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File Ref: 2017/0356~0001

Via email: DisabilitiesTransportAccessSecretariat@infrastructure.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Re: 2018 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport – Submission from the Northern Territory Government, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the 2018 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport.

I am pleased to provide the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics' attached response to specific questions for State and Territory governments outlined in the *Issues Paper*, August 2018.

Our response highlights the initiatives and actions undertaken over the previous five years to move towards eliminating discrimination against people with disabilities when traveling on public transport.

My Department is committed to ongoing improvements in the experiences of passenger transport across the Territory and will continue to strive for a seamless transport system for both abled and disabled passengers.

Should you require any additional information in relation to this response please contact Ms Bernie Ingram, Director Passenger Transport on telephone 08 8924 7501 or email Bernie.Ingram@nt.gov.au

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Kirkman
Chief Executive

2 / 12 / 2018

Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport – November 2018

Submission from the Northern Territory Government, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

Responses to questions for State and Territory Governments as outlined in the *Issues Paper*, August 2018.

Has the accessibility of public transport within your jurisdiction improved since the last review commenced in 2012?

Yes, there have been significant improvements to public transport accessibility in the Northern Territory since 2012. All Northern Territory urban bus fleets is 100% compliant, have easy-access low floors and are fitted with ramps that provide access for standard wheelchairs and light weight mobility aids. The taxi fleet is now 23% wheelchair accessible.

The Darwin and rural area contains approximately 900 bus stops and shelters, of which 550 are within the Darwin urban network. This includes three compliant bus interchanges and three compliant park and ride facilities.

Since 2012 the Northern Territory Government has designed, fabricated and installed approximately 70 compliant bus shelters across the Darwin urban network, upgraded 70 bus shelters with solar lighting and continues to fund an ongoing program to upgrade current bus stops and shelters to meet accessibility requirements.

Since acquiring the Alice Springs bus network in 2011 the Northern Territory Government has continued to fund an ongoing program for upgrades to all bus stops and shelters.

There are currently 102 bus stops in the Alice Springs urban network with 101 stops either fully or partially compliant.

It is planned to manufacture an additional 15 new bus shelters for the Alice Springs network in 2019-20.

How has accessibility of conveyances (for example, trains, buses and coaches, trams, ferries, wheelchair accessible taxis and aircraft) changed?

Coaches and Aircraft: These transport modes are operated privately in the Northern Territory and are not regulated by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Buses: 100% of the urban bus fleet in Darwin and Alice Springs is now low floor.

Special Needs Transport: The Northern Territory Government provides transport assistance to and from school for eligible pre-school, primary and secondary students with special needs in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. These buses are specially equipped wheelchair accessible buses and require a Transit Carer on board. A summary of the previous and current services is provided below.

Darwin

2012 – 211 students servicing 16 schools with 16 special needs buses.

2018 – 271 students servicing 18 schools with 21 special needs buses.

Katherine

Up until 2015, special needs transport was serviced by the taxi industry. In 2015 taxi transport was replaced by two special needs buses.

2012 – 17 students servicing 2 schools utilising taxis for transport.
2015 – 19 Students servicing 1 school utilising 2 special needs buses.
2018 – 31 students servicing 3 schools utilising 3 special needs buses.

Alice Springs

2012 – 39 students servicing 2 schools utilising 5 special needs buses.
2018 – 46 students servicing 6 schools utilising 4 special needs buses.

Taxis: Northern Territory standards for wheelchair space allocation in taxis continues to meet the current Accessible Public Transport Standards, including enhancing the standards by ensuring a rectangular prism standard is to be met for wheelchair spaces in wheelchair accessible taxis.

Have compliance targets been met?

Generally, compliance targets have been met in the Northern Territory or significant progress is being made in meeting targets.

Can you provide examples?

100% of urban buses are compliant. On road compliance audits of taxis are conducted throughout the Northern Territory.

What are some of the reasons for not being able to meet targets?

The main reasons for not complying with the targets are:

- the costs associated with upgrading transport infrastructure to meet accessibility compliance. The Northern Territory Government has ongoing programs in place to mitigate this issue by spreading the cost over a number of financial years;
- given the very dispersed and changing demand of rural and remote areas, the Northern Territory utilises the 'Hail and Ride' method for pick up and set down of bus passengers. Formalised bus stops are rare in rural / remote areas and where bus stops are formalised there are challenges associated with installation of infrastructure such as road side drainage channels and no footpath infrastructure to link bus shelters and stops;
- in most new suburb developments across Darwin developers will only install footpath infrastructure on one side of the road to reduce road width and verge requirements. If the bus service is bi-directional, pram ramps and cross over points and in some cases if warranted, pedestrian crossings will also need to be installed; and
- retro fitting of bus shelters and stops within an established suburb can be problematic as some suburbs have limited road verge space for installations of bus infrastructure.

How has accessibility of information (for example maps, timetables, announcements) changed and can you provide examples?

Information for the travelling public for both the urban bus service and taxi industry has been significantly improved with the introduction of the below initiatives.

Journey Planner Application

The online journey planner allows a passenger to plan their bus trip around Darwin and Alice Springs. The application searches bus services by using a departure and arrival address and the day and time of travel. It allows the passenger to access available bus services, bus route maps, bus stop locations, description and estimated travel time and links back to full timetables.

Bus Tracker Application

The Northern Territory bus tracker app provides real-time information about Darwin and Alice Springs bus networks. The application allows the passengers to find the bus stop closest to the customer, see the

routes that use these bus stops, search for bus stops via suburb, number or name, view the next eight scheduled departures from a bus stop with a real-time forecast of when the bus will depart, view the location of the bus servicing the selected route and the stops on this route and track the bus as it approaches the bus stop on a map, in real time.

Bus Interactive Voice Response system (IVR)

In 2013, the Northern Territory Government implemented an Interactive Voice Response system to allow visually impaired passengers to obtain bus timetable information. The system provides the passenger with the departure times for the next three services for the selected route of travel.

Social Media

The use of social media has increased in the last 12 months to provide another avenue to provide announcements to the travelling public.

Bus and Taxi Totems

Since 2012, the Northern Territory Government has a rolling installation program for taxi information totems at taxi ranks across the Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs regions. The totems provide passengers information on their current location, the totem number and taxi network contact details. The totems, including the urban bus totems also have Braille signage advising them of these details.

How has accessibility of infrastructure (for example, any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on the public transport service) changed? Can you provide examples?

Bus Interchanges

The Northern Territory Government contracted a consultant to review and make recommendations in regard to the upgrade to the Tactile Ground Indicators (TGIs) at all Northern Territory Bus Interchanges. During the 2017-18 financial year a Minor New Works Program was undertaken to upgrade all interchanges with a fully compliant layout of TGIs.

All Northern Territory bus interchanges have upgraded wheelchair accessible parking, line marking, pedestrian crossings and wheelchair ramps.

Digital Timetable Displays

The Northern Territory Government is currently trialling Digital Timetable displays on the Darwin bus network. Once the trial is completed, and if deemed successful, the displays will be rolled out to all bus interchanges.

Taxis

Northern Territory standards for wheelchair space allocation in taxis is consistent with Accessible Public Transport Standards – 23% of the taxi fleet is now wheelchair accessible. The rectangular prism standard has been implemented for wheelchair spaces in multiple purpose taxis with braille labels mandatory on all passenger entry points for taxis and minibuses.

On road compliance audits of taxis are conducted throughout the Northern Territory.

Park and Rides

The Northern Territory Government has installed three compliant Park and Ride facilities in the rural area of Darwin to offer an alternative Transport option for rural residents. The park and ride facilities are serviced by school, urban and express bus services.

Have you been able to improve the collection and reporting of reliable, current data on public transport accessibility within your jurisdiction?

The Northern Territory Government periodically allocates funding to contract an independent audit of the bus infrastructure.

In 2018-19 financial year funding has been allocated to undertake audits in Darwin and Alice Springs.

In 2014 the Northern Territory Government installed an upgraded ticketing system on urban route service buses in the NT allowing for the collection of passenger data and schedule adherence. At this stage the system does not collect specific information on disabled passengers.

As part of the ticketing system door counters were also installed to give Government access to boarding data which will assist in the installation and upgrades of bus stops and shelters.

Are there any other initiatives and actions in relation to removing discrimination from public transport services that do not come under the above, for which you can provide details?

In the Northern Territory, three schemes have been introduced to provide assistance to permanent residence who have been assessed as having a disability, or significant mobility restriction, that prevents them from being able to access public transport.

Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS)

The Transport Subsidy Scheme provides financial assistance to permanent residents of the Northern Territory who have been assessed as having a disability or significant mobility restriction that prevents them from being able to travel on public transport. The disability may be either physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual. The scheme is intended to assist members with their transport needs but is not intended to meet all transport costs. The scheme operates throughout the Northern Territory with members able to access either taxi, minibus, private hire car and rideshare vehicles (where available). The scheme provides eligible members with a subsidy of half the fare. The remaining fare is to be paid by the member.

Lift incentive scheme (LIS)

The Lift Incentive Scheme (LIS) is a Government funded incentive scheme which provides drivers of approved wheelchair accessible commercial passenger vehicles \$20 for each journey involving passengers travelling in a wheelchair. The incentive are allocated to persons who have been assessed as requiring the use of a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Members are allocated 180 x \$20 lift incentives per year.

Seniors Bus Service

A free bus service was introduced to cater for mobility impaired seniors that due to their condition would not normally be able to utilise public transport. The service transports eligible passengers to Royal Darwin Hospital, Darwin Private Hospital and Healthy Living NT (formally Diabetes Australia). The services is demand based, and runs three times a day Monday to Friday. Passengers are required to book at least 24 hours in advance to ensure availability.