

29 November 2018

DisabilitiesTransportAccessSecretariat  
Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  
Canberra ACT 2601

*DisabilitiesTransportAccessSecretariat@infrastructure.gov.au*

Dear Madam/Sir,

**Re Disability Standard for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) – 2017 Review Submission**

Spinal Life Australia represents people with spinal cord injury, the late effects of polio, transverse myelitis and other spinal damage. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback about the DSAPT 2017 Review and do so in the hope it can foster accessible and inclusive services for all Australians and visitors.

Yours sincerely,



John Mayo  
Chief Advisor – Government  
Recipient: UN international Year of the Built Environment Award (Accessibility)

# Submission from Spinal Life Australia

## Disability Standard for Accessible Public Transport – 2017 Review

Established in 1960, Spinal Life Australia is a leading provider of advocacy, therapy and supports for people with spinal cord damage and related physical disabilities. Our members contributed to the development of the Standard in 1994 and have followed its passage ever since. We are pleased to comment as follows.

### **Review opportunity:**

We see this Review as the opportunity for the government to show leadership and guidance to support Australians with disability, the aged and more widely, people with diminished function **to have a fair go** in accessing transport and transport infrastructure (see data attached). These groups include:

- People with a medical condition
- People with a disability
- The Over 60s
- Temporary injury
- Parents with prams
- Language other than English

The international community is now setting global standards for communities, seeking States and nations to become accessible, integrated, inclusive communities. And Public Transport is the great connector of communities. Therefore, as much as it can, the government needs to ensure the DSAPT Review:

- can ensure 'a fair go' for Australians and visitors to our shores -
- can ensure their right to participate in public life and be a customer –
- can ensure they will be included in our community.

There is an exceptional difference between a government saying it will offer equity and equality compared to offering 'inclusion' (see graphic attached). In this regard, we acknowledge the leadership of Brisbane City Council which has just launched its commitment to a 10 year access and inclusion plan called *Inclusive Brisbane – A city for everyone*.

### **Exclusive services:**

Unless there is access to public transport, a person cannot contribute to the fabric of their community, their region, their State. Any tier of government transport service is an exclusive service – and so are transport providers operating on behalf of government through contracts. Service providers of 'exclusive' services are expected to ensure without exception that their services are accessible to all users. Government services, whether delivered direct or through contracted suppliers, are rarely reflected upon as 'exclusive' services, which they absolutely are because for the public they serve, there is no alternative or competitor service. We hope the

responsibility associated with being an exclusive service provider is embedded into the DSAPT Review.

**Temporary Exemptions:**

The history to date of temporary exemptions sought by service providers has done nothing to build confidence for the travelling public. Temporary Exemptions were intended to permit an extra period for the provider to properly deal with a compliance. However, the numeracy of exemptions and repeat exemptions sought during the life of the Standard to date has caused disbelief and loss of faith. This needs to be restored.

**NAPTAC support:**

Given the Standard is part of the suite of disability standards under the Disability Discrimination Act, the National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee (NAPTAC) seems under represented by people with disability. We acknowledge NAPTAC has two lawyers ably representing disability organisations currently, but their efforts need to be supplemented. We are strongly of the view the NAPTAC requires informed, technical representatives who have lived experience as people with a disability using public transport. There should be no less than two such representatives on NAPTAC – and given the meetings are held in Sydney and Melbourne, one from each capital.

**Information Communication Technology (ICT) Standard for Australia**

The DSAPT was developed before the digital age.

*AS EN 301 549:2016 Accessibility requirements suitable for public procurement of ICT products and services*) is the first Australian Standard for the procurement of accessible ICT. It is intended for use by public authorities and other public sector bodies during procurement, to ensure that websites, software and digital devices are more accessible – so they may be used by persons with diminished functionality. **(See attached).**

We believe the DSAPT should now incorporate the ICT Standard, which has been sponsored by the Federal Department of Finance, to guide delivery of accessible, inclusive services for all transport and transport infrastructure users.

Further, the pace of technology change occurring globally indicates that Review of the DSAPT may need to be shorter than the current 5 yearly intervals or have a Working Group advising on change and innovation to keep the Standard current.

**Federal government Whole of Journey Guideline:**

The disability sector, joined by the aged and other community groups, advocated for the Whole of Journey concept and following a sound consultation process, the Guideline is now published and available for use. However, it is a Guideline, not a regulation. How then can it become the primary reference source for all stakeholders in delivering public transport and transport infrastructure outcomes that maximise social and economic outcomes for the nation? Some considerations to give it stature are:

1.

Secure it as an Australian Human Rights Commission Guideline similar to the AHRC Bus Stops Guideline.

2.

Revise the Disability Standards Accessible Public Transport (2003 edition) to include the Whole of Journey Guideline and the Wayfinding Standard AS1428.4.2 and the Procurement Standard AS EN 301 549

We believe the Guideline is a critical reference and we urge its incorporation into the DSAPT Review.

### **Websites**

State government websites, for example, transport websites, are such pivotal information and communication workhorses, but can all users access them? The answer is yes if the site meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0 AA+ compliance. It is thought that no State government websites in Queensland are AA+ compliant and this is possibly true for other states and territories. The DSAPT Review should consider that all public transport related websites be incorporated into the DSAPT by conforming to the WCAG 2.0 AA+ accessibility. In this critical information context for customers, we cannot continue to keep locking some people out of life.

### **Number of allocated spaces:**

When the DSAPT was developed in 1994, population as well as technological change was not as foreseeable as it is today. The Over 60s cohort, through the process of aging causing diminished functionality, leads people from being defined as aged to redefined as having a medical condition and then redefined as having a disability. Looking ahead, the Over 60s are forecast to be 26% of the population by 2031. Added to this, Australia's injury rates causing disability remain high. Therefore, two allocated spaces for mobility device uses are insufficient. Currently, a husband and wife using mobility devices struggle to travel together on the same conveyance, e.g. bus, due to insufficient allocated spaces.

A further fear is new transport systems like the Brisbane Metro, which will carry many more passengers than current buses, will rely on providing just two allocated spaces because that will meet compliance. There needs to be a more representative ratio of allocated spaces to total passenger seats.

### **Accessible Tourism:**

Recent research shows the contribution Accessible Tourism makes to the Australian visitor economy is \$10.8 billion. And who would have believed that people with disability spend more on day trips than people without disability (**see data attached**). Further, when the NDIS rollout is complete in 2019, the estimated number of Australians funded will be 462,000, allowing them to participate in travel as never before. But will they?

The airlines have shown little engagement. There are virtually no accessible destination connection transport vehicles/coaches with ten plus seats to and from airports or ports. Resort transport is usually inaccessible. Accessible long distance coach transport is starting to make strides but in isolated cases. Rideshare struggles with Maxi Taxi equivalent provision because it does not suit their business model – and would require more specific training. Long distance trains in Queensland require a mobility device user to advise the name of the carer/support person who will assist them to board at the departure platform and disembark them at the arrival platform before issuing a ticket.

Clearly, given Australia's dependency on tourism, DSAPT needs to take these realities into consideration to improve the social and economic performance of regions, states and nation.

**Support for Submission:**

We commend and support the Submission made by Dr John McPherson to the DSAPT Review. Dr McPherson is an Honorary Life Member of Spinal life Australia with whom we have worked for over 20 years. We hold his expertise in accessible and inclusive transport in high regard.

**Attachments:**

Access factors – populations with diminished functionality

Equality Equity Inclusion graphic

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Standard

Accessible tourism