



2012 REVIEW OF
THE DISABILITY STANDARDS
FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC
TRANSPORT
2002 (TRANSPORT STANDARDS)

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About Deaf Children Australia:

Deaf Children Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation. Our purpose is to remove barriers to the personal development and social inclusion faced by deaf children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing. We achieve this through direct service delivery, advocacy, and partnership across the deaf sector, supporting research and piloting new initiatives.

In this document, Deaf Children Australia refers to deaf as inclusive of any level of hearing loss.

Deaf Children Australia appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Issues Paper, 2012 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Transport 2002 (Transport Standards).

Our Reference:

United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

Article 9: Accessibility

1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. State Parties (Australian Government) shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, **to information and communications, including information and communication technologies and systems**, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibilities, shall apply to, inter alia:
 - a. Buildings, road, **transportation** and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;
 - b. Information, communications and other services, **including electronic systems and emergency services**.

Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, **and access to information**.

State Parties (Australian Government) shall take all appropriate measure to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, **receive and impart information** and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all **forms of communication** of their choice, as defined in Article 2 of the present convention, including by:

- a. Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in **accessible formats and technologies appropriate** to different kind of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost.

Bold and underline intended.

Deafness is a hidden disability.

One in six Australians experience some degree of hearing loss, this equates to approximately 4.5 million Australians. By 2050, it is projected that one in four will have a hearing loss (1).

Important key points:

- Not every deaf person are fitted with a hearing aid or have a hearing assistive devices;
- There are a number of different hearing devices people use, not all of them are compatible with the system currently used by the suppliers of transport; and
- Some deaf people are profoundly deaf and are unable to use hearing aids or hearing assistive devices, they rely on visual communications.

Although the Standards include hearing augmentation, the current transport standards do not address sufficiently the communication access for deaf people. Deaf Children Australia refers to the above key points and believes that hearing augmentation is not the only solution in addressing communication needs for all deaf people.

We have been advised that the Australian Human Rights Commissions receives several complaints a year regarding the lack of accessible information for deaf people using public transport. Accessible information can be in form of visual text, which is not included in the Transport Standards.

Deaf Children Australia proposes that a recommendation be included in the Transport Standards to address the needs of accessible information and this will not only benefit deaf people, but all users.

Case Study 1:

John, who is deaf, needs to catch a public transport (train) to his destination. Upon the platform, he saw information on the screen advising that particular train will take him to the destination, and got on the train. While the train was stationary, the public announcement announces that the train is going to a different destination, that information was not available inside the train. Unknown to him, he stayed on the train and reached to wrong destination.

Accessible information includes:

- Visual public announcements (in conjunction with public announcements) – information shown on electronic screens advising departure, arrival, time and essential information (including cancellations and up to date information) at the stations, gates and in transport;
- Screened (eg, videos, movies) contents to be captioned (for promotion, information, entertainment) which is shown on internet, public facilities and in transport;
- Public facilities that offer lounging areas that are equipped with entertainments (eg, TV), these equipment need to be caption enabled and left on at all times (industry example: Sydney Airport);
- Visual queuing system alerting next customer to attend next available booth (industry example: Medicare Office).

Case Study 2:

Rachel, who is hard of hearing and do not use hearing aid, is going home from work. She walks to the platform and saw information at the platform advising that the train will be arriving in few minutes and is going to the destination she wants to go to. While waiting for the train to come, the screen suddenly changed to say 'Please listen to the announcement'. The announcement apparently informs the patrons to go to another platform (or another train), while information is not visually available. Rachel has had no idea and waited for the next train at the same platform.

Case Study 3:

Greg, who wears a hearing aid, is going to work and uses public bus transport. He arrives at the designated bus stop and waited for the bus to arrive. It has not arrived, and there is a customer button at the stop and Greg is unable to use this service to find out what has happened, because loop system was not installed. He had to take his car to work, parked his car and paid for full day parking fee. He rang customer service through National Relay Service and was informed that the bus came to the stop a few minutes earlier.

Often deaf people experience poor customer services when seeking assistances at transport facilities. Some customer service desks are equipped with hearing augmentations, however, to be effective; staff need ongoing awareness training on how to communicate effectively with deaf people.

Deaf Children Australia proposes that ongoing disability awareness training be part of the transport service provided by the government and private industries.

Awareness training needs to be included in the standards.

Deaf Children Australia recommends that transport's public facilities (Access to Premises) are equipped with visual alert system that notifies patrons of emergencies, such as flashing fire alarms. They should be placed in public general areas as well as toilet facilities.

Deaf Children Australia recommends that the government needs to consult with specific organisations for the organisations to undertake member consultations and to present recommendations/ guidelines for best practice. Deaf Children Australia is currently undertaking similar activities for 'Accessible Communication for Public Meetings and Events' which we are coordinating with relevant stakeholders.

Deaf Children Australia believes this is the best way forward in ensuring that accessibility to transport will be achieved and has meaningful outcomes for deaf members of the wider community.

Australian Human Rights Commission should not grant exemptions for accessible information. To support this statement, we refer to Australian Government's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, in particular, Article 9.1 (a) and (b) and Article 21 (a).

(1) Access Economic, 'Listen Hear', 2006.