

# **VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION**

## **2017 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002**

**Response to the Commonwealth  
Government Issues Paper**

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# 1 Executive Summary

Since its submission to the 2012 Review of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (the Transport Standards), the Victorian Government has funded and delivered a number of projects to make the Victorian public transport network more accessible for people with a disability. This has involved working together with the State's transport operators to identify opportunities to integrate accessibility into the design of our transport infrastructure, conveyances and information systems.

Each initiative and project outlined in this submission represents the Victorian Government's continued effort to ensuring that everyone – irrespective of abilities – can access public transport. This is because the Victorian Government recognises that a successful public transport system underpins improved economic and social outcomes for all community members and enlivens access to employment, education, services and opportunities.

Highlights during this third five-year period (2012 to 2017) include Victorian Government-funded initiatives to increase the overall number of level access and accessible stops, stations and conveyances. The Victorian Government also began the process of deregulating the Victorian taxi and hire car market to improve transport access for people with a disability who are unable to access public transport. We have also increasingly partnered with the community to understand their end to end needs across the entire transport journey. This submission provides an opportunity for us to highlight and reflect on those accessibility achievements.

However, there are some challenges which have impacted the speed with which we can meet the accessibility needs of all Victorians. These include challenges associated with the scale and breadth of our legacy infrastructure. There have also been ongoing challenges associated with making our tram network fully accessible for people with a disability – a problem unique to metropolitan Melbourne. However, for such challenges we will continue to seek ways to overcome the limitations of our public transport network. Through the separate modernisation process Victoria will also seek opportunities to bring the Transport Standards more in line with modern thinking about achieving full accessibility and more tailored to the different constraints of various public transport modes.

Until that time, the Transport Standards will continue to underpin Victoria's program of transport initiatives and infrastructure and set the minimum requirements required to help us work towards eliminating discrimination 'as far as possible' against people with a disability.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Policy and legislative setting

#### 2.1.1 Legislation

When the Victorian Government provided its submission to the second review of Transport Standards in 2012, the State had just begun an important legislative journey. The introduction of the *Transport Integration Act 2010* two years earlier in 2010 had provided a blueprint for an integrated, multi modal transport system to be delivered against a clear set of transport system objectives.

Since that time, the Victorian Government has introduced governance settings to better support this legislative foundation. In 2017, the Head, Transport for Victoria (Transport for Victoria) was established as an overarching office to better facilitate integrated, user-centric, transport portfolio-wide outcomes. This has encouraged the State's transport agencies (including Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV)) to collectively:

- plan and coordinate Victoria's transport system to meet Victoria's future needs, including accessibility needs;
- improve the user experience, including for people with disability, by providing a single point for enquiry and engagement and coordinated network management;
- build a culture across the portfolio that focuses on integrated transport outcomes that respond to communities and users more proactively; and

- improve the whole of journey experience by collectively identifying service and accessibility gaps in transport.

### 2.1.2 Policy initiatives

Since the second review in 2012, Victoria has been guided by the *State Disability Plan 2013-2016*, and, the subsequent *Absolutely everyone - State disability plan 2017–2020*. The state disability plan has been the overarching policy document committing the State to a range of actions for achieving greater inclusion in Victoria. State disability plans are a requirement under the State's *Disability Act 2006*.

Both plans have emphasised the need to develop a coordinated, accessible transport system. This has included progressively making the transport system more useable for people with a disability as well as working on better transport connections to improve access to people in the community.

The *Accessible Public Transport Action Plan 2013-17* (the Action Plan) has been the key document that has put the policy into practice. The Action Plan has guided the delivery of accessible bus, train, tram and taxi services throughout Victoria and set out the steps required to improve access to public transport and contributed to the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016.

The Action Plan has been supported by the *Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2013-2017: PTV Implementation Plan* (Implementation Plan). PTV developed the Implementation Plan to outline how the Action Plan will be delivered by making public transport simple and easy-to-use throughout the entire journey. This Implementation Plan recognised the need for all customers to have barrier-free access to public transport facilities and services, high quality customer service and information to help plan their journey.

The Implementation Plan signalled an important shift in thinking beyond just compliance with infrastructure standards, to a more holistic approach to accessibility. The Implementation Plan focused on four priority areas — customer service, consultation and community engagement, access to public transport services and access to facilities — recognising the need for customers to have:

- independent and barrier-free access to public transport facilities and services;
- high quality customer service and information to help plan their journey; and
- consultation, engagement and information as improvements are made to the public transport network.

Together, the Action Plan and the Implementation Plan significantly progressed the accessibility and inclusion agenda for public transport. To some extent, this submission demonstrates the culmination of the impact of those plans on the accessibility of the state's public transport network.

The State Government has also pursued significant reforms to the taxi and hire car industry (now referred to as the commercial passenger vehicle -CPV- industry). Those reforms have been important in developing an equitable and sustainable service for passengers who are unable to reach and use conventional public transport, and in the absence of a fully accessible public transport network.

The Victorian Government has implemented legislative and policy reforms to allow more service providers to enter the industry, increase the supply of CPV services, including accessible CPV services, reduce wait times and improve the quality of services.

## 2.2 Background to the 2017 Transport Standards Review

In 2002 the Commonwealth Government introduced the Transport Standards. The object of Transport Standards is to make public transport accessible for people with a disability. It prescribes minimum requirements transport operators and providers need to meet and includes performance requirements and timeframes for compliance.

As required by Part 34 of the Transport Standards, a Review of the Transport Standards must occur every five years. As with the first two Review, which occurred in 2007 and 2012, this third Review is considering the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards. The review commenced with the release of the Terms of Reference on 17 December 2017 and was followed by the release of the Issues Paper in August 2018.

As with the previous reviews, this review asks particular questions of State and Territory Governments, including:

- Has the accessibility of public transport within your jurisdiction improved since the last review commenced in 2012?
- How has accessibility of conveyances (for example, trains, buses and coaches, trams, ferries, wheelchair accessible taxis and aircraft) changed? Have compliance targets been met? Can you provide examples? If compliance targets have not been met, can you elaborate on the reasons for not being able to meet these targets?
- How has accessibility of information (for example, maps, timetables, announcements) changed? Can you provide examples?
- How has accessibility of infrastructure (for example, any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on a public transport service) changed? Can you provide examples?
- Have you been able to improve the collection and reporting of reliable, current data on public transport accessibility within your jurisdiction?
- 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?

These questions have framed this submission and have provided an opportunity for the Victorian Government to reflect on improvements made to the accessibility of the public transport network in Victoria during this third review period, as well consider the challenges that Victoria is facing in delivering accessible outcomes.

## **3 Progress towards improving access to public transport in Victoria**

### **3.1 Challenges in providing accessible public transport**

Victoria's population is growing at a pace that far exceeds that of any of the other State and Territory. This acute pressure on the public transport network across the State, but most particularly for Melbourne's transport network, means that funding in recent years has been prioritised towards projects which increase capacity and patronage.

Infrastructure Victoria, an independent advisory body set up by the Victorian Parliament and tasked with developing Victoria's first ever state-wide, all sector infrastructure strategy noted in its first 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy that:

Victorian cities are expanding, and government must continue to plan and provide infrastructure for new communities. But the more Victorian cities sprawl, the harder it is for people to get around, and the more onerous the task of providing high quality infrastructure. Immediate and ongoing action is required to redirect growth to areas better equipped to cope.

In line with this, the State Government must keep up with the increasing pressure to meet the demands of our expanding Victorian population and keep Victoria moving and prospering. Investment in crucial major transport projects, to expand the coverage of our public transport network, has necessarily been prioritised to support our booming population. New major transport projects integrate accessibility features from planning stage as much as possible, making it easier for that infrastructure to cater for the needs of people with a disability from the outset, and in a more holistic manner.

At the same time as investing in major transport infrastructure development, the State Government has continued to make improvements to its legacy infrastructure and assets. Accessibility upgrades on our legacy infrastructure have been based on a tailored, staged and gradual approach. The gradual approach was sometimes required to respond to heritage listings for buildings or stations (with some train stations over 100 years old, meaning modifications may be prohibited), planning approvals (often requiring either or both local and state government approvals), as well as topographical and space restrictions and green space requirements. Staging and planning is also necessary to account for market capacity constraints – the significant infrastructure investment over recent years, in combination with the level of construction activity taking place across the east coast, is resulting in skill shortages, putting pressure on delivery timeframes and prices.

The roll out of accessibility upgrades was often contingent on the service life of the asset, with the preference, where possible, to align the replacement of assets with end of lifecycles. Where mid-cycle improvements to assets were possible, but required taking assets off the network, the preference was to make changes progressively to assets to minimise widespread disruption to service delivery and passenger needs. Where infrastructure works were required, the preference was to combine accessibility works with the State's ongoing program of asset upgrades, management and maintenance to decrease the impact on productivity levels. The State's approach to accessibility upgrades also necessarily considered the broader potential disruption to public transport services and the impact on users, including people with a disability.

Accessibility improvements can also not be made *en masse* – the variation between different vehicle and fleet types means that often a tailored accessibility solution needs to be developed. For example, rail and tram fleet vary in terms of carriage floor height vs platform height, the gap from the train to the platform and the turning circle within the actual vehicle. Metropolitan and regional rail operators also share the network with freight rail services, which has required unique solutions to achieving accessibility outcomes which also meet safety and technical requirements (including the vehicle loads).

While these factors are not constraints to achieving accessibility *per se*, they have presented challenges in terms of the speed with which accessibility improvements can be delivered. Each of these factors adds complexity, time and cost to achieving increased accessibility through upgrades, maintenance or the renewal of assets. It also explains the State Government's more deliberate approach to upgrading legacy infrastructure and assets. Despite this, the State Government has continued to work towards achieving the greater possible accessibility and non-discriminatory mobility outcomes for all passengers.

### **3.2 Government initiatives to address the challenge**

The Department of Transport, the State's transport agencies and its public transport operators will continue to work closely together with other government agencies and the community sector to make public transport as accessible as possible for people with a disability. Solutions will help to create a society where people have more choices and the opportunity to engage in social, education and employment opportunities without being limited by transport. Part of this will involve making the built environment more usable by more people. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes and abilities. There are no specific goals to reach; there is instead a framework for creating solutions.

Part of the solution will lie in looking beyond the multi-layered, complex regulatory framework, which in many cases adopts an overly-prescriptive focus on technical details. This involves a mindset change which capitalises on innovative solutions and technological advancements. This means contributing to a concerted effort to research innovative ways to deliver accessibility improvements and develop new strategies to progress cost-effective and staged changes which deliver better outcomes.

Victoria expects that it will also be a key task for the Transport Standards modernisation project, to rethink the regulatory framework which shapes our thinking about accessibility. The result of that modernisation process should be to promote an outcomes approach to accessibility to better enable the delivery of equitable, non-discriminatory access across the public transport network that benefits all passengers, and in particular, people with a disability.

## **4 Response to Transport Standards Issues Paper**

### **4.1 Question 1: Has the accessibility of public transport within your jurisdiction improved since the last review commenced in 2012?**

People's ability to get to and from places is about enabling access. An accessible public transport system incorporates concepts of availability, affordability and usability of infrastructure, information and conveyances. An accessible system also looks at the connectivity of various modes and the ease of use, which contributes to the desirability of public transport as a transport choice.

Accessible public transport benefits everyone involved. It is easy and quicker to use, can reduce dwell times and can assist with managing traffic congestion in shared road environments, and takes account of the interaction between land use and transport planning. The broader benefits of planning for and

delivering an accessible public transport system are a key reason why the State Government has continued to invest in, and improve, accessibility across all modes.

This section identifies some of the key accessibility improvements made to the State's conveyances, infrastructure and information systems between 2012 and 2017, the period relevant for the purposes of Transport Standard's third five-year review.

#### **4.1.1 Tram network**

Trams continue to operate as a major form of public transport for Melbourne, servicing 250 kilometres of track across 24 routes and over 1,700 tram stops. Melbourne's tram network remains the largest urban tramway network in the world. Our tram network provides the State with a unique transport attraction and landscape, but also requires a unique approach to delivering accessibility improvements, noting that some of the infrastructure and assets since have existed since the late 1800s.

##### *Asset improvements*

The State Government has continued to work towards making accessibility improvements across the entire network and its assets. One priority has involved increasing the number of and enhancing the design of low floor trams. From 2012, 70 new low floor trams were added to the network. This brought the total number of low floor trams on Melbourne's tram network at the end of the reporting period to 130. Further accessibility features, as required by Transport Standards, were integrated into low floor tram design, including colour-contrasting grab handles, step edging and improved customer service information via automated announcements and electronic displays.

The compliance of low floor trams with Transport Standards was also improved through the implementation of allocated spaces for customers using wheelchairs or mobility aids. Depending on the design of the low floor tram, some now have buttons that alert the driver to activate the 'bridging plate', that is, a mechanism to bridge the gap between the tram and the platform. On other low floor trams, a specially marked call button overrides the automatic door closing mechanism to allow customers using wheelchairs or mobility aids extra time to enter or exit the tram. These trams also have an external door release to help customers using wheelchairs.

##### *Infrastructure improvements*

To complement low floor trams, infrastructure improvements have also been made, with 60 tram stops upgraded to level access stops. This has brought the total number of accessible stops to more than 400 across the tram network.

Accessible stops have ramps that provide improved access for customers, including people in wheelchairs, parents with prams and elderly people. Accessible stops also feature improved lighting, granite and stainless-steel finishes, raised platforms with ramp access, real-time tram arrival information and glass shelters. Many of the newest accessible stops feature pedestrian crossings with flashing amber lights and tactile paving to assist customers to safely cross the road. Selected stops in the central business district also have audio buttons which provide real-time arrival information.

##### *Information improvements*

Increased information accessibility has been achieved through the new Vehicle Passenger Information System (VPIS) which has been installed on 75% of trams on the network. The VPIS provides next on board stop information in audio and visual formats.

To facilitate information provision at tram stops, where possible Passenger Information Displays (PIDs) have continued to be installed at more stops, to among other things, provide next service information. The installation of miniPIDs and train station PIDs also provide tram connection information from within a train station. Technological accessibility has also been advanced with TramTRACKER upgrades, which now ensure the app works with the voiceover software built into phones. In addition, Yarra Trams is going through the process to gain Communication Access Symbol (CAS) accreditation.

#### **4.1.2 Rail network**

##### **Metropolitan**

Railway tracks, infrastructure and rolling stock across Melbourne are owned by VicTrack on behalf of the State Government. VicTrack leases these assets to PTV which then sub-leases them to Metro Trains Melbourne (Metro), the State's metropolitan rail operator. In September 2016, Metro was awarded a seven-year extension to its franchise agreement (until November 2024). As the operator of the city's rail service, Metro is responsible for operating 220 six carriage trains across about 1000 kilometres of track, transporting 415,000 customers each day. Metro services 15 lines and 219 stations.

Accessibility improvements to the state's metropolitan network have involved a joined-up approach by VicTrack, PTV and Metro. Together, they have delivered continued improvements to accessibility and increased the compliance of the metropolitan rail network with Transport Standards. This has involved partnering together to identify opportunities to upgrade facilities, seek funding for accessibility projects and stage planned accessibility works to increase the accessibility of the metropolitan rail network. With these works we are continually seeking to improve the customer experience for all who are getting to the station, onto the station, boarding the train, taking the trip and then alighting the train and departing at the destination.

#### *Asset improvements*

The ability to board trains has improved across the network with the installation of over 150 raised boarding platforms across the metropolitan rail network, allowing unassisted boarding for some passengers. Metro has also introduced a new platform standard which allows some passengers to board without the assistance of the driver. All trains operating on the metropolitan rail network can otherwise also be accessed by assisted boarding. Assisted boarding involves a driver or customer service staff member deploying a ramp for passengers using mobility aids. Changes in operational policy have also allowed for alternative door boarding – offering an additional accessible door. The State Government notes that unassisted boarding is a preferable outcome for all passengers, but that it will take some additional time to achieve that outcome.

The recent on-board reconfiguration of the X'Trapolis and Siemens train fleet has provided a further step towards Transport Standards compliance, through the inclusion of additional allocated spaces, handrails and call buttons.

#### *Infrastructure improvements*

All metropolitan train stations provide accessible step free entrances, except for Heyington. This means that it is easier for some people using mobility devices to access stations across the train network. Some metropolitan stations have ramps to enter the station and platforms and lift availability has improved at 40 stations. Despite these improvements, the State Government acknowledges that some stations may still require people with a mobility device to be assisted to access them. We will continue to collaborate with our providers and operators to develop solutions to facilitate and improve access in these situations.

Some stations have benefitted from works to upgrade accessible parking, increased presence of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) and where possible, improved ramps, toilets, shelters, waiting rooms, lift installation and handrails. More recently the Level Crossings Removal Program has resulted in upgrades to station access as part of broader station rebuilds. Removing level crossings was a condition applied by the Australian Human Rights Commission in the granting of exemption from the Transport Standards to the ARA and its members.

#### *Information improvements*

At stations, customers have also seen information improvements with the installation of PIDS, which display real time information about scheduled services. PIDS are available at 144 metropolitan stations across the network. City loop stations and several major interchanges such as Richmond and North Melbourne, have monitor-type PIDS that list the next three scheduled train services and arrival times. These PIDS provide visual information for customers with hearing impairments rather than displaying the "Listen for Announcements" message. Other locations where the dot-matrix-type PIDS are installed provide next train information including time to departure, destination and type of service (express or stopping all stations).

All station operations staff also undergo training and assessment in making public announcements, which is of particular importance to customers with a vision or reading impairment. And, like Yarra Trams, Metro is also going through the process to gain CAS accreditation to enable service and information messages to be better communicated to all passengers.

In terms of on-line information accessibility, Metro has also developed apps which give additional information to passengers regarding accessible travel, including the Metro Notify and the Stop Here applications, which give passengers with sensory disabilities another option to receive notification of their arrival at their next station straight to their smart device.

## **Regional**

#### *Asset improvements*

The regional rail network has also undergone improvements to increase access for people with a disability. As required under the Transport Standards, the State's VLine VLocity and Buffet Cars have had handrails installed, benefitting the stability of all people walking through the carriages. The handrail



solution installed was developed following customer feedback and testing for different handrail options. Improvements were made to emergency call buttons locations and additional buttons installed also across the fleet to also meet Transport Standards.

Trials of modifications also began on the fleet of 75 VLocity trains to provide wider toilet doors for wheelchair access, hearing loop technology, automatic announcements, new floor markings and handrails. The reconfiguration has allowed for the provisions of two allocated spaces to these conveyances.

#### *Infrastructure improvements*

Accessibility improvements have been undertaken across existing regional stations, with works including the installation of TGSIs, compliant signage, new shelters and seating, new compliant lighting and pedestrian access ramps. All V/Line stations are also accessible via a step free entrance.

New accessible stations have also been built around Victoria including at Caroline Springs, Wyndham Vale and Tarneit. In addition, Regional Rail Revival works are delivering upgrades along all V/Lines corridors, which include station amenity and access upgrades, and track and signalling works.

V/Line has also continued works to improve the accessibility of information available to passengers, both on its website, and in printed form. Recent improvements have included:

- better timetable information
- more accessible network maps (including four stations with accessible maps and developments in place to include all stations)
- increased font sizes on communications (including provision of large-print versions of published information to people with specific requirements on request)
- simplicity of language and explanations of printed diagrams
- proper colour matching (no clashing colours on material).

#### *Information improvements*

At regional stations V/Line has put in place programs for professional announcement training to ensure that all announcements meet accessibility requirements, including through signposting important messages from announcements and repeating messages to passengers. All V/Line station staff are trained regarding announcement-making for passengers with specific accessibility requirements and on use of additional communications tools, such as picture boards and word cards. To build on this, V/Line also received the CAS accreditation and will be finalising the process for the first three years' review and renewal, again meaning the staff can communicate better with passengers.

### **4.1.3 Bus network**

#### *Asset improvements*

Buses are integral to Melbourne's multi-modal public transport system. The bus network currently comprises 1,750 buses on 372 routes and 6,200 route kilometers. And, because most routes operate in and between Melbourne's middle and outer suburbs, beyond the reach of the fixed train and tram network, buses can provide public transport in areas not served by other modes, enhance network connections with the train and tram networks and provide a flexible service in response to the changing needs of the city.

Given buses could also be the only mode of transport available for certain Victorians, it is important that they cater to the needs of people with a disability. Responding to this, more than 80 per cent of Melbourne's bus services are wheelchair accessible on weekdays. Most bus services are wheelchair accessible on the weekend and public holidays.

Some bus routes are fully wheelchair accessible and others are partly wheelchair accessible. Consistent with the Transport Standards, direct assistance can be provided to provide access at bus stops, with the bus driver placing a ramp between the front door of the bus to the kerb of the road.

Bus companies, when contacted and provided with adequate notice, also strive to schedule a low-floor bus service for passengers with accessibility needs. SmartBus vehicles are also able to 'meet' the bus stop at the kerb and eliminate a step to board the bus. SmartBus stops have TGSIs that are used to help people with vision impairments.

Regional bus services, much like metropolitan services, serve several unique purposes reflected by their route design and service levels. There is a network of about 1450 buses transporting Victorian country school children to and from their local country schools each school day. There are also a further 180 town

bus services in country towns across Victoria and long-haul coach services connecting country towns (in some cases with Melbourne).

All these regional bus services are delivered by private sector operators in accordance with service contracts and franchise agreements with the State. Some regional city routes operate with low-floor buses. In Ballarat, all services are wheelchair-accessible. Direct assistance is also available on some regional buses, with passengers also able to contact relevant bus operators for information about which services are most suitable for their needs.

#### *Infrastructure improvements*

PTV also began rolling out PIDs on bus stops that are being upgraded in the context of other works undertaken by the State or local government. PTV also continued to introduce new accessible stops both in metropolitan and regional Victoria and undertook to continuously rectify defects to ensure that more stops were accessible, by providing compliant TGSIs, boarding areas and paths or ramps to suit each site.

Since 2012, there are an additional 1300 Transport Standards compliant bus shelters and PTV funded many additional Transport Standards compliant council bus stops. PTV has also progressed a project to add braille plates (stating the stop ID and PTV phone number) to all bus stops for services within Victoria.

#### **4.1.4 Taxis and hire cars**

The Transport Standards are also relevant to the State's taxi and hire car industry (now referred to as the commercial passenger vehicle industry). Under the Transport Standards, Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs) must meet a range of requirements to ensure the safety of passengers and ensure compliance with the Transport Standards. All WATs must comply with the Transport Standards or applicable Australian/New Zealand standards for allocated floor and ceiling space, restraint systems, hoists and ramps for wheelchair access as a condition of their licensing (and now registration).

During 2012-2017 the State Government induced the supply of Transport Standard compliant vehicles in urban, regional or country towns through its WAT vehicle subsidy scheme. The scheme is administered by the industry regulator CPVV (formerly known as the Taxi Services Commission (TSC)) The purpose of the subsidy is to reduce the capital cost of purchasing a WAT vehicle to make it a similar cost to purchasing a conventional taxi and, as a result, the purpose of the scheme is:

- maintaining and improving the availability of WATs and
- making the operation of WATs more cost effective.

The Transport Standards also require that the wait or response times for wheelchair accessible taxis be the same as for conventional taxis. During 2012 to 2017, the during peak periods of demand, the wait time for wheelchair accessible taxis continued to exceed the wait time for conventional taxis. To begin to address some poor service outcomes, including long wait times, experienced by people with a disability when using taxis and hire cars, in 2016 the State Government announced a series of reforms to the commercial passenger vehicle industry.

To assist to address the wait time disparity, in October 2016 the lifting fee - an incentive paid to taxi operators and drivers - was increased from \$16.70 to \$20 per trip. Since then, legislative and regulatory reforms to the commercial passenger vehicle industry, which have the effect of reducing barriers to entry increasing competition, were implemented in 2018. The outcomes of those reforms, particularly on waiting times, will need to be reported in the State Government's submission to the fourth review of the Transport Standards.

The State Government also continued to provide incentives to Network Services Providers (NSPs)<sup>1</sup>, which are providers of accredited taxi-cab network services. NSPs operate a central communications service, including 24 hour booking and dispatch services for taxi-cabs, including WATs. The Performance Based Booking System (PBBS) allows a WAT booking fee to be paid for each WAT booking dispatched by NSP's. The PBBS also provides incentive payments if performance targets are achieved. The incentive payments are dependent upon performance in two areas: response times and NSP servicing.

The demand for WATs has also been maintained through the State's user subsidy program, the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP). The MPTP pays 50 percent of each regulated taxi fare—up to a maximum of \$60. High need users have no annual spending limit while other users have an annual spending limit of \$2,180 (but can seek additional support by request).

During the reporting period, the number of MPTP members and trips subsidised has increased considerably. At the end of the 2013/2014 reporting period, there were just over 190,000 MPTP members

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<sup>1</sup> This terminology has since changed following the introduction of the *Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017*.

who took under 2 million trips. At the end of June 2017, there were more than 218,000 MPTP members. Of these, 93,153 (45 percent) are active. By 2016/2017, the MPTP subsidised 4.79 million taxi trips.

#### **4.1.5 Ferry services**

Water-based commuter transport forms a small but important component of our public transport system. Three ferry services operate in Victoria, which are overseen by PTV. Each service has been able to facilitate passengers with mobility impairments and has often offered direct assistance.

Western Port Ferry is a ferry service which runs from Stony Point to French Island, Phillip Island (formerly known as the French Island Ferry). The MV Naturaliste ferry has offered disabled toilets and easy boarding for passengers with access needs. For wheelchair access there has been a small lip to manoeuvre over the gangway of the ferry where it sits on the pier or jetty. Mobility device access to Stony Point Pier, Tankerton Pier and Cowes Jetty has been limited due to stairs on each of these piers and jetties and often related to tides. However, in some cases direct assistance has been offered.

Portarlinton Ferry offers a passenger ferry service in Victoria between Portarlinton on the Bellarine Peninsula and Victoria Harbour in Docklands, Melbourne. The service operates 365 days of the year being utilised by daily commuters and leisure travellers. The service has been able to facilitate wheelchairs and motorised scooters on board the ferry and bathrooms have been able to facilitate some accessibility needs. A similar ferry service will soon be launched from Geelong.

In 2011, the then Victorian Government committed \$1.4 million funding for the weekday peak hour ferry services of the Westgate Punt - a ferry service for cyclists and pedestrians, crossing the Yarra River between Spotswood to Port Melbourne. The Westgate Punt ferry service runs between Spotswood Jetty and Westgate Landing in Port Melbourne. The service contract was renewed in 2016, following a competitive tender process. The Westgate Punt service is wheelchair accessible and passengers have been able to take advantage of direct assistance offered.

#### **4.1.6 Improvements to the collection and reporting of data on public transport accessibility**

To improve the way that data is collected, PTV has developed a database which contains train and tram facilities audit data. Through audits we have established a base line set of compliance data which is used by PTV and maintained by the operators, who are responsible to keep the database up-to-date with upgrades and improvements.

PTV has continued to work with operators to improve data collection and maintenance, through processes ensuring updates are done as upgrade works are completed. CPVV has also continued to measure data about the industry and passengers through the MPTP.

## **4.2 Question 2: 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?**

### **4.2.1 Public Transport Victoria**

PTV has a dedicated Inclusive Public Transport Unit which has been responsible for leading many of the accessibility changes outlined in this submission. The Unit has successfully instigated change and continues to pursue changes across the network to ensure greater accessibility and lead to better outcomes for all Victorians using buses, trains, trams and ferries. In addition to the infrastructure and assets changes supported by the Unit, there have been several changes instigated to the way PTV operates and its general services.

All PTV Hubs and the call centre were accredited with Scope's CAS, enabling staff to communicate more successfully with people who experience communication difficulties. Complementing that accreditation, PTV has also developed and is updating a Master Style Guide and a Passenger Experience Regime, which set out guidelines and requirements for announcements, to be followed by operators, ensuring accessibility and consistency.

PTV has launched a new fully accessible PTV website and is now working to integrate PTV and myki websites and Journey Planners into a single faster, accessible, more intuitive to use and more secure platform, streamlining the user experience. The new mobile friendly site is accessible (according to the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA standard), to make it easier to use for people with a disability, those with low literacy or those with English as a second language and provide journey planning, timetable information, real time departures, disruption information and interactive mapping.

Although beyond the reporting period of this submission, PTV recently began a trial allowing passengers to touch on and off using their mobile phones (mobile myki). The aim of the mobile myki is to eliminate the need to use a card to access the network, which is an innovation desirable for people with disabilities. The trial is underway, and the early feedback is being used to refine the technology.

PTV is also working to provide better access to Victoria's train, tram and bus services and support to those who need it. To achieve this PTV organises significant and popular training and awareness events. One such successful event has been the Try Before You Ride – an annual event designed to provide people of all abilities the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the public transport system. This includes people with a disability, parents with children and seniors. This is organised with the support and participation of Victorian public transport operators to give customers access to a range of stationary vehicles and offer them a chance to boost their confidence by practicing how to board and alight conveyances and passenger vehicles.

Travelling in the Shoes of Others is a workshop aimed at giving transport partners the opportunity to experience travelling on the public transport network with a simulated visual or mobility impairment. This inspires and enables staff to consider what role they can play in their own work to help ensure that the public transport network is accessible to all.

The Victorian Government has also committed to making Universal Design a core consideration for all parts of the public transport network and intends to embed it in PTV's detailed design policies and technical requirements for transport infrastructure. Changing Places toilets are a key way of achieving Universal Design and better cater for people with severe and profound disability through the provision of a tracking hoist, change table, a peninsula toilet and extra space for carers to assist people. Noting the benefits of Changing Places toilets, there are plans to identify locations to install Changing Places toilets in existing and new transport interchanges. Changing Places toilets are planned at the five new Metro tunnel stations and at a number of other key transport locations.

PTV is also responsible for chairing the Accessible Public Transport Operations Committee (APTOC) to identify, discuss and resolve issues affecting accessibility. APTOC brings together public transport operators (including Metro Trains Melbourne, YarraTrams, V/ Line and bus operators) and other key transport contributors.

PTV also regularly engages with accessibility advocacy groups (such as: All Aboard, Guide Dogs Victoria, Vision Australia, Vicdeaf, Scope, Yooralla and Arthritis Victoria) to receive feedback, advice and expertise on a range of public transport projects, and sponsors Dialogue in the Dark, a Guide Dogs Victoria initiative which allows participants to experience simulated environments in complete darkness, raising awareness about some of the accessibility challenges faced by those who are blind or have low vision.

PTV also provides secretariat support to Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC), which has been appointed by the Minister for Public Transport to provide independent strategic advice for a public transport system that is inclusive and accessible to all (disabled persons, the elderly and vulnerable groups).

## **4.2.2 Public transport operators**

### **4.2.2.1 Yarra Trams**

Key Yarra Trams' initiatives to remove discrimination against people with disability:

- Increased focus on accessibility awareness: All staff participate in induction training and drivers undergo refresher training every 6 months, both of which include an accessibility component.
- Disruptions management: Tram replacement bus services are run by low-floor buses where possible. For major occupations as well as low-floor buses, an accessible minivan service is available from 7am to 7pm. Outside of minivan operation times, accessible taxis are available on demand at Yarra Trams cost.
- The number and location of next stop request buttons on board trams has been reviewed and funding has been allocated to fit more of these on C and D Class trams.
- VPIS have been fitted to 74% of the tram fleet, providing next stop audio and visual information.
- Yarra Trams has a diversions book for the Operations Centre to improve passenger focus when planning for/managing disruptions.
- Yarra Trams is going through the process to gain the CAS accreditation and is maintaining increased consultation with advocacy groups and people with disability.

#### 4.2.2.2 Metro

Key Metro initiatives to remove discrimination against people with disability include:

- establishing a dedicated accessibility team to engage with and improve the passenger experience for people with disabilities and implement Metro's Accessibility Action Plan.
- deploying new technologies to create more opportunity for direct assistance at locations with steep ramps, including through trialling wheelchair mechanical pushers, devices that enable staff to assist passengers using manual wheelchairs go up and down steep gradients, at no safety risk (to staff or passengers). Seven of these devices are being rolled out on the Metro network.
- establishing a dedicated Accessibility Reference Group which provides strategic advice and direction to the organisation to address emerging access issues. The group also acts as a key point of contact when inviting passengers with disability to engage in consultation for potential modifications to the network.
- establishing a dedicated team to engage with community groups and increase their knowledge and confidence around our services. The Community Education Unit routinely provides travel training on the network in partnership with disability service providers.

Looking forward, the recent metropolitan rail and tram refranchising contracts, implemented a tighter management and performance regime for operators, and have had operators submit implementation plans for their Accessibility Action Plans. All operators, under their operating agreements, are required to submit to PTV annual reports tracking their progress towards their accessibility targets and success measures, and to bring forward proposals to improve the provision of accessible services and their strategies for compliance.

The outcomes of the refranchising will be reported on in the Victorian Governments submission to the fourth review of the Transport Standards. Details of a number of very recent rail station upgrades and improvements will also be provided in that submission.

#### 4.2.2.3 V/Line

V/Line has introduced several initiatives to remove discrimination against people with disabilities and increase the compliance of their operations with the Transport Standards. V/Line has developed Boarding Assistance Zones on station platforms to provide a key location for customers to seek assistance and support to safely board trains. Conductors on V/Line services can facilitate Equivalent Access through Direct Assistance to customers when compliance requirements cannot be met.

V/Line provision customer information has also improved. V/Line's website reached 81% compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1, with works planned to achieve full compliance. In addition, bookings for passengers with accessibility requirements can now be made online and the Journey Planner on the website is being reviewed to enable full accessibility.

In 2016, V/Line became the first public transport operator to become accredited with the CAS. In collaboration with disability service provider Scope, V/Line delivered a range of training and tools to front line staff to increase awareness and skills in meeting the communication needs of our customers. This has included disability awareness training and a variety of tailored communication tool kits for both station staff and conductors. V/Line undergoes annual assessment to ensure staff knowledge retention and continual improvement.

V/Line also committed to ongoing customer engagement opportunities through community forums, a customer Accessibility Reference Group, a quarterly customer Accessibility Newsletter. V/Line hosts regional Try Before You Ride sessions that enable customers (both with or without accessibility constraints) to trial getting on and off regional trains and coaches. Local staff are available to answer any questions customers may have regarding travelling and access queries.

And despite being beyond the 2017 reporting period for the purposes of this submission, in 2018 V/Line rolled out online disability awareness training to all staff to increase understanding and knowledge of the experience of customers with disability. V/Line also recently developed virtual tours, which will be available online for customers in the coming months. And, as an important step towards better integration across services, V/Line services are also included in PTV's Journey Planner (available on the internet or via a smart phone app).

### **4.2.3 Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria**

Because of the reforms instigated to the CPV industry during 2012 to 2017, the State Government expects that there will be more choice in the future for people who rely on WATs and that timeliness and quality of services will improve.

Many of the outcomes of these reforms will be reported on during the fourth submission to the Commonwealth's review of Transport Standards. Early indications are that reforms (that post-date the 2012 to 2017 period for this submission) are already working to increase the accessibility of the commercial passenger vehicle industry. At this early stage, the number of both wheelchair and conventional vehicles in Victoria has increased, as has the number of vehicles that are able to process the MPTP subsidy.

A few other initiatives within the State Government's commercial passenger vehicle reforms are also designed to improve accessible commercial passenger vehicle services, particularly in regional areas. In 2016, the State Government increased the lifting fee to \$20 per trip. This was funded from an additional \$25 million allocated by the State Government to fund improvements to services for people with a disability. The Victorian Government has also begun to consider how to facilitate the expansion of the MPTP beyond taxis to all commercial passenger vehicles.

A Commissioner dedicated to considering disability and accessibility matters for the CPV industry was also appointed to CPVV in early 2018. The Commissioner will monitor the industry and use stakeholder feedback to deliver additional improvements, supported by the Department of Transport and CPVV.

### **4.2.4 Public Transport Access Committee**

The Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC), has been appointed by the Minister for Public Transport to provide independent strategic advice to the Minister and PTV on public transport accessibility matters. PTAC aims to create a public transport network that is inclusive and accessible to all Victorians. PTV provides secretariat support to PTAC.

There are 14 members in the committee, including an independent Chair. The composition of PTAC seeks to reflect the diversity of the Victorian community, maintain a gender balance and draw interest from a range of community members and geographic areas. Membership is predominantly drawn from the disability and accessibility community, carers and experts in the field of transport accessibility.

PTAC has been working to identify current, emerging and/or potential public transport accessibility issues; consult broadly with people with disability, relevant organisations and peak bodies; and provide strategic advice on key public transport initiatives and strategies. The committee also provides strategic advice on public transport projects and investigates any matters relating to public transport accessibility referred by the Minister.

The current PTAC term will conclude at the end of July 2019.

In the field of rail and light rail public transport, to date PTAC has provided input into the:

- design policies and technical requirements for transport infrastructure, including the provision of accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities at metropolitan host and unstaffed stations;
- design of the next generation High Capacity Metro Train, which has resulted in significant improvements to the accessibility features;
- training to improve the capacity of Authorised Officers to recognise and understand passengers with a range of individual needs and circumstances;
- planning for the tram network development to ensure people with disabilities and mobility restrictions can safely and reliably access it;
- delivery on the transport priorities and commitments under the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020;
- development of operator requirements for the management of network disruptions, during times of major project investment;
- evaluation and annual review of the Operators' Accessibility Implementation Plans, under the Metro Refranchising contracts.

Authorised by the Hon Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Public Transport

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