

## 2012 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards)

### Section C: For disability sector and public views

1. Has your accessibility to public transport improved since the commencement or the first Transport Standards Review in 2007?
  - How has your accessibility to conveyances (eg: trains, buses and coaches, trams, ferries, wheelchair accessible taxis and aircraft) changed? Can you provide examples?

The City of Whitehorse is serviced by trains, trams, buses, taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis.

#### **Trains**

Within the City of Whitehorse the accessibility of conveyances remains ad hoc. The grade separation of the Nunawading Station increased access to the station and removed risks associated with crossing a major road. Accessibility however was limited by the installation of the lift without access to a ramp. In the event of power failure people with a disability may be left without means to exit the station.

People using Box Hill train station have benefited from the installation of a fixed wheelchair ramp. This access option is being trialled and to date there has been no release of feedback or community consultation reports on the benefits.

There has been no change in the process of waiting in a designated space, informing the driver of where you need to alight. This process however continues to be distressing for many people with a disability. Timetable commitments and penalty systems for operators mean that some people are left at stations. Drivers grumble at the need to provide a ramp and often will limit the number of people that can access the train. All of this limits the accessibility.

#### **Trams**

Many of the tram stops in Whitehorse are super stops with raised platforms however limited space within tram prevents wide usage. Raised platforms along are generally well connected to footpaths.

#### **Wheelchair Accessible Taxis**

The wheelchair accessible taxi system operating in Victoria provides a range of issues for people with a disability. Taxi's often turn up late or not at all despite booking ahead, some drivers have limited understanding of restraint systems, overcharge clients and or change the route of travel without consulting the passenger. Wheelchair accessible taxis operate best where there is a relationship between the driver and the person with a disability – the system in many ways creates a preferential service for people who are regular users with regular travel needs. This definitely limits people's ability to travel independently.

- How has your accessibility to information (Maps, timetables, announcements) changed? Can you provide examples?

There has been a general increase in the number of maps available in transport areas however the print and keys are often difficult to read and are not consistent throughout the State ie colour schemes change, size of map displays vary.

Signage identifying stations and within stations is difficult for people to read due to placement. Station names are placed higher than eye level, signage is often written in capital letters only which is more difficult for people to read. Colour contrast on some signage is also a barrier.

Timetables are readily available on line which addresses some of the access issues however printed timetables are often in small fonts making them difficult to read.

Announcements are often not clear; public address systems used appear to have electrical interference, people making the address have strong accents; or limited public speaking skills/practice which results in the information being rushed and or blurred as the announcer holds the microphone too close to their mouth. Announcements tend to be made at one time and not repeated.

There are limited visual cues for people who are deaf or hearing impaired when announcements are made. Signage on a train station may announce changes to a line but there is no further information about what the change is.

- How has your accessibility to infrastructure immediately before boarding a conveyance changed (e.g.: any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on a public transport service) Can you provide examples

Infrastructure associated with the public transport system varies greatly.

Pathways to bus stops may not be accessible. For instance there may be gaps in the concrete pathway forcing people to cross the road to the more accessible side of the street. Most bus stops now have TGSIs in place however some are poorly maintained or incorrectly located which increase the risk of injury through trips and vehicle accidents.

Whilst there has been effort to ensure that covered bus stops provide wheelchair access there is only one space allowed. Bus stops areas can be difficult to navigate as there is limited space to pass between those boarding and alighting.

The connectivity between modes of public transport is difficult in Whitehorse with particular reference to Box Hill. The bus interchange is located separately to the train station and tram access, walking between sites requires navigation of a shopping centre.

Accessible toilets on train stations are often locked requiring the person to ask station staff for a key. Other toilets however are left open. Information received indicates the issues relate to vandalism and use of the space by other passengers. This is not reason enough to lock doors and force people with a disability to seek permission to have their personal care needs met.

- What do you currently see as the greatest areas of need with regard to accessibility of public transport for people with a disability? Can you provide specific examples?

The greatest area of need is for choice. People with a disability have the same desire to get to work, school, community events and opportunities as all members of the community however they are limited by the accessibility of the public transport system. Many people with a disability are forced to use an inequitable system as the alternative of driving is not an option due to the nature of their disability.

The use of designated ramps, carriages, specific buses or tram routes all limits the availability of public transport. Engineering in other countries has addressed these issues through the use of ramps that connect each carriage with the train platform, therefore people with mobility issues can board and alight any carriage.

An overhaul of the taxi industry has occurred at state level but there needs to be strong governance and accountability requirements embedded to ensure a truly equitable system where you can rely on the service provided.

2. As a public transport users are there areas of the Transport Standards where you consider that a more specific requirement for compliance would improve accessibility?

Consistency between the access to premises standards and the transport standards need to be imbedded. For example a review of the bus standards undertaken in Victoria in 2012 indicated that ramp access to buses would be at 1:12 not 1:14 as a minimum as required for all other built areas within a community.

Similarly there needs to be a commitment to ensure the accessibility of all structures and consideration given to how people will exit facilities in the event of accident, injury or power outage. Metro Trains website for Victorian Trains indicate that "In the event of a lift outage at stations without platform ramp access, special needs customers can seek assistance either through approaching Metro staff or through using the red emergency button". When approached by a person using a wheelchair to find out what this means the station staff said they would carry the person up/down the stairs and their wheelchair. The risk of injury and OH&S implications are quite significant but could be avoided with better planning.

3. To what extent do you feel that the requirements of the Transport Standards address all of the accessibility requirements of people with a disability? Are there any gaps in the coverage of requirements?

The Transport Standards access requirements need to reflect changes to the Access to Premises Standards in relation to the built environment, paths of travel, lighting, signage, luminance contrast etc. This will provide people with a disability with a sense of surety and safety when accessing public transport.

Dedicated school buses should not be exempt from meeting the Transport Standards. Children with a disability would have increased access to schools and opportunities to travel with friends if dedicated school buses were accessible. Dedicated school buses are often used outside of the school run by bus companies to fulfil other runs.

4. Do you find that the current processes with regard to making a complaint or seeking information are sufficient or sufficiently responsive?

People with a disability are often unaware that they can make a complaint or seek further information from public transport providers. Where people have taken the time to make a complaint or suggestion it is often difficult to identify who in that stream of public transport to address the complaint to. Public transport bodies do tend to respond to complaints received but this does not always equate to evidence of action to address the issues raised.

5. As a body representing the views of people with a disability do you have any specific responses or perspectives with regard to the issues raised in the questions above

Contained in the above comments

6. Other key issues you would like to see addressed:

People with a disability may require access to a hoist and change table to have their personal care needs met. Most accessible toilets do not have this facility. There is no current Australian Standard that requires the installation of hoists and change tables in public facilities. This means approximately 6% of the population of people with a disability can have their person care needs met. Train stations are a key public facility that is open beyond work hours that have the potential to offer this infrastructure.