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The Secretariat
Department of Infrastructure, Regional
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The Tasmanian Government supports the intent and principles of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the associated Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. Accordingly, the State has invested significant funds to improve access to public transport. Of particular note is the investment in accessible buses servicing both urban and urban fringe areas.

Tasmania has made significant progress in meeting the requirements of the Standards regarding land-based passenger transport. This has been achieved through a range of measures including tied direct funding, concession schemes and incentive payments.

Furthermore, to support the implementation of Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action (2018-2021), the Department of State Growth has prepared its second Disability Action Plan.

In relation to public transport, through the action plan a range of initiatives have been implemented. These include:

- Adopting a positive provision policy for accessible bus stops on State-owned roads.
- Requiring disability access and facilities in the planning for new facilities.
- Providing assistance to people with disability who have permanent or severe disability through the Transport Access Scheme.
- Providing funding and support for special needs school bus services.
- Requiring all new vehicles for general access bus services to meet accessibility requirements consistent with Australia's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* through contracts with operators.
- Conducted a review of arrangements related to Wheelchair Accessible Taxis to explore measures aimed at increasing supply and accessibility.
- Providing funding to local government and state government contracted bus operators to upgrade bus stops.
- Funding the infrastructure for 40 new *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* compliant bus stops in municipal areas as a part of reviewing and developing a more connected bus network.

The Tasmanian Government continues to support the aims and objectives of the Standards and looks forward to working cooperatively with the Australian Government to progress implementation of the Standards. A more detailed precis of Tasmania's progression towards meeting the Standards and challenges faced can be found in Attachment I.

Please contact Babette Moate by email at babette.moate@stategrowth.tas.gov.au or by telephone on 6166 3332 if you would like any additional information in relation to this request.

Yours sincerely

Shane Gregory
Acting Deputy Secretary Transport Services

30 July 2019

Appendix 1

Tasmania's Submission to Third Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards)

The scale of the challenge for a state such as Tasmania to continue to meet each of the targets contained in the Transport Standards is enormous. Tasmania's original endorsement of the Standards in April 1999 was conditional on the Australian Government funding the implementation. Despite a request for funding of \$10 million in 2005, no assistance has yet been forthcoming.

Whilst all jurisdictions face significant obstacles in achieving compliance, Tasmania's position is particularly adverse because capital expenditure on land-based public transport infrastructure by state and local government is constrained by the need to distribute scarce resources to reach a highly dispersed population with a relatively large number of small communities compounded by a small budget due to the overall low population.

Furthermore, challenging topography, including areas of hilly terrain and streetscapes that retain certain qualities of heritage, including narrow streets and footpaths, render technical aspects of the Transport Standards (such as access paths) impossible to implement in all locations. This was raised as an issue in the 2012 Review and remains a concern.

Bus Stops

As was acknowledged in the Australian Government's response to the 2012 Review, the cost of bus stop upgrades is a significant barrier for providers.

As the threshold compliance levels progressively increase, operators and providers face increasing difficulty, both in meeting the capital expenditure required and in determining how best to deploy that capital for purchase of assets and installation of infrastructure. This challenge must be managed in the face of rising public expectations which are often in excess of what can reasonably be achieved.

In recent years the Tasmanian Government entered into funding agreements with a number of local government bodies to support the upgrade of key bus stops in urban fringe and regional communities to complement operator investment in accessible

vehicles servicing those locations. In 2018-19 the State has also funded the infrastructure for 40 new *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* compliant bus stops in municipal areas as a part of reviewing and developing a more connected bus network. The cost of each new stop, which often involves additional infrastructure modifications such as improvements to footpaths and traffic safety requirements, is in the order of \$25 000.

The provision of funding for these initiatives is challenging in a jurisdiction such as Tasmania which has over 3 300 bus stops, not including dedicated school bus stops. Further, there remain sufficient uncertainties over what constitutes compliance that there are serious concerns that a complaint may still be successful despite the best endeavours of both the Tasmanian Government and the provider. Further issues revolve around differing perspectives between the State and councils on roles and responsibilities as they apply to bus stops in municipal areas.

Significant concerns remain about the ability to meet the 2022, 100 per cent Transport Standards compliance target with regard to bus stops. In endeavouring to upgrade targeted urban fringe stops in cooperation with local government, provision of support to meet the capital cost of infrastructure upgrades has been shown to only be part of the equation. Councils have also identified concerns about meeting ongoing maintenance costs and the risks and liabilities which may be associated with any ground surface works.

This assumes that works can reasonably be undertaken to upgrade bus stops to a compliant standard. However, in urban areas, many footpaths are so narrow that provision of a suitable access path is impossible. In other cases, the level of incline is so great as to preclude a bus driver from deploying the ramp. In many urban fringe areas there are no footpaths at all. Pursuing 100 per cent compliance in such areas could only reasonably be achieved by complete removal of the bus stop, the effect of which is to reduce amenity for all passengers.

It is suggested that the compliance thresholds for 2022 should be qualified so as to exclude those locations where compliant bus stop infrastructure cannot be achieved due to practical considerations or where the cost will far exceed the benefit. However given these challenges, Tasmania continues to implement a program of work towards meeting the 2022 benchmark. This includes requiring all new bus stops to be DDA compliant, commencing an audit of bus stops in Tasmania to determine level of

compliance and level of work required, and working with operators to upgrade bus stops.

Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd is Tasmania's major urban bus operator and the largest provider of bus services in the State. The Tasmanian Government has provided Metro with additional funding each year since 2009-10 for a range of purposes including to facilitate the upgrade of urban bus stops.

Furthermore, the Department of State Growth has an operational policy for the management of public transport facilities in the context of delivery and maintenance of the State's road network. This policy incorporates the Transport Standards and to make positive provision for upgrade of ground-level infrastructure in the process of any road works where the location is suitable and safe.

Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs)

For some wheelchair-reliant people, WATs are the only form of transport they have access to, as they are unable to transfer into a seat in a standard vehicle, do not have access to a private accessible vehicle, and/or cannot travel on accessible buses. As such it is critically important to ensure that there is adequate supply and that supply is affordable.

In 2017-18 State Growth conducted a review of arrangements related to WATs. The aim of the WAT review was to ensure that the arrangements related to WAT services support the delivery of safe, efficient, and reliable WAT services across the State that do not discriminate against passengers and serve to increase accessibility.

The Department is currently undertaking analysis of potential options for policy change that could be made to legislation, regulations and internal programs, to vary the policy settings for WATs to foster increased supply and accessibility.

Conveyances

Where the Tasmanian Government contracts for public transport services, those contracts reflect the need for the operator to comply with any obligations under the Transport Standards. Further, contract payments to operators are structured to reflect the requirement to invest in compliant buses.

In Tasmania the largest public transport subsidy payment is a single contract payment to Metro.

Metro operates a fleet of approximately 200 buses in and around Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. In 2017-18 Metro secured the first of 100 new buses that will be delivered

over the next four years. These new low floor accessible buses will enable Metro to be 100 per cent compliant with the Transport Standards ahead of the benchmark date of December 2022.

The Tasmanian Government continues to support the aims and objectives of the Transport Standards and the progressive approach to implementation to ensure the removal of discrimination from public transport. However, in committing to this process, support from the Australian Government was anticipated and, in the absence of such support, the process of meeting the progressive milestones is proving to be a significant burden on operators, providers and the State, given its role as the primary funding source for most public transport in Tasmania.