

I attended the Brisbane hearing and feel that I still need to make several comments having read this latest review. These comments are made by me as an individual.

I believe that the importance of the usage of the 'Motorised Wheelchair' and 'Scooter' as a method of mobility 'Outside' of the home has not still been fully realised by the review (Issue 3). Although mentioned several times through the report ( Pages 25/26/40/48 )the growing reliance on these 2 methods of mobility is increasing for several reasons not least, ironically due to increased access to public places, shopping areas and leisure activities. But also due to increased acceptance in the community, the rising costs of private transport, advances in mobility technology and a growing population of the elderly and disabled. Small manual chairs cannot be used by all and indeed for use outside of the home are problematic for many meaning that they are not independent and have to rely on a Carer for no other reason than to push them long distances. Therefore I am extremely concerned by remarks such as "It is too late now to change the prescribed space size needed" If not now,when? As stated on page 54 "the number of low floor busses are as yet relatively low". Surely now is the time to change the Australian Standards definition for space needed for a wheelchair, especially for use on transport and other areas outside of the home such as public toilets. If not done now (rec 5) the incurred costs down the track will be far greater and the resulting outcome much less successful with a large % of the population still unable to access Public Transport. We cannot just label compliant, items that fit the allotted space.

To date only 25% of main infrastructure of Bus stops,Trains,Ferries,Airline,Trams,Taxis etc are required. As a result of the lack of guidance from the Transport Standards (Page 55) many local councils have sought direction in a more concrete plan for fear of non-compliance either under these or other standards. I believe that there should be an audit therefore of the work done so far across the country to ensure that the required results are being achieved before the other 75% is due. During this hiatus a review of the size requirement could be undertaken by a specialist panel of Disability workers and pwd's.

Outdated AS(Page 92) are used as a guide for this current Transport Standard so I suggest that we need 2 new Australian Standards for the 3 dimensional footprint of a wheelchair/mobility device. An updated one, taking into account newer wheelchair dimensions for use in Homes,Apartments,Units,Townhouses,etc and one for the dimensions of mobility devices to be used when out of the home stating that the space needed be that of the average sized scooter and electric wheelchair in present use.

I agree that some standardisation of equipment has to be forthcoming but it has to take into account the needs of the user.What good is a standardised chair that only 30% can use? Weight and compliance plates can easily be placed on equipment in full view.(Rec 5) Patrons of Taxis and others to whom weight limits of 300kg apply (page 48) should be expected to act honestly in this respect and knowing their own weight can assess with the plate displayed on their mobility device whether they exceed this. This weight limit must be plainly visible and known in advance to all Patrons. The onus should be on the individual and not the driver. The ramps for Buses,Trams,Ferries,Trains and other larger Transport should be constructed to carry heavier weights as they do presently for lorries, trucks and trains for freight and patrons advised accordingly.

I also agree that all mobility devices must have compliant tie-down (anchorage) points (Page 49). These must be compulsory on all new mobility equipment and retrofitted where possible on all existing equipment. When used in taxis where the client stays in the mobility device the taxi must provide a minimum number of straps with varying connections i.e. hooks,straps with seat belt connectors,floor connectors, which will allow any device to be secured safely. (page 49) The 3 wheeled scooter could possibly have a device much like a seat belt with which to hold it to the floor of the taxi utilising the present strip, across its foot plate and tightened,as well as front and back anchor points. I believe that buses in some overseas countries have an automatic anchorage system which should also be looked into now before we go any further.

Driver training should be required for all Bus and Taxi drivers. For sedan drivers a basic course in folding, lifting and storing of equipment in a safe manner both for themselves and the occupants. What type of assistance may be expected of them by people with certain disabilities, e.g. protocol for dealing with guide dogs. As well as an understanding of their responsibilities to people with a disability as members of society, should be part of a standard course before allowing drivers to achieve their license. For Taxi drivers of Maxi Taxis and vehicles that are capable of carrying people seated in their mobility devices, training needs to also comprise of a secondary course encompassing the art of anchoring mobility devices properly and with the correct types of straps and their various usses, fitting of seat belts,operation of lift (including emergency procedure)and any laws and regulations pertaining to this. For Bus drivers the initial course should also be taught with a secondary course on equipment and usage for all low floor bus drivers. A similar idea for trains,trams,ferries etc.

The new independent travel criteria now used by at least one airline must not be abused as an excuse to discriminate against people with a disability, nor must the size and weight of essential mobility equipment. The health and safety aspect can also be misrepresented and it is essential that airlines and their staff whilst working within their guidelines not lose touch with the fact that they are part of a service industry which people with a disability have an equal right to enjoy. I can see the reasoning behind the independent travel criteria and if a person with a disability cannot fulfill the three physical tasks of oxygen mask,lifejacket and seatbelt it would appear fair that a Carer must accompany the person and I believe it is unreasonable for people with a disability to expect airline staff to lift them, unless using a device that in no

way strains the person using it.(Page 67) However I cannot see why the safety rules normally on a card and demonstrated by the attendant cannot be explained in a number of alternative ways both before boarding during the long wait at airports or/and on the plane.(Page 64)

The transportation of essential mobility devices ( these are not belongings, these are our legs! part 30) has to comply in size with the airline door, however I cannot see why there is a problem with the weight of the device as an occupational health and safety issue as other heavy containers etc are allowed in the hold, even if the mobility equipment has to be crated in order to comply. Also all passengers with a disability are required to give dimensions and weight of mobility aids when booking their flights so the aircraft can take this weight into account (Part 30.1) when following it's Casa requirements.(Page 65) I certainly would not like to see people with a disability penalised by having to pay excess baggage allowance for their essential mobility device. Nor should they arrive at an airport with pre-purchased tickets and not be allowed to board.(Page 78)

Clarity needs to be sought in regards to workplace health and safety and pushing manual chairs on the flat, up a ramp, assisting people alight transport in other manners and any other possible conflicting areas. So that both the PWD and Worker is aware of the obligations and responsibilities of each other.

Until people with disabilities can undertake their travel requirements with full confidence in both the reliability of the product and it's standards they will not utilise the individual parts sufficiently to be of a financial benefit to the service. When you have a disability you cannot allow yourself to be abandoned in the middle of nowhere or book a flight that will not let you board unless you leave your chair behind. You cannot find that the connecting bus is inaccessible when you reach it and your only option is to get a taxi for the 200 km journey to your destination. Having a 'Whole of Journey' option will open up Australia to people with disabilities in a way that will impact not only on themselves and their families, but on the economy of the tourist trade and Australia itself.

Yours sincerely  
Kay Maclean

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