



Australian Government

Aviation Disability
Standards



Aviation disability standards— Consultation paper

August 2026



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Executive summary

There are more than 5.5 million people with disability in Australia, or around one in 5 people (ABS 2024).

Equitable access to air travel is crucial for people with disability to connect with their community and access essential services and support. People with disability face barriers when travelling by air, including inaccessible facilities and services at airports and unhelpful practices and systems adopted by airlines. Barriers can be encountered across the passenger journey – from booking a flight, to airport check-in, on the aircraft and when disembarking at the destination.

Unlike other modes of transport, air travel has unique safety, security and operational requirements. While safety and security remain paramount, airlines and airports must also ensure that they do not discriminate in the services they provide.

Discrimination occurs when a person, or group of people, is treated differently than other people because of their background or personal characteristics, such as their age, sex, race or disability (*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, sections 5 and 6). The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) seeks to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the basis of disability.

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards) outline the responsibilities that providers and operators of public transport services, including airlines and airports, have under the DDA. Despite air travel being covered in the Transport Standards, people with disability have made it clear that issues remain.

Co-designing solutions

In the 2024 Aviation White Paper, the Australian Government committed to co-designing new aviation disability standards that would affirm rights of people with disability during air travel and the obligations that airlines and airports have to provide equal access (DITRDCA 2024).

During 2025, the department established an Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee (Steering Committee) with members from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disability Australia, the Justice and Equity Centre and relevant government departments.

The department and the Steering Committee held 3 co-design workshops with people with disability, during which participants identified and developed solutions to address the barriers encountered by people with disability during air travel. These co-designed solutions, together with input from organisations representing people with disability, have directly informed the drafting of options for the new standards outlined in this consultation paper for community and aviation industry feedback. Input on the solutions was also sought from subject matter experts involved in the operation of aviation services in Australia.

The proposed solutions are broken down by journey stage:

- **Whole of journey**
- **Booking and planning**
- **At the airport**
- **On the aircraft**

Multiple solutions have been put forward to address the barriers identified, including proposals for new regulations or best practice (non-regulatory) guidance. Some sections also include an option to maintain existing practice where there are other legislative frameworks that either currently apply or will soon come into effect to the matter under consideration.

A summary version of the draft standards can be found in a series of fact sheets available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards.

Responding to this consultation paper

Purpose of this consultation

The purpose of this consultation paper is to gather a broad range of stakeholder views on the merits of the proposed policy options—whether regulatory, non-regulatory, or maintaining existing practice.

Sharing your views will help the department to assess the proposed reforms on all stakeholders, including people with disability, carers, the broader community, airports, airlines, other aviation entities and government.

How to engage with this paper

You can read this consultation paper in whole or in part. You can provide feedback on individual options for new aviation disability standards or the entire document.

Targeted consultation questions have been provided throughout the paper to help guide your feedback. These questions are optional – you do not need to answer all or any of them.

This consultation paper is available in Word, PDF and Braille Ready Format. The department has developed supporting resources available at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards.

Additional documents include summary fact sheets of the consultation paper in Auslan, Braille Ready Format and Easy Read.

Hard copy versions and translations into languages other than English are available upon request by emailing AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au.

How to submit your response

You can respond to this consultation paper in one of the following ways:

- submit a written response through the department's 'Have your say' page, available via www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards.
- complete the consultation question survey on the same page.
- email a written response, or a video or audio recording to AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au. (Please include 'Consultation paper submission' in the subject line.)
- telephone (free call) on 1800 621 372, Monday – Friday 9 am–5 pm AEST (excluding public holidays).

Accessibility and support

If you would like to share your views in other accessible formats or have questions about the process, email AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au.

These resources are available on the department's website at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards. If you would like a hard copy version or a translation into a language other than English, please email AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au. If you need information in another language, you can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

Privacy and publication

Your response to this consultation paper will be published on the department's website in accordance with the Privacy Collection Notice, available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards.

If you would like your submission to be made private or if you would like it to be published anonymously, please let us know when making your submission.

Glossary

Term / abbreviation	Definition
AACF	Accessible Adult Change Facilities
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AS	Australian Standards
AS/NZS	Australian/New Zealand Standards
Assistance animal	(Definition taken from <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>, subsection 9(2)) A dog or other animal: • accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a persons with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or • accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of subsection 9(2) of the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>; or • trained: – to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and – to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.
Assistant	See ‘Carer or assistant’
Boarding device	A device designed to get a passenger on or off a conveyance, including hoists, aerobridges, gangways, ramps and scissor lifts (Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Guidelines 2004 (No.3), section 8.1)
Carer or assistant	(Definition taken from <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>, subsection 9(1)) In relation to a person with a disability, is one of the following who provides assistance or services to the person because of the disability: • a carer; • an assistant; • an interpreter; • a reader.
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
Co-design participants	People who participated in the aviation disability standards co-design workshops in July and August 2025
Co-design partner	Representatives from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disability Australia and the Justice and Equity Centre who are members of the Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee
DDA	<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>
Department or DITRDCSA	Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Term / abbreviation	Definition
Direct assistance	(Definition is taken from the Transport Standards, section 1.15). Help given by an operator or provider: - to make public transport accessible to a person with a disability when premises, infrastructure or conveyances do not fully comply with the Transport Standards; or - to provide non-discriminatory access on request.
Disability	(Definition is taken from <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>, section 4) In relation to a person, means: - total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or - total or partial loss of a part of the body; or - the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or - the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or - the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or - a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or - a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that: - presently exists; or - previously existed but no longer exists; or - may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or - is imputed to a person. To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.
Disability aid	(Definition is taken from <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>, subsection 9(3)). In relation to a person with disability, is equipment (including a palliative or therapeutic device) that: - is used by the person; and - provides assistance to alleviate the effect of the disability.
Disability Standards	Legislative instruments developed under the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>: - Disability Standards for Education 2005 - Disability (Access to Premises—Buildings) Standards 2010 - Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

Term / abbreviation	Definition
Discrimination	(For full definition please refer to sections 5 and 6 of the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>) When people with disability are treated unfairly or not given the same opportunities as others because of their disability. This could be direct or indirect.
The Guidelines	Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Guidelines 2004 provide information and comment about the Transport Standards.
Hidden disability or non-visible disability	A broad term which can include any disability that may not be immediately apparent to others. Some examples of non-visible disabilities include: • physical conditions (for example, chronic pain, diabetes) • mental health conditions (for example, PTSD, depression, anxiety) • neurological conditions (for example, epilepsy) • neurodiversity (for example, autism, ADHD, dyslexia)
Infrastructure	Any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on a public transport service. Infrastructure does not include any area beyond immediate boarding points (for example, bus stops, wharves, ranks, rail stations, terminals) (Transport Standards, section 1.18).
Medical equipment or aid	Medical equipment or aids are a type of disability aid. Examples include breathing equipment or apparatus, hearing aids, communication devices, body supports and glasses.
Mobility aid	Mobility aids are a type of disability aid. Examples include manual or powered wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, braces, canes and crutches.
National Construction Code	A performance-based code which sets the minimum required level for the safety, health, amenity, accessibility and sustainability of certain buildings in Australia.
Operators	(Definition is taken from the Transport Standards, subsection 1.20(1)) A person or organisation (including the staff of the organisation) that provides a public transport services to the public or to section of the public. This includes airlines and airport operators.
Premises	Structures, buildings or attached facilities that an operator provides for passenger use as part of a public transport service (Transport Standards, subsection 1.21(1)).
Premises Standards	Disability (Access to Premises—Buildings) Standards 2010
Providers	A person or organisation that is responsible for the supply or maintenance of public transport infrastructure. A provider need not be an operator (Transport Standards, subsection 1.22).

Term / abbreviation	Definition
Public transport service	(Definition is taken from the Transport Standards, section 1.23) An enterprise that conveys members of the public by land, water or air and includes: • community transport conveyances that are funded or subsidised by charity or public money and that offer services to the public; and • foreign aircraft and vessels that carry passengers to, from, or in Australia and that offer services to the public. A public transport service does not include a service that provides adventure travel (for example, white water rafting, ballooning or amusement park rides), except to the extent that the service operates to move the public from one location to another distant location. Commercial passenger air travel is a public transport service.
RPT	Regular Public Transport
Steering Committee	Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee
Transport Standards	Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines They are international technical standards for making digital content accessible to people with disabilities

Introduction

Background

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.

– United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 9

In 2022, more than one in 5 Australians identified as living with a disability, or roughly 21% (ABS 2024). The prevalence of disability in Australia increased between 2018 and 2022 from 4.4 million to 5.5 million people, driven by a range of reasons including:

- a growing awareness of disability in Australia
- a general increase in prevalence of some long-term health conditions
- an ageing population.

Air travel can impose significant hardship on passengers with disability, from policies and procedures that are inconsistently applied across airports and airlines, facilities that are not accessible, and services that are neglectful or may potentially lead to harm.

Stakeholder submissions to the government's 2023 Aviation Green Paper shared personal examples of the barriers to accessibility experienced by passengers with disability and the impact to their health and wellbeing. Key areas of concern included feeling a lack of dignity at security screening checkpoints, staff without adequate training to understand the needs of people with disability, difficulties when boarding and disembarking aircraft, and loss/damage to mobility aids, among others, that are discussed in the chapters that follow.

In response, the Australian Government's 2024 Aviation White Paper committed to protecting the rights of people with disability during air travel through a range of initiatives. Initiatives within the scope of this consultation paper include:

- **Initiative 4:** Make new aviation-specific disability standards as a schedule to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards) under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA)
- **Initiative 5:** Require airlines and airports to coordinate the facilitation of passenger journeys for people with disability
- **Initiative 6:** Require airlines to offer passenger assistance profiles that will enable people to communicate accessibility requirements to airlines online, in advance
- **Initiative 7:** Review airline policies that limit the number of passengers who require assistance
- **Initiative 8:** Review industry compliance with the new aviation-specific disability standards
- **Initiative 9:** Co-design user guides that outline airlines' and airports' legal requirements under the DDA and the new aviation-specific disability standards

A separate initiative committed the government to considering improved remedies for damage to wheelchairs and other mobility aids during air travel (Initiative 10). This item is out of scope of this consultation paper, as it is being considered through the proposed Aviation Consumer Protections Framework separate to the new aviation disability standards. More information on the framework can be found at www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/aviation/aviation-consumer-protections.

A word about language

The Australian Government acknowledges that some language that is used to describe people with disability can further entrench ableism in our communities. We can all create more safety and inclusion by making time to understand and respect individual preferences.

Our co-design partners (representatives from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disability Australia and the Justice and Equity Centre) who assisted the government in developing this consultation paper, expressed the view that many people with disability prefer to use identity-first language to describe themselves. This was also the general view of the co-design workshop participants, whose ideas to improve aviation accessibility are captured in this paper.

Language is always evolving and personal choices change over time. Some people may prefer person-first or different language to describe their experiences or may not identify as a person with disability but rather as part of a cultural group.

We recognise that there is no one term that suits everyone.

To reflect and respect the feedback that the department received through our stakeholder consultations on different language preferences, this paper will use person-first language (that is, people with disability).

There are also some instances where we have been required to rely on domestic and international legal definitions in enabling legislation (such as ‘dangerous goods’, ‘carer’ and ‘assistance animals’).

Context on disability rights in Australia

New aviation disability standards build on previous work to affirm the rights of people with disability in Australia.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

The DDA makes discrimination on the basis of disability unlawful across a broad range of areas of public life in Australia and aims to eliminate such discrimination as far as possible.

The DDA covers people who have temporary and permanent disabilities, physical, intellectual, sensory, neurological, learning and psychosocial disabilities, diseases or illnesses, physical disfigurement, medical conditions, and work-related injuries.

It extends to disabilities that people have had in the past and potential future disabilities, as well as disabilities that people are assumed to have.

The DDA protects people with disabilities who may be discriminated against because they are accompanied by an assistant or interpreter; they are accompanied by an assistance animal; or they use a disability aid.

The DDA is supported by 3 Disability Standards made under section 31(1) of the DDA:

- **the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards)** seek to remove discrimination against people with disability in relation to public transport services, including trains, trams (including light rail), buses, ferries, aircraft, taxis and dial-a-ride services. They establish the minimum accessibility requirements to be met by providers and operators of transport services and applies to conveyances (such as aircraft), infrastructure and premises used to support their services.

- **the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards)** aim to provide people with disability dignified and equitable access to buildings and provide certainty to industry that they are complying with the DDA. Many Australian airport terminals are covered by the Premises Standards.
- **the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Education Standards)** clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Reforms to the Transport Standards

In March 2024, the Australian Government announced a package of reforms to the Transport Standards, with agreed changes aiming to improve public transport accessibility and remove discrimination against people with disability. The reforms were developed in collaboration with people with disability, the public transport industry, and state and territory governments. The department is now working to finalise the amendments this year.

Industry-led accessibility plans

To achieve the objectives of the DDA and Transport Standards, the Australian Government encourages airports and airlines to publish Disability Access Facilitation Plans, setting out their approach to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disability.

These plans are intended to inform the public regarding the availability and accessibility of services for people with disability—ideally covering the entire passenger journey from making a reservation through to arriving at the intended destination. Disability Access Facilitation Plans typically include information such as:

- the services and facilities onboard aircraft and in airport terminals
- procedures for transporting mobility aids and assistance animals
- the extent of direct assistance available to passengers with disability
- advice to passengers on ways to work with airline and airport operators to meet specific needs
- contact details to assist people with disability to provide feedback on their travelling experience.

Aviation accessibility concerns

Air travel is considered regular public transport and is covered by the Transport Standards and many airports and airlines have developed Disability Access Facilitation Plans. However, feedback from people with disability indicates that these measures do not go far enough. Feedback received during the 2022 Review of the Transport Standards reiterated the need for aviation-specific standards to address the unique aspects of air travel.

The Australian Government has determined that more needs to be done to protect the rights of passengers with disability travelling by air.

Poor transport accessibility and reliability is a barrier for people with disability to access medical and other health services, safe evacuation during disasters, education and employment opportunities, community supports and services, and social interaction with friends, family and the broader community.

– People with Disability Australia (2023)

As discussed in the Aviation White Paper, people with disability continue to encounter inaccessible facilities and services at airports and face unhelpful practices and systems implemented by airlines. Submissions to the Aviation White Paper suggest that the burden faced by people with disability is significant and systemic.

Common issues raised in consultations during the development of the Aviation White Paper included:

- inconsistency in service delivery across airports and airlines
- a need for a clear lines of responsibility among service providers to promote greater accountability and transparency
- denial or lack of access to necessary information and support prior to flights
- extended and unreasonable wait times and hold times when checking into flights
- experiences of discrimination and refusal to carry people with disability who use assistance animals
- airlines limiting the number of wheelchairs in a cabin to 2; and not all regular public transport aircraft having the ability to carry onboard wheelchairs
- lack of consideration of the needs of people with disability in the event of flight cancellations
- lack of access to timely and appropriate responses by airlines, with reports of people with disability feeling ‘silenced’ or ‘dismissed’
- no requirement for single-aisle aircraft to have an accessible toilet
- a lack of accessible flight options and carriers in regional and remote locations (DITRDCA 2024).

Government action

In response to the concerns raised, the government made a range of commitments through the 2024 Aviation White Paper aimed at strengthening and affirming the rights of people with disability during air travel, which will be achieved by co-designing new aviation disability standards as a schedule to the Transport Standards.

The new aviation disability standards will affirm many of the existing obligations that airlines and airports have under the Transport Standards, which apply to all operators and providers of public transport services. However, the new standards are intended to go further in clarifying the obligations that airlines, airports and other aviation services providers have to facilitate the passenger journey for people with disability, and in removing discrimination in the delivery of commercial passenger aviation services.

Co-design

To deliver the government’s commitments to improved aviation accessibility, the department established an Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee with members from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disability Australia, the Justice and Equity Centre and relevant government departments. The department and the Steering Committee facilitated a series of co-design workshops where solutions to aviation accessibility barriers were identified by people with disability, drawing on participants’ air travel experiences.

The Steering Committee selected co-design workshop participants using 3 principles:

- **Principle 1: Lived experience/interest in air travel** – People with disability who have first-hand experience with air travel, as well as those who wish to travel by air but have faced barriers preventing them from doing so.
- **Principle 2: Diverse representation** – Participants who reflect the diversity of the disability community, including people from a wide range of disability types, cultural backgrounds (including First Nations peoples), gender identities, and age groups, as well as valuing the perspectives of families, carers, and disability organisations.
- **Principle 3: Geographic location** – Participants who represent the varied experiences of air travel across Australia, including people from major cities, regional communities, and different states and territories.

Three co-design workshops with people with disability were held in July and August 2025. Topics of the workshops were based on different stages of the aviation passenger journey, namely:

- Workshop 1: Journey planning
- Workshop 2: Accessibility onboard the aircraft
- Workshop 3: Accessibility through an airport.

Information on existing aviation accessibility services and developments was provided to participants ahead of the workshop series. Representatives from airports and airlines attended specific sessions of each workshop to provide context on technical issues.

Across each workshop, co-design participants discussed what actions the government or aviation industry could take to address barriers to air travel for people with disability. In doing so, they also considered intersectionality and international best practice.

Co-design findings

Four key themes emerged from the co-design workshops that participants consider will support a significant improvement in providing accessible, dignified and respectful air services:

- **Include people with disability** in the design of any policy, process or infrastructure impacting air travel experience.
- **Be consistent** so that people with disability know what services and requirements they can expect at each airport and from each airline, every time they travel or visit an airport.
- **Staff training is critical** for all staff, including contractors and passenger screening personnel. Workshop participants agreed that regular, high-quality training in disability awareness and consistent service delivery—designed and delivered by people with disability—should be mandatory.
- **Be transparent** to ensure policies, procedures and other information impacting a passenger's travel journey is readily available and provided in a range of accessible formats. Include clear information regarding support available for people with disability requiring assistance, how people with disability can expect this service to be delivered, and who is responsible.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality recognises that a person or group of people can be affected by multiple and compounding forms of discrimination and disadvantage due to their race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, class, religion, age, social origin, and other identity markers. For example, a First Nations woman with disability may experience discrimination with respect to her First Nations identity, her gender, and her disability.

Intersectionality may also refer to a person who has multiple disabilities. For example, a person with physical and psychosocial disabilities, or a physical disability and neurodivergence may experience discrimination because of one or more disability.

The government is currently considering whether the DDA could be strengthened to better consider intersectionality in matters of discrimination. As the aviation disability standards will be a schedule to the Transport Standards under the DDA, intersectionality is not explicitly addressed in this consultation paper.

However, some options discussed in this consultation paper may have flow-on benefits for intersectional groups. For example, more accessible language and communication about aviation services may also benefit those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Comparison with international jurisdictions

A number of countries have put in place legislation and best practice guidance which protect and affirm the rights of people with disability during air travel. The Steering Committee agreed that international best practice should be considered in the design of Australia's aviation disability standards.

In drafting the options for the standards outlined in this consultation paper, requirements are referenced for passenger assistance in the USA, Canada and the European Union. Links to these regulations and requirements are set out below and referred to throughout the paper:

- United States Air Carrier Access Act 1986, 14 CFR, Part 382.D, as of March 3, 2026. Accessed from US Code of Federal Regulations at: www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-II/subchapter-D/part-382.
- Canada Transportation Act 1996, Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations, SOR/2019-244, last amended June 25, 2022. Accessed from Government of Canada at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2019-244/index.html>.
- Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air [2006] OJ L 204/1. Accessed from Publications Office of the European Union at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006R1107>.

A guide to the policy options presented in this paper

The chapters that follow propose co-designed policy options to address barriers to air travel identified by people with disability. These policy options address each identified issue in 3 ways, regulatory, non-regulatory, or maintaining existing practice.

- **Regulatory options** would introduce new legal requirements requiring compliance by airlines and airports.
- Under a **non-regulatory option**, the government would issue guidance to airlines and airports on actions and best practice to support people with disability in navigating their aviation journey. Airlines and airports would be encouraged to follow this guidance but would not be required to do so.
- Under an option to maintain **existing practice**, no new legislation or guidance would be issued by government. Existing rules on the prevention of disability discrimination during air travel (for example, under the DDA and the Transport Standards) would continue to apply.

To streamline reading of this paper, not every section will present 3 policy options.

If a non-regulatory option is not listed in a section, it should be assumed that the non-regulatory option is that the government would provide guidance based on the regulatory option, rather than introducing new regulation.

Government must consider all policy options (regulatory, non-regulatory, and existing practice) to assess the most effective response to issues identified for people with disability and for the aviation industry.

As part of the process to develop the proposed policy options, co-design partners and workshop participants expressed a strong preference for regulatory change.

How aviation disability standards would apply in Australian airspace and airports

Regulatory options presented in this paper will apply throughout Australia, including for international airlines within Australian airspace or using airports within Australia. An airline operating at an Australian port would be subject to the DDA (and hence these aviation disability standards). This includes its staff and customers while within Australia (including in Australian airspace).

The aviation disability standards will not apply to an airport outside of Australia, regardless of whether a flight will conclude in Australia, or whether an aircraft is owned or operated by an Australian company.

Solutions identified at the co-design workshops but not presented in this paper

Some of the aviation accessibility solutions identified by people with disability during the co-design workshops have not been developed into options for the new standards. This may be because they fall outside the scope of the DDA or are matters that are covered by other regulations such as other Disability Standards or in aviation safety regulations.

Participants identified the following policy issues:

- **Evacuation tests should include people with disability:** For an aircraft to be certified as airworthy, manufacturers must demonstrate that it can be evacuated within set timeframes in the event of emergency. People with disability raised concerns that passengers with a range of abilities, including those with reduced mobility, are not included in the criteria for evacuation testing required for certification. The safety regulations pertaining to evacuation testing are administered by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). The department will continue to liaise with CASA on this matter outside of the standard development process.

- **Announce accessibility needs before flight:** Some co-design participants wanted all passengers to be more aware of their accessibility needs during flights, including through announcements over the public address system. However, not all co-design participants agreed that this was the most appropriate way to communicate passenger accessibility needs. As consensus was not reached, this suggestion was not progressed as a proposed standard for consultation. Engagement with airlines indicates that cabin crew are able to assist passengers with communicating their accessibility needs if requested.
- **Allow passengers to stay in their own mobility device during the flight:** Allowing people with disability to travel in their own mobility devices during flights was an idea put forward during the co-design workshops. However, the technology for this to happen safely does not yet exist. To ensure this suggestion is not lost, it will be considered as part of future reviews of the Transport Standards.

Wherever possible, the department will look for ways to keep these solutions under consideration in other ways, working with the aviation industry and other areas of government.

Next steps

At the close of the consultation period, the department will review all submissions and collate feedback for discussion with the Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee, alongside ongoing consultation with airports and airlines. Advice will then be provided to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and the Attorney-General to support decision-making on the final standards.

The department will also prepare an impact analysis to inform the decision-making process, including a cost-benefits analysis.

The purpose of the cost-benefit analysis is to assess the economic impact of government regulations and whether the regulations will deliver a net gain to society. A cost-benefit analysis is an important tool for decision-making in regulatory reform because it:

- enables consideration of the gains and losses of all members of society.
- enables the valuation of impacts in terms of a single, familiar measurement scale (usually dollars), assisting in demonstrating whether change is worthwhile compared to existing practice.
- quantifies the impact of regulatory proposals in a standard way, promoting comparability, assessing relative priorities, and encouraging consistent decision-making.

Prior to any final recommendations made for the aviation disability standards, proposed regulations will be assessed for compatibility with existing legislation and regulatory frameworks. For example, requirements set by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority to ensure no conflict or regulatory overlap.

Following decision on the final standards, the government will release an exposure draft of the standards for public feedback which will include the proposed wording of the standards as a legal instrument.

The proposed legislation will then be tabled in parliament for endorsement, following which the aviation disability standards will be submitted for assent by the Governor General.

In parallel, the government will also co-design user guides with people with disability. The user guides will provide clarity regarding the accessibility obligations of airlines and airports.

Chapter 1: Whole of journey



People with disability encounter many barriers along the passenger journey, some of which are present across all stages of travel including planning and booking, navigating through the airport, and on the aircraft.

People with disability have highlighted that improved transparency would support clearer expectations around how accessibility services are delivered by airlines and airports. Enhanced transparency can also contribute to greater consistency across the travel experience.

Through the co-design process, people with disability identified a number of ways accessibility can be improved across all stages of the aviation journey. These insights have informed the basis for the following sections of this chapter.

Whole of journey

- 1.1 Set out the roles and responsibilities of airports and airlines
- 1.2 Make sure staff are trained to support people with disability
- 1.3 Set up disability reference groups
- 1.4 Report on how standards are being met

Whole of journey

1.1 Set out the roles and responsibilities of airports and airlines

Definition of issue

Airports and airlines have a responsibility to assist passengers with disability across their aviation journey. However, it is not always clear which entity (airline or airport) is responsible for providing this assistance. The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) do not provide requirements that clarify these respective responsibilities.

Submissions to the Aviation Green Paper highlighted the inconsistent service received across the passenger journey. Responses expressed frustration at the varying levels of service received at different airports, with no clarity as to who is responsible for services to support accessible travel. For example, people with disability may receive baggage assistance at their departure airport but find there is no baggage assistance at their destination airport. People with disability have also reported being left stranded without assistance to onwards connections including transfers between terminals, or to ground transport. Support for moving from the kerb to the terminal is not always available, with people with disability reporting that they have been left stranded kerbside with no information on how to signal for assistance.

As a result, Initiative 5 of the Aviation White Paper committed the aviation disability standards to set out obligations of airlines and airports to improve the coordination of passenger facilitation, from arrival at the airport terminal through air travel until reaching the terminal at the destination airport.

For the purposes of this section, passenger facilitation refers to the services and supports provided to ensure that a passenger with disability can complete their aviation journey. Infrastructure-related supports are addressed in other sections of this consultation paper and more broadly included in the Transport Standards and Disability (Access to Premises—Buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards).

Co-design findings

Co-design workshop participants highlighted the need for consistency and transparency regarding the availability of accessibility services throughout their journey. This helps with journey planning and sets expectations about what assistance is available. Workshop participants also wanted to see support provided for both arrivals and departures. Participants suggested a concierge model that would provide assistance from drop-off through to boarding, and on arrival through to pick-up.

Participants asked for clarity regarding who is responsible for providing accessibility support throughout the journey. They suggested that airlines should be responsible for coordination of assistance as passengers are purchasing tickets from an airline, not an airport. Participants also wanted to see consistency in accessibility support across airports.

Industry input

Consultation with the aviation industry has indicated general support for greater clarity on the provision of assistance throughout the passenger journey. Majority of airlines and airports consulted preferred a shared model of facilitation.

Airports highlighted that they do not have access to passenger information, and an airport led model would rely heavily on information sharing between airports and airlines. Regional airports also noted the smaller number of staff at terminals, constraining the services they can offer. Airports also noted that existing accessibility support devices (for example, Eagle lifts and aisle wheelchairs) are airline property.

Airlines consulted have highlighted their current policies and procedures which provide accessibility services from check-in at the departing airport to baggage collection at the arrival airport. However, airlines highlighted the challenges of providing these services when relying on airport-owned infrastructure such as ramps, aerobridges, and luggage lifts. Airlines also highlighted that their staff may not be able to work outside the terminal (kerbside) and would like to see airport staff cover kerb to check-in, and baggage collection to kerb.

Airlines and regional airports consulted raised concerns about financial implications. Regional airports would like to see funding made available, or the continuation of existing regional airport funding programs, for any changes to the roles and responsibilities of airports for accessibility services. Airlines would like to see a clear funding mechanism to ensure that costs are transparently and fairly shared between airlines and airports.

Policy options

Regulatory options

Three options are proposed to improve coordination of assistance across the aviation passenger journey for people with disability.

Option 1: Shared responsibility model

This option would see both airports and airlines share responsibility for the passenger journey. This model would aim to create greater consistency of passenger facilitation services across all Australian airports.

Airports would be responsible for arrival to the airport until check-in. This would include assistance in movement from entry points (for example, public transport, car parks, drop-off zones) to the check-in desk. At the passengers' destination, airports would be responsible for provision of assistance from the arrivals hall (after baggage claim, and after customs clearance) until connection to onwards ground transport.

Airlines would be responsible for check-in through to the aircraft. On arrival, airlines would be responsible for assistance to deplane, through to the arrivals hall, including any assistance with baggage claim or customs clearance.

Airline staff would be responsible for assisting passengers with disability to catch connecting flights, including any terminal changes required.

This option would see both airports and airlines share responsibility for the passenger journey and would see greater consistency of service delivery across all Australian airports.

Option 2: Airport responsibility

This option would see airports take responsibility for the passenger journey from arrival at the airport (including public transport, car parks, drop off zones) to the departing aircraft door, and from the arriving aircraft door to onwards ground transport.

Airport staff would also be responsible for assisting passengers with disability to catch connecting flights, including any terminal changes required.

Airlines would be required to share appropriate passenger information with airports to ensure facilitation of services across the whole aviation journey. Airlines would be required to share information regarding passenger assistance requests within 48 hours of receiving such request.

This option is aligned with the European Union's aviation accessibility regulations.

Option 3: Airline responsibility

This option would see airlines take responsibility for provision of accessibility support for the whole passenger journey, from arrival at the airport (including public transport, car parks, drop off zones) through to the aircraft and during the flight, and on arrival from the aircraft to the passenger's onwards ground transport. This would include assistance with baggage claim.

Airline staff would be responsible for assisting passengers with disability to catch connecting flights, including any terminal changes required.

This option is aligned with the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 1.1.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 1.1.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 1.1.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 1.1.d Which option (shared responsibility, airport responsibility or airline responsibility) would provide the most effective and transparent provision of accessibility services across the passenger journey?
- 1.1.e Should assistance for people with disability include support to move from all airport entry points (including public transport, car parks, and kerbside drop-off zones) to the check-in desk? If so, how could this be implemented in practice?
- 1.1.f Should airlines or airports be required to assist passengers with disability to access food and shopping outlets in airports?
- 1.1.g Who is best placed to coordinate facilitation between connecting flights, including any transfers between terminals – airlines or airports?

1.2 Make sure staff are trained to support people with disability

Definition of issue

Throughout the air travel journey, people with disability have many interactions with airport and airline staff. People with disability report inconsistencies in how they are treated, being subjected to unsafe transfer methods (for example, to and from personal mobility aids) and boarding techniques and receiving conflicting information from airline and airport staff. While airline and airport staff may receive training on a range of issues relevant to their roles, it may not be tailored to identifying and addressing accessibility barriers in the air travel journey.

Staff training is recognised as a key component of providing accessible services as it increases consistency in the passenger experience, reduces barriers, and promotes a disability-aware culture. The European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States have implemented mandatory staff training for airline and airport staff involved in the passenger journey.

Under reforms to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards), operators and providers (including airlines and airports) will be required to provide training to staff to support passengers with disability. Training must be tailored to meet the roles and responsibilities of each staff member and must be refreshed annually. Training must be developed in consultation with people with disability or disability representative groups and delivered by a qualified trainer.

Policy options that consider specific training requirements for security screening staff are presented in [section 3.7](#).

Co-design findings

Staff training was raised at each of the three co-design workshops as a systemic aviation accessibility issue.

Workshop participants wanted to see mandatory staff training on disability awareness or confidence for all airline and airport staff, including those without a customer-facing role. Participants also wanted training to be made mandatory for third parties contracted by an airline or airport (for example, customer service call centres).

Participants requested that staff training:

- be designed and delivered by people with lived experience of disability, in line with the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’
- includes how to engage with people with disability, the use of disability inclusive language, and respecting the autonomy of the person with disability who knows their own equipment and support needs
- covers accessible communication with people with disability
- includes how to identify and respond to disability-related behaviours (for example, sensory overload, distress)
- be made publicly available.

Participants also requested that all staff should have consistent understanding of policies including the carriage of mobility aids and dangerous goods.

Industry input

Airlines and airports consulted indicated that they provide training to staff to ensure accessible air travel for people with disability. However, training modules across industry vary in subject matter, whether the training is mandatory and the frequency of refreshers. Public information on staff training is limited, with consulted industry bodies noting that staff training is usually a commercial-in-confidence activity.

Airlines and airports consulted were supportive of staff training standards, particularly for third-party contractors, however, they would like more guidance on what should be included in training programs on accessibility matters. Some entities indicated that standards on staff training should be outcome-based rather than prescriptive programs, particularly as different airports and aircraft have different equipment, processes and resources available to support staff training. Airports cautioned against standards that would require all airport staff to undertake disability/accessibility training as this would apply to staff with no role in assisting passengers, such as construction contractors.

Some industry stakeholders suggested that the government should produce national training modules developed with people with disability. Under this proposal, airline and airport staff would be required to complete the national modules, and the employer may choose to implement additional training to supplement this material. Alternatively, a national list of compliant training programs could be created for industry reference. This would also improve transparency regarding the content of industry training on disability and accessibility matters. It was also noted that regional and remote airports may require financial assistance from government to meet any new requirements on staff training.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Reforms to the Transport Standards will require staff training as outlined above and will apply to airline and airport staff, including contractors.

In addition, this regulatory option would see the Transport Standards expanded to include aviation-specific training outcomes. These specific outcomes would include ensuring staff responsible for transferring people with disability from a mobility device or seat are sufficiently trained to conduct this process in a manner that maintains passenger safety and dignity. Additionally, staff that handle mobility aids would be trained in identifying different types of mobility aids and understanding appropriate methods to move, disassemble and reassemble them. Staff would be required to undertake competency assessments.

The aviation disability standards would require airlines and airports to provide information about their disability confidence training programs on request from a member of the public. This information would be high level and not contain commercially sensitive information. Airlines and airports may be asked to provide information on:

- program names
- training provider name
- the number of hours of training and refreshment training intervals
- whether the training was developed in consultation with or co-designed with people with disability and their representatives
- categories of staff that undertake this training (for example, ground handling staff and flight attendants)
- outcomes of the training program.

Public reporting on staff training programs and compliance is addressed in [section 1.4](#).

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's aviation accessibility regulations.

Existing practice

Reforms to the Transport Standards will continue to apply to airlines and airports.

No additional aviation-specific regulations or guidance would apply.

Consultation questions

- 1.2.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 1.2.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 1.2.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 1.2.d Are there additional training outcomes that should require in-person training and/or competency assessments?

1.3 Set up disability reference groups

Definition of issue

The phrase ‘nothing about us without us’ refers to the principle of participation enshrined in the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the importance of people with disability being involved in the development of any policies or processes that impact their lives.

Currently, the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) do not specify any requirements for consultation in the design of public transport facilities or in the development of policies and processes intended to support people with disability, leading to varied levels of consultation. In response to the Aviation Green Paper, several submissions highlighted that engaging directly with people with disability is essential to ensuring that proposed solutions effectively address the barriers they experience throughout the aviation journey.

International precedent exists where airports over a certain size must have a mechanism for consultation with people with disability, including through a committee or similar, which includes either people with disability or their representative organisations.

For example, in the European Union airports with at least 150,000 commercial passenger movements annually must have quality standards for the assistance they provide people with disability. These standards must be set in consultation with an airport users committee and with organisations representing persons with disability and persons with reduced mobility (European Union 2024).

Co-design findings

Throughout all three co-design workshops, participants pointed out the value in consulting people with disability early. This included changes to airports, aircraft interior design, service offerings and information and communication technology (ICT) systems used by the public.

Participants requested that the new aviation disability standards include a requirement for airports and airlines to consult people with disability or their representative organisations through the formation of disability reference groups.

Industry input

Airports and airlines who were consulted were broadly supportive of the establishment of disability reference groups. It was noted that some airports and airlines have already established disability reference groups or broader consultation groups.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines and airports to establish disability reference groups. It is proposed that this requirement would apply only to airlines and airports above a threshold of a certain number of passengers. We are seeking feedback through this consultation paper on what the threshold should be.

A disability reference group would need to be consulted before implementation of significant changes which may impact a user’s experience with that airport or airline. The group would need to meet at least twice per year and as determined by agreed Terms of Reference.

Specific guidance may include:

- good practice in selecting members, such as ensuring independence, diversity of lived experience and disability types and that intersectionality with other cohorts is represented (for example, First Nations or cultural and linguistic diversity)
- recommended remuneration for disability reference group participants and covering the cost of any support they need to participate
- types of issues that could be discussed by disability reference groups (for example, significant changes or staff training programs)
- an example Terms of Reference, noting this should be developed and agreed by members of the group.

Consultation questions

- 1.3.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 1.3.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 1.3.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 1.3.d What should the Terms of Reference for disability reference groups cover?
- 1.3.e It is proposed that airports and airlines above a certain size threshold be required to establish a disability reference group. For example, this requirement could apply to airports and airlines with more than 150,000 passenger movements per year. What threshold would be appropriate if this regulatory option were implemented?
- 1.3.f Under what circumstances would it be appropriate for airlines or airports to have a shared disability reference group (such as when multiple airports are owned by the same company)?

1.4 Report on how standards are being met

Definition of issue

The Aviation White Paper committed the government to provide public reporting on airlines' and airports' compliance with the new standards once they are in effect. Public reporting on implementation and compliance is a recognised way of making sure regulations are being followed and are operating as intended.

The current Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) do not require public transport service providers or operators to report on compliance. Consequently, no operators or providers currently publish compliance data. This has been a key concern raised in recent statutory reviews of the Transport Standards and in the final report of the Disability Royal Commission.

Through the reforms to the Transport Standards, the government agreed to develop a non-mandatory reporting framework through a working group including participants from disability representative organisations, industry and government. The framework provides guidance to help operators and providers to improve their compliance data collection and reporting processes. It sets expectations to increase transparency and accountability, while highlighting the need for continuous improvements in reporting practices over time.

All operators and providers are encouraged to consider the framework and to begin reporting on their compliance with the Transport Standards. The government will evaluate the effectiveness of the framework through the next statutory review of the Transport Standards, scheduled to commence in 2027. You can view the framework on the department's website:

www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/transport-accessibility/reform-disability-standards-accessible-public-transport-2002-transport-standards.

Internationally, the European Union, United States and Canada all require airlines and airports to provide some level of reporting on their compliance with accessibility requirements.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants strongly supported airlines and airports being required to report on their compliance with the new aviation disability standards. It was further emphasised that reporting should include reporting on damage to mobility devices. Workshops participants viewed the aviation disability standards as an opportunity to align Australia with other countries such as the United States.

Co-design partners called for airlines to publicly report on:

- the number of times mobility aids are lost/damaged
- number of complaints of injury and disability discrimination made in the provision of aviation services
- the instances of, and reason for, passengers being refused carriage on a flight.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines and airports to report their compliance with the aviation disability standards to government. The non-mandatory reporting framework in the Transport Standards (outlined under 'Definition of issue') will instead be mandatory for airlines and airport operators. It is proposed that this requirement would apply only to airlines and airports above a threshold of a certain number of passengers. We are seeking feedback through this consultation paper on what the threshold should be.

Further, the aviation disability standards would require airlines (regardless of passenger movements per year) to annually report to government:

- the number of mobility aids that have been damaged and/or lost while in the airline's care
- staff training and refresher training hours, and training outcomes, categorised into staff positions
- the number of instances and reasons why a passenger is refused air travel due to their disability
- the number or proportion of assistance animals refused carriage
- the number of complaints of injury and disability discrimination of which the airline is aware (whether to the airline, the Australian Human Rights Commission, an anti-discrimination commission in a state or territory (or similar body) or the new Aviation Consumer Ombuds Scheme) related to aviation services.

This requirement to report data would be comparable to the requirements in place in other jurisdictions such as the United States, where carriers must submit a report on damage or loss to mobility aids and reports summarising the disability-related complaints received during the prior calendar year.

Government would then be required to collate and publish provided information annually in accessible formats.

Existing practice

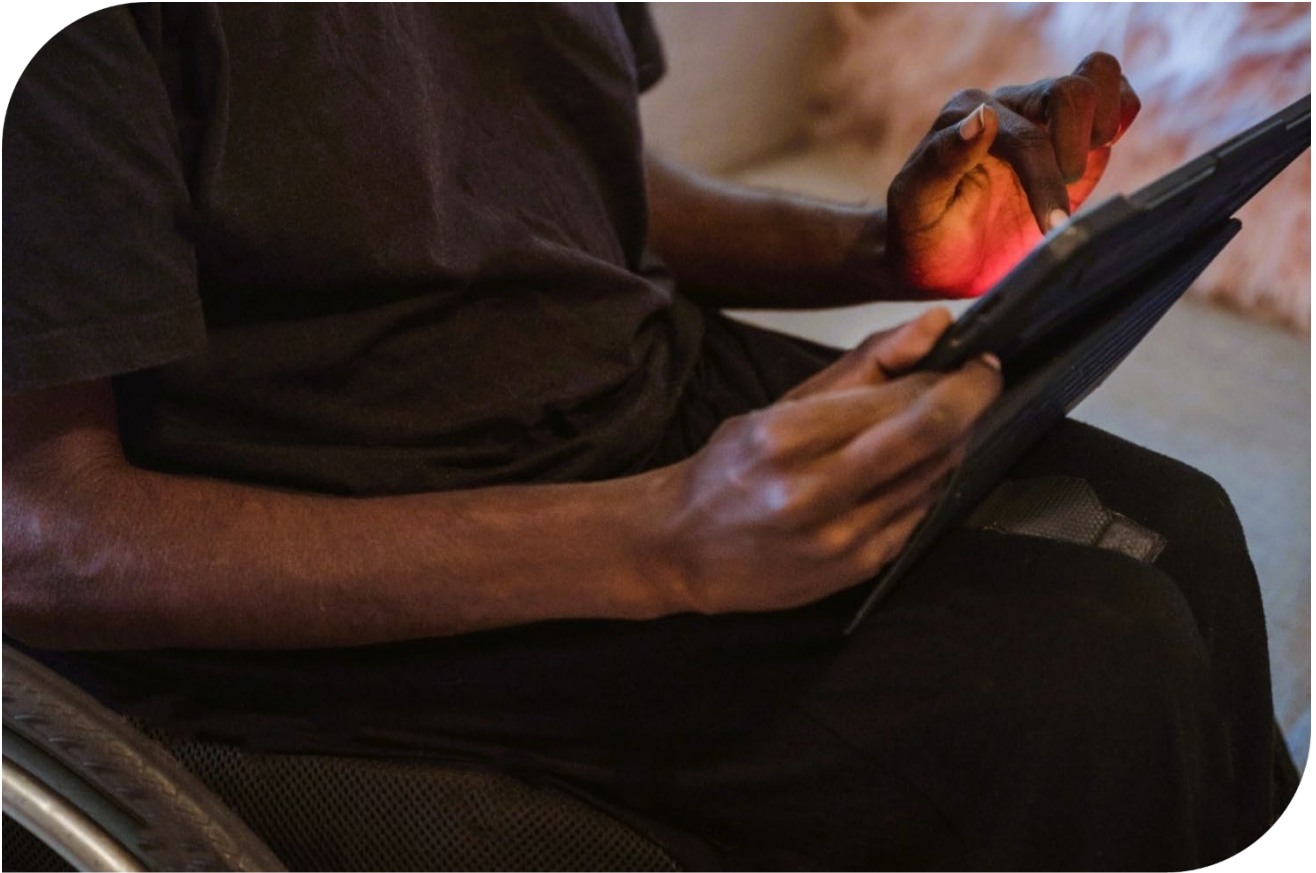
Airlines and airports would be free to adopt the non-mandatory reporting framework agreed through the reforms to the Transport Standards, but not required to do so.

There would be no requirement for airlines to publish the number of mobility aids that have either been damaged or lost during the course of air transit, the number of passengers requiring assistance that have been refused carriage, the number of assistance animals refused carriage, or the number of complaints of injury and disability discrimination.

Consultation questions

- 1.4.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 1.4.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 1.4.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 1.4.d What areas would you prioritise for public reporting and why?
- 1.4.e Are there any international examples you believe we should model our reporting requirements off?
- 1.4.f It is proposed that airports and airlines above a certain size threshold be required report on their compliance with the aviation disability standards. For example, this requirement could apply to airports and airlines with more than 150,000 passenger movements per year. What threshold would be appropriate if this regulatory option were implemented?
- 1.4.g Is the proposal for government to publish data provided by airlines and airports appropriate? Should a different approach be considered (such as airlines and airports publishing individually)?
- 1.4.h Is annual reporting feasible for industry?
- 1.4.i What transitional arrangements would be required for implementation of reporting on these issues?

Chapter 2: Planning and booking air travel



Planning a trip by air is stressful at the best of times. For people with disability, it can be even more challenging if they may need extra information or need to make additional arrangements. This chapter explores the planning and booking stages of the aviation journey and suggests practical solutions to make these steps accessible for people with disability.

Prior to booking, people with disability may need to confirm that different aspects of the trip meet their accessibility needs and as such will need to find answers to more questions than other travellers. For example, will their scheduled aircraft be able to accommodate their electric wheelchair or an assistance animal? The aviation disability standards aim to address these, and other uncertainties, to deliver greater consistency in the passenger experience for people with disability. During the co-design workshops, people with disability identified several ways consistency could be achieved.

Remove barriers to air travel when planning and booking

- 2.1 Offer passenger assistance profiles
- 2.2 Clarify times where limits on passengers requiring assistance may apply
- 2.3 Services must be provided when passengers give advance notice of accessibility needs prior to travel
- 2.4 Make sure people with disability access the same fare regardless of the method of booking

Make approval processes clearer

- 2.5 Clarify rules for carriage of assistance animals on aircraft
- 2.6 Explain how passengers can get approval for equipment classed as dangerous goods
- 2.7 Ensure disability aids can be transported for free and in-cabin, where possible
- 2.8 Explain requirements for carers or companions travelling with a person with disability
- 2.9 Clarify when airlines can ask for medical certificates

Make information easy for people with disability to access and understand

- 2.10 Provide clear information about accessibility options before booking
- 2.11 Offer information needed for flight bookings in multiple accessible formats
- 2.12 Provide communication in accessible formats during disruptions
- 2.13 Communicate when passengers with disability or their disability aids are not accepted for travel
- 2.14 Allow people with disability to choose seats that best meet their needs

Remove barriers to air travel when planning and booking

2.1 Offer passenger assistance profiles

Definition of issue

Airlines ask passengers with disability to share as much information as possible about their accessibility needs when booking, so they can provide the best possible travel experience. Information requested may include:

- assistance required to move between different areas of the departure and arrival terminal
- information regarding medical assistance that may be required and, where necessary, medical clearance to fly
- specifications of disability aids the passenger is travelling with, including approvals for batteries contained within the disability aids
- support needs of deaf and blind passengers
- details about assistance animals that will be travelling with the passenger
- whether the passenger is travelling alone or with a carer.

Airlines request this information in advance of each flight, even if passengers have previously flown with the same airline with the same assistance requirements. If information is not provided, airlines state they may not be able to provide appropriate support.

People with disability are frustrated that they must repeatedly inform airlines of their accessibility needs across their journey to ensure they have a safe and dignified experience. Airlines request more information from people with disability than travellers without disability and having to communicate support needs for every flight creates additional burden on people with disability and the people they travel with. Even when passengers provide information about their accessibility needs at the time of booking, people with disability report that information often does not filter through to all relevant staff on the day of travel.

In response to these concerns, the Aviation White Paper committed to consulting on options to require airlines to offer passenger assistance profiles as part of new aviation disability standards.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants were supportive of an online profile where they could nominate their accessibility needs such as seating preferences, communication needs, assistive devices they will be travelling with, required documentation for dangerous goods and assistance animals, and details regarding any carers that may be accompanying them on their journey. Participants requested that airlines develop a system to store this information, which could then be conveyed to airports and other airlines for bookings. Participants wanted to ensure that the information in the profiles is provided at all steps throughout their journey so people with disability do not have to keep repeating and explaining their requests.

Co-design participants requested that profiles be consistent across airlines and incorporate a degree of flexibility to allow as much information as a person wants to include to support their travel journey.

Industry input

Airlines consulted have recognised the value of passenger assistance profiles but have advised that such a system would be technically complex and would be best developed at a global level by reservation system software providers. To the department's knowledge, no airline internationally has implemented a passenger assistance profile along the lines of the initiative outlined in the Aviation White Paper.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to provide passengers with disability the option to nominate their accessibility needs in a passenger assistance profile. With the passenger's consent, this information would be saved in the airline's system for future bookings by that passenger. Airlines would be required to share necessary information from a passenger profile to the origin, transit and destination airports to ensure coordinated facilitation across all segments of the passenger's aviation journey. If a passenger is transferring to another carrier as part of their journey, their accessibility needs should also be communicated with that airline.

Specific inclusions in the profiles may include:

- passenger seating requirements
- communication needs
- disability aids that passengers will be travelling with, including the aid's dimensions and weight
- approvals for carriage of disability aids, including assistance animals and dangerous goods certification
- medical equipment and medicine the passenger will be travelling with, along with the ability to upload a doctor's note/certificate for these items
- assistance animals that will be travelling with the passenger, along with the ability to upload details of training and certification (if applicable) of the animal
- carers that will be travelling with the passenger.

The standards would require airline systems that host the passenger assistance profiles allow passengers to:

- access clear and accessible information about their profile, including access to a designated contact at the airline for passengers to seek further information about their profile (versus a generic airline email or phone line)
- to modify/update nominated information in their profiles
- request deletion of the profile along with all personal information pertaining to the profile held by the airline.

Consultation questions

- 2.1.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.1.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.1.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.1.d What information would people with disability like to see included in a passenger assistance profile (note: information provision will be optional)?
- 2.1.e How long should passenger information be held by airlines? What considerations should be taken into account when storing and sharing sensitive information?
- 2.1.f Could information held by one airline be shared with other airlines or airports to accommodate passenger support needs across their journey?
- 2.1.g When travelling with disability aids, how long does it typically take to respond to mandatory airline questions regarding assistance needs and disability aids?

2.2 Clarify times where limits on passengers requiring assistance may apply

Definition of issue

Through the Disability Royal Commission, the 2022 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) and submissions to the Aviation White Paper, people with disability have expressed concerns about airline policies that limit the number of passengers requiring assistance that can be carried per flight. This is often referred to as a ‘2-wheelchair policy’, but it can also affect passengers requiring assistance who do not use a wheelchair.

People with disability reported instances of these policies resulting in passengers being denied boarding or moved to a later flight, causing disruptions to their journey, sometimes at very short notice. The impact of these policies may be exacerbated when passengers are travelling from locations with infrequent service or where groups of passengers that require assistance are travelling together.

While operational and safety reasons may underpin the adoption of these policies by airlines, it is appropriate that such policies be reviewed to ensure limits are not arbitrary and to identify solutions that favour increased access to air travel for people with disability.

As there are currently no specific requirements in the Transport Standards relating to limits on how many passengers requiring assistance can travel, there is an opportunity to clarify this through the new aviation disability standards.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants noted the inconsistency across airlines in the number of passengers with disability that are accommodated on flights. This creates uncertainty as it is not clear how the limit is applied. Participants wanted to see greater clarity to ensure that the flights they are booking can accommodate them.

Co-design participants wanted to see limits on passengers with disability removed to eliminate the uncertainty and the provide greater choice for people with disability when travelling.

Industry input

Airlines consulted advised that safety in the event of an emergency evacuation is a key consideration in limiting the number of passengers using a wheelchair that can be accommodated on a flight. As a framework to assist in making decisions on this matter, industry cites *CASA Aviation Order 20.11 - Emergency & life saving equipment & passenger control in emergencies* which sets out the minimum requirements for airworthiness certification of aircraft.

For demonstration of emergency evacuation procedures, *CASA Aviation Order 20.11* invokes *United States Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 25.803*, which mandates that for aircraft with a seating capacity of more than 44 passengers, cabin crew must evacuate all passengers and crew in an emergency within 90 seconds.

Industry advised that for low-cost airlines, the impact of turnaround times following the landing of a flight has a substantial impact on the ability of the airline to offer low-cost airfares.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would only permit airlines to set a limit on the number of passengers on a flight who require wheelchair assistance with boarding and exiting the aircraft where it would create a significant safety or operational issue.

This would mean passengers who only require wheelchair assistance to move long distances through an airport but can board the plane with minimal assistance would not be counted towards a limit.

Requirements for airlines to communicate when passengers with disability or their disability aids are not accepted for travel is discussed in [section 2.13](#).

Non-regulatory option

The government would issue guidance that encourages airlines to remove limits on the number of passengers with disability that can travel on a scheduled flight. Assessment of the number of passengers requiring assistance able to travel on a particular flight must be based solely on what is safe.

Requirements for airlines to communicate when passengers with disability or their disability aids are not accepted for travel is discussed in [section 2.13](#).

Consultation questions

- 2.2.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.2.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.2.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.2.d Should there be an obligation for airlines to publish their operational and safety reasons for placing limits on the number of passengers on a flight who require assistance to board or disembark the aircraft?

2.3 Services must be provided when passengers give advance notice of accessibility needs prior to travel

Definition of issue

Airlines and airports currently request advance notice from passengers with disability who require support or assistance due to a disability or medical condition. For example, passengers needing mobility assistance, or those travelling with assistance animals or other disability aids. This helps airlines and airports ensure they have the staff and right equipment available. However, passengers with disability report that advance notice does not guarantee services will be available, leading to reduced confidence throughout the aviation journey or potential delays.

International jurisdictions such as the European Union and Canada request people with disability to communicate their accessibility needs to airlines at least 48 hours in advance of the scheduled departure time to assist with operational planning and resourcing considerations. In Canada, where 48 hours' notice has been provided, airlines must provide requested support. Where notice has not been provided, airlines must make every reasonable effort to accommodate passenger needs.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants did not raise concern with a requirement to provide advance notice to airlines/airports. However, they emphasised the need for consistency in information requirements and timeframes, as well as certainty that requested services would be provided.

Industry input

Existing industry advice from major domestic airlines recommends at least 48 hours advance notice for passengers travelling with medical devices or who require support for accessibility needs. Advance notice helps airlines to ensure they have the resources available to provide the requested services.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would specify that if a person with disability makes a request for a reasonable accessibility related service at least 48 hours before the scheduled departure time, airlines/airports must provide the service. Airlines must provide written confirmation to the passenger of the services they will provide and coordinate with airports where needed. Where 48 hours' advance notice is not provided, airlines/airports must make every reasonable effort to provide the service requested by a person with disability.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 2.3.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.3.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.3.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.3.d Are there any requests for assistance which may take longer or shorter than 48 hours to accommodate? If so, what are they and what period of notice is preferred?

2.4 Make sure people with disability access the same fare regardless of the method of booking

Definition of issue

Airlines offer a range of methods for consumers to book flights, including in person with airline staff, online through the airlines' websites, and through dedicated contact numbers which connect to airline representatives.

Note: This section does not apply to bookings undertaken through third parties such as travel agents and other external online platforms as they are not operators or providers of public transport services as defined in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards).

People with disability may not be able to use one or more of the booking methods offered by airlines if these methods are inaccessible. For example, people with low vision may find that a booking completed via phone is more accessible than via the airline website.

Reforms to the Transport Standards will require that if the standard method of payment is not accessible to a person with disability, an alternative method must be provided which facilitates independent access and does not result in the person paying more than they would if they used the standard method of payment.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that existing provisions do not go far enough to address the price variation that exists across airline booking methods.

Co-design participants shared experiences of people with disability who find that when nominating their accessibility needs during the booking process on airline websites, they are directed to call a customer service number to complete the booking. People with disability are frustrated that they cannot use airline websites to make a booking and must spend, at times, considerable time on the phone to complete their purchase.

Co-design participants raised concerns that the price of airfares with the same airline can vary depending on the booking method used due to the application of additional fees for some booking methods. Participants provided an example where sale fares offered online were not available for people with disability booking via phone. Co-design participants were supportive of consistent pricing across all the booking methods offered by airlines and removing any price disadvantage that may arise when only specific booking options are available to people with disability.

Industry input

The aviation industry clarified that some airlines use third party organisations to operate their call centres and some booking fees may be applied. One airline noted that phone booking fees are waived for people with disability, whilst another stated that fares are the same across channels with no difference between the price quoted online and the price quoted over the phone.

Industry also explained that sale fares are subject to dynamic pricing and can change quickly depending upon the number of people booking at the same time, which is why an online price may have changed by the time a person with disability calling the airline connects to a customer service representative.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to ensure that people with disability can choose their method of booking, including to book fares online without having to call the airline. Airlines would be required to offer to extend the online booking session for people with disability if they need additional time to complete the booking.

The aviation disability standards would also require airlines to provide equivalent airfares for people with disability across all booking methods that are in their control (for example, online, phone or chat function). Provision of equivalent fares would apply to promotional airfares offered during sales.

Existing practice

Existing provisions in the Transport Standards and the reforms regarding accessible and equivalent fares will continue to apply.

The aviation disability standards would not provide additional provisions on providing equivalent fares.

Consultation questions

- 2.4.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.4.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.4.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.4.d Airline websites allow a set amount of time for tickets to be purchased within. What amount of time would be considered accessible?

Make approval processes clear

2.5 Clarify rules for carriage of assistance animals on aircraft

Definition of issue

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (the DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability who has an assistance animal, subject to certain exemptions. Section 9(2) of the DDA defines an assistance animal as a dog or other animal:

- a) accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or
- b) accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or
- c) trained:
 - (i) to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and
 - (ii) to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

As per the DDA definition, the absence of accreditation under a law of a state or territory, or animal training organisation, does not preclude an animal from being classified as an assistance animal. Pets, emotional support animals, or other animals not meeting the above criteria are not considered assistance animals under the DDA.

An assistance animal may be refused on a flight where there are safety or biosecurity concerns. The ultimate decision on whether an assistance animal poses a safety risk to a flight currently lies with the pilot in command, according to the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998.

It is not discrimination for a service provider to request evidence that the animal is an assistance animal under Section 54A of the DDA. However, people with disability have expressed frustration at inconsistent practices from airlines regarding the refusal of carriage of their assistance animal.

Inconsistent state and territory accreditation

States and territories have different definitions of assistance animal and different accreditation processes (with some not having their own accreditation process).

Inconsistent airline guidance

Airlines currently have different policies when it comes to which assistance animals they will accept. Each airline recognises different assistance animal training organisation accreditations, and some airlines are more restrictive than others. Airlines may accept assistance animals not trained through these organisations, but they face a more onerous application process and the outcome is less certain.

Supporting work underway

Commonwealth, state and territory governments have developed draft Assistance Animal National Principles to improve consistency in regulation throughout Australia. Public consultation on these draft principles closed on 1 June 2025.

Early analysis of data received from consultation on the government's draft Assistance Animal National Principles shows that 59% of respondents with assistance animals reported issues or challenges in relation to accessing transport in the 12 months before the consultation, such as public transport, taxis, ride share services and air travel.

Holding formal accreditation does not appear to prevent challenges or issues. In fact, almost all the individuals who responded who held internationally recognised accreditation (such as certification with Assistance Dogs International) also reported challenges or issues in the last 12 months.

The government is also currently reviewing the DDA in response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. This includes reviewing the sections of the DDA relevant to assistance animals.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that greater clarity and consistency is needed on carriage of trained assistance animals by airlines and airports. This includes the timeframes for the animal to be granted approval to fly in the cabin with their handler (not as cargo).

Co-design participants shared their experiences with inconsistency across airlines when it came to securing approval for their assistance animals to travel. Participants wanted to see more clarity and consistency with approval of assistance animals, which could be achieved through national standards.

Participants wanted to see:

- assistance animal travel approvals to be valid for multiple flights (for example, up to a year), instead of having to seek approval each time to fly
- online check-in allowed with pre-approved assistance animals (currently, people travelling with assistance animals are typically told they must check-in in person)
- a set timeframe for airlines to approve an assistance animal as being able to travel (or, if not, provide clear rationale in writing about the reasons for refusal).

Industry input

Industry views were mixed but would broadly welcome greater clarity about accreditation/training of assistance animals. Some industry advisers pointed to the United States (US), where the inclusion of emotional support animals led to airlines having to carry unusual and poorly trained animals until the US Department of Transport changed its regulations to specify that only dogs trained to be service animals would be permitted carriage.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would provide directives for airports and airlines regarding the processing and carriage of assistance animals with the aim of ensuring greater consistency across industry. Regulation would include:

- clear application requirements and processing timeframes
- obligations for airlines to provide applicants with decisions on their application in an accessible format and within a specified timeframe (for example, up to 48 hours). If an airline does not make a decision within the specified timeframe, the lack of a decision should be deemed to constitute a refusal and the airline should explain the reason for refusal in writing.
- for domestic flights, airlines cannot require a person travelling with an assistance animal to use in-person check-in
- allowing airlines to require handlers to bring appropriate animal relief accessories for long-haul flights, and obligations for airlines to provide appropriate disposal options for soiled items
- requirements ensuring that assistance animals are carried in the aircraft cabin with their handler.

The ability to save assistance animal authorisations to a passenger assistance profile is discussed in [section 2.1](#). A person's use of their assistance animal in cabin is covered in [section 4.3](#).

Consultation questions

- 2.5.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?

- 2.5.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.5.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.5.d Is the 48 hours advance notice discussed under [section 2.3](#) also appropriate for an airline to process and make a decision regarding a request for an assistance animal?
- 2.5.e The US Department of Transportation has a standard form to seek approval for service animals in air travel – see www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/service-animals/Air_Transportation_Form. Would a similar form in Australia be beneficial? If so, what information should such a form cover?
- 2.5.f For air travel, what is the minimum evidence that can be requested to demonstrate:
- i. an animal is trained to alleviate the effect of the person’s disability, and
 - ii. an animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place?
- 2.5.g On average, prior to approval or rejection of a request for carriage of an assistance animal, how many minutes of staff time is spent requesting, reviewing or discussing information per request?

2.6 Explain how passengers can get approval for equipment classed as dangerous goods

Definition of issue

Lithium batteries that power mobility aids are considered as dangerous goods when transported by air. In the case of internal degradation or damage, lithium battery cells have the potential to release stored energy through a highly energetic reaction which can generate smoke, flammable gas, heat, fire, explosion or a spray of flammable liquids (Airbus 2025).

Carriage of dangerous goods on aircraft is regulated by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), with Part 92 of the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* setting minimum safety requirements for the consignment and carriage of dangerous goods by air.

In compliance with these regulations, airlines have developed guidelines and instructions that passengers must follow to ensure their mobility aid is approved for carriage.

Submissions to the Aviation White Paper reported that airline processes for approving the carriage of assistance animals and batteries can be inconsistent, burdensome and repetitive.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants asked for greater transparency and consistency in the approval process to travel with mobility aids that are powered by lithium batteries. A standard timeframe for information provided to be considered and approved by airlines would assist people with disability to plan trips, especially at short notice, and address uncertainties currently present in this process.

Industry input

Airlines consulted advised that completeness of information from people with disability regarding the specification of their mobility aids is important to approve the mobility aid for carriage. This information includes details such as the weight and dimensions of the mobility aid, size of the battery, and handling instructions.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to standardise the information needed from passengers regarding disability aids that have components classed as dangerous goods so that this information is complete and consistent across the industry. Airlines would be required to communicate the approval process for travel with dangerous goods as per [section 2.11](#) and follow this process in operations.

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to provide decision on an application or request within 48 hours. If the passenger does not hear from the airline within that timeframe (that is, approved application or request for further information), the lack of decision should be deemed to constitute a refusal, and this should instigate rebooking or refund processes. If the application is made less than 48 hours prior to the flight check-in, airlines must make every reasonable effort to provide the service requested by a person with disability.

Consultation questions

- 2.6.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.6.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.6.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.6.d What timeframe would be appropriate for airlines to approve requests from passengers with disability to travel with a battery powered mobility aid?

2.7 Ensure disability aids can be transported for free and in-cabin, where possible

Definition of issue

Section 9(3) of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* defines a disability aid as: ‘in relation to a person with disability, is equipment (including a palliative or therapeutic device) that:

- (a) is used by the person; and
- (b) provides assistance to alleviate the effect of the disability’.

Examples of such equipment include:

- medical supplies such as medications, stoma equipment
- walking canes or frames
- crutches
- wheelchairs
- positive airway pressure (PAP) machines
- respirators and ventilators
- neurostimulators
- portable oxygen concentrators
- blood glucose meters.

In 2022, more than half of people with disability surveyed reported using aids for mobility, self-care, communication, meal preparation and/or managing health conditions. More specifically, 18.4% of people surveyed with disability reported using a mobility aid, and 23.9% reported using a medical aid to manage health conditions (ABS 2024).

Disability aids are critical to the wellbeing and independence of people with disability. People with disability have raised concern about disability aids attracting extra baggage fees, on top of their regular baggage allowances.

People with disability also seek consistency in the way disability aids are managed by airlines, such as:

- the categories of disability aids that will be allowed on flights
- items that can be carried into the cabin and those that must be stowed in the cargo hold
- documentation the passenger must submit to airlines prior to departure
- notice periods for this documentation to be reviewed and approval granted.

Under Part 30 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards), disability aids, (for example, equipment and apparatus including mobility, technical and medical aids) are to be in addition to normal baggage allowances, and if possible, are to be treated in the same way as cabin baggage (items kept with the passenger on board) or accompanied baggage (items travelling with the passenger). However, feedback has indicated that more specific aviation guidance is required to ensure consistency.

Storage of supportive aids and medical equipment inside the cabin is discussed in [section 4.2](#).

Co-design findings

Co-design participants described the inconsistent treatment of disability aids by airlines. Participants described that there is a need to carry some equipment or supplies on board the aircraft for which airline guidance is unclear and can attract excess baggage fees. Similarly, a participant recalled times where their mobility aid attracted baggage fees because it folded into a case and was stored in the cargo hold.

Co-design participants called for greater clarity regarding disability aids that are permitted on board aircraft, noting the diversity of accessibility supports used by people with disability, and noting this is not optional baggage. Further, participants expressed the need for consistency in the way carriage of disability aids is managed by airlines, particularly in relation to the application of fees for baggage that exceeds personal baggage allowances.

Industry input

Airlines consulted indicated that policies are in place to ensure passengers are not charged additional baggage fees for disability aids. However, stakeholders acknowledged that further clarification, particularly regarding the categories of disability aids that will be allowed on flights, would be beneficial.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to communicate the following:

- the categories of disability aids that will be allowed on flights
- items that can be carried into the cabin and those that must be stowed in the cargo hold
- documentation the passenger must submit to airlines prior to departure
- notice periods for this documentation to be reviewed and approval granted.

This information should be in line with other aviation safety regulations and conveyed in accessible formats as per [section 2.11](#).

The aviation disability standards would specify that disability aids as defined by the DDA (including assistance animals) needed by the passenger because of their disability must not be counted as part of a passenger's standard baggage allowance. The policy objective is to ensure that equipment required to support a passenger with disability is not subject to additional fees.

Passengers may choose to carry these devices on board, in addition to their permitted carry-on items where allowed, or have them stored in cargo without incurring extra charges (for example, for large mobility devices). Carriage in cabin would only apply to aids necessary for accessibility during a flight.

Airline policies regarding size limits and what can be carried into the cabin would remain in place. This includes rules for the storage of disability aids when in use/not in use, and any restrictions regarding the use of disability aids during taxi, take-off and landing.

Consultation questions

- 2.7.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.7.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.7.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.7.d Are there specific considerations that should apply when a disruption occurs and a passenger requires access to a checked-in disability aid?
- 2.7.e What types of disability aids should be included in any future regulation or guidance?
- 2.7.f What types of disability aids have you been charged to travel with and has it been consistent?
- 2.7.g What types of disability aids have you been required to check-in when you would have preferred for it to be in the cabin with or near you?
- 2.7.h What information would improve understanding of the disability aids that can be taken on a flight?

2.8 Explain requirements for carers or companions travelling with a person with disability

Definition of issue

People with disability may require a carer or companion to travel with them during the aviation journey. Domestic airlines generally specify criteria for independent travel which outlines several tasks that passengers must be able to undertake in order to fly by themselves. This can include the ability to understand and respond to briefings about emergency procedures, ability to use toilet facilities, administering medication, transferring to a seat, and food and beverage consumption.

The definition of carer in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* is broad and can include provision of a range of assistance when travelling, including by informal carers such as family and friends. As such, the number of passengers travelling with a carer is difficult to determine but is likely to range between 6.8% to 22.7% of passengers with disability. In 2022, 6.3% of people with disability reported needing ‘help or supervision’ to use any type of public transport (ABS 2024). When asked about ‘activity limitations’, 22.7% of people with disability reported requiring assistance with mobility, and 13.7% reported requiring assistance with transport (ABS 2024).

Currently, there is no consistent approach to the criteria for independent travel for people with disability or the policies applied when this is required. In addition, passengers with disability have expressed frustration that even after demonstrating compliance with the listed requirements for independent travel, they are still being asked to travel with a carer.

If a passenger with disability is travelling with a carer, the preference is that they are seated next to the person or close by. Existing provisions in Part 28 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) require transport operators to locate carers, companions or assistance animals with the passenger they are accompanying, generally in the adjoining seat.

Different airlines have different policies on the fares for carers. It is not in scope for the aviation disability standards to set prices, however, a more consistent approach is explored in the policy options below.

Airline policies and requirements regarding carers and companions travelling with people with disability are not always clearly stated on airline websites. The provision of this information in a manner that is clear and accessible is discussed in [section 2.10](#).

Co-design findings

Co-design participants were supportive of a consistent framework across industry which specifies the requirements for people with disability to travel independently. Participants also raised that despite meeting these requirements, they had experienced instances where the airline has insisted they travel with a carer, which is difficult and stressful to arrange if this directive is given upon arrival at the check-in counter and unnecessary and undignifying if the person can travel independently. Participants expressed the need for greater consistency in the way these requirements are applied in practice, and clarity from airlines as to how fulfilment of these requirements is assessed.

When required to travel with a carer, participants raised the additional financial burden this creates and requested airlines discount airfares for either the passenger, or both passenger and carer to alleviate some of this burden. While some discounts are currently offered, this is not consistent across airlines.

From a practical perspective, co-design participants noted that carer arrangements frequently change, making it difficult to update the name on a booking to reflect revised arrangements. These changes often occur just hours before a flight, particularly when carers are unable to attend and a third-party provider is required to make alternative arrangements.

Industry input

Airlines consulted wanted to see pricing associated with carer travel be a commercial decision, due to airlines having different operating models. However, airlines would welcome consistency in the criteria for carer and companion travel and greater clarity on the role they need to fulfil.

Policy options

Regulatory option

A new requirement within the aviation disability standards would establish the following:

- Airlines must maintain a consistent policy regarding passengers travelling with a carer or companion.
- If a passenger with disability is travelling with a carer, the carer is to be allocated an adjoining seat.
- An airline cannot require a passenger with disability to travel with a carer unless the passenger is assessed as unable to travel independently, due to the need to ensure the safety of the person and other passengers.
- Airlines must allow free changes to the name (and other details) of the carer or companion up to one hour before the scheduled departure time for domestic flights and 3 hours before the scheduled departure time for international flights.

Requirements of travel with a carer or companion must be clearly communicated by an airline.

Supporting guidance will recommend offering a discount for carer or companion travel to improve accessibility for people with disability, particularly when the airline requires the passenger with disability to travel with a carer.

Existing practice

Existing provisions in the Transport Standards would continue to apply.

The aviation disability standards would not specify any consistent requirements regarding carer or companion travel or the need for airlines to publish this information on their websites. Airlines would continue to apply their own policies and procedures.

Consultation questions

- 2.8.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.8.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.8.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.8.d What are the circumstances in which a person with disability travelling by plane should be required to have a carer?
- 2.8.e Should airlines be permitted to request proof that a passenger with a disability can travel independently? If so, what proof should be permitted, and under what circumstances?
- 2.8.f In the United States, where an airline has determined a person with disability must travel with a carer for safety reasons, the airline must cover the cost of the carer's fare. Is this implementable in Australia? What are the barriers to implementation?

2.9 Clarify when airlines can ask for medical certificates

Definition of issue

Under the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998*, Reg 91.215 2(b), the pilot in command of an aircraft must ensure the safety of persons on the aircraft, including flight crew and passengers. Pilots or their flight crew must be aware of factors which may affect safety before the flight takes off.

To assist them to fulfil their duties, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) recommends that airlines develop policies outlining when passengers may need to provide medical clearance that they are fit to fly (CASA 2024).

CASA provides several examples where a passenger's condition may threaten the safety of the flight, other passengers or themselves:

- The passenger may be suffering from any disease that is believed to be actively contagious and communicable.
- Due to certain diseases or incapacitation, the passenger may have or may develop an unusual behaviour or physical condition that could have an adverse effect on the welfare of other passengers and/or crew.
- The passenger could be considered a potential hazard to the safety of the flight (including the possibility of diversion and unscheduled landing of the flight).
- The passenger would require medical attention and/or special equipment to maintain their health during the flight.
- The passenger may have their medical condition aggravated during or because of the flight.

However, as CASA only recommends airlines makes policies about this issue, there is no consistent approach as to when airlines ask for medical clearances and for what conditions.

Co-design findings

Co-design partners raised instances of people with disability being asked for medical certificates to justify their adjustment requests, even where those adjustments or their disability would not have affected the safety of the flight. This places a further administrative burden on people with disability, and co-design partners recommended that airlines and airports be limited in the situations in which they can request a medical certificate.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Similar to US regulations, the aviation disability standards would clarify that airlines may only request a medical certificate when the person with disability:

- has a medical condition such that there is reasonable doubt that the individual can complete the flight safely, without requiring extraordinary medical assistance during the flight
- needs medical oxygen during a flight
- is traveling in a stretcher or incubator.

Specific guidance may include whether medical evidence should be time-limited for certain conditions. For example, it may be appropriate to require people with communicable diseases to get a medical certificate within 7 days of the scheduled flight date; while for people with chronic conditions that are stable, it would be unfair and costly to ask the person to provide a new medical certificate each time.

Consultation questions

- 2.9.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.9.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.9.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.9.d Are there any other circumstances where it would be appropriate for an airline to ask passengers with disability for a medical certificate?
- 2.9.e In the United States, regulations also allow for airlines to require passengers with disability who present a medical certificate to undergo additional medical review if there ‘... is a legitimate medical reason for believing that there has been a significant adverse change in the passenger's condition since the issuance of the medical certificate or that the certificate significantly understates the passenger's risk to the health of other persons on the flight’.

Should such a clause be considered for Australia? If so, who should be responsible for covering the cost of the additional medical review?

Make information easy for people with disability to access and understand

2.10 Provide clear information about accessibility options before booking

Definition of issue

Clear and upfront information at the time of booking assists people with disability to plan and book flights. When this information is not provided, not clear, or inconsistent, it can create significant barriers to travel for people with disability.

This section explores the nature of information that should be communicated to people with disability. How this information should be communicated to ensure accessibility is discussed in [section 2.11](#).

The reforms to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) will require airlines to communicate accessibility features of conveyances, premises and infrastructure. These reforms will require airlines to:

- identify access barriers within the transport network and publish information on solutions, and
- publish information about the features of the conveyance, premises or infrastructure (whichever is applicable) to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. This information must be published in a way that is consistent and easy to understand and conveys the level of access available.

Co-design findings

Co-design partners advised that the reforms to the Transport Standards do not go far enough given the unique passenger experience of aviation compared to other modes of transport.

Co-design participants sought greater clarity and consistency of information regarding the accessibility of infrastructure and services along the passenger journey, citing that this information would empower them to make travel choices most suited to their needs and to understand their obligations prior to departure.

Industry input

Industry bodies consulted were supportive of this initiative, stating that a consistent national standard would improve outcomes for people with disability. Industry sought clarity regarding what information should be provided to assist people with disability and where this information is best located, noting that different entities are responsible for different sections of the passenger journey and that parts of this information may already be available.

Industry requested consideration be given to resourcing challenges for smaller and regional airports/airlines which may need tailored approaches or phased implementation.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would clarify existing provisions in the Transport Standards to require airports and airlines to communicate information regarding the accessibility of the infrastructure and services available for people with disability across the aviation journey. This may include provision of:

- maximum weight and dimensions of mobility aid that specific aircraft can transport, including the number of wheelchairs which can be safely stowed

- detailed airport wayfinding information through tools like interactive maps showing the location accessible facilities and services within the airport
- critical safety rules regarding the air transport of equipment classed as dangerous goods (for example, batteries)
- information about any booking restrictions, such as those for exit row seating, with an explanation as to why these restrictions are in place
- information about equipment available to make flights and airports accessible (for example, availability of Eagle lift, slide boards, wheelchairs, accessible toilets/adult change rooms)
- information about services available onboard the aircraft (for example, assistance with stowage of carry-on baggage, opening food and drink packaging)
- information about the use of on-board disability supports (for example, harnesses), including disability supports provided by the airline, and what supports a person with disability may bring
- information about accessible seat amenities and entertainment options
- requirements for passengers travelling with assistance animals and carers (refer to [section 2.5](#) and [section 2.8](#) for more detail on these requirements).

Existing practice

Existing provisions in the Transport Standards and the reforms would continue to apply.

The aviation disability standards would not contain aviation-specific directives that mandate communication regarding the accessibility of infrastructure and services available for people with disability.

Consultation questions

- 2.10.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.10.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.10.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.10.d What additional information would people with disability find useful to know at the time of booking a flight?

2.11 Offer information needed to book flights in multiple accessible formats

Definition of issue

Information to assist people with disability book flights is not always communicated in accessible formats, creating significant barriers to understanding information to plan an aviation journey.

Requirements relevant to the communication of information in accessible formats are set out in Part 27 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards), including requirements for the accessibility of information in printed formats. The reforms to the Transport Standards will introduce additional requirements, which will apply to the aviation sector and include:

- new accessibility requirements for websites (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)
- requirements for airports and airlines to publish information about service accessibility features
- further requirements to ensure the accessibility of printed information, including Braille.

The focus of this section is to assist people with disability when planning and booking air travel. Accessible information at later stages of the passenger journey are discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

Some Australian airports have implemented third party website accessibility tools that allow users to customise content to suit their needs. These tools may enable adjustments to font size and style, contrast, text spacing, image display, screen masking, text to speech functionality, reading aids such as screen rulers and simplified reading modes, and translation or multilingual support. A range of commercially available products are used across the sector.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that current provisions in the Transport Standards and the reforms do not go far enough to ensure that information to book flights is available in accessible formats. Additional clarity is needed on this matter given the unique passenger experience of aviation compared to other modes of transport.

Co-design participants requested that information regarding the accessibility of infrastructure and services offered by airports and airlines be made available in a range of formats which are inclusive and accommodate people's needs. Participants also requested this information to consider cultural safety needs and the diversity of languages spoken in the community.

Participants wanted to see airlines test the accessibility of their websites in consultation with people with disability or members of disability organisations and seek feedback from people with visual, auditory, tactile, and cognitive disabilities. Consultation with disability reference groups is further explored in [section 1.3](#).

Co-design participants cited instances where the information displayed on airline websites can become overwhelming for users, particularly those with screen readers. For some people with disability, this is too much information, and airlines are requested to consider implementing an 'accessible mode' of the website which converts the webpage into a simple text field to book flights and removes unnecessary content. Others cited examples of where, because of the nature of their disability, they could not complete the booking before the site 'timed out'.

Industry input

The aviation industry was supportive of this initiative but sought clarity regarding what formats would be required to meet the standard. Some entities noted these features are being gradually implemented, as described in Disability Access Facilitation Plans.

Industry stakeholders noted resourcing challenges for smaller and regional airports/airlines which may need tailored approaches or phased implementation.

Industry stakeholders advised that they aim for either WCAG 2.1 AA or WCAG 2.2 AA compliance across digital platforms, with support for browser and voiceover functions. Industry is also partnering with organisations which specialise in digital accessibility to gather and implement feedback from people with a wide range of accessibility needs and people with diverse language backgrounds.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Availability of information to book flights in a range of accessible formats

In addition to the Transport Standards reforms, the aviation disability standards would require airports and airlines to communicate information regarding the accessibility of infrastructure and services in formats that accommodate the diverse needs of people with disability. This information should be made available to support the booking process and, where possible, provided on the website or otherwise made available on request. These accessible formats include:

- Auslan translations or the availability of Auslan interpreters
- Easy Read
- Braille
- websites that give extra time for bookings before timing out
- pictorials and social stories
- direct assistance through a dedicated phone line or availability of interpreters.

Simplified booking websites

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to provide functionality whereby people with disability can select to view an accessible version of the website that contains text fields relevant and exclusive to bookings only, as far as practicable, to assist people with accessibility needs.

Existing practice

Current requirements in the Transport Standards and the reforms would continue to apply. The aviation disability standards would not contain aviation-specific directives regarding the availability of information to book flights in a range of accessible formats.

Consultation questions

- 2.11.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.11.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.11.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.11.d Are there other accessible formats in which people with disability would like booking information presented?
- 2.11.e Should the standards require that terms and conditions also be provided in accessible formats such as Easy Read?

2.12 Provide communication in accessible formats during disruptions

Definition of issue

When flight or airport disruptions occur, people with disability can be disproportionately affected by a lack of accessible and timely communication, leaving them uncertain about revised travel plans. Disruptions can encompass delays along the passenger journey, re-routing of flights, or cancellations of flights altogether.

Flight changes may impact planned accessibility accommodations for people with disability. For example, a person with a motorised mobility device may have planned their route well in advance to ensure they are travelling on an aircraft that can accommodate their mobility device's dimensions. If a flight change occurs that means a different sized aircraft is used, carriage of their mobility device may not be possible.

Under the current requirements in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards), where information cannot be provided in an accessible format or in a timely manner, information may be provided through direct assistance. The reforms to the Transport Standards will also require that if a public transport service is disrupted as part of a planned disruption, operators and providers must provide information about the disruption and (if possible) alternative travel options in a variety of formats and with as much notice as can be reasonably provided in the circumstances. If this is not possible, information must be provided by direct assistance. This does not apply when a disruption is outside the operator or provider's control (for example, a police operation or building fire).

The 2024 Aviation White Paper also included a commitment to establish a new Aviation Customer Rights Charter setting out the fair and appropriate treatment of customers by airlines and airports. The Charter will outline minimum customer service levels, give customers greater certainty about what they can expect when flights are cancelled and delayed, and when passenger journeys are disrupted, including in relation to the prompt payment of refunds, across all fare types.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants shared experiences of the mental burden of flight planning and ensuring that flights can meet their accessibility needs before they book. Where flight changes occur, participants shared how they then had to go through the checking process again to ensure their needs were still met. This was particularly the case for people travelling with motorised mobility aids, which sometimes can only be accommodated on particular aircraft models.

Co-design participants were not confident that the reforms to the Transport Standards would be sufficient to cover the types of disruptions that are unique to air travel journeys, particularly unplanned disruptions such as weather delays.

Co-design participants put forward options to address this problem, including ensuring:

- communication from airlines to people with accessibility needs is simple, clear to understand and in an accessible format
- messages about changes to airlines or airports are communicated as soon as possible in advance of the journey.

Additionally, participants suggested a more personalised service should be offered to people with disability when flights are rescheduled – such as ensuring people are not placed on less accessible flights without the option and assistance to rebook or change flights.

Industry input

Industry broadly appears to support this initiative, with initial indications showing it could be relatively straight forward to implement when given sufficient guidance. Some airlines have advised they are already doing this to some degree via social media and website updates.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement for airlines to inform people of changes or disruptions to their flights in accessible formats as outlined in [section 2.11](#). Information that must be communicated would include:

- whether flight changes will impact on the airline's ability to transport the passenger or their mobility device
- alternative itineraries available if the changes impact the passenger's accessibility needs (for example, the aircraft's inability to carry their mobility device)
- how to get assistance to rebook or manage the change to flight.

Consultation questions

- 2.12.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.12.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.12.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.12.d How are passengers with disability currently informed and accommodated for during planned and unplanned changes to their itinerary?

2.13 Communicate when passengers with disability or their disability aids are not accepted for travel

Definition of issue

During development of the Aviation White Paper, people with disability reported instances of airline policies resulting in passengers or their disability aids being refused carriage, causing unexpected disruptions to their journey, sometimes at very short notice. People with disability expressed frustration at the limited communication received from airlines in these situations, particularly where they had provided at least 48 hours' notice of their accessibility needs (see [section 2.3](#)).

This impact is especially burdensome for passengers travelling from locations with infrequent service for onward connections, such as regional and remote airports, or where there is a group of passengers that require assistance travelling together and only a few can be accommodated on the flight.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants expressed frustration at the limited information conveyed to them when they, or their disability aids, have been refused carriage. Participants sought greater clarity in the communication received from airlines to disclose the reasons why passengers or their disability aids are unable to be accommodated on flights.

Co-design participants requested nationally consistent processes across airports in the provision of customer support and infrastructure to enable greater independence, dignity and respect when travelling.

Industry input

The aviation industry largely indicated support for the principle of transparency and clear communication when a passenger or their disability aids are refused carriage. Airlines raised that in some instances, the conditions that impact travel may not be known in advance, which is why passengers or their disability aids may be refused carriage at short notice. For example, strong winds may prevent the use of passenger lifts to board passengers with limited mobility. Under this scenario, passengers may be refused carriage at the time of boarding if there are no alternative methods for boarding available. This may especially be the case for regional or remote airports which have fewer resources.

Additionally, airlines noted the need for clear and accurate information about a passenger's mobility aid such as wheelchair weight, battery size and handling instructions at time of booking. Airlines discussed the challenges when bookings are received through third parties such travel agents, as this information may not be complete and they may not have a full understanding of a passenger's condition or the specifications of their mobility aid until the passenger presents at check-in. In these circumstances, airlines stated that advance notice to passengers regarding refusal of carriage is not possible.

Policy options

Regulatory option

If a passenger with disability communicates their accessibility needs with an airline at least 48 hours prior to departure, following which an airline refuses carriage of the passenger or their mobility aid, the aviation disability standards would require the airline to:

- at the time of the refusal, inform the passenger of the reasons for refusal and, no later than 10 days after the day of the refusal, provide the person with a written notice setting out the reasons for the refusal; and

- advise the passenger of the next available flights to the same destination on which they, and where applicable their disability aid, would be accepted for carriage, and offer to book an alternative flight at the lesser of the original fare and the alternative fare. Alternatively, where there is no alternative flight available (for example, where a person's disability aid cannot be accommodated on any itineraries), the airline must refund the passenger's fare.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's and the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 2.13.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.13.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.13.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.13.d Under what circumstances should the passenger with disability be responsible for rebooking their flight rather than the airline?
- 2.13.e Are there situations where it would be considered reasonable for airlines to refuse carriage to passengers with disability and/or their disability aids?

2.14 Allow people with disability to choose seats that best meet their needs

Definition of issue

Some public transport modes (for example, buses and trains) incorporate dedicated seating for people with disability with additional legroom or space. People with disability can travel in these seats without paying additional fees or request an accessible seat when booking without additional fees being applied.

Some airlines charge additional fees for seats with extra legroom or space that may be more suitable for people with disability. Airfares and price variation across seats are not in the scope of the aviation disability standards. Policy options focus on improving the information provided to people with disability, so they can book a seat that meets their accessibility needs.

Part 28 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) currently contain the following provisions regarding accessible seating that apply to aircraft:

- Accessible seats must be kept for passengers with disability.
- Operators must allocate unbooked accessible seats to other passengers only after all other standard seats have been filled.

The reforms to the Transport Standards will add the following requirements:

- Passengers with disability must be able to book seats that are located in parts of the conveyance that are appropriate for their travelling needs (unless such seats have already been booked).
- If different classes of travel are provided by a service, seats appropriate to the travelling needs of people with disability must be available in each class.

There is a need for improved compliance in the application of seating regulations in the Transport Standards to deliver a consistent passenger experience for people with disability. When booking seats, people with disability want to be informed regarding the seating options that are available to them that allow for amenities such as moveable armrests, aisle/window seating as per passenger preference, and proximity to amenities such as toilets.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants requested some seats on aircraft to be designated as priority seats for people with disability. These seats should offer additional legroom/space to accommodate passenger accessibility needs, with bookings reserved for passengers with disability for some time, after which bookings can be open to all travellers. Functionally, such a system would be in line with what is currently offered on other forms of public transport where there are designated seats that offer more space and legroom for passenger accessibility needs.

Co-design participants also requested airlines to provide the dimensions of seats during the booking process, and to be able to book seats with additional legroom without paying additional charges.

Industry input

Airlines shared that they conduct pre-flight reviews to ensure that appropriate seats are allocated to passengers with accessibility needs where possible. To assist in this process, passengers are able to inform the airline of their accessibility needs at the time of booking or check-in. In considering seating requests, airlines must comply with requirements set by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority. For example, there are requirements about sitting in emergency exit seats.

Airlines stated that if they identify on board that a passenger has been seated in a location that does not meet their accessibility needs, cabin crew are able to adjust seating to ensure passenger comfort and safety, subject to operational requirements. Airlines stated that this applies to situations where a guest has upgraded online as well as any other circumstances where the assigned seat is not appropriate.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would extend the provisions contained in the Transport Standards and the reforms. Additional clauses would be inserted to clarify the responsibility of the airline in assisting people with disability to identify and book a seat that meets their accessibility needs.

If a person with disability identifies the nature of their disability when making a reservation with an airline, the airline must:

- before assigning a passenger seat to a person with a disability, inform the person of the passenger seats that are available in the class of service that the person has requested and that have equipment and facilities that best meet the accessibility needs of that person, such as a wheelchair-accessible toilet or a passenger seat that has additional leg room, a larger seat pitch or movable armrests; and
- in assigning a passenger seat or cabin to a person with a disability, take into account the person's opinion with respect to which seats or cabins would best meet the accessibility needs of that person.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 2.14.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 2.14.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 2.14.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 2.14.d Do airlines already offer dedicated accessible seats for passengers with disability on any aircraft?
- 2.14.e In the United States, some airlines block seats or provide priority seating areas for people with disability. These seats are to be allocated to people with disability first, before being offered to other passengers. Would this model be feasible in Australia?
- 2.14.f How would seat selection work, particularly for online bookings?
- 2.14.g Where passengers must pay a fee to select seats, are airlines able to assist people with disability to select a seat that meets their accessibility needs without the application of fees for this provision?

Chapter 3: At the airport



Airports are busy places, with lots of noise, movement and potential for last-minute changes. People with disability have additional considerations to navigate upon reaching the airport and travelling through the airport. This chapter will discuss these issues.

Upon arrival at the airport, one of the first barriers that people with disability may encounter is how to get to the check-in area, as assistance is not always available from the kerb. Other inconsistencies that may arise are when a passenger will need to transfer from their mobility aid to an airline/airport mobility aid, which may limit their independence to travel through or visit airport facilities. Security screening can present a barrier as screening practices can at times be inaccessible and may not fully support passenger autonomy and dignity.

The aviation disability standards aim to address these, and other barriers, to deliver greater consistency in the passenger experience for people with disability.

People with disability identified many areas where this could be achieved.

Make it easier for people with disability to move around the airport independently

- 3.1 Allow people with disability to stay in their mobility device as long as possible
- 3.2 Provide accessible check-in facilities
- 3.3 Install points throughout the airport where people can ask for assistance
- 3.4 Make wayfinding around airports consistent and accessible
- 3.5 Provide information about travel changes and disruptions in accessible formats

Ensure a dignified travel experience for people with disability at the airport

- 3.6 Improve access for arrivals at and departures from the airport
- 3.7 Provide clear information and priority for people with disability at security
- 3.8 Involve people with disability when designing accessible facilities at airports
- 3.9 Protect disability aids from damage and loss, and track their movement
- 3.10 Provide choice for passenger transfer to airline wheelchairs and seats

Make it easier for people with disability to move around the airport independently

3.1 Allow people with disability to stay in their mobility device as long as possible

Definition of issue

Airlines currently have inconsistent policies on whether people with disability can travel through an airport with their own mobility device or whether they need to transfer out of the mobility device at check-in.

When mobility devices are required to be checked in, people are transferred to airline wheelchairs. These wheelchairs are then pushed by someone else (such as airline staff or their carer) through the terminal to the gate.

People who use mobility devices raised 2 key issues.

Transferring from a personal mobility device to one provided by an airline or airport often means transferring to a wheelchair that cannot be self-propelled. This means the person must be pushed in the airline/airport chair to the departure gate by a carer, support person or airline/airport staff. Anecdotally, when airline/airport staff push the person to the departure gate, they often leave the person in the airport/airline wheelchair alone for extended periods. No further support is provided for the person to go to the toilet, or get food, drink or any other service. This loss of independence and access to services and facilities impacts people's wellbeing and dignity.

Mobility aids, including wheelchairs, are not a 'one size fits all'. For example, wheelchairs must be tailored to individuals, otherwise they can easily develop pressure sores or other injuries. Using airline wheelchairs place people at greater risk of injury due to using a wheelchair that may be unsuitable for their needs, potentially for extended lengths of time.

These issues can also occur after exiting the aircraft, as a person's mobility device may only be available at the oversize baggage collection area, instead of being delivered to the aircraft door or arrival gate.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants expressed their loss of independence in having to transfer from their personal mobility devices to airport- or airline-supplied wheelchairs at check-in.

Co-design participants highlighted that:

- Passengers should not be made to transfer from personal mobility devices until absolutely necessary. Processes around when the handover of a device should occur should be consistent with clear reasoning for why leaving the device is necessary at that point.
- Standards should ensure passengers have freedom to explore food, retail and other airport services before boarding on the same basis as other people.
- Policies and staff training must reinforce respect for autonomy and dignity.

Industry input

Industry representatives consulted highlighted that clarity is required in relation to when it is 'absolutely necessary' to transfer from a personal mobility device.

Some airlines put their cargo and luggage into containers designed to fit in specific aircraft – this is called containerisation. This allows for quick turnaround of cargo and luggage between flights.

It has been raised that the time required to load and secure a mobility device into a cargo container often means the point at which it is ‘absolutely necessary’ to transfer from a person’s own mobility device is at check-in.

Other difficulties included where passengers need to be transported by bus to the aircraft. Not all buses are able to accommodate larger, more customised personal mobility devices.

Airports consulted supported allowing passengers to choose where to transfer from their mobility device but called for clear guidance on the roles and safety responsibilities (particularly in making clear the responsibilities between airlines, airports and ground handlers).

Policy options

This item relates to [section 4.4](#), which considers timing for the return of stored mobility aids following flight arrival.

Regulatory option

Option 1: Passengers may keep their mobility devices up to a set time before gates close and may choose where to transfer from their mobility device

Under this option, the aviation disability standards would include a requirement for airlines to allow passengers travelling with a mobility device to remain with that device up to a certain time (for example, 30 minutes before gates close). Further, the passenger can decide whether to hand over their personal mobility device at check-in or at the departure gate or tarmac so long as it is within the stipulated time period.

Where a passenger with disability has transferred out of their mobility device, airline or airport staff would need to accompany that person and not leave them unattended for long periods of time (for example, longer than 30 minutes).

Option 2: Mobility aid not to be handed over until ‘absolutely necessary’

Under this option, the aviation disability standards would include a requirement for airlines to allow passengers travelling with a mobility device to remain with that device up to the point it becomes ‘absolutely necessary’, where ‘absolutely necessary’ can depend on organisational processes such as when luggage must be loaded onto the plane.

Where a passenger with disability has transferred out of their mobility device, airline or airport staff would need to accompany that person and not leave them unattended for long periods of time (for example, longer than 30 minutes).

As this option is open to interpretation, it could lead to inconsistent practices across airlines, with some airlines continuing to require mobility devices to be handed over at check-in. Supporting guidance would encourage airlines to allow passengers travelling with a mobility device to remain with that device up to a certain time (for example, 30 minutes before gates close) and allow the passenger to decide where to hand over their device (for example, at check-in, departure gate or on the tarmac).

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada’s aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 3.1.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.1.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.1.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.1.d Which option (1 or 2) would best address the issue?
- 3.1.e For option 1, what is a reasonable time limit when relinquishing a mobility aid at the gate? Do aircraft type or other factors change this timing?
- 3.1.f What equipment and/or infrastructure is most appropriate for safely transporting mobility aids from the departure gate to the cargo hold?
- 3.1.g What is an appropriate frequency (for example, every 30 minutes) for a staff member to check in on a person with disability that is in an airline wheelchair?

3.2 Provide accessible check-in facilities

Definition of issue

Airports and airlines are moving towards self-service kiosks for check-in and bag drop. It is important that the accessibility of self-service systems is considered through this transition. The introduction of self-service systems means travellers can be more independent, but it can also mean it is hard for people with disability to find assistance. This section will consider whether current and incoming Transport Standards are sufficient in an aviation context.

Part 22 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) currently requires at least 5% of information desks, check-in counters and similar airport fixtures used by passengers must be suitable for use by passengers in wheelchairs or similar mobility aids. It is acknowledged that traditional check-in desks need to be accessible where they are still being used, which is more common during regional and international travel.

Reforms to the Transport Standards will require that information and communication technology (ICT) hardware, services or software intended for public use are accessible to people with disability. The reforms will introduce requirements for the software and hardware of accessible fare systems, including check-in kiosks.

This section links to [section 3.8](#), which looks at the development of accessible facilities at an airport, and [section 3.3](#), which explores when assistance and information is available.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants highlighted a number of issues during the co-design workshops. They noted that the shift toward self-service processes has made it difficult to understand how to request assistance when using kiosk check-in systems and bag-drop facilities, indicating that these systems are not always accessible.

Co-design participants also emphasised that check-in desks should follow universal design principles to ensure equal access for people with disability. They recommended that accessibility standards include requirements for appropriate counter heights to meet diverse user needs. It has since been clarified that the existing Transport Standards already include requirements for heights of at least 5% of check-in counters. However, through the consultation process we are seeking feedback to better understand how effective this requirement has been in practice.

Industry input

In consultation with industry stakeholders, it was noted that airlines are generally moving away from check-in desks and that any future requirements should focus on accessible outcomes for check-in methods rather than prescriptive regulations on infrastructure. It was noted that if not already compliant, airports were generally working towards compliance of the height of check-in desks.

For any updates or changes to check-in kiosks and supporting facilities, guidance would be required on roles and responsibilities of any new requirements between airlines and airports.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include the following requirements, noting that the height specifications of staffed check-in desks are covered in Part 22 of the existing Transport Standards.

Accessible check-in kiosks

If self-service kiosks are provided, both the hardware and software must be fully accessible and designed with people with disability (for example, through reference groups covered in [section 1.3](#)). This requirement builds on the reforms to the Transport Standards by explicitly mandating accessibility for check-in kiosk hardware and software at airports.

See also [section 3.3](#) for points throughout the airport where people can ask for assistance, including at check-in.

Accessible supporting facilities

Any supporting self-service facilities, such as bag drops, must be accessible and co-designed with people with disability (for example, through reference groups).

This includes considerations such as:

- appropriate heights and reach for interactive screens. For example, inclusion of features such as voice guidance and audio prompts
- appropriate heights and reach for loading luggage onto belts
- facilities to assist with lifting luggage onto bag belts and tagging bags.

Where independent use is not possible, direct assistance must be provided by staff.

Existing practice

Existing requirements in the Transport Standards and the reforms for accessible staffed check-in desks would continue to apply.

Consultation questions

- 3.2.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.2.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.2.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.2.d To what extent has the requirement for at least 5% of airport information desks, check-in counters, and similar fixtures to be wheelchair-accessible (as set out in Section 22.2 of the Transport Standards) improved the accessibility and ease of the check-in process for passengers using mobility aids?

3.3 Install points throughout the airport where people can ask for assistance

Definition of issue

Airports can be complex environments to navigate, with few places to find information or ask for assistance throughout the terminal.

When assistance is not available at key points in the airport journey, passengers with disability can encounter barriers that other passengers do not. For example, a person trying to check-in a disability aid using self-service systems (the accessibility of which is explored in [section 3.2](#)) may face difficulties using check-in kiosks or bag-drop facilities. Without timely assistance, this can lead to longer processing times and a more challenging travel experience.

The absence of accessible assistance and information in the right place and time (for example, during disruptions, last-minute gate changes or delays), adds to the confusion and distress, and increases the potential for missed flights.

Co-design findings

In discussing potential solutions, some participants referenced the requirements in the European Union, which clearly defines obligations and points of assistance, as an example that may help address uncertainties around roles, responsibilities, and availability of support.

Co-design workshop participants wanted to see clear places at each departure gate where people with disability can ask questions or request assistance with boarding, particularly when disruptions occur. This place should be clearly marked and available, separate to the boarding process.

Participants also wanted to see clear information desks available at airports where people with disability can access tailored information and accessibility services. Participants noted that the check-in process itself is not consistent (for example, you have to show your ID if you use the check-in desk, but not the self-service kiosk) and assistance should be provided to help people navigate different scenarios.

Staff training in relation to supporting people with disability during the check-in process was also mentioned as critical and is discussed further in [section 1.2](#).

Industry input

This proposed option has not yet been tested with airlines and airports. However, aviation industry is supportive of an outcome where they can understand where people with disability are in order to locate them and provide them assistance.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airports to provide designated assistance points throughout the terminal. These assistance points would be located at key stages of the passenger journey, including at arrivals, check-in, security, each departure and arrival gate, and baggage claim.

It is proposed that this requirement would apply only to airports above a threshold of a certain number of passengers. We are seeking feedback through this consultation paper on what the threshold should be.

Assistance points must be accessible for people with disability to allow them to request assistance or information from an airport or airline (subject to outcomes of [section 1.1](#)). Points of assistance may be delivered through a range of mechanisms, such as a staffed assistance desk or a call button that

connects directly with airport or airline staff. Each assistance point must be staffed at all times the airport is in operation.

Each designated assistance point would include adjacent priority seating for people with disability.

Assistance points would be required to be clearly marked with signage, and any desks, buttons, or screens must be positioned at accessible heights – in accordance with existing provisions in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 and the Disability (Access to Premises—Buildings) Standards 2010.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on the European Union’s aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 3.3.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.3.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.3.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.3.d Where would you want to see designated assistance points located?
- 3.3.e It is proposed that airports and airlines above a certain size threshold be required to provide assistance points. For example, this requirement could apply to airports and airlines with more than one million passenger movements per year. What threshold would be appropriate if this regulatory option were implemented?

3.4 Make wayfinding around airports consistent and accessible

Definition of issue

Wayfinding and airport navigation can be difficult for people with disability, particularly as airports are typically crowded, noisy and stressful experiences.

Submissions to the Aviation Green Paper highlighted that:

- blind and vision impaired people are sometimes unable to find their way to check-in and are not provided with adequate support by the airport or airline
- signage often lacks universal design principles, with each airport using slightly different signage often based on the airport's 'brand'.

These barriers lead to people with disability missing flights or connections and facing increased stress.

Airports are already subject to some regulations around wayfinding and signage under the Disability (Access to Premises – buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards) and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards).

The Premises Standards include requirements on signage and tactile ground surface indicators. The Transport Standards including wayfinding requirements on signage, tactile ground surface indicators, access paths, and handrails and grabrails. The reforms to the Transport Standards will introduce additional wayfinding requirements for access paths, handrails and grabrails, audible announcements, braille and tactile information and signage.

The 2021 review of the Premises Standards noted there was an opportunity for the Australian Government to identify, prioritise and develop guidance around standardisation of signage requirements and emerging wayfinding solutions. It also noted this guidance may form the basis of nationally consistent standards in future and should be developed in consultation with people with disability, the Australian Human Rights Commission and other relevant stakeholders (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 2021).

This issue has also been investigated internationally. The Guidelines for Passenger Services at European Airports, recognised there would be value in consistent wayfinding and signage at airports around the world (ACI Europe 2018). However, it also recognised that the 'individuality and exclusivity of each airport brand would be lost in the process, as signage is often a key element in the overall image of an airport' (ACI Europe 2018). A key conclusion was for airports to adapt a degree of predictability in how wayfinding is presented; wayfinding signage should differ significantly from other information in the same space (for example, through its colour, form or size) so that it is clearly visible and recognisable (for example, through its position and type size and/or font). This 'helps the passenger identify the relevant information quickly in the "information jungle" of the airport' (ACI Europe 2018:52).

Co-design findings

Participants in the co-design workshops shared their experiences of wayfinding across different airports and highlighted that inconsistent approaches made it difficult for them to navigate.

Participants suggested that standards should make sure there are nationally consistent wayfinding and navigation across airports. They recommended that new standards:

- require consistent signage, colours, and symbols across airports
- have large print, high contrast and tactile formats
- require airports to provide GPS-style navigation apps and static "you are here" maps throughout the premises.

Industry input

Industry representatives consulted indicated that standards around consistent wayfinding would be relatively easy to implement provided the instructions are clear and do not contradict other regulations (for example, the Premises Standards, the Transport Standards and the National Construction Code).

Policy options

Regulatory option

Option 1: Identify and standardise signage requirements

The Australian Government would work with the aviation industry, people with disability, the Australian Human Rights Commission and other relevant stakeholders to identify signage requirements and wayfinding solutions that should be standardised and develop nationally consistent standards for use across airports.

Following development of signage requirements, appropriate regulatory amendments would be made.

This work could not be completed in time to be included in the initial introduction of the aviation disability standards but would be completed in time to feed into the 2027 statutory review of the Transport Standards.

Option 2: Airports required to test wayfinding systems with people with disability

The aviation disability standards would require airports to test wayfinding signage, colours, symbols and technology (for example, GPS-style navigation apps) with people with disability to ensure wayfinding tools assist accessible navigation of the airport.

This initiative would complement [section 1.3](#), which explores establishment of disability reference groups.

Existing practice

The wayfinding requirements in the Premises Standards, Transport Standards and the reforms to the Transport Standards would continue to apply.

Consultation questions

- 3.4.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.4.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.4.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.4.d Which method (option 1 or option 2) of developing wayfinding systems would best address the issue identified?
- 3.4.e What signs or information should be standardised and why?

3.5 Provide information about travel changes and disruptions in accessible formats

Definition of issue

The scheduled details of a flight such as departure gate and boarding time may change, sometimes at short notice, to accommodate operational needs. People with disability rely on the timely delivery of updates in a format that is accessible to make decisions and navigate their journey.

When these updates are not clear or in a format that is not accessible for people with disability, it can create a significant barrier to travel.

Existing requirements relevant to the provision of information in accessible formats are set out in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards). The reforms to the Transport Standards will introduce the following requirements:

- If a public transport service is disrupted as part of a planned disruption, an operator or provider must be able to provide information about the disruption and (if possible) alternative travel options in a variety of formats and with as much notice as can be reasonably provided in the circumstances.
- However, if the operator or provider cannot provide the information with the above method, the operator or provider must provide the information by direct assistance.
- These requirements do not apply where the disruption is out of the control of the operator or provider, for instance a fire or police operation.

Although planned disruptions are covered under the reforms, additional clarity is needed for disruptions that are unplanned, such as when departure gates and times change at short notice.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants requested that information regarding travel changes and disruptions be made available in formats which are accessible and accommodate the diversity of needs. Co-design participants requested information at the gate be clearer and more accessible. They also expressed that airlines and airports should be proactive in ensuring that people with disability are not left to make alternative arrangements for themselves when sudden disruptions change the schedule of flights.

Industry input

Industry was largely supportive of these measures, noting that some work on this matter has already been implemented or would be straightforward to implement. Industry requested clarity regarding the accessible formats that are in scope for this measure and whether it is airports or airlines that would be responsible for implementation. The roles and responsibilities of both airports and airlines across the passenger journey is discussed in [section 1.1](#).

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement for airlines to communicate travel changes and disruptions in accessible formats, including:

- digital screens
- public announcement systems
- push notifications
- voice to text systems
- Easy Read

- Braille
- direct assistance
- notifications to consumer devices that are compatible with screen readers.

Airlines would need to coordinate with airports to ensure appropriate infrastructure is available to deliver updates regarding gate changes. If this information cannot be supplied in a person's preferred format, the airline/airport must provide equivalent access by giving direct assistance.

Airports may need to coordinate with airlines to communicate unplanned changes to the accessibility of infrastructure such as a breakdown of lifts.

Consultation questions

- 3.5.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.5.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.5.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.5.d What accessible formats available at an airport do people with disability consider are required to communicate information about travel changes and disruptions?

Ensure a dignified travel experience for people with disability at the airport

3.6 Improve access for arrivals at and departures from the airport

Definition of issue

The accessibility of connections to ground transport in the lead up to or following a flight can significantly improve the journey for people with disability. When accessible parking, drop-off and pick-up zones, along with access to public transport, taxis, and rideshare are located close to terminals, it removes barriers and reduces the burden on people with disability to find their way safely from the point of arrival with baggage to the check-in counter.

Reforms to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) will reinforce requirements contained in the Premises Standards for public parking areas, passenger loading zones and taxi ranks within premises and infrastructure, which include airport terminals. The requirements will relate to:

- appropriate dimensions of accessible parking spaces
- kerb ramps
- the number of spaces that must be accessible
- access paths connecting with the main entry point of the premises or infrastructure.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants requested that airports provide more accessible parking bays near kerbside drop-off zones, with ramp access, protection from the weather and clear signage. Additionally, participants suggested parking permits to be recognised consistently across airports, including within pick-up zones at destination airports.

Co-design participants suggested there be a minimum number of accessible parking, drop-off and pick-up zones on airport premises which are proportionate to the passenger flow through the airport. Co-design partners requested the provision of a designated area outside the airport terminal with free short-term parking for people with disability to safely access the terminal.

Co-design participants requested greater assistance when arriving and exiting the airport, including baggage claim, transfers to taxis/public transport, and connections. Participants noted that service delivery could be improved if their assistance needs when arriving and exiting the airport are linked to the proposed Passenger Assistance Profiles (refer to [section 2.1](#)) for continuity across airports and trips. The roles and responsibilities of airports and airlines in providing assistance across the passenger journey are further explored in [section 1.1](#).

Industry input

Industry representatives consulted were broadly supportive of locating accessible parking, drop-off and pick-up zones close to terminals, along with access to public transport, taxis, and rideshare services, citing that these measures were either already in place at airports or would be implemented during planned upgrades. Regional and rural airports raised the need for additional resources to implement free short-term parking. It has also been highlighted that there are existing requirements that apply, so consideration should be made not to implement overlapping or conflicting regulations.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include the following requirements for airports, building on existing obligations under the Transport Standards and Premises Standards:

- Provision of an accessible drop-off and pick-up area located close to terminals. The number of accessible spaces available should be proportionate to the total number of drop-off and pick-up spaces provided.
- In addition to existing accessible parking requirements, provision of free short-term parking for people with disability to enable safe and easy access to terminals. This parking should be located within a short distance of the terminal and would assist those who need additional time to pick up or drop off passengers with disability, including where leaving a vehicle is necessary. The number of accessible spaces available should be proportionate to the total number of short-term spaces provided.

Accessible parking spaces must conform to the layouts and dimensions of AS/NZS2890.6 (2009) Design for access and mobility.

These standards would only apply to areas where the airport has legal control.

Consultation questions

- 3.6.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.6.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.6.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.6.d It is proposed that the number of accessible spaces provided for both drop-off and pick-up areas, as well as short-term parking, be proportionate to the total number of spaces available. What should this proportion be?
- 3.6.e The Transport Standards and Premises Standards detail the minimum number of accessible parking spaces to be provided within premises and infrastructure, which is based on the total number of parking spaces available. Should the nominated number of accessible parking spaces be revisited?

3.7 Provide clear information and priority for people with disability at security

Definition of issue

Security screening can be one of the most difficult parts of the aviation journey for people with disability to navigate. Submissions from people with disability during development of the Aviation White Paper highlighted that lack of staff training in disability awareness and inconsistent screening procedures across airports can create uncertainty about what to expect and how to prepare for travel. Further, people with disability reported that screening practices can be uncomfortable and lack respect for passenger autonomy and dignity. Concerns were also raised about people being separated from assistance animals and carers during the screening process.

People with disability were also uncertain about who is accountable for any problems encountered during the security screening process.

Security screening is compulsory under law for anyone entering the area of an Australian airport that lies beyond the security screening point. This covers all passengers, including children and infants, people accompanying passengers to the boarding gate, assistance animals and pets, government employees, aircrew and airport workers. Security screening officers must be satisfied that individuals passing through security screening are not carrying any weapons or prohibited items before the individual can move beyond the screening checkpoint (Department of Home Affairs 2025).

Airports and their security screening contractors are responsible for delivering aviation security services, including passenger screening. Screening processes must be delivered in a way that delivers the security objectives set out in the *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004* and its regulations. The Department of Home Affairs (2025) sets the broad requirements and outcomes for aviation security (but does not employ airport security screening staff).

Screening staff are responsible for making decisions about how screening is conducted, acting in line with aviation security legislation and security screening protocols. Disability aids such as wheelchairs and white canes are unlikely to be compatible with body scanners, so this usually means an alternative security screening method is required for people with those aids.

Screening officers are required to successfully complete a Certificate II Transport Security Protection qualification. They are also required to undertake an initial 40 hours of on-the-job training and accreditation testing before being able to independently screen passengers. In addition, they must complete 12 hours of continuing professional development every year. Accreditation testing must also be completed annually to continue performing screening functions. Airports may also require additional training on other issues.

Some elements of security screening are already addressed in the Transport Standards or will be addressed through the reforms:

- Part 12 of the Transport Standards states that direct assistance may be provided through security check points.
- The reforms to the Transport Standards will require that airlines and airport operators provide staff with disability awareness training that is tailored to meet the roles and responsibilities of each staff member. Training must be developed and reviewed in consultation with people with disability or groups representing people with disability, and training must be refreshed annually.

Co-design findings

Participants at the co-design workshops reinforced previous input to the Aviation White Paper regarding issues experienced by people with disability during security screening. Participants spoke about unclear communication concerning security screening processes, undignified and uncomfortable security pat downs in public spaces, and being physically manoeuvred into place for screening, without consent being sought or adequate explanations provided.

Co-design participants would like to see clearly marked priority security screening lines for people with disability, for those who want this option. This would not remove the need for all screening check points to be accessible, and for all security screening staff to be trained in disability awareness and communication.

Participants requested the provision of clear, consistent and accessible information on what to expect during screening.

Overall, participants requested security screening protocols that protect the dignity and autonomy of people with disability while being screened. They advised that dignity and autonomy are compromised when staff assume a person with disability requires support or provide assistance without the individual's consent. Participants also wanted more privacy protection when undergoing pat-downs, no unnecessary separation from disability aids, and for interpreters (for example, for those who use Auslan) and carers to accompany people through security where needed.

Industry input

A number of airports already have specially marked security screening lanes for people requiring assistance or priority screening. Airports would be concerned about the efficiency of having one security checkpoint dedicated only to people requiring assistance, and in small regional airports, this would not be feasible. Airports were supportive of all lanes being accessible, with staff who can support all those who require assistance.

On the issue of staff training, airports consulted advised that in addition to their required training, security screening staff may receive training in disability awareness including through airport-specific training modules. Security staff may also receive training and presentations from service providers and people with lived experience of disability and medical conditions. This may include information from the perspective of people with low vision, ostomy, prostheses, diabetes or hidden disabilities, for example.

While the consulted airports were generally supportive of the need for disability awareness training and an improved experience of the screening process for people with disability, they noted the challenges involved in training a very large operational and dispersed security screening workforce. There were also concerns about the impact of any new training requirements on airports' existing contracts with screening providers, and the financial impact on small regional airports. Some flexibility in training is also needed to allow staff to be trained in issues that particularly impact their local communities.

On the issue of improved communication, some airports already use communication and sequencing boards, providing pictures and icons to show people passing through security screening what to expect during the screening process. These resources are also available from airport websites to assist with journey planning.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require the following:

- Airports with more than one security screening lane are required to provide at least one clearly marked, priority queuing line for security screening at each check point, for the use of people with disability. People with disability may choose to queue in this line or remain in the line in which they have presented. The priority queueing line should be straight and provide direct access to the security screening check point, to minimise distance to the screening point and time spent waiting to be screened.
- Airports with only one security screening machine should still offer priority assistance for people with disability if they choose.
- In alignment with additional staff training regulatory options proposed in [section 1.2](#), the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 would be expanded to include aviation-specific training outcomes for security screening staff. This would see security screening staff undertake training on screening people with disability aids and an understanding of how screening equipment interacts with different bodies.
- Screening protocols should be communicated via verbal or visual cues or additional instructions. This communication should include information about what is permitted and prohibited to take through security.
- Tactile or audio guidance should be provided so that blind or low-vision people can position themselves during screening without being unnecessarily touched or manoeuvred (or denied that screening method).

Consultation questions

- 3.7.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.7.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.7.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.7.d Would there be implementation issues with the proposal to have a dedicated queuing line at all airports with more than one security check point? Are there other ways of defining which airports should be subject to this proposed standard?
- 3.7.e Are there other staff training outcomes for security screening staff? Should training require competency assessment, in alignment with proposed changes in [section 1.2](#)?
- 3.7.f Are there specific implementation issues for small and regional airports? How could these be addressed?

3.8 Involve people with disability when designing accessible facilities at airports

Definition of issue

People with disability have reported that accessible facilities in airport terminal buildings are not always available nor located conveniently or accessibly. Delays and even missed flights occur when passengers with disability cannot locate facilities or must travel unreasonable distances to access them. Facilities which are inconsistent in their design and availability across different airports creates further issues.

Airport facilities that people with disability want to be accessible (both in design and location) include, but are not limited to:

- toilets, including Accessible Adult Change Facilities (AACFs)
- assistance animal relief facilities
- lifts
- quiet rooms
- sensory spaces
- wheelchair transfer spaces
- security screening rooms
- airport lounges
- waiting areas
- retail areas including shops and food courts
- water coolers, vending machines and telephones.

The design and the number of accessible facilities such as toilets (including AACFs) are regulated in existing standards such as the National Construction Code, Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards) and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Standards 2002 (Transport Standards). However, clarity around where they would best be located is not.

While airports and airlines are increasingly providing accessible facilities for people with disability, these facilities are not consistently designed or applied, and there is limited guidance or regulation to support consistency.

As a result, people with disability have emphasised the importance of airports co-designing with end-users of the facilities whenever they add new accessible facilities or make upgrades to existing accessible facilities.

Co-design findings

Participants with lived experience of disability noted that accessible facilities are inconsistently available at airports, particularly in regional airports. They highlighted the need for:

- accessible toilets at multiple points, such as before security screening and close to gates
- private spaces for wheelchair transfers (into airline wheelchairs)
- quiet rooms and sensory spaces (both airside and landside)
- assistance animal toileting facilities, co-located near regular toilets at both arrivals and departures
- additional and larger passenger lifts.

It was raised that refurbishments and changes to infrastructure should be co-designed with people with disability and/or advisory groups, including access consultants.

Considerations when providing accessible facilities in airports include:

- safety of users
- ease of finding facilities

- convenience, with minimal walking/travelling distance, as far as reasonably practical
- access for as many travellers as possible – both arriving and departing.

For example, accessible toilets, adult change facilities (AACFs) and animal relief areas located near both arrival and departure gates to avoid additional travel through the airport.

Industry input

Industry stakeholders consulted noted that airports are increasingly making their facilities more accessible and adding facilities which are over and above those currently regulated. Some airports already consult with disability representative groups or have engaged disability consultants.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Airports and airlines would be required to engage with people with disability, for example in a disability reference group (see [section 1.3](#)), when new accessible facilities and infrastructure are to be installed, and when significant upgrades and changes to existing accessible airport facilities are to be made.

Where the design of accessible facilities is already regulated (such as for AACFs and passenger lifts), the preferred location and the optimal number for each airport must be co-designed with people with disability.

The end users of the accessible facilities or their representatives must also be involved in the co-design. For instance, assistance animal relief facilities must be co-designed with animal handlers.

In co-design processes, airports and airlines would consider:

- the safety of users
- the ease of finding facilities
- the optimal number of these facilities, with consideration to the size of the airport
- convenience, with minimal walking/travelling distance, as far as reasonably practical
- access for as many travellers as possible – both arriving and departing
- proximity to other airport services. For example, location of quiet rooms in proximity to security screening.

Best practice examples would be provided in the Guidelines to assist with the design of accessible facilities not already covered by the National Construction Code and the Premises Standards Access Code, such as assistance animal toileting facilities and sensory rooms.

Consultation questions

- 3.8.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.8.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.8.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.8.d What accessible facilities do people with disability consider necessary at airports?
- 3.8.e Should minimum design standards for select facilities be regulated for airports, and if so, which ones?

3.9 Protect disability aids from damage and loss, and track their movement

Definition of issue

Disability aids, such as wheelchairs and other mobility aids, are often damaged during travel. This can have significant impacts on people with disability, including loss of independence, reduced mobility at their destination, and a loss of confidence to travel. A wheelchair may require urgent repairs or temporary replacement that disrupts travel plans and creates additional costs. This may be due to staff not receiving adequate training, or insufficient protective equipment and processes for safe transport of mobility devices in cargo.

People with disability also lack visibility of where their disability aid is during the journey. For example, they may not know whether their wheelchair has been loaded onto the aircraft, or if it will be available at the baggage carousel on arrival at their destination. This uncertainty also creates a barrier and lack of confidence in relation to air travel.

A separate Aviation White Paper initiative committed the government to considering improved remedies for damage to wheelchairs and other mobility aids during travel (Initiative 10). When passengers with disability experience loss or damage to their mobility aids, the proposed Aviation Consumer Protections Charter, released for consultation in 2025, includes provisions for the repair, replacement or reimbursement for replacement mobility aids. Following this consultation process, an updated Charter was released for targeted consultation on 2 March 2026. Consultation is ongoing, separate to the new aviation disability standards.

Co-design findings

During the co-design workshops, people with disability raised that there is a need to improve the handling of equipment and aids. Specifically, that safe storage for aids is required and that there should be performance targets in place where airports and airlines are required to report on device damage and loss. Compliance requirements regarding reporting are discussed in [section 1.4](#).

In addition, workshop participants requested disability aids to be carried in the cabin and stored near where the passenger is seated. This is explored in [section 4.2](#).

Industry input

At the time of writing, this proposed requirement has not specifically been tested with airlines and airports. Airlines have commented they continue to investigate safe transport of disability aids in cargo.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement that:

- airlines ensure through equipment, processes and appropriate training that disability aids loaded and transported as cargo are stored and secured to prevent damage. This may include measures such as custom containers and secure tie down systems for mobility devices such as wheelchairs.
- once a disability aid has been transferred to an airlines' custody, the airline must provide a way for a person with disability to track the location of their disability aid that is updated in a timely manner. This could include real time notifications via SMS, email, or a mobile app.

Consultation questions

- 3.9.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.9.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.9.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.9.d What equipment is currently used to protect disability aids while stored in cargo? Are you aware of any technology or systems which are effective in supporting the safe transport of disability aids?
- 3.9.e What training do ground handlers currently receive to ensure the safe storage and transport of disability aids?
- 3.9.f What methods are currently used or available to track disability aids that have been transferred to an airlines' custody to ensure they are not misplaced?

3.10 Provide choice for passenger transfer to airline wheelchairs and seats

Definition of issue

A passenger using a mobility aid may be required to transfer from seat-to-seat multiple times throughout their journey. Seat transfers are a point of high risk for both the passenger and the airline staff facilitating this transfer. When transfers go wrong, passengers may be physically injured if they are not lifted and seated correctly. Staff can also be injured if they are not properly trained in completing a transfer.

Further, transfers are a vulnerable moment where passengers with disability rely on staff to maintain their dignity. Sometimes transfers happen at the gate or on the tarmac before boarding, as well as in the aircraft, and usually they happen in public spaces.

Some airports and airlines have equipment which facilitate seat transfers, such as mechanical hoists, slide boards, or slings. People with disability are sometimes made to use transfer devices that are unsafe or inappropriate for their needs. Allowing people with disability to choose gives them agency and autonomy in a delicate and high-risk setting. It allows people with disability to advocate for what is best for their needs.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability drew out key themes in the air travel experience for passengers with disability. It highlighted limited access to safe ramps and hoists to accommodate wheelchair users, and unsafe use of aisle chairs.

People with disability find that, at times, staff are not sufficiently trained in executing transfers safely, including using devices correctly. This is addressed in [section 1.2](#).

In the reforms to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards), operators and providers will be required to provide training to staff regarding the accessibility needs of passengers. Training must be tailored to meet the roles and responsibilities of each staff member and must be refreshed annually. Training must be developed in consultation with people with disability or disability representative groups and delivered by a qualified trainer.

This section links to [section 2.10](#), airline communication of accessibility services. The ability for people with disability to save their preference for transfer method in passenger assistance profiles is addressed in [section 2.1](#).

Co-design findings

Co-design participants highlighted the importance of people with disability being understood as the experts of their own equipment and needs. Participants recalled experiences where airline staff were inflexible to understanding a person's needs, which made them feel devalued as a person. Instead, participants wanted to see airline policies reinforce respect for people with disability's autonomy and dignity.

Participants wanted to see airports invest in assistive technology such as mechanical hoists, which can improve access and safety. They wanted to see these devices available consistently across airports and to be available at every gate.

Industry input

Industry representatives consulted noted that they already provide assistance with passenger transfers and provide assistive devices such as slings and slide boards. However, they noted that not all devices are available at all airports. Industry has concerns about the number of assistive devices they may need, given that they may not be used often.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement for airlines to give passengers with disability choice about how they would like to be transferred from their own mobility aid to the airline's wheelchairs or seats. Transfers may occur via the airline's approved methods and available equipment in that location.

Staff assisting in the passenger transfer using airline approved equipment must be appropriately trained to complete such transfers. Staff must follow the preferences of the passenger to the extent of the options available at that airport to avoid injury or unnecessary discomfort during transfers.

This would apply to all transfer types, at all transfer points, such as from personal device to airline device, or to the passenger seat, and vice versa. Additionally, this would apply for transfers at any stage of the journey.

Consultation questions

- 3.10.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 3.10.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 3.10.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 3.10.d What minimum methods of transfer should airlines provide?
- 3.10.e Is additional infrastructure necessary for airports to meet this standard? If yes, what kind of infrastructure would be purchased at what volume for airports?

Chapter 4: On the aircraft



People with disability continue to encounter significant uncertainties once on board an aircraft. This chapter will explore these challenges in detail.

On the aircraft, many people with disability are separated from their disability aids, with these being stored in the cargo compartment or in cabin storage for the duration of the flight. For many people with disability this means a loss of independence and concerns about whether their disability aids may be damaged in transit.

The aviation disability standards aim to address these, and other uncertainties, to deliver greater consistency in the passenger experience for people with disability.

People with disability identified many areas where this could be achieved.

Improve the boarding and exiting experience

- 4.1 Make it easier for people with disability to board and leave the aircraft

Treat disability aids safely and respectfully

- 4.2 Support passengers to store disability aids inside the cabin
- 4.3 Allow people to use their disability aids onboard aircraft, where possible
- 4.4 Return mobility aids as soon as possible following flight arrival

Improve service in-flight

- 4.5 Provide critical in-flight information in accessible formats
- 4.6 Make in-flight food and drink more accessible

Enable people with disability to have greater independence in-flight

- 4.7 Improve accessibility of aircraft toilets
- 4.8 Make in-flight entertainment accessible
- 4.9 Require aircraft to have accessible passenger controls
- 4.10 Increase the number of aircraft seats that have moveable armrests

Improve the boarding and exiting experience

4.1 Make it easier for people with disability to board and leave the aircraft

Definition of issue

Currently, limited availability of appropriate boarding devices and infrastructure for step-free access exists across airports. Airlines' operational procedures for boarding and disembarking are inconsistent, including the availability of staff assistance at departure and arrival gates of major airports.

The factors above contribute to inconsistent and unsafe experiences for both people with disability and airline/airport staff. Physical inaccessibility and the negative impacts on passengers' physical and mental wellbeing creates significant barriers to air travel for passengers with disability.

Boarding and disembarking includes passenger movement between the departure gate to their assigned seat, and in reverse on arrival. Additional forms of transport (such as buses) may also be required for transporting passengers to and from aircraft at remote stands and departure/arrival gates.

Currently, Part 8 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) includes requirements for boarding devices. People with disability have made it clear that these existing requirements are not sufficient for air travel. Additionally, small aircraft are exempt from some existing requirements.

Universal step-free access

Step-free access for boarding and disembarking aircraft, including provision of aerobridges, lifts and mobile ramps is inconsistent across airports and aircraft of different sizes. Currently, universal step-free access is not required for small aircraft in the existing Transport Standards.

The current Transport Standards require boarding devices to be used where there is a vertical rise or a horizontal gap at the entrance of the aircraft. Boarding devices must also be deployed if a passenger requests it. The Transport Standards also specify maximum weight and size allowances of a boarding device – noting that small aircraft are exempt from these requirements.

Where aerobridges or boarding devices are provided, a gap or step remains between the device and aircraft. This gap is to protect the aircraft door; however, this presents an accessibility issue for some people with disability. Co-design participants recalled times were travelling between the boarding device and the aircraft has not been continuous due to a gap or step.

Timing and order of boarding and disembarkation

Currently, airlines' operational requirements specify that people who need boarding assistance must be boarded first and to disembark after all other passengers. People with limited mobility often have to transfer to an airline wheelchair well before reaching the aircraft and taking their seat. Many experience physical pain and discomfort because these wheelchairs and aircraft seats are not custom-fit to suit their disability or medical condition. Long waits for staff assistance when disembarking can add to this discomfort. The timing of transfer from a passenger's device to the airline's device is discussed in [section 3.1](#).

Difficulties arise when people with disability are required to board first and be seated in an aisle seat. When remaining passengers board, they may have to 'climb over' the passenger with disability already seated. When a person is physically unable to stand up or move aside to let them through, this situation causes embarrassment for both parties and is unsafe.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants suggested that safe equipment and facilities for step-free boarding must be provided consistently at gates. They wanted to see investment in step-free boarding devices such as passenger lifts and ramps, particularly at regional airports where aircraft are smaller, and airports are unlikely to have aerobridges. In particular, participants called for every gate to have a Passenger Assistive Device lift.

Participants wanted to see priority boarding and disembarking for passengers with disability. They wanted to see choice for boarding times for passengers with disability so that those who may need extra time or space can choose to board early.

Industry input

Airlines and airports consulted highlighted that many airports have Passenger Assistive Devices such as lifts and ramps for passengers that cannot use stairs. However, regional airports and airlines raised concerns about limited resourcing to provide additional infrastructure and staffing to allow for step-free boarding and disembarkation.

Airlines consulted stated that priority boarding is current practice. Airlines were supportive of passengers with disability having choice when they board or disembark but were cautious about the operational requirements. Passengers who require assistance with special equipment such as the Eagle lift are required to board first to ensure there is space to transfer the passenger. Staff availability, safety, and implications to on time performance are also considerations for requiring priority boarding. Airlines also stated that it is hard to control passenger disembarkation to allow for priority disembarkation, particularly where assistive devices are required for disembarkation.

Airlines also stated that pre-boarding is a requirement for people with disability on smaller flights as there is limited flight staff and they have to provide individual safety briefings to the passenger.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The new aviation disability standards would include requirements for the following.

Universal step-free access for boarding and disembarking

Existing requirements outlined in the Transport Standards would be clarified to ensure that where a boarding device has been used (for example, aerobridges, ramps, lifts or stairs) a gap or rise must not exist. Where a gap or rise exists, an alternative boarding device must be made available, or direct assistance must be provided. Direct assistance must not include hand-carrying a passenger, even if the passenger consents. This regulatory option is to ensure that a continuous and unhindered path extends from the boarding device into the aircraft to allow for independent access.

The Guidelines would provide examples of appropriate boarding devices to ensure a continuous step-free path to board or exit an aircraft. The Guidelines would also outline direct assistance options and would define hand-carrying to be distinct from manual handling of a person.

The reforms to the Transport Standards will define what a boarding device is.

Choice for boarding and disembarking

Airlines must give passengers with disability choice about when they board and disembark. However, an airline may require a person with disability to board before or disembark after other passengers if the person with disability has requested assistance with boarding or disembarking where equipment is being used (for example, an aisle chair or Eagle lift), or for safety to the person with disability.

Passengers with disability who have preboarded must not be climbed over by other passengers to access their assigned adjacent seating. Where operationally possible, other passengers assigned to adjacent seats should be seated before the person with disability is transferred or seated. Passengers in adjacent seats may be asked to preboard and disembark at the same time as the person with disability.

If the passenger with disability misses the priority boarding period, then airlines may require the person to board after other passengers.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 4.1.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.1.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.1.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.1.d Where aerobridges are unavailable what are the preferred methods and types of step-free access to enter and leave an aircraft (for example, ramps and lifts)?

Treat disability aids safely and respectfully

4.2 Support passengers to store disability aids inside the cabin

Definition of issue

Passengers with disability may need to travel with disability aids, a term which includes mobility and technical aids. Examples of such equipment includes:

- stoma equipment
- walking canes or frames
- crutches
- manual wheelchairs, including folding or collapsible wheelchairs
- positive airway pressure machines
- respirators and ventilators
- neurostimulators
- portable oxygen concentrators
- blood glucose monitors.

Part 30 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) allows for disability aids to be brought into the cabin and requires that disability aids are to be in addition to normal baggage allowances. Where possible, disability aids are to be treated in the same way as cabin or accompanied baggage.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that the Transport Standards provisions do not go far enough and that additional clarity is required regarding storage of these items inside the cabin. Where possible, disability aids should be stored in proximity to the passenger.

Further, participants recommended that passengers with disability who travel with these items should be allowed the opportunity to pre-board the aircraft to stow these items in the cabin with priority over items brought onto the aircraft by other passengers or crew boarding at the same airport.

Industry input

Airlines consulted were not supportive of dedicated overhead storage for disability aids as it was deemed not practical, especially on smaller aircraft, and difficult to manage operationally. Airlines advised that passengers with disability are currently able to access priority boarding which enables priority access to overhead storage compartments, with assistance available from cabin crew for stowage.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Existing regulations under Part 30 of the Transport Standards will continue to apply. Under these regulations, disability aids are to be considered as in addition to normal baggage allowances, and if possible, are to be treated in the same way as cabin or accompanied baggage.

Additional aviation-specific regulation would be proposed in the aviation disability standards to require the following:

- Cabin crew must provide assistance to passengers with disability in stowing and retrieving disability aids. Disability aids should be stored in proximity to the passenger.

- Passengers travelling with disability aids should be provided the opportunity to pre-board the aircraft to stow these items in the cabin with priority over items brought onto the aircraft by other passengers or crew enplaning at the same airport, subject to relevant safety and security requirements. Passengers travelling with disability aids who do not take advantage of priority boarding can store their disability aids on a first come first served basis along with other passengers.
- Airlines must ensure that there is priority space (for example, closet, or a row of seats where a manual wheelchair can be strapped) to fit at least one typical adult-size manual wheelchair. If an airline uses the seat strapping method, there must be enough space for at least two typical adult-size manual wheelchairs. This would apply to any aircraft with 100 or more passenger seats and this space must be different than the overhead compartments and under-seat spaces routinely used for passengers' carry-on items.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's and the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 4.2.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.2.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.2.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.2.d Are there disability aids used by passengers with disability for which they believe the information regarding carriage/storage/use on board is not clear or insufficient?
- 4.2.e In the United States, regulations require airlines to ensure priority space to store at least one typical adult-sized manual wheelchair. This includes allowing stowage through using a strap kit to secure the wheelchair to a row of seats. What are the operational considerations for airlines operating in Australia if this was to be implemented in the aviation disability standards?

4.3 Allow people to use their disability aids onboard, where possible

Definition of issue

People with disability have reported uncertainty about when disability aids can be used during a flight and when they are able to bring specific devices on board to support their travel. These devices may include crutches, a small wheelchair, a medical device, an assistance animal, or a specialist harness that provides posture support for a seat.

Currently, airlines provide guidance on what disability aids may be brought onto a plane, however, people with disability find that guidance is not sufficient in understanding how and when these disability aids may be used during the flight. For example, passengers may need to know whether they can keep an assistance animal on their lap to provide support during the flight.

Additionally, approval processes for disability aids such as seat harnesses differ across airlines. Approval periods can be lengthy which adds to the additional planning and uncertainty experienced by people with disability.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants frequently reinforced the need for clear, consistent, and accessible information to support journey planning. Participants shared experiences when traveling with disability aids was stressful due to unclear policies and staff uncertainty about how to implement them. This lack of clarity often resulted in inconsistent advice across different flights or airlines, and reduces confidence in air travel for people with disability.

Industry input

Airlines consulted have advised that any additional items brought onto an aircraft, particularly those that interact with existing design features such as seatbelts or seating structures, require a safety assessment prior to approval. This is necessary to ensure that critical safety features are not compromised during the flight. Airlines must balance accessibility with regulatory compliance and operational safety, which can include engineering reviews and checks against international standards.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a section that outlines the following requirements:

- Airlines must ensure that passengers with disability can use their disability aids during a flight wherever it is safe and practical to do so. This includes, but should not be limited to, required mobility aids, assistance animals and medical devices. Airlines should actively minimise unnecessary restrictions and prioritise accessibility while maintaining safety.
- Where disability aids must be secured, tethered or stowed during critical flight stages, such as take-off, landing, or turbulence, airlines must provide clear, consistent guidance to passengers with disability and reasonable adjustments. This information should explain why restrictions apply and consider alternative arrangements to ensure passengers can access their disability aids.
- Airlines must implement a standardised process for approving disability aids that require prior assessment, such as seat harnesses or other specialised equipment. This process should be timely, transparent, and communicated in advance of travel to avoid last-minute uncertainty (see also [section 2.3](#), [section 2.7](#) and [section 2.10](#)). Airlines should also ensure staff are trained to apply these processes in alignment with [section 1.2](#).

- Airlines must provide clear and accessible information about disability aid policies on their website which can be offered in alternative formats if requested.

Consultation questions

- 4.3.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.3.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.3.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.3.d What timeframe would be appropriate for airlines to approve requests from passengers with disability to travel with and use disability aids in the cabin?
- 4.3.e What types of disability aids do people rely on in-flight because they cannot be seated in their customised wheelchair (for example, seat pillows, restraints and others)?
- 4.3.f What policies currently exist regarding assistance animals during a flight? Specifically, when must they be secured, and when they can provide support to their handler (for example, resting on their handler's lap)?

4.4 Return mobility aids as soon as possible following flight arrival

Definition of issue

Large or heavy mobility aids may need to be stored in the cargo holds of aircraft during a flight. Sometimes mobility aids need to be disassembled to fit in the cargo hold. On arrival, mobility aids are sometimes returned to the passenger disassembled.

Submissions to the Aviation White Paper noted instances of passengers being left stranded on planes for unreasonable amounts of time without access to mobility aids to disembark the aircraft. These situations have a profound effect on passenger wellbeing, dignity and autonomy.

Initiative 10 of the Aviation White Paper committed the government to considering improved remedies for damage to wheelchairs and other mobility aids during air travel. The proposed Aviation Consumer Protections Charter, released for consultation in 2025, includes provisions for the repair, replacement or reimbursement for replacement mobility aids. The outcomes of this consultation are being considered by government, separate to the new aviation disability standards.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants indicated their strong preference for mobility aids to be returned to them as soon as possible following arrival at a destination.

Participants want to minimise the amount of time out of their own mobility aids to minimise the physical discomfort of being seated in standard seating that is not appropriate for their disability or medical needs.

Industry input

Airlines consulted noted that the return of devices to passengers depends on a number of factors including:

- availability of lifts for retrieval of devices from the cargo hold
- availability of staff
- time taken for reassembly of devices where necessary
- the layout of the destination airport and type of aircraft operated during the flight.

Airlines proposed that the regulations should place priority on ensuring that mobility aids are returned safely and securely to passengers.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would specify that where a mobility aid has been stored in the cargo hold, the airline must return the mobility aid to the passenger as quickly as possible upon arrival at the destination.

To achieve the timely return of mobility aids, airlines must ensure that mobility aids are among the first items retrieved from the baggage compartment. Where possible, passengers should be offered the choice as to whether the mobility aid is returned to them at the arrival gate or at baggage claim, so long as it is within the same timeframe of arrival at the destination.

A mobility aid must be promptly returned to the passenger in the condition in which the aid was received. If the airline had disassembled and packaged the aid prior to storage, it should be unpackaged and reassembled.

Airlines may request passengers to provide written directions concerning the disassembly and reassembly of their wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Staff must carry out these instructions to the greatest extent feasible.

The aviation disability standards would specify a minimum level of airport infrastructure such as baggage lifts to facilitate the efficient return of mobility aids from the hold to the tarmac, and from the tarmac to the gate, for those passengers requesting the return of their mobility aid at the gate.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on Canada's and the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 4.4.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.4.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.4.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.4.d Should a timeframe for return of mobility aids following flight arrival at the destination be specified? If so, what is a reasonable timeframe for their return, and why?
- 4.4.e What equipment and/or infrastructure is most appropriate for safely transporting mobility aids from the cargo hold to the tarmac, and from the tarmac to the gate?
- 4.4.f How would ground handling crew prefer instructions to be provided regarding the disassembly and reassembly of mobility aids (such as written instructions or diagrams)?

Improve service in-flight

4.5 Provide critical in-flight information in accessible formats

Definition of issue

Prior to take-off, cabin crew give a safety demonstration to all passengers to tell them what to do in an emergency. For people with disability, particularly sensory disabilities, this critical flight information is not always provided in an accessible format.

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) currently require that general information about public transport services be accessible to all passengers. The reforms to the Transport Standards will introduce requirements for the provision of general information in different formats, including direct assistance, large print and Braille where requested.

Co-design findings

Co-design partners advised that current provisions regarding the communication of general information in the Transport Standards and their reforms do not go far enough to include the communication of critical flight information, instructions regarding how to access onboard facilities and accessibility services available. Additional clarity is needed on this matter given the unique passenger experience of aviation compared to other modes of transport.

Co-design participants requested an app where safety information could be communicated, with captioning and Auslan translation on their own device or a device provided to them. Co-design participants wanted to see Wi-Fi, where available on board, provided to passengers with disability at no extra charge to support the use of communication devices that function as aids, such as translation apps.

Industry input

Aviation industry bodies consulted indicated that delivering safety briefings in digital accessible formats is achievable with support, with one airline noting they already provide Braille translations of safety information, in addition to the required one-on-one safety briefings.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to provide passengers with critical flight information in various accessible formats including Easy Read, Braille and Auslan, prior to take-off. This information should cover details such as what to do in an emergency, flight updates, onboard facilities available and how passengers are able to access these facilities.

It should be noted that this requirement would not direct airline staff to communicate in Auslan, but rather that the information should be made available in this format (for example, via a pre-recorded video).

The aviation disability standards would also require airlines to enable Wi-Fi access, where available on the aircraft, to passengers with disability at no extra charge, for the use of communication devices that function as supportive aids.

Consultation questions

- 4.5.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.5.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.5.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.5.d What accessible formats are needed to communicate information to passengers with disability during a flight (for example, emergency instructions, flight updates and information about onboard facilities and services)? To what extent would pre-recorded audio and video formats meet these needs?
- 4.5.e Are there periods during flights when Wi-Fi cannot be accessed (for example, during take-off and landing? If so, state when and why?
- 4.5.f To what extent is Wi-Fi needed to support the accessibility tools and applications commonly used by passengers with disability for communication on board aircraft?

4.6 Make in-flight food and drink more accessible

Definition of issue

The food and drink onboard aircraft can be inaccessible to some passengers. For example, if the menu is only available in a written format, some passengers with disability may not be able to read and understand it, especially if travelling without a carer. Passengers with disability may also be unable to open the packaging of consumable items purchased/served onboard aircraft.

Part 27 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) requires that general information about public transport services must be accessible to all passengers. The reforms to the Transport Standards will introduce requirements for the provision of this information in different formats, including direct assistance, large print and Braille where requested. Part 29 of the Transport Standards requires that any food or drink service that is provided as part of a public transport service is equally accessible to all passengers.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that current provisions and the reforms to the Transport Standards do not go far enough to communicate the food and drink offering to passengers with disability and assistance available to open the packaging of items and requested additional clarity on this matter, given the unique passenger experience of aviation compared to other modes of transport.

Co-design participants requested access to suitable utensils and tools to make it easier to consume meals, such as standard metal cutlery.

Co-design participants also requested assistance from cabin crew with opening packaging or providing information about where food or drink has been placed on the tray table.

Industry input

Airlines consulted advised that cabin crew are able to assist with the opening of packaging and providing information about where food or drink has been placed on the tray table. Due to occupational health and safety considerations, cabin crew cannot assist with cutting food or eating – passengers requiring assistance with these functions are required to travel with a carer.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would require airlines to provide in-flight menu information (where menus are provided) in large print, Braille and through direct assistance where requested.

The aviation disability standards would also include a requirement for cabin crew to assist with opening the packaging of items. If a meal is served on board, cabin crew are to assist with identifying food items and their location. The aviation disability standards would not require cabin crew to cut food or assist passengers with eating and drinking.

Parts of this option are based on Canada's and the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 4.6.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.6.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?

- 4.6.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.6.d Should the ingredients list also be made available in large print, Braille or through direct assistance?

Enable people with disability to have greater independence in-flight

4.7 Improve accessibility of aircraft toilets

Definition of issue

As noted in the Aviation White Paper, the lack of accessible toilets on aircraft can be a significant barrier for people with disability when travelling by air, which also compromises passenger safety and dignity.

People with disability, knowing that they will not be able to use the toilet during a flight, may dehydrate themselves or even withhold bodily functions so that they do not need to use the toilet. These actions can cause adverse health effects, including increased chances of urinary tract infections. Other passengers may use adult diapers or catheters, which they may find degrading and uncomfortable. Some wheelchair users avoid flying altogether.

Part 15 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) currently requires only wide-body twin-aisle aircraft to have at least one accessible toilet on board (that is, accessible to a person using an on-board wheelchair). Airline staff must provide direct assistance to the toilet door.

Aviation accessibility regulations in Canada and the United States mandate a level of accessibility for toilets on an aircraft. United States' regulations cover both single-aisle and twin-aisle aircraft, while Canada's regulations only cover twin-aisle aircraft.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that the lack of accessible toilets on some aircraft placed considerable burden on their travel experience, with some passengers avoiding lengthy flights altogether because of the issue.

Industry input

Airlines advised that on single-aisle aircraft, space and design limitations make it very challenging to install fully accessible toilets. Changes of this nature would be determined by aircraft manufacturers, and would require certification processes that often take years, and involve very significant investment.

Airlines noted that original equipment manufacturers are exploring accessibility features and are starting to install accessible features on their narrow body aircraft, such as an assist handle, transfer seat, 100% brightness switch, ramp into the lavatory and a call button. Airlines intend to add new accessibility features as they become available, however significant waiting times are expected between placement of an order for new aircraft and receipt of those aircraft.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Current provisions in the Transport Standards would be extended to ensure that there is at least one toilet that can be accessed using an onboard wheelchair on a single-aisle aircraft where there is a toilet. This would require airlines to carry an onboard wheelchair on aircraft with toilets.

In addition, the aviation disability standards would provide new requirements for accessible toilets on aircraft.

Options to improve accessibility of aircraft toilets would be divided into two stages; the first stage would have a shorter-term implementation timeframe and cover installations of accessibility features within the toilet on single- and twin-aisle aircraft.

The second stage would have a longer-term implementation timeframe and encompass the provision of sufficient space within the toilet to enable a person with disability to manoeuvre as necessary to use all toilet facilities by means of the aircraft's onboard wheelchair.

Stage one

The aviation disability standards would require airlines, when undertaking major refurbishment of onboard toilets or bringing in new aircraft after a certain date, to equip at least one aircraft toilet with accessible facilities including:

- a tactile map on the door of the toilet identifying the location of amenities
- Braille signage of toilet amenities
- doors that are equipped with handles, pulls, latches, locks and other devices that are operable using minimal force, with one hand in a closed-fist position, or by another method of operation that does not require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist
- toilets that
 - are equipped with an automated flush control or a flush control that is operable using minimal force, with one hand in a closed-fist position, or by another method of operation that does not require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist
 - have a back support if the toilet has no seat lid
- taps that are equipped with
 - handles or other controls that are tactilely discernible unless the water temperature is fixed to eliminate the risk of scalding
 - in the case of non-automated taps, handles or other controls that are operable using minimal force, with one hand in a closed-fist position, or by another method of operation that does not require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist
 - in the case of automated taps, a water activation motion sensor that turns the water on automatically when a hand is below the faucet
- grab bars that
 - are located on a wall beside the toilet,
 - are rounded, slip-resistant and free of any sharp or abrasive elements
 - have an exterior diameter and a clearance from the wall surface to which they are attached that permit them to be easily grasped
 - are capable of supporting a minimum weight (to be confirmed)
- toilet paper dispensers that are located so as to not interfere with the use of the grab bars
- soap dispensers that are operable using minimal force, with one hand in a closed-fist position, or by another method of operation that does not require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist
- at least one call button or other device for signalling an emergency that
 - is colour-contrasted with its background and identified by tactile and Braille signage
 - is operable using minimal force.

These requirements have been adapted from Canadian and United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Stage 2

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement for all new single-aisle aircraft ordered after a future date (to be confirmed following consultation), with a seating capacity above a threshold value (to be confirmed following consultation), to include at least one toilet of sufficient size to:

- permit a passenger with disability to approach, enter, manoeuvre within as necessary to use all toilet facilities, and leave, by means of the aircraft's on-board wheelchair, in a closed space that provides privacy equivalent to that provided to other users; and
- permit a carer to assist a passenger with disability, including assisting in transfers between the toilet and the aircraft's on-board wheelchair, within a closed space that provides privacy equivalent to that provided to other users.

These requirements have been adapted from the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Consultation questions

- 4.7.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.7.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.7.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.7.d What timeframe would be appropriate for the first stage of these regulations to come into effect?
- 4.7.e What timeframe would be appropriate for the second stage of these regulations to come into effect?
- 4.7.f What threshold of seating capacity on an aircraft is appropriate for these regulations to apply?
- 4.7.g What information, if any, is available on the relevant costs per toilet for implementing Stages One and 2 on each aircraft? What factors would vary these costs (for example, aircraft size or accessible toilet size compared to current toilet provided)?
- 4.7.h What should be considered as a 'major refurbishment'?

4.8 Make in-flight entertainment accessible

Definition of issue

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (the Transport Standards) do not currently require information and communication technology (ICT) to be accessible, which includes in-flight entertainment. As a result, people with disability can face difficulty in accessing in-flight entertainment (for example, people who are hard of hearing have had difficulty because their airline's system was not compatible with hearing aids or did not provide closed captioning).

The reforms to the Transport Standards will require any ICT that an operator or provider intends for public use to be accessible to people with disability. However, this reform is targeted at requirements around communication e-boards, digital fare screens and other enabling ICT rather than the accessibility of in-flight entertainment.

Co-design findings

Co-design participants wanted to see aviation-specific regulations for in-flight ICT that go beyond the incoming Transport Standards regulations. This is because aviation is unique in providing digital entertainment during transit.

Industry input

Industry noted that any communication methods would still need to meet the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's requirements, but that it should be relatively easy to implement provided the technology was available. Many airlines already offer accessible in-flight entertainment, as outlined in their Disability Access Facilitation Plans. Industry also noted that some content available for purchase from communications providers isn't always accessible – mainly older movies or TV shows.

Accessible in-flight entertainment is an area considered in international aviation accessibility regulations and guidance. For example, the European Union requires in-flight entertainment systems to be accessible. This is defined as being perceivable, operable, and understandable for people with disability, requiring features like closed captions, audio descriptions, and compatibility with assistive technologies.

In Canada where in-flight entertainment is offered, content must offer closed captioning and audio description, and interfaces must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). If the entertainment system does not offer closed captioning and audio description, the aircraft must be equipped with portable electronic devices that can offer those accommodations for passengers with disability that request a device.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement that all digital entertainment offered during air travel (where provided) must be accessible to people with disability. Similar to the European Union and Canada, this would include closed captions and audio descriptions for the entertainment, and that the technology itself must be easily usable for people with disability.

Where the in-flight entertainment system does not meet accessibility requirements, the airline would need to provide a portable electronic device pre-loaded with (or that allows wireless streaming of) accessible entertainment content. The content available on the portable electronic devices would need to be the same as the content available through the in-flight entertainment system or, where this is not possible, it would need to be comparable to that content. Airlines would need to carry enough portable electronic devices to provide to a passenger with a disability who requests one and airlines would be allowed to ask for advance notice.

Regulations would only apply where an airline offers in-flight digital entertainment.

Consultation questions

- 4.8.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.8.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.8.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.8.d Are there any accessibility features that in-flight entertainment should offer beyond WCAG compliance, closed captioning and audio description?
- 4.8.e For airlines: where current content or that available for purchase is not accessible, is it possible to retroactively apply accessibility features?
- 4.8.f Are airlines able to offer a controller for in-flight entertainment that is tactilely discernible, colour contrasted with its background, and operable using minimal force from a seated position?

4.9 Require aircraft to have accessible passenger controls

Definition of issue

When on board aircraft, passenger controls may not be accessible for passengers with disability, particularly for passengers with lower grip strength, low vision and difficulties with reach. Current designs and locations of controls for amenities such as call buttons, air conditioning, lighting, seat recline and in-flight entertainment require passengers to have a high degree of physical reach, strength and/or visual ability. Consideration should be given to the accessible design and location of controls to enable operation by passengers with disability whilst seated. Moveable armrests are discussed in [section 4.10](#).

Co-design findings

Co-design participants advised that many passenger controls for comfort, entertainment and lighting are inaccessible, particularly when located in overhead panels above seats. Participants requested for these to be moved/lowered to improve access and operable with minimal force.

Industry input

Airlines advised that they are looking at ways to make passenger controls more accessible through feedback sessions with assistive technology users, however noted that the placement of some controls such as air conditioning and lighting are determined by aircraft and seating manufacturers. While airlines cannot directly change the current implementation of these controls, they support industry efforts to improve accessibility in future cabin designs.

Policy options

Regulatory option

The aviation disability standards would include a requirement that passenger seats on all new aircraft ordered after a specified date with a seating capacity above a threshold value must be equipped with a call button that is tactilely discernible, colour contrasted with its background, and operable using minimal force from a seated position. This requirement would also apply to all aircraft undertaking a major refurbishment. The future date and seat capacity threshold value will be confirmed following consultation.

The regulations would also require the following controls on an aircraft be accessible:

- seatback monitor controls (where applicable)
- controls for in-flight entertainment (where applicable)
- individual passenger lighting
- airflow
- recline of passenger seats.

Consultation questions

- 4.9.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.9.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.9.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standard?
- 4.9.d What timeframe would be appropriate to allow for these regulations to come into effect?

- 4.9.e What percentage of seating capacity on an aircraft is appropriate for these regulations to apply?
- 4.9.f How can the following features be made more accessible: seatback monitor controls, controls for in-flight entertainment, individual passenger lighting, airflow, and seat recline?
- 4.9.g Are there other controls not listed in this section which should be made more accessible?
- 4.9.h What should be considered as 'major refurbishment'?

4.10 Increase the number of aircraft seats that have moveable armrests

Definition of issue

People with disability have found that fixed armrests on aircraft seats restrict movement and make transfers into and out of seats very difficult. These limitations create significant challenges for people with disability during boarding and for passenger movement during flight more generally. Moveable armrests allow for easier transfer into aisle seats and improve accessibility for all passengers.

Currently the availability of moveable armrests is inconsistent across airlines and aircraft. Information about which seats have movable armrests is not available at the time of booking.

Co-design findings

Transfers and movement to and from seats are difficult or impossible where there are fixed armrests on aisle seats. Movement is also impaired where armrests in other seats are fixed. This problem occurs for all seat types (aisle, middle and window) across all seating classes.

People with disability have advised that inconsistencies in the availability of moveable armrests across airlines and aircraft and lack of information on moveable armrest availability are barriers to accessible air travel.

People with disability would benefit from knowing whether there are moveable armrests on a flight at the time of booking and be informed of subsequent changes to the aircraft or their assigned seat before flight departure.

Where aircraft seats have moveable armrests, they should be considered ‘accessible seats to be available for passengers with disability’, as per Part 28 of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (2022) (the Transport Standards).

The reforms to the Transport Standards will also introduce the following requirements:

- Passengers with disabilities must be able to book seats that are located in parts of the conveyance that are appropriate for their travelling needs (unless such seats have already been booked).
- If different classes of travel are provided by a service, seats appropriate to the travelling needs of people with disability must be available in each class.

Policy options

Regulatory option

Option 1: Moveable armrests for all new aircraft seats and aircraft subject to major seating replacement

When undertaking a major seating refurbishment or bringing in new aircraft after a certain date, seats to contain movable armrest for all aircraft seats (including aisle, middle and window seats) and across all seating classes. Except where, for safety reasons, seating cannot be allocated to people with disability.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on the United States’ aviation accessibility regulations.

During any transition period, information about whether moveable armrests are installed on aircraft and their location within the aircraft to be available at time of flight booking.

Option 2: Moveable armrests for 50% of the aircraft's seating capacity for all new aircraft seats and aircraft subject to major seating replacement

When undertaking a major seating refurbishment or bringing in new aircraft after a certain date, seats are to contain moveable armrests for 50% of the aircraft's total seating capacity (including aisle, middle and window seats) and across all seating classes. Except where, for safety reasons, seating cannot be allocated to people with disability.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Information about whether moveable armrests are installed on aircraft and their location within the aircraft to be available at time of flight booking.

Option 3: Moveable armrests for aisle seats on all new aircraft seats and aircraft subject to major seating replacement

When undertaking a major seating refurbishment or bringing in new aircraft after a certain date, seats are to contain moveable armrests on all aisle seats except where, for safety reasons, seating cannot be allocated to people with disability.

Parts of this regulatory option are based on the United States' aviation accessibility regulations.

Information about whether moveable armrests are installed on aircraft and their location within the aircraft to be available at time of flight booking.

Consultation questions

- 4.10.a Would the issue best be addressed through a regulatory or non-regulatory intervention, or by maintaining existing practice?
- 4.10.b Does the proposed standard adequately address the issue? If not, what is missing or what other options exist?
- 4.10.c Are there any barriers to implementing the proposed standards in any of the 3 options? If so, what are they?
- 4.10.d How can passengers identify which seats have moveable armrests at the time of booking?
- 4.10.e For each of the 3 options presented, what is a reasonable transition period for the inclusion of moveable armrests?
- 4.10.f What percentage of seats replaced or refurbished on an aircraft should be counted as a 'major seating replacement' to trigger this requirement?

Chapter 5: Other matters for discussion

Current exclusion of small aircraft from parts of the Transport Standards

Definition of issue

The new aviation disability standards will form a schedule to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (the Transport Standards), which were established in 2002 and set out requirements for public transport services, including commercial aviation services.

As part of the current Transport Standards, there are specific exclusions for ‘small aircraft’, which is defined as an aircraft with fewer than 30 passenger seats. The exclusions are in place for 16 items:

Part 3 Manoeuvring areas

- 3.3 Limited on board manoeuvring

Part 6 Ramps

- 6.2 Boarding ramps
- 6.3 Minimum allowable width
- 6.4 Slope of external boarding ramps

Part 8 Boarding

- 8.2 When boarding devices must be provided
- 8.3 Use of boarding devices
- 8.5 Width and surface of boarding devices
- 8.6 Maximum load to be supported by boarding device

Part 9 Allocated Space

- 9.1 Minimum size for allocated space

Part 11 Handrails and grabrails

- 11.3 Handrails on steps
- 11.4 Handrails above access paths
- 11.5 Compliance with Australian Standard
- 11.6 Grabrail to be provided where fares are to be paid

Part 12 Doorways and Doors

- 12.1 Doors on access paths
- 12.6 Automatic or power-assisted doors

Part 14 Stairs

- 14.1 Stairs not to be sole means of access

It is important to note that planned updates to the Transport Standards, following recent consultation, are forthcoming. However, at this stage there are no proposed changes to the current small-aircraft exclusions. Broader requirements under the Transport Standards that apply to aviation will remain in place, and changes to some of these requirements are anticipated. More information can be found on the department’s website: www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/transport-accessibility/reform-disability-standards-accessible-public-transport-2002-transport-standards.

When the Transport Standards were introduced in 1999, the government released a Regulation Impact Statement. Consultations at the time highlighted that ‘more work on what is structurally possible for lower-capacity aircraft is necessary before it can be ascertained whether and how these aircraft can be made accessible within the term of the draft standards.’

Issues identified included:

- the restricted physical confines of the cabin, making transfers from a wheelchair to a seat difficult
- insufficient luggage space for storing a wheelchair
- limited weight-carrying capacity on some aircraft.

Some requirements, such as signage and symbols, were applied universally, including to small aircraft.

Another informing factor was the decision not to apply the Transport Standards to airports and aerodromes that do not accept Regular Public Transport (RPT) services, as these facilities are more likely to be served by non-commercial or charter operators using small aircraft.

Developing the new aviation disability standards creates an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of existing exclusions and to identify whether future work is required to remove exclusion. This work aligns with the Australian Government’s Aviation White Paper commitment to uphold the rights of people with disability to equal access to air travel.

Consultation questions

To help determine what future work is needed, we are seeking views on the current exclusions, which have remained unchanged since 2002. We also acknowledge that accessibility at airports, including support facilities, is a key factor in meeting the Transport Standards.

We welcome input on the following:

- 5.1.a What impact do the current exclusions for people with disability impose when they travel on small aircraft with less than 30 seats?
- 5.1.b What proportion of your fleet has fewer than 30 passenger seats?
- 5.1.c What are the current structural or engineering barriers to meeting accessibility requirements on small aircraft?
- 5.1.d What considerations are currently made to ensure people with disability can access small aircraft?
- 5.1.e Is there a long-term plan to replace or develop aircraft capable of meeting accessibility requirements?

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