Submission in response to:

Reform of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport: Consultation Regulation Impact Statement

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About Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia (ATSA)

Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia (ATSA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Reform of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport: Consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

ATSA is a national organisation representing assistive technology (AT) suppliers, including manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers, tradespeople and technicians.

Our 145 members comprise businesses and not-for-profit organisations and range from small family-owned concerns to multinational organisations throughout Australia.

It is estimated that, excluding AT for communication and sensory disabilities, approximately 80% of the AT in Australia passes through the hands of ATSA members.

ATSA is a registered not-for-profit charity with the ACNC and requires that its members adhere to a comprehensive Code of Practice on the provision, sales and servicing of AT. We are also a member of the Australian Ethical Health Alliance.

General Comments

The implications of changes to the Standards for suppliers and end users of AT mobility equipment imported or manufactured in Australia is very significant. Any changes to the Standards that require a design change in AT equipment must allow for sufficient lead time for changes to AT items to be included in the design, manufacturing and importing processes.

It is noted that ramps for buses and trains (with the exception of gangways for ferries) have been excluded from this phase of the review. This is another significant issue for clients as most ramps are rated for 300kg, with the issue being that more complex (and supportive) wheelchairs often weigh up to 200kg and a client can weigh more than 100kg, thereby being over the safe working limit. We recommend this issue be considered in future phases of the Standards Review.

Response to Questions

Mobility Aid Safety

Which option do you prefer: non-regulatory or status quo?

ATSA recommends:

a) The Transport Standards include a reference to reference to both AS/NZS 10542.1:2015 and AS/NZS ISO 10865.1:2015 and that the current review of ISO 7176-5 and flow on

changes to the AS/NZS standards also be monitored and updated as the reviews are completed.

b) The Whole Journey Guide be further amended by including the wording underlined below:

"Operators and providers should consider measures to minimise or contain the movement of mobility aids in allocated spaces when in transit. The type of forces and movements to be contained will be different for each mode and should be considered when developing solutions to contain movement. The minimum space for a mobility device should take into account seating, handrails or other fixtures. ….".

A passive restraint system contains movement of a mobility aid within an allocated space. As section 9.7 of the Transport Standards Guideline provides, a three-sided zone allowing the user to drive into the zone and prevent the possibility of tipping or a vertical surface that restricts the movement of a mobility aid are examples of passive restraints. Where a passive or active system is offered on a service and it is not a requirement for all other passengers to wear safety belts, the use of these systems is at the discretion of the user. It should also be noted that there may be technical constraints in adopting an active system as there is not a solution that may fit the needs of all users and device types.

These changes would support the implementation of Section 9.11 of the Transport Standards outlines requirements regarding movement of a mobility aid in allocated space. 9.11 Movement of mobility aid in allocated space an allocated space must contain movement of a mobility aid towards the front or sides of a conveyance.

Would mobility device users be receptive to the installation of active restraints in public transport conveyances?

The use of any passive or active restraints must align with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support) Rules 2018. Refer to the following link- Regulated restrictive practices | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (ndiscommission.gov.au)

The above amendments would ensure the independence of the device user during their travel on public transport.

What are the barriers, operational costs and other considerations that may arise if staff are required to assist customers in utilising an active restraint system?

The above amendments also prevent any additional operational cost and time to the driver.

Digital Information Screens

ATSA recommends that the effectiveness of Section 27.1 of the Transport Standards which currently provides that 'general information about transport services must be accessible to all passengers' could be improved with the implementation of an App (for smart and

android devices) that could be used on mobile phones, iPads etc which links to digital displays. The appropriate suppliers of AT and PEAK bodies should be consulted in the design of the App.

Communication during service disruption

ATSA recommends the introduction of an App (for smart and android devices) for people with disability to receive information during service disruption. This would ensure that people with physical, hearing or vision loss would all be able to receive the required information. This is particularly important for people who rely on communication technology and AT such as eye gaze screens. The appropriate suppliers of AT and PEAK bodies should be consulted in the design of the App.

Emergency Egress

ATSA recommends the introduction of an App (for smart and android devices) for people with disability to receive information during service disruption. This would ensure that people with physical, hearing or vision loss would all be able to receive the required information. This App would also link to information during service disruption and the digital information screens. This is particularly important for people who rely on communication technology and AT such as eye gaze screens. The appropriate suppliers of AT and PEAK bodies should be consulted in the design of the App.