

## AVIATION ACCESS WORKING GROUP

### SUMMARY RECORD: MEETING 3, 12 JUNE 2009

- The Chair opened the meeting at 1.10pm. An attendance list can be found at [Attachment A](#). Apologies were noted.
- The Chair requested and received confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting, and progress against Action Items arising from previous meetings was reviewed.
- The Chair informed members that an Aviation Access Working Group webpage had been created and published on the Department's website and a link would be sent out to members for information.
- Members noted the Braille information provided by the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) (a promotional brochure for Braille signage products and a copy of the Australian Braille Standards). Discussion of these documents and their applicability noted the importance of incorporating tactile signage into aircraft at the design phase. Due to the difficulties associated with retrofitting an aircraft with tactile components, members suggested the need to influence manufacturers from an early point. It was suggested that this issue could be raised with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for discussion at a global level.
- Members suggested that the Australian Airports Association (AAA) be asked to provide feedback on the Braille information on behalf of the airports. In addition the RAAA offered to talk to the manufacturers of the aircraft its members use (Embraer, Saab and ATR).
- In the lead up to the meeting, the AFDO had provided a list of key issues which outlined the practical difficulties still experienced by passengers with disabilities. It was agreed this list would serve to guide the Department's policy advice to the aviation industry.
- The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) addressed the ongoing issues associated with individual pre-flight safety briefings. CASA reported to members on a recent meeting of the Asia Pacific Cabin Safety Working Group (comprising industry cabin crew trainers). CASA will consult with disability advocates and cabin safety inspectors to further examine the approaches taken on individual pre-flight safety briefings for passengers with a disability.
- Members reviewed a discussion paper written by the Department, proposing a self-regulatory initiative for industry. CASA and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) indicated their support for such an approach and willingness to be consulted by industry on the applicable legislative provisions. Based on their experience, the AHRC representatives thought that the approach would bring about a decrease in the frequency of complaints made under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

- The RAAA offered support for the flexibility of the proposal, which would allow for the varied size and capacity of regional aircraft and aerodromes.
- Members discussed the point at which an airline becomes responsible to provide direct assistance to a passenger with a disability. AFDO suggested there needed to be links between air and land transport and different sectors of the travel process, such as from an international terminal to a domestic terminal. It was noted that the Department would provide guidance to aviation industry bodies on the specifics of the approach, and that a template could help encourage operators to define these boundaries. It may be useful to seek advice from the Australian Passenger Transport National Advisory Committee which deals with cross-modal access issues.
- Qantas indicated support for the proposal, but highlighted the limits on direct assistance it can provide in transition from feed-in flights on other airlines, where those airlines do not have an interline agreement with Qantas, or where Qantas has not become aware of the person's arrival ahead of time. Unlike most other domestic operators, Qantas will also have to consider international transfers and how to provide consistent service across operational constraints of Qantas' overseas ports.
- The Chair advised members that a draft final report of the Transport Standards Review had been sent to the Office of Best Practice Regulation and that an assessment had been requested by the Department by 17 June. Following assessment, the Review Steering Committee would consider the report which would, upon finalisation, be provided to Minister Albanese and the Attorney-General for their consideration.
- A representative of the Department of Infrastructure distributed copies of, and explained the 'Standards and Recommended Practices' for disability access, issued by ICAO. He also informed members about the recently formed ICAO Passengers With Disabilities Working Group (PWD WG) which will review these guidelines.
- Members expressed interest in contributing to the work of the ICAO PWD WG and discussed the approaches taken to disability access to air travel by other countries. Qantas raised the European approach where the airport authority had responsibility for providing assistance to passengers with special needs.
- Representatives from Qantas and the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA) committed to provide members with presentations of information on the transportation of wheelchairs and large mobility devices at the next meeting. Qantas reported that it had recently consulted physiotherapists and ergonomists on the appropriate methods to be used by the airline's ground-handlers when lifting and carrying wheelchairs, to minimise risk of injury.
- Some members requested that an agenda item be included for the next meeting to allow discussion of the issue of direct assistance as an important aspect of the smooth movement of passengers on and off aircraft and around airports. The discussion should cover what efforts are currently made, what particular areas of the journey are covered, what responsibilities lie with whom, and what options exist for making complaints if necessary.
- The ongoing issues of amending the CASA safety regulations on exit row seating and carriage of assistance animals were discussed briefly. Amendments to Civil Aviation

Order 20.16.3, which instructs operators on the carriage of people on an aircraft, are progressing. CASA has provided a draft of the amendments, which was circulated to members in hard copy. Members were encouraged to provide any comments on the draft.

- Members agreed that the potential to take positive action on the issue of the carriage of assistance animals was limited while relevant amendments to the *Disability Discrimination Act* were still to be passed by the Senate. Airline operators hope further work on this issue will provide clarity for their own policies.
- A representative from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs offered to arrange for members to be briefed on the progress of the Commonwealth Companion Card scheme at the next meeting, which was welcomed.
- Members agreed to schedule the next meeting for late July 2009.

## ATTACHMENT A

### ATTENDANCE – MEETING 3, 12 JUNE 2009

<b>Organisation</b>
Australian Human Rights Commission
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
National Disability Services
Deafness Forum of Australia
Qantas
Virgin Blue
Regional Aviation Association of Australia
Civil Aviation Safety Authority
Attorney-General's Department
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Aviation and Airports, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

### Apologies

Physical Disability Australia
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Tiger Airways
Regional Express
Australian Airports Association
Office of Transport Security, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government