



Questions and answers

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

Thursday 3 September 2026

9:30am—11:00am AEST

This document covers participants' questions that were not answered during the aviation disability standards information session. Some questions have been edited for clarity or combined to address similar themes.

Questions and answers

What happens if your flight is cancelled? Will there be an obligation to notify customers of any alternatives or booking adjustments if a flight is cancelled or if the type of aircraft changes?

Section 2.12 of the consultation paper proposes a requirement for airlines to inform people of changes or disruptions to their flights in accessible formats (such as Auslan, Easy Read, Braille, or direct assistance). This would include communicating whether changes to the flight would affect the airline's ability to transport the passenger or their mobility device. Airlines would be required to communicate alternative flights that would be able to accommodate the passenger and their mobility device.

Why do airlines give people with disability an aisle seat?

The department heard from people with disability that sometimes airlines will reassign people with disability aisle seats without taking into consideration the preferences or needs of people with disability.

Section 2.14 of the consultation paper proposes requiring airlines to take into account the person with disability's opinion with respect to which seat would best meet the accessibility needs of that person.

A big part of service delivery for people with disability is about being flexible and adaptive to needs. This is a difficult element to comply to. Has this been considered? How?

Throughout the co-design workshops, people with disability emphasised the idea that people with disability are the experts in their own needs and the importance of choice and maintaining independence. In our policy options, we have tried to reflect this by creating standards that promote independence and choice for passengers with disability. For example, section 3.10 in the consultation paper proposes a requirement for airlines to give passengers with disability choice about how they would like to be transferred from their own mobility aid to the airline's mobility aid or seat.

Some other sections propose requirements for airlines and airports to make every reasonable effort to accommodate even last-minute requests.

We would welcome any feedback on the proposed standards and whether they consider the flexibility and adaptive needs of people with disability.

A big issue is damaged disability aids during transit. What safeguards will be in place to mitigate this risk?

Section 3.9 of the consultation paper proposes a requirement for airlines to ensure through equipment, processes, and appropriate training that disability aids are stored and secured to prevent damage. This includes equipment such as custom cargo containers or secure tie down systems.

Additionally, the Aviation Consumer Protection framework is considering compensation and other remedies where wheelchairs and mobility aids are damaged during transit.

Will the new standards cover things like the Qantas Carer Concession Card?

Section 2.8 of the consultation paper proposes options to clarify requirements for people with disability travelling with a carer or companion. This includes a requirement for airlines to maintain consistent policies regarding passengers travelling with a carer or companion.

It is out of scope for the Aviation Disability Standards to standardise a mandatory discount on airfares for carers. However, the consultation paper proposes the government provide guidance to recommend airlines to offer a discount for a carer travelling with a person with disability.

Will the standards cover cafes and shops at the airport?

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, which the Aviation Disability Standards will sit under, will apply to public transport service providers, which includes airlines and airport operators. This means retail outlets at the airport may not have obligations under these standards. However, they would have broader obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Section 1.1 of the consultation paper considers the roles and responsibilities of airports and airlines in providing assistance for people with disability, such as wheelchair assistance in moving around the airport. In the consultation paper, the department asks whether assistance should include access to food and shopping outlets in the airport. We would welcome any feedback on whether the standards should cover access to food and shopping outlets.

The accessibility of cafes and shops is also covered by the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, which set standards for the design, construction and accessibility of buildings.

Will the staff training standards include airport lounge staff?

Forthcoming requirements under the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport will require public transport operators, including airlines, to provide training to staff aimed at preventing disability discrimination. This training must be tailored to the roles and responsibilities of individual staff members.

We would like to receive feedback as part of the consultation process, particularly through Section 1.2 of the consultation paper. This can include where clarification may be required on who should be included in the staff training standards.

Can the standards require the generation of a feedback form for travellers with disabilities to complete at the end of a journey?

Section 1.3 of the consultation paper proposes requiring airports and airlines to establish disability reference groups. These reference groups would be consulted before implementation of significant changes that would affect a user's experience of the airport or airline.

The consultation paper does not consider requiring airlines and airports to collect feedback from travellers with disability at the end of their journey. However, we would welcome any feedback on whether the standards should include mandatory collection of feedback from travellers with disability and how that feedback should be used and stored.

Some airlines already provide general customer feedback surveys. Incoming reforms to the Transport Standards will include website accessibility requirements that will apply to airlines and airports. However, we would welcome further feedback on whether these general feedback surveys should be offered in accessible formats through this consultation process.

Legally, what avenues will be available should we need to lodge formal complaints about individual staff as well as airline procedures not followed?

The existing complaints framework under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), administered by the Australian Human Rights Commission, will continue to apply.

If you believe you have been discriminated against due to your disability, you may wish to lodge a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission, who have the authority to investigate and attempt to conciliate complaints of discrimination.

If you have not already done so, you may wish to raise complaints directly with the relevant airport, airline or travel agent.

The Aviation Consumer Ombuds Scheme is not currently legislated, however, once the legislation has passed, the scheme will be able to investigate complaints against airports and airlines. More information about making a complaint can be found at

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/aviation/aviation-consumer-ombuds-scheme/making-complaint>.

What will non-compliance mean for airlines and airports? Will there be a penalty of some kind?

The proposed Aviation Disability Standards would sit under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and, as such, the process for non-compliance set out under the DDA would apply to the Aviation Disability Standards.

Under the DDA, the Australian Human Rights Commission has the power to investigate and attempt to conciliate complaints of discrimination. If the conciliation is unsuccessful, in certain circumstances, legal proceedings may be commenced regarding the complaint in the Federal Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

The DDA is currently under review by the Government.

Noting that reforms are important, will there be any consideration by government or the department given to the potentially significant costs that will flow through to airlines and then onto all airline customers, as a result of any changes?

As part of the process of developing new standards, the department is undertaking a cost-benefit analysis to inform recommendations to government on the new standards. This analysis will consider the costs to airlines and airports of complying with the new standards. Through the consultation paper, we welcome any data and feedback on costs that may be incurred to support this analysis.

When going through security screening, why do they need to swab you and your wheelchair and not everyone else?

Security screening requirements are established by the Department of Home Affairs. Airports and their service providers are responsible for delivering passenger screening services and implementing screening procedures that meet these requirements. Many of those requirements are classified, for security reasons, however we understand where a passenger is unable to go through the body scanner Explosive Trace Detection must be used in conjunction with other methods.

Possible changes to those security screening requirements are not within scope of this consultation.

Section 3.7 of the consultation paper includes proposals that would ensure screening staff are trained in screening disability aids and can communicate screening protocols via verbal or visual clues or using additional instructions. We would welcome any feedback on the proposed standard.

(End of questions and answers)