



Accessible air travel for people with disability

The Aviation White Paper sets out long-term policies and actions to guide the next generation of growth and innovation across Australian aviation.

The current experience

People with disability face barriers when travelling by air including inaccessible facilities and services at airports and unhelpful practices and systems. Barriers can be encountered across the journey – from booking a flight, to airport check-in, to disembarking the aircraft at the destination.

Evidence presented to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and to the 2022 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, as well as submissions made in 2023 during development of the Aviation White Paper have all illustrated the range of barriers to accessible travel.

Some specific issues include:

- denial or lack of access to necessary information and support before flights
- extended wait and hold times when checking into flights
- refusal to carry people with disability who use assistance animals
- airlines limiting the number of wheelchairs in a cabin to 2
- lack of consideration of the needs of people with disability amid flight cancellations
- a lack of accessible flight options and carriers in regional and remote locations.

Delivering an accessible aviation sector that protects the rights of people with disability

We are committed to an accessible aviation sector that protects the rights of people with disability. To address these barriers described above, the Australian Government will:

- ✓ **Create new aviation-specific disability standards** as part of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002. Co-designed with people with disability and developed in consultation with industry, these new standards will affirm the rights people with disability have during air travel and the obligations of airlines and airports.
- ✓ **Require airlines and airports to coordinate their actions in assisting people with disability.** The new aviation-specific disability standards will set out responsibilities for airlines and airports to improve their actions in coordinating the use of their facilities by passengers with disability. The standards will cover the entire journey from information provision through to exiting the destination terminal.
- ✓ **Require airlines to offer passenger assistance profiles.** Each passenger will have the choice to grant airlines permission to store personal details, including accessibility requirements, in a profile that airlines can access for future bookings. The profile will contain information about assistance animals and wheelchair battery specifications so airlines can confirm in advance the necessary support that meets air safety requirements.
- ✓ **Review airline policies that limit the number of passengers who require assistance.** In developing the new aviation-specific disability standards, we will consider options to prohibit airline policies from limiting the number of passengers who require assistance on a flight.
- ✓ **Review industry compliance with the new disability standards.** The government will publicly report on airline and airport compliance with the new aviation-specific disability standards after the rules come into effect.



Photo credit: Sunshine Coast Airport

- ✓ **Produce user guides that outline legal requirements for airlines and airports under the Disability Discrimination Act and the new aviation-specific standards.** We will produce accessible user guides to inform passengers of their rights and about airline obligations for providing more effective assistance.
- ✓ **Improve remedies for damage to wheelchairs and other mobility devices.** We will consult on amendments to the *Civil Aviation (Carriers) Liability Act 1959*, and supporting regulations, to increase the maximum compensation entitlement for passengers whose wheelchairs or other mobility devices are damaged or lost by domestic airlines.
- ✓ **Require airport development plans to set out how they will enable access for people with disability.** We will amend the Airports Regulations 2024 for this purpose. The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has written to the operators of airports leased from the government advising them that consistency with the new aviation-specific disability standards will be considered in decisions on whether to approve new development proposals.
- ✓ **Implement broader reforms to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.** These changes will introduce requirements for staff training and require improvements to the provision of service information in accessible formats.
- ✓ **Establish an ombuds scheme for the aviation industry.** This will have the power to investigate customer complaints about airline and airport conduct and to direct airlines and airports to provide remedies to consumers. The scheme will also provide recommendations to government and refer systemic misconduct by airlines and airports to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.
- ✓ **A new aviation customer rights charter will feature in the aviation ombuds scheme.** The charter will set out what the ombudsperson considers the fair and appropriate treatment of customers by airlines and airports, including when flights are cancelled and delayed and when passenger journeys are disrupted. Appropriate support may include meals and accommodation, refunds, and monetary compensation.
- ✓ **Consider options to strengthen compliance with the consumer guarantees.** These may include a measure that prohibits airlines and airports from not providing a consumer guarantee remedy when required by law.

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