

DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD: MEETING 10

Date:	Wednesday 13 April 2011
Venue:	Qantas Meeting Rooms, Terminal 3, Sydney Airport
Time:	9:00am – 12:00pm
Attendees:	Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) The Royal Society for the Blind Physical Disability Australia Deafness Forum of Australia Qantas Jetstar Virgin Blue Tiger Airways Board of Airline Representatives of Australia (BARA) Australian Airports Association (AAA) Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) Mayor of Ballina Attorney-General's Department Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DOIT) Office of Transport Security
Apologies:	Physical Disability Australia Virgin Blue Regional Express Civil Aviation Safety Authority Attorney-General's Department Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
Secretariat:	Department of Infrastructure and Transport

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed new representatives and noted the contributions to the AAWG of Beate Himbert, former representative of FaHCSIA. The Chair announced that the Flight Safety Foundation would be resigning from the AAWG but would be available to provide information relevant to the AAWG's activities if requested.

a) Agreement to record of outcomes of the previous (9th) meeting, 4 November 2010.

Members accepted the record of outcomes from the previous meeting of 4 November 2011.

b) Review and report on action items arising from the last and previous meetings.

Further to the summary provided for the meeting, in relation to Action Item AAWG 2/9 while DOIT advised no work was currently underway in regard to requirements for the carriage of mobility aids or aircraft, the Chair confirmed that the release of the Government Response to the Transport Standards Review was expected to occur shortly.

In relation to Action Item AAWG 7/9 airline members advised that they understood that passengers requiring assistance were disembarked at the end of the process based on aircraft emergency evacuation requirements but CASA may be able to provide further background.

In the event of an emergency evacuation of an aircraft, cabin crew are instructed to remain at assigned locations within the cabin until the flow of passenger traffic had ceased. At that stage of an emergency evacuation and if able, cabin crew may then assist any remaining passengers who had a disability or had sustained a disability as a result of the emergency. Airline members also clarified that there was no requirement for a passenger with a disability to remain onboard the aircraft should they be able to evacuate without assistance.

AAWG noted some airlines had limitations on the number of wheelchairs based on safety and operational requirements including the need to turnaround aircraft in a prescribed amount of time as well as hold space and dimensional requirements and that wheelchair limits by some carriers was currently the subject of a legal dispute.

AAWG noted the definition of what constitutes a disability was contained in the Disability Discrimination Act.

2. (a) and (b) Disability Access Facilitation Plans (DAFP's).

Members noted progress had been with the completion of DAFP's with 27 plans now published (6 airlines and 21 airports).

The AHRC thanked DOIT for support in relation to the assessment of the plans but indicated it was unsure of how many more plans it could expect to receive for comment. DOIT advised there were three remaining major airport and five international airlines that had been contacted for advice on their commitment to the DAP initiative. Of these operators four have confirmed their commitment to the initiative.

Members noted that Qantas and Virgin Blue had published plans on their websites while Jetstar advised that it was finalising its plan and expected to publish it later this month.

Tiger Airways advised that it had drafted a plan and had received comments on its plan from DOIT and had sought comments from AHRC and CASA. The airline was prioritising the publication of its plan, anticipating that it will be published next month.

The RAAA confirmed the recent participation of Skywest and Sky Trans in the DAFP initiative and Skippers Aviation had now provided a plan for comment to AHRC, CASA and DOIT. RAAA also sought clarification on whether Air North had received comments on its draft plan completed last year, which the Department would check to confirm.

Members discussed the importance of international airline participation in the initiative. There was agreement that all airlines operating within and into Australia should be engaged in the DAFP initiative noting differences and jurisdictional issues related to levels of service depending on the origin and destination of international flights.

ACTION(1/10) DOIT to use available industry forums to encourage continued adoption of DAFP's by international airlines.

2(c) Discussion of issues raised in the plans.

DOIT highlighted general areas for future discussion in the plans including:

- clearer location and accessibility of plans on websites.
- importance of plans being live documents and need to ensure they are regularly updated.
- varying levels of consultation undertaken by operators despite advice in DOIT guidelines.

- use of terminal “ambassadors” or information service staff at airports to provide general assistance to passengers with a disability.
- inconsistent level of information provided on facilitating assistance animals at airports.
- level of curbside assistance at airports.

DOIT encouraged AAWG members to examine the plans and consider what improvements could be made as well as identifying examples of good practice in current plans which could be shared throughout the industry.

Members also sought advice on a previously discussed suggestion of a trial of a dedicated service for passengers with a disability at airports.

DOIT advised a discussion paper on issues around a dedicated service (and what it might cover) had been prepared and discussed at AAWG. However a possible trial location and funding was not located, no consensus on the type of service had been reached and that initial priority should be given to getting the DAFP’s in place.

DOIT noted that with the DAFP’s now emerging, these should be examined to see where they covered issues well and where there were gaps. Subsequently options could be considered for addressing agreed gaps, one of which would be examining some form of dedicated service through a trial if industry agreement could be established and other measures such as airline and airport staff training.

The AAA advised that it was prepared to look at options including some form of dedicated services with its members and suggested the possibility of locating a trial service within an international terminal.

AAWG members noted there was a wide range of disabilities and what may be a dedicated service for one group may be irrelevant to, or not meet the needs of, another group, while cost and specialised resourcing needs would have to be considered especially with the increased operation of low cost carriers.

ACTION(2/10) AAWG Secretariat to establish a sub-group to identify issues arising out of published plans and provide advice to the next AAWG meeting on options to address any gaps identified including the scope for, operation and cost of, a trial dedicated service at an airport terminal.

3. Assistance Animals.

AAWG noted the DOIT paper which examined improving the approval process for the carriage of assistance animals in the aircraft cabin. Airline members raised concerns the paper was advocating they would be made more responsible than under the current arrangements.

DOIT clarified that the proposal should make it easier for airlines by not only extending the number of domestic airlines covered but also the number of training organisations covered through use of Assistance Dogs International and its published standards to provide a benchmark which was the basis for the current list of organisations approved by CASA. The current instruments also became out of date if a local training organisation changed its name.

DOIT also noted that once AGD advised that further work on the national accreditation scheme for assistance animals was completed then any outcomes of this (e.g. a nationally approved list of training organisations) could be used in a future instrument.

ACTION(3/10) DOIT to discuss with CASA and domestic airlines the proposal and then consult with AAWG before finalising a way forward.

4. Staff Training

AAWG noted and supported the DOIT paper which identified broad training topics, content and competencies for staff that assist passengers with a disability.

Members suggested that the following topics be included in the list of suggested topics:

- Disability awareness, manual handling, equipment and transferring methods, communication methods and equipment and clarification of suggested topics on handling unexpected circumstances and emergency situations.

AHRC noted that operators were able to seek advice from particular advocacy groups in relation to developing or reviewing staff training manuals. It was agreed that this information be made available as advisory material and could be included in the DAFP guidelines.

ACTION(4/10) DOIT to place advisory material on staff training topics to be placed on AAWG website with DAFP guidelines for preparation of DAFP's.

5. Transport Standards Review – DOIT to update AAWG.

This item was discussed under Agenda Item 1(b).

6. Aviation Security Issues including use of body scanners

AAWG noted an update from the OTS on new passenger screening technologies, in particular the introduction of new body scanning equipment (which do not present intrusive images) and a Proof of Concept trial at two airports prior to a formal roll-out to all eight international airports later this year.

The OTS advised it would be reviewing the Aviation Screening Notice and Screening Practice Guidelines and would consult with the AAWG and disability groups in this process.

AAWG noted concerns over time restrictions placed on vehicles dropping off passengers with a disability near the front of airport terminals.

ACTION(5/10) DOIT and AAA to raise the issue of time limits at designated drop off points for passengers with a disability at the next Aviation Security Advisory Forum meeting and an OTS “front of house” specialist to discuss security-related access issues at next AAWG meeting.

7. Other Business

Qantas announced that discounts for nominated carers (administered through Nican) had changed, the discount has increased to 50% and is now available on all flights.