
From: Jo-An Partridge
To: aviation statement
Subject: 080517 Travel Equity for the Aged and Disabled

Sirs,

From personal point of view travel by any means for the aged and disabled is not user friendly.

1. The discomfort starts before arriving at the airport, Taxis that are aged and disabled friendly are very difficult to obtain, particularly if you are travelling during peak hour traffic, live in the outer suburbs or in a regional area.
2. On arrival at the airport the long queues are the first hurdle to overcome for those with walking aids this is a major issue as standing for any length of time is often too difficult.
Wheelchair bound persons often have difficulty in depositing their wheelchairs at a designated site and have to wait for an airport people mover or wheelchair, both of which are normally great distances from each other.
3. Persons with walking aids are not normally allowed to take them on board, even though they fold and can be stowed easily, this means they have to take a people mover or designated wheelchair, which is not much use when having to walk on to the aircraft; often other essential aids are prohibited, such as walking sticks, eating and dressing sticks, etc.
4. The biggest hurdle is if you need a carer/companion with you, means doubling up of the cost of the journey. Most airlines will argue that you should have someone who is responsible for your care because of Occupational Health & Safety regulations.
5. If you are fortunate enough to have a trouble free flight, arrival at your destination can also be another hurdle to overcome, such as a suitable taxi to take you and your wheelchair, etc.
6. Some disabled may be able to walk but have difficulty in carrying in-flight baggage, it would be helpful if a trolley could be taken through to the departure lounge; before I was wheelchair bound I had this problem when an airport handler snatched the trolley from me and left me standing utterly helpless, no attempt was made to get assistance, fortunately the security officer recognised I was in difficulty and helped me to a people mover station, I don't have that issue now as I am wheelchair bound so have to face a new set of travel issues.
7. I have only touched on physical impairment, I dread to think of the issues that arise should you have a hearing or sight impairment.
8. If you are able to drive a vehicle there is the issue of parking and unloading the wheelchair/scooter to ensure your safe arrival.

I have practically given up travelling because I do not want to face the hazards. I have always been an independent person and I resent being treated like a second class citizen, surely equity is not too difficult for airport and airline management to implement. I am still the same person that travelled extensively in the past the only difference is I have wheels to walk with, and no one is exempt from disability.

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