



2. Planning and booking air travel—options for new aviation disability standards



What we've heard

Planning a trip by air can be a stressful experience. For people with disability, it can be even more challenging if they need extra information or support to assist their journey. This fact sheet discusses the additional considerations when planning a trip, and proposed solutions.

Before booking air travel, people with disability need to confirm that their whole journey will meet their accessibility needs. Information people with disability may be seeking before travel, but can't access, could include:

- confirmation that an aircraft can accommodate wheelchairs
- that medical equipment can be carried into the cabin, or
- whether a carer is needed to support their trip if a specific service is not offered.

The aviation disability standards aim to address information gaps like this, to deliver greater certainty and consistency in the passenger experience for people with disability. This fact sheet provides a summary of the regulatory options being considered in the aviation disability standards consultation paper.

Options for new standards

People with disability identified many areas where the pre-journey experience could be improved.

Removing barriers to air travel when planning and booking

1. Offer passenger assistance profiles

- With passenger consent, airlines could store the accessibility needs of a person with disability in a 'passenger assistance profile'. This would mean the person does not need to provide the information again for future bookings.

2. Clarify times when limits on passengers requiring assistance may apply

- Airlines would only be allowed to limit the number of passengers with disability who need wheelchair assistance with boarding or exiting the aircraft where it would create a significant safety or operational issue.

3. Services must be provided when passengers give advance notice of their accessibility needs

- If a person with disability informs the airline what services they will need at least 48 hours before the flight, the airline would need to provide that service.
- Airlines must provide written confirmation of the services they will provide.

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

- People with disability would not be required to book via phone.
- People with disability would not be charged extra for booking through different means. For example in-person, online or over the phone.

Making approval processes clearer

5. Clarify rules for carriage of assistance animals on aircraft

- Airlines would need to make it clear how a passenger with disability can apply to bring their assistance animal with them on an aircraft and have a set timeframe to process those requests (for example, up to 48 hours).
- Airlines would need to inform people in an accessible format whether or not their assistance animal has been approved for travel.
- For domestic flights, airlines cannot require a person travelling with an approved assistance animal to use in-person check in.
- Airlines may require animal handlers to bring animal relief accessories for long-haul flights, and airlines would need to provide ways for the handler to dispose of soiled items.
- Airlines would need to transport the assistance animals in the aircraft cabin with their handler.

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

- All airlines would need to ask for the same information about disability aids that are classified as 'dangerous goods', for example, wheelchair batteries, for consistency across all airlines.
- Airlines would need to tell the person with disability if their equipment can go on the aircraft within 48 hours of the application.

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

- Disability aids and medical equipment would not be counted as part of a passenger's baggage allowance and must be transported without extra charges.
- Airlines would need to make it clear what disability aids are allowed on flights, including the size and weight the aids must be to travel in-cabin, and any approval process to carry disability aids.

8. Explain requirements for carers or companions travelling with a person with disability

- Airlines cannot require a person with a disability to travel with a carer unless the person is unable to travel independently.
- If a person with disability is travelling with a carer, the carer must be seated next to the passenger with disability.
- Airlines must allow free changes to personal details like names of the carer or companion.

9. Clarify when airlines can ask for medical certificates

- Airlines would only be able to ask for medical certificates from a person with a disability where the person:
 - has a condition that means the person cannot fly safely without needing medical assistance
 - needs medical oxygen during a flight
 - is traveling in a stretcher or incubator.

Make information easy for people with disability to access and understand

10. Provide clear information about accessibility options before booking

- Airlines and airports would need to provide clear information about how accessible their infrastructure or services are for people with disability.
- For example:
 - maximum weight and size for mobility aids on specific aircraft and how many wheelchairs can be safely stowed
 - airport wayfinding information like interactive maps
 - safety rules regarding transport of equipment classed as 'dangerous goods'
 - any booking restrictions, such as those for exit row seating, explaining why these restrictions are in place.

11. Offer information needed for flight bookings in multiple accessible formats

- Airlines and airports would need to provide information in a range of accessible formats to meet the different needs of people with disability.
- For example:
 - Auslan translations or the availability of Auslan interpreters
 - Easy Read
 - Braille
 - pictorials and social stories
 - web pages to have an 'accessible mode' when booking flights.

12. Provide communication in accessible formats during disruptions

- Airlines would need to inform people with disability about any changes or disruptions to their flight plans in an accessible format.
- This includes:
 - whether flight changes will impact the airline's ability to transport the passenger or their mobility device
 - other travel options available if the changes impact the passenger's accessibility needs (for example, the aircraft cannot carry their mobility device)
 - how to get assistance to rebook or manage the change to flight.

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

- Airlines would need to inform people with disability why they or their disability aid have been refused.
- Airlines would also need to advise the person:
 - of other flight options that could carry their disability aid to the same destination
 - offer to book them in for the same or less cost as their original flight, or
 - provide a refund if another flight is not possible.

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

- If a person with disability informs airlines of the nature of their disability and the adjustments they need, airlines would need to inform them of seating in the travel class they select, such as economy or business, that would best meet their needs at booking.

Have your say

For more details on these options, read the consultation paper at www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards

You can also read our other fact sheets covering different parts of the journey:

- How we got here – an overview of the co-design process
- Whole of journey
- At the airport
- On the aircraft

You can share your views on the options:

- Online (written submission or survey) via the Have Your Say page: www.infrastructure.gov.au/Aviation-Disability-Standards
- By email (written, video or audio): AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au
- By phone: 1800 621 372