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To Whom it May Concern.

Please find the following as my

Submission to the Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

Since 2012, my travelling experiences have changed considerably. Beforehand I used an electric scooter and was able to walk short distances. Since August 2012 I have been totally dependent on the use of an electric wheelchair for my mobility and no longer able to walk or stand alone. Therefore accessible public transport is a major concern, always has been, but now even moreso.

As a member of the All Aboard Network and continually advocating for accessible Public transport, disturbingly, I find that accessible public transport seems to be rather low on the priority agenda of our Governments and stakeholders for the Governments. It is very frustrating to note that progress nowhere near matches the guidelines set down in the DSAPT. Eg; Trams to be something like 95% independently accessible by end of 2017, and in reality we see a less than 20% independently accessible Network.

Trains, again we see progress way behind any appropriate schedule considering the Network is supposed to be fully independently accessible by 2032. Even with the largest projects we have seen on metropolitan train Network in Melbourne, actual independent accessibility.

A few examples I mention here. Suburban station we see a very slow rollout of the raised platforms for entering the front doors of the trains, and still nothing concrete in place to raise the remainder of older platforms, even as we are now witnessing the aging population (Baby Boomers) not renewing their licenses and heading towards the usage of Public Transport.

Also, at stations where the raised platforms are in place, we are constantly still requiring the deployment of the ramps due to the ever changing dimensions of platform meeting train doorways. Caused by the obvious variables of an unstable foundation (rock / gravel) movement, wear and tear of wheels and age or repair of suspension systems.

Myself, I try my best not to use buses, as I find they are the hardest and most awkward form of travelling in a wheelchair. This is due to several challenges that seem to be not being met. eg; Room only for 2 chairs, and having to compete with parents with prams for the allocated spaces. Drivers not trained correctly in the deploying of the ramps, and not clearing the aisle or allocated spaces for us to park safely. What seems to be the continual refusal by Governments and bus companies to look at vehicle designs overseas that enable better access for wheelchairs and other mobility aids.

Aeroplane travel is absolutely ridiculous and as far as I'm concerned highly discriminative in their approach to people with a disability. I currently do not travel by air, even as I would like to, because

of all the horror stories I hear from other travellers. It is rarely that I hear of people with mobility aids having a hassle free journey.

It appears that there is a definite lack of guidelines and standards that airlines are subject to. A recent example I will use is between Jetstar and Qantas. A traveller needed a larger door in the hold for his wheelchair to fit and also needed a lift to transfer him into the passenger's seat. Jetstar had the hold but Qantas had the Eagle lift. There was no continuity or seemingly any standards that have to be met. This is further exacerbated by no penalties being enforced for lack of conforming to any access standards.

Travelling by taxis seems to be a reversal more so than progress. With the introduction of ride sharing, people with mobility aids seem to be facing a rather dismal future. With the demise of the Taxi vehicles as such, and the low cost of setting up a ride share vehicle, we are not seeing a specific and urgent demand for the inclusion of WAT vehicles in the ride share scene.

In conclusion, you can see by my notes, I do not see any vast improvements towards the DSAPT standards and enabling people with disabilities or mobility aids to be able to travel independently.

There are I believe a couple of things that need to change before we will see any significant improvement towards independently accessible public transport.

Accessible travel as a concern needs to have a higher priority in the agenda of improving public transport. My experience as a traveller myself, and advocate for a more accessible public transport system, can see there is a blatant attitude of accessible issues being an addition to travel designs. Whereas they need to be an integral part of travel designs. By including accessible travel issues in the beginnings of any designs, and therefore being a 'normal' item as part of the plan. We will then and only then see a significant improvement of reaching the goals set in the DSAPT.

An example I will use. Here in Victoria, we have an Inclusion team in the PTV, an access reference group in both Metro trains, and VLine trains. We have the Public Transport Access Group, yet not one of these groups has any jurisdiction with the LXRA group who are in charge of possibly the biggest projects we have seen in Melbourne ever. These groups also, will have no influence with the new Metro Tunnel project that is taking place. These project groups also do not have their own Access reference officers or teams.

As a result of eg; LXRA not having their own reference team, we have seen a major stuff up with the Buckley St crossing removal in Essendon, and more recently the interior designing of the accessible toilets at a few of the new sky rail stations. All could have been avoided if access issues were treated with a higher priority.

To see an access officer or access team starting further up the line, example; within Transport for Victoria or in the Office of the Coordinators General, then that person / team, having the power to be involved or oversee all projects right from the day of conception, we would see a marked increase and improvement in the application of accessible standards

Included along with the higher priority I see a need for bodies like HREOC to be able to enforce their decisions. To see bodies like HREOC have no power to enforce their decisions, again shows us how low on the list of priorities is accessible public transport. The example we see with Q'ld rails blatant disregard of the Public Transport standards and HREOC having no power to place sanctions on Q'ld transport displays all of what I am saying.

In spite of my seeing a lack of attempting to meet the DSAPT from a physical travelling perspective. I have seen and continue to see a marked improvement in being able to access information. There has definitely been an improvement in online and physical access to information. Information like Timetables, transport delays, access to stations and platforms. This information is being supplied by new technology and more staff on hand.

I feel staff are better trained and have a better understanding of our needs and can explain more clearly. With technology I see, apps, websites, PIDS at stations and stops, WiFi connection.

These all contribute to us people with the need for an independently accessible public transport have a better day.

My number one suggestion, is as I have already said, a much higher priority for accessible public transport on both the Governments and stakeholders agendas.

Thank you for inviting me to forward a submission, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to make a contribution to the betterment of Accessible Public Transport, and voice my opinions of the lagging in effort to maintain the standards within the DSAPT.

Yours Sincerely
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