



4. On the aircraft—options for new disability standards



What we've heard

There are many uncertainties that people with disability encounter on board an aircraft.

On the aircraft, many people with disability are separated from their disability aids when the aids are stored in cabin or cargo storage during the flight. For many people with disability this means a loss of independence and causes concern about whether their disability aids may be damaged in transit.

The aviation disability standards aim to address this challenge and other uncertainties while flying, 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 on-the-plane experience could be improved.

Improve the boarding and exiting experience

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

- Airports and airlines would need to ensure that there is step-free access when boarding the aircraft. Where there is a gap or a rise, they must help a person with disability to navigate this safely.
- Airlines must let a person with disability choose when they board or disembark, unless that person needs staff assistance to board or disembark.
- People with disability who have pre-boarded should not be climbed over by other passengers to access their seats.

Treat disability aids safely and respectfully

2. Support passengers to store disability aids inside the cabin

- Airline cabin crew would need to help people with disability to stow and retrieve their disability aids if asked.
- Passengers with disability aids can choose to pre-board to be able to have priority access to cabin storage.
- Airlines must have space on board to fit at least one typical adult-sized manual wheelchair.

3. Allow people to use their disability aids onboard, where possible

- People with disability would be allowed to use their disability aids in flight if safe to do so.
- Airlines would need to clearly explain why sometimes disability aids cannot be used in flight because of safety risks, for example during turbulence.
- Airlines would need to be clear how people with disability can check if their disability aids can be used on flights before their travel.

4. Return mobility aids as soon as possible following flight arrival

- Airlines would need to return a person's mobility aid at arrival without delay. The passenger can choose whether their mobility aid is returned to the gate or to the baggage claim.
- Where people give written instructions on how to disassemble or reassemble their wheelchair, airlines would need to follow those instructions before delivering the wheelchair back to the person.

Improve service in-flight

5. Provide critical in-flight information in accessible formats

- Airlines would need to give critical flight information, like what to do in an emergency or how to use onboard facilities, in various formats such as Easy Read, Braille and Auslan.
- If a passenger with disability uses an electronic device to communicate and needs Wi-Fi to use it, airlines would need to allow that person to access available Wi-Fi free of charge.

6. Make in-flight food and drink more accessible

- Where menus are provided, airlines would need to also provide a menu in large print or Braille.
- Cabin crew would need to help people with disability to open food and drinks if asked.

Enable people with disability to have greater independence in-flight

7. Improve accessibility of aircraft toilets

- Airlines would be required to have at least one accessible toilet on single- and twin-aisle aircraft. This also means that aircraft would be required to carry an on-board wheelchair.
- Airlines would need to put Braille signage, a tactile map, door handles, call buttons, grab bars, taps, and other controls or dispensers that can be used by a passenger with disability in at least one bathroom on an aircraft.
- Airlines would need to make sure any new single-aisle aircraft includes at least one bathroom large enough for a person with disability and their carer to access and use with the on-board wheelchair.

8. Make in-flight entertainment accessible

- Airlines would need to make sure the digital entertainment they offer is accessible to people with disability.
- If the entertainment system on a plane is inaccessible, the airline must provide an accessible portable electronic device pre-loaded with accessible entertainment.

9. Require aircraft to have accessible passenger controls

- Airlines would need to make sure their passenger seat buttons, such as lighting, seat recline and calling for flight attendant assistance, are:
 - easy to feel by touch
 - colour contrasted with its background, and
 - can be used with minimal force.

10. Increase the number of aircraft seats that have moveable armrests

- Airlines would need to install seats that have moveable armrests. There are several options for how this could be done, including:
 - all seats in new or upgraded aircraft
 - at least half of seats in new or upgraded aircraft, or
 - all aisle seats in new or upgraded aircraft.

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
- Planning and booking air travel
- At the airport

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