



Live transcript

Aviation disability standards consultation 2026 Information Session 1—Open to all

Thursday 3 September 2026

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This session was hosted by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) and facilitated by The Social Deck (TSD).

Panellists included DITRDCA and Aviation accessibility co-design partners—People with Disability Australia (PWDA), Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), and Justice and Equity Centre (JEC)

Original session transcript supplied by Access Captions on behalf of TSD for DITRDCA.

Welcome and introduction

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, everyone, for joining. We're just getting settled with everyone in the room and we'll be starting shortly. Thank you. I think we have most of our attendees now in the room. I wanted to welcome everyone and thank you for joining us today for this information session and consultation on the development of the Aviation Disability Standards. My name is Jane and I'm from The Social Deck. We are supporting the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts in this consultation. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional lands we are joining from today. I'm privileged to be coming to you today from the lands of the Yuggera and Turrbal people. I want to give thanks for the traditional lands and acknowledge the connection and care that First Nations peoples have had with this land, water, and live on this Country for many thousands of years. I pay my respects to them and their cultures and to Elders past and present. I also extend that acknowledgement and respect to all First Nations people joining us today. To ensure today's webinar is accessible for all, we have Auslan interpreters that will be shown on the screen at all times.

Live captioning can be accessed directly in Zoom or via a separate screen. To see the captions in Zoom, depending on the device you use, select "CC" at the bottom or top of your screen. We will post the link to access captions via a separate screen in the chat now.

There will be some slides shared during parts of this session. All of the information on the slides will also be spoken. Today's information session is to let you know about the consultation for the development of the Aviation Disability Standards, including what has happened so far, what's happening now, and how you can give input.

This session is specifically for people from disability organisations that represent and support people with disability. Soon, we'll hear from Brendon Buckley from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, which we'll refer to as "the department" from here. They'll be sharing some background about what the Aviation Disability Standards are, and why they are being developed. He will talk about the Aviation White Paper, how these Standards fit with the Disability Discrimination Act, and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, and related protections and reforms.

He will hand over to co-design partners - Matthew Hall from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Bastien Wallace from People With Disability Australia, and Mitchell Skipsey from the Justice Equity Centre. They will introduce themselves and talk about the co-design process. Brendon will come back after that to go over some of the key outcomes from that process. Following that, Peta Margrie from the department will take us through the consultation paper, what that is and what's in it. She will tell us about how you can respond to the consultation paper with a submission and what happens next. Finally, there will be a Q&A panel for our speakers. You can submit questions for that using the "Q&A" option on the Zoom menu.

The last thing I will note before I hand over to Brendon is that there will be some discussion about discrimination against people with disability. We understand that that could bring up some distressed feelings for some people. It's OK and important to take care of yourself. So, if you do feel upset and need to reach out to someone, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. We'll put that, and one or two other support lines, into the chat now. I'll now hand over to Brendon. Thank you, Brendon.

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. Thanks very much, Jane. It's great to be here with you today, and welcome to our consultation. So, as Jane said, my name is Brendon Buckley. And just to give you a bit of a visual of who I am, I'm a white male, middle-aged, 40s, short hair, a bit of stubbly beard, blue suit and a blue shirt. Pretty much looking very bureaucratic! On the screen right now is a slide that outlines some of the background of why we're here today to talk about the Aviation Disability Standards. The slide outlines that it comes from the Aviation White Paper initiatives. It was released in August 2024 and sets out the Australian Government's vision for Aviation in Australia to 2050. It outlines that there were a number of initiatives that related to supporting people with disability access aviation. There was Initiative 4, which was to co-design new invasion-specific Disability Standards as a schedule to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, which is under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

It also outlines that there are a number of other initiatives, Initiatives 5- 8, which outlines that airports and airlines are to coordinate passenger facilitation, that passenger assistance profiles would be required, and a review would be undertaken into removing limits on passengers with disability on flights, and that compliance reporting on new Standards would be required. So, I just wanted to outline quickly about where we've been since then, and I'll pass over quickly to Matthew, to Bastien, and to Mitchell. So, following the release of the Aviation White Paper, we were very excited to work with co-design partners - and I'll let them speak about the process that we have been through to develop the Aviation Disability Standards.

But it's important to know a little bit about how the Aviation Disability Standards sit within broader regulation. So, the Aviation Disability Standards, we're proposing, will be introduced as a Schedule into the Transport Standards, and they are regulations underneath the Disability Discrimination Act. And the idea behind the Standards are to make it as clear as possible to the aviation industry about the expectations of what they should provide to support people with disability to access aviation. We've really enjoyed the process of co-designing the Aviation Disability Standards and we hope that people with disability have got a lot out of the process to date. But we're also very excited to move to the next stage, where we can get your views on those Disability Standards and we can then have them

regulated. But now I might pass over to Matthew, Bastien, and Mitchell to talk through the process that we went through to co-design.

Matthew Hall (AFDO): Matthew speaking. Thank you, Brendon, and good morning, everyone. It's great to be here and to - for you to learn about all the hard work to date and what you can do moving forward. I wanted to... My name is Matthew Hall. I am the National Manager of Systemic Advocacy at AFDO, and I was a co-chair of the Co-Design Steering Committee that the department formed to co-design these Standards.

There's a slide about the co-design process, I think, isn't there? Yep, thank you. So, there's now a slide on the screen that sets out some dot points about co-designing with people with disability and the approach the department took. So, as I said, there was a steering committee. The department established the Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee with AFDO, People With Disability Australia, and the Justice Equity Centre, and we worked very closely - and I think very productively - with the department on the design and implementation and rollout of the co-design process. It was very important that people with disability were at the front of that process and that it was guided with people with disability at the centre. And on that, I might just throw to Bastien.

Bastien Wallace (PWDA): Thank you. Bastien speaking. For a visual description, I am a short blonde woman, wearing a brightly patterned business shirt. I am a Senior Policy Officer at People With Disability Australia and one of the co-design partners, and it has been a great pleasure to work on this consultation because I've had a lot of exposure to other transport-related ones. And what's been wonderful about this is that not only have the voices of people with disability across Australia been included in these workshops that have informed the development of these Standards, but that different and varied, intersectional knowledge across all of the states and territories of Australia has been valued appropriately, has been supported accessibly.

And what we haven't done is expected people to work for nothing or, you know, diminished people's ability to really share that lived experience because the process wasn't accessible. I have been incredibly proud as well that, in order to respond to this process, there are so many accessible options. It's so important that we hear from you because this has been developed - it really has followed the "nothing about us without us" maxim. There really has been that level of engagement, but we want to further engage and ensure that the process really hears from all of you, in case anything has been forgotten or you have particular priorities that we need to hear. So, I'm really proud that we're going to continue with this. And I will hand over to Mitchell.

Mitchell Skipsey (JEC): Thanks, Bastien. My name is Mitchell. For a visual description, I am a Eurasian male in my 30s, dark brown hair, wearing a black T-shirt. While it's cut off by the screen, it has branding for the Justice Equity Centre on it. That is where I come to the co-design process from. So, I and my team at the JEC, we're a leading law and policy centre, and in particular we've had a long history of working with people with disability, particularly around air travel accessibility.

So, a large part of what we've sought to bring to the process has been our technical legal expertise, both as to the ways that effective regulations can be crafted, but also from our history of acting particularly in discrimination complaints for people with disability and against airports and airlines, to really speak to the ways that this might practically work on the ground to give people remedies where they have a poor experience.

And to make sure that the way the Standards will play out in real life is going to actually be effective in solving the problems, that they won't just look good on paper but they will create a better experience. And I think we would say we've found it to be a really helpful process to bring together the technical expertise we have but, most importantly - with the lived experience that all the participants have brought - to develop a really sophisticated set of discussions and options for consideration.

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCSA): Thanks very much. We might move to the next slide. Brendon speaking again here. So, before we get into the detail of the Aviation Disability Standards and outline what they are and explain how you can contribute to providing your views on those Standards, I just wanted to give some key insights from the co-design workshops.

So, on the screen at the moment is a new slide, which outlines these key insights, which I will go through one by one. But just before I do, I just wanted to give some context to them. So, during the co-design workshops and through other consultation that we heard throughout the consultation period, all throughout the process, we've heard of many very practical ways and practical rules that can be put into place to support people with disability to access aviation. But we also heard very clearly four key themes that we consider, if put into practice, would go a very long way to removing discrimination from the aviation journey.

And those four are that: You should include people with disability in the design of any policy, process or infrastructure impacting air travel experience. Of course, that's what we're doing with these consultations, but we also think that it would be very important for airlines and airports to include people with disability in the decisions they make about their policy, processes, and infrastructure investment. Second, staff training is critical for all staff, including contractors. A number of... We don't receive all of the complaints that people make against airlines and airports in regards to travel, but we do receive quite a number, and I would say a high proportion of those point to poor staff training as a root cause as to why a passenger had a poor experience.

Third, be consistent so that passengers know what they can expect at each airport and from each airline every time they travel. I think... I can't even count how many times, or in how many different ways, it's been explained to me that a person with disability could travel on a Tuesday and have one experience on a flight, and it be a positive experience, and then travel on a Thursday and it be the same flight, the same airline, the same airports, and it being an extremely negative experience. And so being consistent, not only between the practices that are put in place, but being consistent across the aviation industry will go a long way to supporting an accessible journey.

And finally, being transparent, so that information impacting a passenger's travel journey is available and accessible. So, these four are really the key insights that we got from the co-design workshops and from other conversations that we have had over the period. And you'll see, when we go into the detail of the Aviation Disability Standards, how we try to put those into practice. And now I will pass over to Peta Margrie to talk about the Disability Standards themselves.

Peta Margrie (DITRDCSA): Hello. This is Peta speaking. For a visual, I'm a blonde, white female in her late 30s. I'm wearing glasses and I'm wearing a black and white polka dot top. I will be providing an overview of what's in the consultation paper, how it's structured. I'll give an insight into six of the consultation policy areas. I will then tell you about how you can respond to the consultation paper and then what we are going to do post the consultation period. And I represent the department.

So, in terms of what's in the consultation paper, it is split into four chapters, which covers different journey stages. So, the first one we are calling the Whole of Journey, and these are policy areas that apply throughout your aviation travel experience, and there are four policy areas in that chapter. The second chapter looks at the booking and planning stage of travel, and there are 14 policy areas in that chapter. We then specifically look at the airport stage of the journey, and that's when you arrive at the airport, but that's also when you reach your destination and the airport that you access there, and that has 10 policy areas. And then we also look at the journey on the aircraft, which is another 10 policy areas. So, there are 38 all up.

Under each of the policy areas, you will see a similar structure. There is the definition of an issue that we are trying to address. We summarise what we heard in the co-design workshops from people with lived experience of disability. We also summarise feedback we've already received from industry - so,

airlines and airports. And then we talk about the policy options that we have come up with in terms of how to address the issue defined at the top of each policy area. So, you'll see a regulatory proposal, which would mean how we could introduce a new Standard, a new Rule. We could also introduce guidance or we could keep existing practice. We're interested to know which of those responses would best address each issue.

We then follow each section, sorry, with a number of consultation questions, which give us a bit more of an in-depth idea on some of the considerations we should be making in terms of whether to create a Standard or what should be included in a Standard. And I should point out that you don't...in responding to the paper, you don't need to answer all of the consultation questions, and we do also welcome general feedback as well. And I will move to the next slide, thank you.

Consultation paper overview

Peta Margrie (DITRDCSA): So, now I will talk about six of the policy areas, and this is six out of the 38 that I just mentioned. So, the first one that I'll talk about is in Chapter 2, which is Booking and Planning Your Travel. And the first one is around offering passenger assistance profiles. So, in a regulatory option, in a potential Rule that the Government may introduce, airlines would be required to provide passengers with disability the option to nominate their accessibility needs in a passenger assistance profile. This information would be saved for future bookings and can be shared with airports and partner airlines to ensure coordinated facilitation.

So, we are interested to know what you would like - or what people with disability would like saved whenever they make a booking - or have the option to save, I should say. That might be things like seating requirements, it might be communication needs, it might be approvals for disability aids and assistance animals. In the consultation paper, you'll see that we're also interested to hear about the information you would like to see saved in a profile. Again, this would be optional. However, it would mean that you don't have to input the information every time you book your travel.

I'll move to the next slide. Remaining in Chapter 2, so the Booking and Planning chapter, section 2.3 looks at services that must be provided when passengers give advance notice of accessibility needs prior to travel. And the regulatory option, or the rule that is proposed there, is that, "If a person with disability makes a request for accessibility-related services at least 48 hours before scheduled departure time, airlines and 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' notice is not provided, airlines and airports must make every reasonable effort to provide the service requested by the person with disability.

And so many of you may have already experienced that there are time frames in relation to requesting accessibility services. However, what we heard during the co-design workshops was that it's not always consistent, and sometimes it doesn't always occur. So, this is designed to bring consistency to that experience. I'll move to the next slide, thank you. So, on this slide, I will highlight three sections, but they all relate to clear and timely approval processes. So, they relate to, again in the Booking and Planning chapter, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7. And those particular sections cover approvals for assistance animals, approvals for dangerous goods or goods classed as dangerous goods, and approvals for carrying disability aids in the cabin.

So, the regulatory option, or the rule, would be that, "Airlines would be required to provide clear information about the requirements for travelling with disability aids, including assistance animals and those considered dangerous goods. Airlines would be required to process applications to travel with disability aids within a specified time frame - for example, 48 hours. And airlines would also be required to provide information about how disability aids can be stored and/or used on the aircraft.

I will move to the next slide, thank you. And now moving to our next section, which is at the airport. So, Section 3.9 looks at protecting disability aids from damage and loss, and the ability to track their movement. So, the regulatory option, or the rule, would read, "Airlines must ensure disability aids are transported in cargo in a way to prevent damage. This includes through equipment, processes, and appropriate training. Once a disability aid has been transferred to an airline's custody, the airline must provide a way for the person with disability to track the location of their disability aid and ensure that it is updated in a timely manner." As some examples, this could be a push notification through an app. It could be via SMS. We are interested to know what would be ways to keep informed about where a disability aid is at any point in your journey.

So, in the consultation questions on this particular area, we are interested to understand practices that already occur to protect disability aids and any technology that may already be used, but also what should be considered as well in making a decision around a Standard or Guidance or keeping the existing practice. So, they are six areas of the consultation paper. Like I mentioned, there are 38 and, unfortunately, we don't have time to go through them all now.

But now I will move to how to respond to the consultation paper. So, in terms of a response, we are interested in, "Does the proposed Standard adequately address the issue? If not, what's missing and what other options may exist?" So, if there is another way to address the issue that is defined under each section, please let us know. And we are also interested if there are any barriers to implementing a proposed Standard. Where we are aware, for example, of other Standards or potentially operational or safety considerations, we're very interested to know that so that we know what potentially not to conflict with in creating the aviation-specific Disability Standards.

And now I'll talk about how to make a submission. So, consultation is currently open and it's open until 2 October 2026. In terms of how to make a submission, the best thing to do is to head to our website, which is www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation-disability-standards. In terms of the resources that we have available on the website, the consultation paper - that includes those 38 policy options - a number of fact sheets which provide summaries of each of the chapters, and they are available in multiple formats, such as Easy Read, Auslan, and a Braille Ready Format. If you do require other resources to understand the policy areas, please let us know and I'll talk to that shortly. In terms of submission methods, so on the website you can upload and complete a submission form.

There is also a consultation paper survey, and that includes the questions that are at the bottom of each of the policy areas. And like I said previously, you don't need to answer every question, but they are all available for you to answer. You can also either send us an email, you can email us a video or an audio submission as well. And you can also send us an email if you have any other questions or would like to discuss the consultation paper. And we also have a phonenumber available as well. I will move to the next slide in terms of our next steps.

So, following the closing of consultation, which will occur on 2 October 2026, public feedback will be assessed and analysed and will inform recommendations that are made to Government for new Standards. The Government will consider recommendations and endorse new legislation to be drafted. We then need to go away and draft what the legislation or what the Rules will look like, and then we will release that for further public comment. And that's really to ensure that we have taken the decision on what to make a Rule for and represented that appropriately in legislation. And then the final Standards, or the final Rules, need to be tabled in Parliament for a period of time prior to taking effect. And once that's occurred, the new Standards will be in place and airlines and airports will be required to comply with those new Rules. I will hand back to Jane. Thank you.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you for that, Peta. This is Jane speaking. We now have a little over 30 minutes for our representatives from the department and co-design partners to answer your questions. Returning to join us, we have both Brendon and Peta from the department, and Bastien, Matthew, and Mitchell from the co-design partners.

Questions and answers

We're now going to jump into some of your questions. Just bringing those up. Alright, so the first question that we've had come in is about, "How or why airlines lose information about assistance, despite being told well in advance and having the support confirmed before travel." Any of you who would like to take on that question, feel free to unmute and provide an answer.

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Yeah, thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking. Thanks very much for the question. This is a consistent issue that we did hear during the co-design process, that people with disability would provide information to support and to require assistance throughout their journey, and the information would be lost or the information just wouldn't be known by different people along their aviation journey.

So, one of the key measures, I guess, or one of the key Rules that we've outlined in the Disability Standards Consultation Paper is that airlines would be required to have passenger assistance profiles. And by doing that, we consider that will make it a much easier process to ensure that your information is saved.

But also that it's saved and can be used on multiple journeys so that you don't need to keep putting in the same information every time that you fly. I think another thing that we've got in there that's interested in people's views about is also how that information can then be shared along the aviation journey to make sure that every person that you come in contact with, that you require support from, has the information that they need to support you. So, that's a really good point and I think that's one of the things we're keen to address through these Aviation Disability Standards.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you, Brendon, for that answer. There's been a couple of questions that have come in about disability aids specifically, and so this one is for the department. "Will 3.9, Disability Aid Tracking, apply to both domestic and international airline travel?" There was also another question about clarifying that disability aids and assistance animals are defined under the Disability Discrimination Act separately, in Section 9.3 and Section 9.2. And that's about 3.9 as well. So, just those couple of questions about domestic and international travel being applicable, and about how it applies with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. So, in terms of the question around, "Will 3.9, Disability Aid Tracking, apply to both domestic and international airline journeys?" in relation to all the Standards, if a flight starts or finishes at an airport in Australia, then the Standards will apply. Or the Rules will apply. So, whether that is an international flight or a domestic flight, the Standards, including 3.9, would apply. Unfortunately, it wouldn't apply at an overseas airport, let's say if you're flying Los Angeles to New York, it wouldn't apply in that context. But, yes, if a flight starts and finishes at an Australian airport, that Rule will apply. And, Jane, I can also answer the question around in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act. Yes, when we talk about disability aids and assistance animals, we are meaning those that are defined under the Disability Discrimination Act. So, we will need to align with that legislation.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you very much, Peta. And we have had some comments come through where people have raised experiences they've had, particularly where they've faced challenges in travel. And I just wanted to jump in here again to encourage people to make a submission about those experiences and about whether the draft Standards would have prevented them from happening. A couple of questions now about the legislation itself. "Does this legislation cover ground staff? And does it also legislate evacuation procedures?" Happy for anyone to jump in on those ones.

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking. Just before we do jump into those questions, I just wanted to also make a comment in relation to the experiences that people are including in the Q&A, or that you might include in your submission. And this is just to say, as we articulated beforehand, the options or the co-design Standards that we have in there are based on co-design workshops that we held, where the solutions to some of the problems that people are facing when travelling by air were discussed and put forward by people with disability. But that doesn't mean every single issue that might occur may be addressed in those Standards.

And so I just want to make it really clear for people putting submissions in, it's not only to receive feedback on the Standards that are there and whether they're going to address the issues that we've heard through consultation, but also if you have other issues that aren't covered by that, we're also keen to hear about that.

Now, in relation to, "Will the Rules apply to ground staff?" so the answer to that, it sort of depends on which Rule we're talking about. But if I can take staff training, for example, yes, very much so. The intention from how it's expressed in the consultation paper is that the Standards would apply to making sure that ground staff are appropriately trained. For example, to handle mobility aids, to make sure that they aren't damaged, for example. And just in general to make sure that any equipment that's stored under the cabin is not damaged. So, the answer to that one is yes.

And then in regards to evacuation procedures, the answer to that is no. And the reason for that is that it's actually a safety regulation, and so it can't fit within the Disability Standards that we're looking to amend. But having said that, we are working with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority to make sure that that is considered as part of the Safety Regulations that they are responsible for.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you for that, Brendon. And there are some really great questions coming through here. Someone else has asked about, "Will the Standards help deal with inconsistency between airports when it comes to delivering wheelchairs to the gate?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Yes. There is a section under Chapter 4, which is On The Aircraft, and that section is 4.4, return mobility aids as soon as possible following flight arrival. And that's where we are trying to achieve that consistency in terms of returning mobility aids following a flight.

Jane Britt (TSD): That's great to hear. Thank you. And another question here is about, "How long will airlines and airports be given to comply with the Standards once they're passed?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking. That's a very good question, which we don't have an answer for at the moment. So, when we go to the next step after the Standards are agreed by Government of what to implement, when we put those into legislation and we consult on that publicly, we'll also include in there implementation time frames, which outline when airlines and airports would need to comply with those Standards.

Right now, actually, is probably also a good time for me to let people know about - separate to the Aviation Disability Standards, we have also just recently tabled in Parliament reforms to the Transport Standards that apply to all transport modes, which includes aviation but also includes other transport modes as well.

And those Standards and those changes to the Standards, for example, include staff training. So, for the first time, that will be included in the Transport Standards. It will also include requirements to provide information for people with disability to help them plan their journeys, and there's a whole heap of other reforms that are being passed there. And within that, that legislation that's currently before Parliament - and we're hopeful that that will pass in early to mid-October - it also does include those time frames for how long different transport providers have to comply. So, as I said, we will come back out, so when we've got an agreement on what the Rules will be, to seek your views on how long is reasonable to make sure that the airlines and airports will need to comply with those.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you for that. "What compensation would be available if disability aids are damaged or lost?" Obviously, a number of questions coming through here about mobility aids and wheelchairs as well. So, Brendon or Peta, would you be able to answer that one?

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Yes, thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking. Yes, I can. In terms of compensation, this is another key thing that we heard all the way back when we were consulting on the Aviation White Paper, that the compensation limits that currently exist for wheelchairs aren't adequate. In fact, I think the way that it works in domestic legislation at the moment is they're classed as luggage. And we heard very clearly that that's obviously not the case. And we've heard very clearly from people with disability, you know, that it obviously impacts their everyday life, so it is something much more important than just general luggage.

Now, the Aviation Disability Standards won't be able to address that specifically, but we do have a separate reform process that is under way at the moment, which is the Aviation Consumer Scheme. And within that, there's going to be a new Charter that's developed, and that will outline the plan is, and the consultation related to that Charter, outlines compensation related to people with their mobility aids. And, in short, what that is suggesting, that the compensation will be enabling a like-for-like replacement. So, as in no specific limit related to that. The intention there is for the mobility aid to be fixed, if it can be, and whatever the cost it is to fix that, or to be replaced like-for-like.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you. And I think this is another question really about what's in the Standards. "Will we be required..." I'm presuming this comes from someone, a person with a disability. "Will we be required to provide proof of our disabilities?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. So, there is a section in the Booking and Planning chapter which talks about clarifying where airlines can ask for medical certificates. And as part of this, we are trying to achieve more consistency and ensure, and potentially look at what evidence can be required as well. So, yes, there is a section in there. It's 2.9, Clarify when Airlines can ask for Medical Certificates. It's also worth, as part of the passenger assistance profiles, that's also something we'll consider as part of that section as well. So, we are interested to hear your thoughts on both of those. Thank you.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you. We would love to hear from everyone about their thoughts on this, and all of these other questions and answers that are coming through. The question here is about regional airports and the impact that these Standards may have there. The person has noted that they're smaller and have less ability to put in place expensive changes. So, the question is about unreasonable burden and how that will be handled.

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon here. Yes, within the Standards as they currently exist, there are some exemptions for smaller aircraft. That's outlined at the back of the consultation paper and there are some questions there related to that. And I think it relates to aircraft with fewer than 30 seats. Also then in regards to regional airports, there are some sections in there where we do...where the consultation paper does specify that there may be a limit on the size of the airport that the Standards would apply to. And within those particular sections, it does seek feedback on what would be an appropriate size. So, we do recognise there, and we have noted through our consultations to date, that there is a big difference between the services that are provided in major airports, then our larger regional airports and our smaller airports. And some of those regulations and Rules would need to reflect that. I might pass to Bastien.

Bastien Wallace (PWDA): Thank you, Bastien speaking. This is also an opportunity as well for you, if you have seen solutions in smaller airports that have really worked for you. So, I have travelled to a small airport that, although it didn't have an aerobridge, did a wonderful job with a ramp gradient that would comply with Standards. So, if there are things that you have seen that work really well for you, it's a great opportunity to share because it can be a way for a smaller airport to make things accessible and perhaps not with giant construction projects. Thank you.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Bastien. Jane speaking. And a question along these lines has come through about Launceston Airport, you know, using that as an example of a regional airport. "Will the Standards require airports currently without air bridges to install them?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCSA): Peta speaking. So, in Section 4, which is On The Aircraft, there is a Section 4.1, which is make it easier for people with disability to board and leave the aircraft. And in that section, what we are exploring is independent, step-free access in boarding the aircraft and exiting the aircraft. I think it's important to say that aerobridges aren't always suited to every aircraft. So, there are, at times, other solutions that may be used, such as a ramp, for example. But, importantly, we're trying to bring consistency to that experience and ensure that it is step-free, no matter which aircraft you may be boarding and exiting from.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. Jane speaking. I wanted to just throw in some information here for anyone who has shared their experiences about how their disability aid, or themselves, how they have been treated in the past. If you do have complaints to make, you can reach out to the Australian Human Rights Commission. We're not able to address them in this particular process with the Standards, but that's another way in which some of the things that you may have experienced can be addressed. The question here is about, "Will the Standards allow people needing disability support to now be able to book online?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCSA): Peta speaking. So, yes, we do have a couple of sections in the paper that do consider the ability to book online. We understand that at times you may be requested to make a phone call for a booking. So, under Chapter 2, the Booking and Planning section, there is 2.11, which is around "offer information needed to book flights in multiple formats". And also 2.4, which is around "ensuring that people that have accessibility needs have access to the same fare, regardless of the booking method". So, that's more about where you may still choose to book by phone. But it shouldn't mean that necessarily you pay a higher fare. So, it is covered off in a couple of sections in the consultation paper, but that is something we're trying to achieve.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. Jane speaking. We have so many fabulous questions still coming through, so please keep them coming. The question here is, "Will assistance for transfers be stored in someone's travel profile?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCSA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking here. So, yes, I think the idea of the passenger assistance profile is that you could request assistance in that manner. Also, just for awareness, there's a section in the Disability Standards consultation paper which outlines clarifying roles between airlines and airports. And so we have outlined in there that a clear requirement that the responsibility for things like transfers needs to be clear between who has responsibility between an airport and an airline. And we have been having some conversations with airlines and airports to make sure that there's agreement between airlines and airports about where those responsibilities lie, and that then we can make that clear to all passengers so that you know exactly who it is that you need to talk to, to support you in that. But the idea of the passenger assistance profiles - and we'll also seek feedback on this as well - is to ensure that the information that you provide in that can transfer through different airlines and different airports as well.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Brendon. Jane speaking. The question here is about staff training, and the person wants to know, "Will a person with lived experience be involved in that training?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. Yes. That is one of the items that we are suggesting should occur in the delivery and design of staff training.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. One person has noted that, "Air travel is only one aspect of the passenger journey. What linkages do you have with the wider transport sectors?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking. Before I answer that question, I also just wanted to say, I can see through the attendee list, we actually have some members who joined our co-design workshops online with us today - I just wanted to give a big shout-out to you. Thanks very much for coming along to today's session. But more importantly, thanks very much for being part of our co-design workshops. Your time and the input that you put into there was extremely valuable. And I hope that you can see the input that you put in there, in the consultation paper.

Yes, so the answer to that question is yes. Two things to say about that. One is that the broader Transport Standards apply to all forms of transport. And so in that way, it does link between different forms of transport. More specifically, the department is also developing something called the Whole Journey Guide, which is helping to support people beyond just the compliance requirements to make sure that the journey, your whole, entire journey, is accessible.

And probably the third thing that I will say specifically to the Aviation Disability Standards is there are proposed Standards in there which do require that it's mainly related to an airport, but that an airport can provide assistance for people with disability to move through the airport to a form of transport that they choose to leave that airport from, whether that be a public transport option or a private transport option.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Brendon. Jane speaking. A question here says, "Can the legislation mandate for certain accommodations on board? Like Braille numbers on arm rests or toilet provisions, et cetera?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. So, yes, there are a few sections which, in the consultation paper, which look at your examples there. So, Chapter 4, On The Aircraft, there is a Section 4.9, which looks at a requirement for aircraft to have accessible passenger controls. And that does include...and that does include things like Braille on the seats and other examples as well. But if there's anything we've missed or you would like additionally considered in that section, please let us know.

And then in relation to toilets specifically, 4.7 does look at improving the accessibility of toilets on aircraft. And it sets out quite a few different rules or requirements that do not only apply to bigger aircraft with two aisles, but also single-aisle aircraft as well. And some examples include better, if you like, facilities in the toilet, but also the overall size of the toilet as well, making it easier to use. So, yes, 4.7 looks specifically at toilets. Thanks, Jane.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you, Peta. Jane speaking. If a person can't transfer out of their mobility device themselves, will an Eagle hoist be available at all times?

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. I can jump in there again. So, there is a section under Chapter 3, At The Airport, which under Section 3.10, it looks at providing choice for passengers in transferring from an airline wheelchair, for example, to a seat. And, of course, the other way as well. And, yes, part of the consideration there is around the equipment that is available to support that choice as well, such as an Eagle hoist. Thanks, Jane.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. And there was a question that came through before about this recording and people being able to access it before they make their own submission. A recording of this event, and information about questions and answers, will be made available online in the coming days. And when this session wraps up, I will be able to tell you a little bit more about what happens after this particular information session.

Now to continue with some of the questions that are coming through, there was a process question here about, "How did we go about recruiting people with lived experience? And what criteria was applied to selection?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Thanks, Jane. Brendon speaking here. I might also get our co-design partners, if they wish to comment on this as well, because they were heavily involved in that process too. But in short, we worked with the co-design partners, People With Disability Australia, and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations mainly, Justice Equity Centre were involved but not as heavily involved in the recruitment side of things. So, we selected - jointly we selected based on three principles. One was people with lived experience and interest in air travel, so to make sure people who are firsthand experience with air travel, as well as those who wish to travel by air but have faced barriers preventing them to do so.

We also - the second principle was making sure that we had a diverse representation. So, participants who reflect the diversity of the disability community, including people from a wide range of disability types, cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and age groups, as well as valuing the perspectives of families, carers, and disability organisations. And the third principle was around the geographic location. So, participants who represent the varied experience of air travel across Australia, including people from major cities, regional communities, and different states and territories. And I would also say, and a big thankyou to The Social Deck, who also helped us with the recruitment of co-design participants.

So, in terms of then creating changes or how you do that, there's also information in there about what we think we might need to put in terms of rules or regulations around that, to make sure that you have access to your information and that you're able to change it, able to change it easily. And, of course, privacy - I know in our conversations with the airlines and airports, that's very much at the forefront of their minds in terms of making sure that privacy is maintained.

And I think another key point that I'd make is the way that we've suggested in the consultation paper, and from what we've heard previously, is that the passenger assistance profile wouldn't be mandatory for people with disability. So, it's just an option for you to use to get the benefits that we think that many people in the disability community would like, from having that thing, but it's not a requirement that you do have one.

In terms of sharing it with international airports, that's a really good question. It's not really dealt with in the consultation paper. So, in terms of questions or thoughts about how it can be shared between different airlines or shared between different providers in the aviation journey domestically, that's definitely in there. But in terms of sharing it with international airports, that is not something that's contemplated in there. So, you know, very interested in views related to that, if you have them.

Mitchell Skipsey (JEC): Mitchell speaking. Sorry, if I might just jump in and say I think that's a really good example of the kinds of things that submissions from people are perfectly placed to raise. And I think will really improve the final Standards if there are points that haven't been thought up or aren't addressed by the consultation paper and the proposals. I really want to stress the value of saying, "This is something I would like to, from my own experience, see the Standards cover." And that also applies to a lot of the questions I think we've heard in other places about, "Will the Standards cover this thing? How will they balance these different kinds of competing imperatives?"

I can say, from litigating around these questions, we know that there are a range of views that sometimes airlines and airports will have one view, and sometimes passengers will have different views. I think it's really important that, if you have these kinds of questions about, "Will the Standards cover these things, or should they cover this?" that, again, that gets heard in submissions as well as in the conversation today. So, I want to really stress the value of participating in the consultation process to make a lot of these points.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you, Mitchell. And I certainly would second that point about the importance of hearing all of this. So, for everyone listening, if you do have thoughts about this, please make a submission. A question here is about, "How will industry compliance be reported? Will there be independent auditing?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. Thanks very much for that question. So, within the - there's probably two key points to make here. One is, within the Aviation White Paper itself, it outlined a commitment from Government that Government would be auditing and making sure that there is compliance with the Standards. Now, separate to that, we've also been working in a separate process on developing guidelines for reporting of compliance against the Disability Standards. Now, these are the Disability Standards as they exist at the moment, and once we get to the point where these Aviation Disability Standards are included, that will include that as well. And so we're very keen to... The guidance that we have available on our website related to reporting, I encourage you to engage with that as well. And if you have views and thoughts on that, we're very happy to receive that.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Brendon. A couple of questions have come through on the back of the earlier discussion about training. "Will it also cover transit staff? And will training cover how to properly use an Eagle hoist?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. Just regarding staff training, so within Section 1, so that's the Whole of Journey section, 1.2 explores making sure that staff are trained to support people with disability. Just in terms of transit staff, I will just clarify that. In terms of our consultation paper, it's looking at airport and airline staff, including contractors. But there are - and as Brendon has talked about - the broader Transport Standards, which may cover staff that work on a bus or on a train, for example. So, there are training requirements coming into place shortly for those staff as well. In terms of the specific question around, "Will it cover how to properly use an Eagle hoist?" so what we have said in the training section is that it will need to cover specifically where you are supporting people with disability to transfer, which does include an Eagle hoist. So, we have specifically talked about that in terms of the training required for staff responsible for that transfer. If there are other areas, though, that you think we specifically need to explore, we're keen to hear your views on that. But the section is 1.2, which explores staff training. Thanks, Jane.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. There are questions about future innovations. So, "Will the Standards include or allow for future technologies? For example, being able to stay in your wheelchair on the flight?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. So, the answer to that is, not in the current form that we have in the consultation paper. Specifically on that example that you have there, it was the assessment going through consultation was that the technology just isn't there at the moment to support a Standard related to staying in your wheelchair on-flight. But we have heard, and we did hear throughout the consultations as well, that there are some innovations that are occurring that may enable that in the future, which is a very exciting piece of work that we'll all stay engaged with, I'm sure.

Now, the Transport Standards themselves are required to be reviewed every five years, and so we'll be making sure in those reviews, where the technology does get to a point where that might be possible, that then governments can consider whether those Standards should be put in place at that time. That's how we've sort of put it in the consultation paper. But, again, as Mitch said previously, if you have different views to that, we'd very much welcome that.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you, Brendon. "Will the Standards specify what medication or disability aids you can have in your carry-on luggage?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): So, there is a section within the Booking and Planning chapter, which is 2.7, and it's titled "ensure disability aids can be transported for free and in cabin where possible." And what we're looking at there is the types of disability aids, including medication, for example, and it's more about airlines being really clear about what you can and can't bring in the cabin. But we are interested to know potentially some specific details there, through the consultation. But we do acknowledge there is a broad range of medications that may be difficult to specify, but we are still interested in your feedback. But that section is really designed to make it very clear at the point of booking what you can and can't bring onto the aircraft. But also if there are any approvals required with that, that those time frames are really clearly set as well at your time of booking. So, Section 2.7 explores that. Thank you, Jane.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you very much. And, "In regards to getting to airports, some are really good and others are poor. Will the Standards look at improving access to airports?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): So, the Standards do have proposals in there to support people at an airport getting from however you arrive at the airport to the check-in. And the Standards themselves sort of outline that that is proposed to be an airport responsibility, to ensure that that access exists. The Standards themselves - it sort of depends on where this questioner was going with this - the Standards themselves don't look at how do you get to the airport itself, though.

Now, the broader Transport Standards and the way that they operate mean that, you know, obviously the Disability Discrimination Act and the Transport Standards apply to those methods of public transport, if you're arriving to the airport by public transport. So, that does exist there. But in terms of when you're at the airport, yes, there is a Standard that looks at making sure that the journey from however you arrive at the airport - whether that's public or private transport - you have an accessible journey to get to check-in.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Brendon. Someone said, "Travelling with disability can result in long delays, often interfering with forward travel connections. Will the Standards help to reduce these delays or is there a potential for these changes to add further delays?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. So, this is a question where we genuinely would value feedback about your view on what that means for the Standards that you think that that will have an impact on. So, one of the things we need to do in our advice to Government is provide them advice on the impact. From what we heard through consultation, we do consider that - you know, talking about it as a whole - that these changes will mean an improvement in the timeliness for people travelling with disability. And there's a number of particular sections that we consider that deal with that. One is the passenger assistance profiles, so being able to have clearly in there the information that you need to fly should make it easier, not only for the person flying but also for the airline and the airport to make sure that the journey is as accessible as possible and can be done in a timely manner.

There's also sections in there related to staff training, which we think will improve the staff awareness and ability to support people, which will also help make sure that there aren't delays. And then the third one is just really in regards to providing as much information as possible in a transparent and accessible way, to make sure that you have the information that you need to have an accessible journey, but also that you can provide the information that you need to provide to support airlines and airports to make the journey successful. So, we think there's a number of things in it that will, but obviously if you do not think that, or if there's different measures in there that you think, "Actually, I think this is gonna create further delays," then we would be very interested to hear that, to hear that from you.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Brendon. "Will airports and airlines need to report how many wheelchairs have been damaged?"

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. So, under Section 1, which is the - Chapter 1, sorry, the Whole of Journey chapter, under 1.4, "report on how the Standards are met", one of the areas that we are looking at requiring airports and airlines to report on is the number of mobility aids that have been damaged and/or lost while in their care. So, yes, that is something we are looking to specifically report on, on an annual basis. Thanks, Jane.

Jane Britt (TSD): Yeah, thank you, Peta. There is a question here about, "Is it likely these changes will result in additional fees being applied to passengers with disabilities?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. I might also - I will touch on...I will ask maybe you to speak on this as well, Mitch, to clarify what I say. Mitch and the JEC know very well how the Disability Discrimination Act operates. My view, and it would be my own interpretation of the legislation, is that that would not be allowed, that would be a form of discrimination, should a person with disability be charged a different fare based on their disability. So, the answer from me on that is, no, it will not result in passengers with disabilities being charged additional fees to access aviation. But Mitch will let me know if I've misread the DDA.

Mitchell Skipsey (JEC): Mitchell speaking. Look, I think that's substantially right, Brendon. I think in many cases, it would be an issue for airlines or airports to try and do that under discrimination law, perhaps consumer law as well. A variety of problems. And there are many places in which I think the Standards themselves propose to say that various kind of indirect charges that are sometimes applied to people with disability, as a kind of "disability tax" for travelling, that those are also designed to be at least reduced, if not eliminated, such as various costs that might be associated with the various form of ticket you might need to get, or so on.

There are places in which, though, I would repeat my earlier point - some of these questions about should you, if you need a particular seat, have to pay for a different kind of seating arrangement if that would otherwise be more expensive, or how do we accommodate things like a person travelling with a carer or a support person, and so on? Those are questions that different people will have different views on. Airlines and airports will have views on those, people with disability will have different views on those. And so where there are potential effects like that, please do make submissions and tell us about what's important and how we can make sure that the fairest results are reached.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you for that, Brendon and Mitchell as well for providing a bit more info on that. We have one final question before we do wrap up for today. And if anyone's question we haven't got to, we will be looking at those after the meeting and ensuring that some answers are provided. But one question here is about, "Would one airline's dangerous goods clearance paper also cover other airlines, or would we need to have one from each airline?"

Brendon Buckley (DITRDCA): Brendon speaking. And I might ask Peta also to jump in here if I don't get this correct. But the intention behind the Disability Standards is to ensure that there is consistency in the way that airlines ask you to provide that information. Particularly also obviously through the passenger assistance profile, we're hoping to ensure that instances of that are greatly reduced, or if not, even eliminated. I will also say that the Disability Standards themselves don't go to the detail of saying exactly what you've said there - that one assistance, or one particular declaration that you provide to one airline can be exactly the same as a form that you provide to another one. But it would be our intention to work with airlines and airports to remove the inconsistency wherever that occurs.

Peta Margrie (DITRDCA): Peta speaking. Yes, the only thing I will add to that is that we are seeking feedback, more likely from industry, about how information could potentially be shared to really reduce, potentially, those instances of having to have different profiles with different airlines. But that's something we are seeking more information on through the consultation paper. Thank you.

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Peta. And thank you, Peta, Brendon, Bastien... Sorry, Bastien does have a hand up, so I will go to you before I do a wrap-up of this Q&A.

Bastien Wallace (PWDA): Bastien speaking. Look, the only variation that might occur is some airlines use different aeroplanes than other airlines, and that can affect what can be carried, as can different aircraft sizes. So, talking about your experiences really helps, but also we need to be aware that sometimes different sizes and types of aircraft put limitations that industry, with the best will in the world, can't overcome easily.

Closing remarks

Jane Britt (TSD): Thank you, Bastien. And I want to thank Peta, Brendon, Bastien, Mitchell, and Matthew for your time today. Thank you for answering those questions. And, unfortunately, that's all the time that we do have. However, questions that we weren't able to get to today, the department will take on notice and publish on the consultation website, together with the recording of today's session. Again, to access the consultation paper and make a submission, you can go to www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation-disability-standards. That should be on your screen now. You can also find information on the Aviation Disability Standards on the department's website, at www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation-accessibility. And you can also email AviationAccessibility@infrastructure.gov.au or phone 1800 621 372. We've also put these details into the chat again as well. The consultation website will take you through all the options for giving input or you could send your submission to that email. Again, the submission process is open until 2 October.

Thanks again to our panel and other speakers. And thank you for joining us today for this open session. As I said in the beginning, this is not the Disability Representative Organisations session, but I noticed some of the people here today are also from DROs. There will be another session coming up shortly for Disability Representative Organisations. Thank you for attending and we look forward to receiving your input. Have a wonderful rest of your day. Thank you.

(End of Transcript)

Transcript prepared by: Access Captions



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