

Draft Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (January 2008)

The following comments are made in regard to the Draft report:

Need To Strengthen (Mandate?) Linkages

- Linkages between home, various transport modes/nodes and destination /departure points are critical to the ability of people with disabilities to complete even simple journeys. Differing responsibilities of the differing stakeholders at transition points at every node is a significant obstacle in ensuring the integrated upgrading of infrastructure. It would be highly desirable to ensure mandated Interagency / inter Government cooperation in the implementation of standards to ensure that the strategic implementation of access ways that provide for prioritised upgrades to infrastructure radiating out from critical transition points.
- Poor linkage connectivity significantly limits the travel opportunities for the mobility impaired. The review process needs to address the 'whole of journey' and what the expectations / limits are in regard to areas of responsibility.

Funding of Upgrades

- It is clear that in many instances the upgrading of infrastructure will require substantial capital investment to achieve goals and specifications. Local Government is constrained in its ability to raise additional revenue to meet these goals and it is essential that State and Commonwealth Governments recognise these costs and resource councils accordingly

Compliance Timetable

- It would be highly desirable to establish incentives for the achievement of goals within the compliance timetables (Carrots), and clearly articulate penalties (Sticks) where providers fail to meet requirements.

Accessibility of Trains and Trams

- Simple quotas for accessibility on train stations (25%) should be revised to ensure prioritisation based on use and need. Regional stakeholder meetings or Access type Committees should be required to prioritise upgrades to all infrastructures within the resource available to comply with standards.
- Lifts have been the key piece of infrastructure that has been upgraded to ensure access to railway stations to date. It is apparent that there are few accessible toilets on railway stations, accessible ticket sales counters / machines and hearing loops at counters should also form part of the review.
- Disabled toilets should be provided for customers not simply staff (for example the recent upgrade proposed at Como)
- Electric scooters are growing in prominence. Parking at rail stations should consider this issue as an emerging trend.

- A regional supply of accessible back up busses needs to be considered to ensure that PWD can access journeys during upgrades to rail infrastructure.
- Physical access needs to incorporate thoughtful consideration of the needs of visually impaired travellers ie; type and location for furniture, overhanging stairs and phone boxes. Dangerous and inappropriate infrastructure on platforms is a growing concern with the rapid growth of the ageing community which brings with it significant increases in the number of people suffering from vision impairment

Chapter 4 Accessibility of Taxis

- Disabled residents of Sutherland Shire continue to suffer long delays in accessing wheelchair accessible taxis especially after hours. There is an overall need to increase the supply of accessible taxis and how access is managed that will ensure equitable provision to PWD.

Chapter 5 Accessibility of Buses and Coaches

- It important that provision is made for accessible busses to be replaced with accessible busses if they break down as PWD count on them. These buses could also be used a back up service during rail infrastructure upgrades (see above).
- Many older people relying on school busses have difficulty coping with unsupervised students and fear trips and falls. There is a need to ensure improved frequency of buses outside school hours.
- Accessibility of infrastructure – Upgrades to bus and rail, and bus / bus interchanges is critical to the success of ‘whole of journey’ trips. A missing link in a key piece of infrastructure undermines all other efforts.
- Need to provide kerb ramps at bus stops
- Bus stop signage and shelters should be standardised and documented ensuring correct placements and designs that can work hand in hand with advertising generating revenue streams to offset costs.
- Accessible pathways in residential areas that connect to bus stops require significant upgrades – Councils require funding assistance to meet acceptable standards. Pre paid tickets for transport are not accessible to non internet users and people with disabilities sometimes (pg 56)

Accessibility of Ferries

- Upgrading infrastructure to ensure accessibility of public ferry wharves is extremely costly (eg Bundeena and Cronulla Wharves). These upgrades cannot be achieved without the support of other levels of government
- Effectiveness and Efficiency of the transport Standards

Overall

- It would be highly desirable to develop a standard reporting format that will enable an assessment of compliance with standards to be made. This would provide incentives for all stakeholders to work together in the achievement of strategic goals, identify areas of failure and enable these to be addressed.

- A standard evaluation tool would also facilitate comparison between regions, benchmarking of best practice and facilitate the identification of what is working and what is not.

Costs of Transport Infrastructure

- Transport infrastructure upgrade costs are going to impact local government substantially. Funded infrastructure and maintenance plan are critical to the success of this strategy. These can only be implemented with a degree of certainty if other levels of Government provide support and funding to the prioritised projects.
- Further work need to be undertaken to not only develop tools that will model the cost of implementation but also ongoing maintenance liabilities for the infrastructure so that 'whole of life costing' can be factored into budget subsidies from funding bodies.

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