



**Inclusion Australia**

acting locally - representing nationally - connecting globally

*“Transport is my ticket to the community.”*

A submission by Inclusion Australia in response to;

*The Whole Journey: A Guide for Thinking Beyond  
Compliance to Create Accessible Public Transport  
Journeys*

A consultation by the Commonwealth Department of  
Infrastructure and Regional Development

## **Acknowledgment**

Inclusion Australia, (formerly the National Council on Intellectual Disability), appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development's (Department) consultation on *The Whole Journey: A Guide for Thinking Beyond Compliance to Create Accessible Public Transport Journeys*.

We would like to thank the Department for its kind invitation for Inclusion Australia to participate in its focus group workshop in Perth on 2nd May 2017. We also acknowledge the leadership and encouragement by Disabled Peoples' Organisations Australia to engage in the consultation process.

Inclusion Australia would like to thank:

- Members of the NSW Council on Intellectual Disability and the Speak Out Reach Out Transport Group for their considerable input into this submission
- Jane Eacott, from the Human Chain Foundation, who attended the Department focus group workshop in Perth, and her son Aaron, for their participation and ideas.
- Katie Perpetch and daughter Eloise, from Developmental Disability WA, for their ideas on improving mobile transport applications.
- Staff from Jobsupport (NSW and Victoria), whom regularly travel train people with significant intellectual disability on trams, buses and trains, for their insights on why transport is critical for work and social participation.

## **Inclusion Australia**

Inclusion Australia was created in 1971 by parents and friends in an endeavour to improve the quality of life of people with intellectual disability and to fill the need for national unity and information.

Inclusion Australia is the national and leading voice on issues of importance to people with intellectual disability in Australia. Inclusion Australia brings

together members from across Australia who are connected locally to people with intellectual disability and committed to the vision of inclusion.

The Members of Inclusion Australia include;

- Development Disability WA
- NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
- Parent to Parent QLD
- Speak Out Association of Tasmania
- South Australia Council on Intellectual Disability
- Victoria Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability



## Introduction

The public transport system is an essential service for people with intellectual disability to have an ordinary life of work, social participation and achieving personal life goals.

Many people with intellectual disability are unable to drive cars due to the impact of their disability which means that access to good public transport is essential to maximise independence and inclusion in the workforce and community.

Using public transport for many people with intellectual disability is a skill that requires *explicitly* training and support to ensure that individuals can competently and safely get from home to their destination and back again.

Even if a person with intellectual disability may learn to catch the same bus or train at the same time each day, they may not be able to use public transport on an unfamiliar route without additional training and support.

Our submission contains recommendations and suggestions on how public transport could be improved to assist people with intellectual disability experience the 'whole journey' which;

- improves information for individuals to make the right travel choices;
- ensures their safety as they travel to and from their destination; and,
- is supported by transport staff willing and able to support individuals when they need help with challenges on their journey.

The good news is that feedback from people with intellectual disability, their families, and specialist provider organisations, indicate that, in general, most individuals have a positive experience on their journey when using public transport.

In the spirit of the consultation being about going beyond compliance with minimum standards, we offer this feedback to help make the public transport journey experience even better for people with intellectual disability.

# **Trains**

## ***Stations***

Individuals with intellectual disability have indicated that they need better information and accessibility at train stations.

It is recommended that;

- The size of the text on indicator boards be increased, and,
- More indicator boards be available on station platforms.

## ***Station Staff***

Whereas the experience of people with intellectual disability with station staff is frequently positive, there have been some individual negative experiences.

Individuals have the best travel experience when station staff take the time to help when requested. This makes individuals feel safer and better able to find their way at the station and get to their destination.

It is recommended that;

- Staff training to ensure awareness of the transport needs of people with intellectual disability in terms of information and safety.

## ***Ticket Systems***

Some people with intellectual disability find ticketing systems challenging, and are often confused or unsure as to what to do. “Topping up” pre-paid cards can be slow and challenging, and confusing when problems occur.

People with intellectual disability were clear that they want to be able to get help with ticketing directly from station staff, rather than via a machine or phone support.

It is recommended that;

- Station staff be available to assist people with intellectual disability directly with ticket enquires.

- Identify ticket retailer 'black spots' and increase retailer availability, especially in regional areas.

### ***When on the train***

Some individuals reported that some train carriages do not have a panel indicating the next station stop, and often found the next station stop announcements difficult to hear and understand.

Other individuals often found the trains to be very dirty.

Other individuals did not always feel safe on the trains, and reported being bullied and harassed when travelling on trains.

It is recommended that,

- All train carriages should have clear indicator boards and easy to hear and easy to understand public announcements for next stations stops
- Trains should be clean
- Trains should provide ample time for individuals to get on and off at stations
- Train authorities prepare easy English guidelines for people with intellectual disability to know what they should do if they do not feel safe or are being bullied or harassed on trains.

## **Buses**

Individuals with intellectual disability have raised issues of safety, abuse, and accessibility when travelling on buses.

### ***Getting on and off buses***

Some people with intellectual disability also have physical and mobility challenges, particularly concerning maintaining their balance. This means that they may need assistance when getting on or off the bus, and sufficient time to get to their seat before the bus takes off.

Some specialist providers noted that on some bus routes drivers have “run sheets” which indicate if a passenger at a particular stop requires assistance. It has been suggested that people with intellectual disability who travel regularly on routes could be included on the run sheets to address any specific concerns with getting on or off the bus and for general awareness and safety considerations.

It is recommended that;

- Bus drivers should be aware that they may need to kneel<sup>1</sup> buses for people with intellectual disability with physical challenges.
- Bus drivers should (always) wait until people are safely seated before taking off and provide ample time to safely get off a bus at the stop.

### ***Abuse***

Some individuals have reported being verbally abused when travelling on buses. Other people said they were abused if they got on the wrong bus.

It is recommended that,

- Bus drivers should assist people with disability who experience abuse when travelling on buses; and that people with intellectual disability know that they can request assistance if they feel threatened.

### ***Bus Stops***

Some people with intellectual disability have found that some bus stops have poor lighting, and need to be bigger and spaced out when there is more than one bus stopping in the same area.

It is recommended that,

- Bus stops be maintained with good lighting, bigger, and spaced out when more than one stop, to ensure accessibility and safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Kneeling bus is a bus that can lower its body or entrance door to facilitate boarding by the elderly or people with disabilities.

- Numbers on buses, and at bus stops, need to be in larger text to be clear.
- Complaints about bus stop accessibility be passed on by bus authorities to local government officials to be addressed, rather than referring complainants to local government.

### ***Students***

Some people with intellectual disability are concerned that students do not offer their seats, and leave their bags on the bus floor which makes it difficult to move on and off the bus. Some bus drivers address this behaviour, but others don't.

It is recommended that,

- Bus drivers ensure that school children give up seats to individuals with disability and ensure bags do not block access to get on and off the bus.

### ***Timetables - when will the next bus arrive?***

People with intellectual disability would like a simpler solution to knowing when the next bus will arrive at a bus stop. Individuals have suggested some possible solutions.

1. A large button — similar to what is available at some train stations — which you press to hear when the next bus is due to arrive.
2. A digital screen at the bus stop which tells you how long it will be till the bus will arrive at that stop
3. A more accessible transport phone application which;
  - 3.1. Has a large, bright button which activates the GPS function to tell you when the next bus will arrive, and allow tracking of progress while waiting;
  - 3.2. Alerts the driver that there is someone at the bus stop as an alternative to flagging down the bus by sticking out an arm; and,
  - 3.3. Shows the progress of the journey,