



Protecting the rights of people with disability on public transport: changes to the Transport Standards

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What is this document about?

This document explains the purpose of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (called the Transport Standards) and explains some of the new rules that will make public transport safer, easier and more accessible for people with disability.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because they have a disability, including on public transport. The Transport Standards set rules that operators and providers must follow to ensure their services are accessible. Operators and providers own and run public transport. Public transport includes vehicles like buses, trains, trams, light rail, ferries, airplanes and taxis. It also includes stops and stations like train stations, ferry wharves, bus stops, airports and taxi ranks.

On 13 October 2026 the Australian Government made changes to the rules in the Transport Standards. The government worked closely with people with disability, the public transport industry and state, territory and local governments to develop the new rules. This document provides a summary of the new rules and explains when you can expect to see changes on the public transport you use.

This document does not explain all the changes to the Transport Standards. Detailed information about the full list of changes is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/transportstandards.

When will I see the changes to the public transport I use?

The government encourages public transport operators and providers to follow the new rules as soon as possible. However, the implementation of these rules needs careful planning to make sure public transport works well, and it will take time before you see all the changes on the public transport you use.

For example, some of the changes will only happen when a public transport operator or provider buys a new vehicle or upgrades your stop or station. For other rules, operators and providers will have 5 or 10 years to make changes to upgrade their existing vehicles, stops and stations. A full list of when each change must be made is in Part 35 of the Transport Standards.

Summary of changes to the Transport Standards

This section of the document explains how changes to the Transport Standards will make different parts of your journey safer, easier and more accessible.

Journey planning and information

The changes to the Transport Standards include new rules to help you plan your trip, so your journey is safe and easy. Information should be easy to find and use, and in a format you can understand.

The new rules mean public transport operators and providers must:

- give you information in different formats, including both online and offline. This includes information about timetables, tickets, fares and routes.
- share information in the way you find most accessible, such as audio, large print or braille. If that is not possible, public transport staff must help you.
- make sure information and communication technology (ICT) is accessible and easy to use. This includes information screens, digital ticketing booths and websites.
- make sure websites and apps meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines set rules for websites and apps so they can be used by people with disability easily. It includes rules for things like how information should be written, contrast for people with low vision, and image descriptions for people using screen readers.
- share information about features of vehicles, stops and stations which will make your journey easier, such as ramps and lifts, or any barriers, such as steps.
- tell you about any planned changes that may impact your journey, such as a bus replacing a train. They also need to tell you about this in more than one way, such as by providing website updates and audio announcements on the platform.
- on a bookable journey, such as a long-distance bus or train, you must be allowed to book an available seat that suits your travelling needs, for example, near access paths or toilets. Carers and assistance animals must also be able to sit with you.

Operators and providers of public transport must make these changes five years from when the new rules were made.

Staff training

During your journey, you may talk with public transport staff at different stages – including at the ticketing gate, when boarding a vehicle, or when asking for help at a stop or station. Staff should treat you with respect and dignity, answer your questions and help you find your way.

The changes to the Transport Standards include new rules to make sure public transport staff receive training. The training will make sure public transport staff know about the rules and better understand what support you might need on your journey. Public transport operators and providers must talk to people with disability when developing the training to make sure staff know how to best support people with disability.

The staff training must be:

- tailored to the role of each staff member.
- completed by new public transport staff when starting their job.
- completed again every year by all public transport staff.

Public transport staff must start receiving this training five years from when the new rules were made.

Signs

Signs help you find your way during your trip. You may find signs at stops and stations, and when travelling in a public transport vehicle. The updated Transport Standards include new rules for signs, including digital signs and signs with braille and tactile lettering. These changes will make it easier to find and understand signs.

The new rules will:

- make braille and tactile signs better and make sure they are placed in important areas.
- make signs clearer with better contrast between text and the sign background.
- make the information shown on digital screens easier to read, for example, by showing the information for a longer time so you have time to read it all.
- make sure signs show you which train cars are accessible, what features they have and where to board them.
- make sure signs show you where to find accessible toilets.

All new signs must meet these rules.

At public transport stops and stations

Stops and stations are places where you can get on, get off or change vehicle. These places must be accessible and safe so you can complete your trip. You should be able to find your way around stops and stations easily, and it should be clear where you can go for help if needed.

Changes will improve the accessibility and safety of bus stops, train stations, tram and light rail stops, ferry terminals, airports, taxi ranks and nearby locations such as car parks.

The new rules will ensure stops and stations include:

- access paths that connect you on the shortest route to accessible facilities such as toilets, and to connect you to important nearby locations such as taxi zones and accessible parking spaces.
- flat and stable places for mobility aids to rest beside seated resting points along access paths.
- a way to speak with the driver to signal your need to use a boarding device.
- better contrast of door handles, floors, walls and other things near access paths that you could bump into, such as poles and columns. This will help people with low vision when moving around stops and stations.
- better use of raised patterns on the ground (called tactile ground surface indicators) to help guide people with low vision along the safest route and warn you about hazards, like gaps or platform edges.
- power-assisted doors on all unisex accessible toilets to make them easier to access.
- lifts with better signs, braille and tactile information, audio announcements, and accessible ways to call for help in an emergency.
- safer stairs and handrails for you to hold to help guide you and stop you being knocked over in busy areas.
- better designs for ticket machines and card readers so they are easier to use, including better height and spacing around them for mobility aid or wheelchair users.

Some of the changes will be made sooner than others. You will see some changes, such as improvements to accessible toilet doors, when a public transport operator or provider upgrades your stop or station. For other changes, such as improvements to tactile ground surface indicators, operators and providers have 10 years to upgrade their stops and stations. A full list of when each change must be made is in Part 35 of the Transport Standards.

Getting on and off public transport

It is important that the places where you board public transport vehicles are safe. New rules will improve the design of these places and make it easier for you to get on and off a vehicle.

Operators and providers will need to:

- make sure the place you get on and off a vehicle is firm and stable.
- have a set place for you to go to when you need to ask someone for help to get on your vehicle.
- make fixed gangways you use to get on a ferry safe. For example, the slope of the gangway must be safe and there must be handrails for you to hold onto.
- have barriers on the edge of boarding devices such as ramps to prevent people falling off.
- make the first and last space at passenger loading zones and taxi ranks accessible. For example, by having raised patterns on the ground to help guide people with low vision (tactile ground surface indicators) and kerb ramps to make it easy for wheelchairs to board a vehicle.
- make the design of assistance buttons easier for you to use if you have trouble using your hands or have a hearing impairment.

Some of the changes will be made sooner than others. You will see some changes, such as the inclusion of edge barriers on boarding ramps, when a public transport operator or provider upgrades their ramp. For other changes, such as improvements to the design of taxi ranks, infrastructure providers have 10 years to upgrade these places. A full list of when each change must be made is in Part 35 of the Transport Standards.

Your onboard experience

When you are travelling on public transport you should feel safe and comfortable, know where you are, and be able to tell the driver when you want to get off.

The new rules will make getting to your seat safer by:

- making it easier to use automatic and power assisted doors.
- making door frames easy to see so you do not trip or hit your head.
- making sure grabrails are easy to see and are placed in locations where they are needed, such as along access paths and near seating and allocated spaces. New rules also make sure they are not placed too close to other things so passengers using wheelchairs or other mobility aids can use them.

Allocated spaces and priority seats will be better by:

- making sure allocated spaces are not blocked by things like seats and poles which make it hard for passengers with wheelchairs to use them.
- increasing the number of priority seats on a vehicle.
- making sure manoeuvring areas in vehicles are wide enough and do not overlap with allocated spaces nearby so people using larger mobility aids have space.
- making sure priority seating looks different to other seating, so it is easy to find. Signs will also tell other passengers that priority seating is for people with disability.
- making sure there is a safe space under priority seats for your assistance animal, like a guide dog.

The new rules will also make it easier to know where you are on your public transport journey. Operators and providers will need to show you where you are at in your journey on a screen and through audio announcements, including via hearing loop technology, so you know when your stop is.

You will see some changes, such as easier to see grabrails, when a public transport operator or provider upgrades their vehicles. For other changes, such as increasing the number of priority seats, public transport operators have 5 years to upgrade their vehicles. A full list of when each change must be made is in Part 35 of the Transport Standards.

What you can do if you have been treated unfairly

If you think you have been treated unfairly on public transport, you can make a complaint.

You can complain directly to the public transport service you use.

You can also complain to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

- They can give you a translator or interpreter if you need one.
- They will talk with you about your problem and support you through the process.

For more information about how to complain to the AHRC, visit

<https://humanrights.gov.au/complaints/complaint-areas/disability-discrimination>

Further information

For more information about the changes to the Transport Standards, visit

www.infrastructure.gov.au/transportstandards.