hours a day, and particularly with community groups being transported to and from their facilities in the morning and afternoon.

5 The wheelchair accessible vehicles are quite often tied up for that purpose. The drivers are very helpful and cooperative, but the travel is, I think, it was mentioned this morning, can be fairly expensive if you've got to travel some distance out of town. Our bus system is fairly accessible in the CBD of Ballarat, except you've got to pre book or let the bus operators know that you're travelling on a particular route, because not all buses are accessible, and particularly in the case of V/line, you know, 10 you've got to let them know, because again not all their buses are equipped which means that - we are independent and can make decisions on the spot.

15 Unless your brakes on your wheelchair are properly adjusted or we maintain our equipment, sitting on a vehicle like a bus or a train is sometimes difficult with movement, and that sometimes leads us to want to sit perhaps in the public seating area rather than our own chair. In case of trains, one of the key issues we come across was there was a railway line from Ballarat to Ararat that had been closed for some 10 years, and that was reopened as part of the fast rail project, but there was no effort to fix up one of the intervening railway stations, or all the crossings for 20 pedestrian access, and there was about eight of them in the CBD of Ballarat, there was no work done on tactile markings or gates or slopes or whatever, even though we made contact with the - in that case, it was Victrack, and the DDA 2002 came in before some of the - part of this thing was open.

25 So there was a real concern there that the philosophy of opening up a railway line was almost - it should have a new railway line and brought up to the standard right from the start, but that wasn't the case. In the case of our new trains, they certainly are accessible, and the staff on the trains, the conductors are very good in terms of getting us up in terms of the significant lift you've got in the old stations, and in fact, 30 the door entrances on the new train, they've got handles which you can grab hold of, so that's a plus with the modern technology.

35 One thing you need to look out for, if you can get onto the train independently in Melbourne and the conductor doesn't know you are on the train, when you get to another location and you need the ramp and he doesn't know you are there, you could be at the next station before you realise it. That is one of the tricky bits. That is one thing about life. We have got to have a sense of humour, I guess, because there is pluses and minuses in terms of what we have all got in regards to disabilities.

40 One of the, I guess, questions we would ask, when they are rebuilding a station and particularly the work that was done at Spencer Street, why wasn't the platform made level with the trains or vice versa when they were doing that work, given that it was going to be there for another 100 years probably? Our ageing population would need it to make - to get access to it.

45 That is one thing we enjoyed while the train was out of action or the line was out of action during construction and the buses weren't accessible. A lot of us travelled to and from Melbourne by taxi. That meant we went from door to door. Given that the

revenue was good for the taxi driver, they often stayed in Melbourne and waited until we were ready to go back. So, that was a plus, I guess, in that sector of life.

5 The provision of tactile markings around the community has certainly changed in the last ten years and that is good. Both local government and also VicRoads and also the audible signs at crossings and the difficulty using it, visually sometimes the green man is still hard to see if you have got sufficient impairment. There are some elements that have brought about changes so that is good to see and read what is going on. Our railway stations are picking that up too, so there is – we don't want to be overly critical about life when there are changes going on. I think it – was it Lindsay this morning said that the kerb, was it – that the first 25 per cent of easy, seeing that the 10 per cent had already been started.

15 The next 25 per cent is going to be extremely expensive and the easy solutions would have been probably addressed already. So, we are going to all have a challenge to (a) fund it. Those of us still paying tax. That is our money. Also we have got a community that hopefully will be going – grow old enough and still want access and the ability to move around. That is obvious now when we – as our access group, we talk about strollers and prams before we get into walking frames and wheelchairs and scooters and the like.

25 So it is a real challenge for us as a nation to think about that issue and also welcome visitors that may also want to travel and have disabilities. If they are familiar with – someone mentioned this morning in England and Canada, they might be a bit critical of us in Australia at this point in time. There are some challenges and the rural sector, given the patronage, is less – as expenses grow, that will be facing some difficulty there but it is about equality and I would hope that some of the conclusions of what we have been talking about today in the future will let us all address that – I mean make some financial decisions, commitments.

30 MS SKILBECK: Thanks, Brian. Can I ask a question about Ballarat itself? Am I right in understanding that the primary transport, public transport, within Ballarat is – would be accessible to taxis? I know there is a - - -

35 MR KILEY: Yes, the bus lines have got the fold down floors. The only thing is, they are not on every route so you need to - - -

MS SKILBECK: Okay.

40 MR KILEY: - - - perhaps give some notice or they become familiar with - - -

MS SKILBECK: That is both within town as well as the inter-city routes?

45 MR KILEY: Inter-city, again that is notice. The V/Line do have buses that have got that facility.

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MR KILEY: Around town – probably taxis is one tool. Again, I guess we are fairly fortunate, the number of buses that are there. I think there is about 10 or 11 at this stage. So, it is not bad for a small community when you think about it. It is just availability.

5

MS SKILBECK: Yes.

MR KILEY: I mean, it is a job. Someone mentioned this morning about the drivers have got to, well, lock away all the tie down equipment between the type of passengers; particularly at 2 o'clock in the morning they - the straps might be used for other purposes, so they have got a fair bit of time involved with the driver actually getting us in and out and therefore they do deserve a reasonable return in terms of that cost, but the bus routes are there. I mean, Ballarat is not a flat city, so there is some real trouble just getting up and down around the community compared to other areas and – but by and large the inner city bits – the train I think is one of the key tools we have got now.

15

MS SKILBECK: Do you find the taxis within Ballarat quite responsive?

MR KILEY: Yes. I mean, the thing is they know who you are, so they almost know the house where they are going to be picked up, and, I mean, night time they are busy with other purposes because groups of people like to travel as well, but buy and large – like, in the evenings when you come home from Melbourne, they are there within a fairly short period of time, but it's expensive if you have got to go, you know, 50 kilometres, or something like that, with the taxi car.

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MS SKILBECK: Okay. Thank you very much, Brian, and thank you to everyone else, the depleted audience we have at the end of the day, but thank you to everyone. Thank you for the transcription and perhaps we will see some of you tomorrow.

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MATTER ADJOURNED at 4.41pm UNTIL WEDNESDAY, 8 AUGUST 2007