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**AUSCRIPT**

Level 10, MLC Court, 15 Adelaide St BRISBANE QLD 4000

PO Box 13038 George St Post Shop BRISBANE QLD 4003

Tel:1300 308 420 Fax:(07) 3503-1199

Email: [orders@auscript.com.au](mailto:orders@auscript.com.au) Website: [www.auscript.com.au](http://www.auscript.com.au)

## TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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O/N 59035

### **THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP**

### **REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**HEARING CONDUCTED AT: MERCURE HOTEL  
156 BATHURST STREET  
HOBART**

**DATE: 16 JULY 2007**

MR BELL: My name is John Bell and I'm from the Allen Consulting Group Canberra office, and I have with Ms Sharon Kennard, also from the Canberra office, and as I think you all know, we are undertaking this review of the disability standards for accessible public transport on behalf of the Commonwealth  
5 Government, and we're holding a whole series of consultations in State capitals, and in some regional centres to do this review. As you, I think, probably all know, these standards came in in 2002 and they are to be implemented over quite a long time period. I think that long time period reflects in part the long lived nature of some of the assets that need to be – some of the infrastructure that needs to be fixed. So this  
10 is the first five year review, to see what sort of progress is being made. And so far it has certainly been very interesting. We've done hearings so far in Dubbo and in - - -

MS KENNARD: Bendigo.

15 MR BELL: - - - Bendigo. Yes, okay. So this is number three. So we are really looking not so much at whether there should be standards or not, because the clearly the Government's decided that there should be standards. But rather we're looking to see the extent to which progress has been made in improving accessibility of public transport to people with disabilities. And so to help you with all this we've  
20 issued – we've released an issues paper, and we've advertised for submissions. Now, the original date was put back, and it's now 24 August for the submissions. We are obviously very keen to receive written submissions, but we understand that not everybody has the time, or perhaps the possibility of producing a written submission. So that's why these hearings fulfil part of that role, and you'll notice  
25 that we have some microphones and a tape recorder, and the purpose of that is to ensure that we capture what you say accurately, but we're also planning to put a transcript of today's session up on the internet.

30 And the reason for that is that there are people who are not able to be at the hearing today, but who would be very interested to see what was said, and they'll be able to – or to hear what's said, because there will be some hardware to do that. So to that end today's transcript will be up on the web in about a week. Now, we're going to try to organise this in a way that we get one group of people talking at a time. You'll understand that, for the purposes of getting a transcript, it's important that we – have  
35 a name associated with a voice. So in Dubbo we actually did have some other discussion with other people in the audience, and that's fine. We just need to manage it in a way that the transcript does know who made various comments. So we're not making this – this is not a formal hearing. We're not – it's not a royal commission. I have to remind myself about that. So we're going to make it really  
40 informal, and I think we've got four lots of people.

MS KENNARD: Yes.

45 MR BELL: Sharon, who's going to be talking to us today?

MS KENNARD: We have Metro Tasmania, Tasmanian Bus Association, Tasmanians with Disabilities, and the Glenorchy City Council, takes us through to 1 o'clock.

MR BELL: After which we're heading for Launceston. So who's up first?

MS KENNARD: Metro.

5 MR BELL: So, Metro. So the team from Metro, would you like to come and sit over here and front of this mike. Sorry, but I think that'll work a little better. Now, I'll just get you to mention your names again for the recording, please.

10 MR SIM: If I start off. My name is Tony Sim. I'm the Chief Executive Officer of Metro Tasmania. I have with me Mr Jack Lane, who's our Manager Business Development. I would like to give a brief introduction if I can and then Mr Lane will follow on with a bit more detail. Just for the benefit of the record, and this might sort of bore a lot of the other people that are already here, but our company is a State owned company. It originally – or it came from the old Metropolitan Transport  
15 Trust, which was basically a public transport provider that operated under its own legislation, etcetera. A bit like Sydney Buses, that's sort of – however, we've now been set up as a company. We operate under corporations law, and we try to perform the task that we have, which is providing urban public transport services in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. We try to do that in accordance with our contract. We have  
20 a contract with the Government. We do provide some regional services, but they are relatively minor compared to our urban services. We operate in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

25 We have about 450 employees, of which there are about 300, 350 bus drivers. We have 215 buses, the majority of which are urban-type buses. There are 150 buses located in Hobart, 50 in Launceston, and about – I think it's 14 in Burnie. We have been introducing low floor accessible buses since 2002. We weren't replacing any of our fleet in fact from 1995 until about 2000, so we were able to kick off replacement of our fleets with low floor buses, I guess, with the benefit of some hindsight,  
30 because if you recall back in the late 90s and – I think it up until 2002 that the standards for accessible buses, and accessibility were in draft format and they were changing significantly. We have in our fleet in Hobart 25 per cent of our fleet are accessible buses, in Launceston it's about 20 per cent, and in Burnie about 20 per cent.

35 MR BELL: So what sort of life does a bus have?

MR SIM: Our buses in our fleet, we keep them from between 15 to 20 years.

40 MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: And we do have some very old buses at the moment, which we're hoping to replace soon with low floor accessible buses. They're in up around the 25 year age mark, so we sort of have a plan to replace approximately 10 buses a year  
45 ongoing. So we basically established that back in the early 2001, 2002. We knew that we needed to make a significant commitment to upgrade our rolling stock, and we did that, knowing that we would also have to do a lot of work eventually with our infrastructure, fixed infrastructure, which we don't own. We basically operate on

public streets, and we rely heavily on bus stop infrastructure being supplied by councils, and/or in some cases the Department of Infrastructure. But mostly councils.

5 We operate within I think it's about eight jurisdictions, council jurisdictions throughout the State, so it is difficult to negotiate, I guess, with eight players, with varying degrees of commitment, I guess, with expenditure to DDA issues. So that's sort of a bit of the background, I guess. We do – our best estimates are that in terms of the accessible weekly trips that we provide with those accessible buses is - about  
10 29 per cent in Hobart of our trips are accessible bus trips. Launceston is about 14 to 15 per cent, and Burnie is about 17 to 20 per cent, something of that order.

MR BELL: Is it predictable as to which route, or which service will have a bus - - -

15 MR SIM: We have some services that are advertised as accessible services - - -

MR BELL: Okay.

MR SIM: - - - particularly in Hobart. In Launceston we only have a small number of buses, and in Burnie an even smaller number of buses, to it's very difficult to  
20 make a commitment with, for example, in Burnie with three buses. However, having said that, as we introduce more buses into our fleet we will increase the number of buses in Burnie and Launceston, and we believe that probably in the next 12 months we will start to nominate accessible services within our route structure. However,  
25 having said that, I'm talking about accessible buses. Talking about a total accessible service of course is a different matter, because that relies on the fixed infrastructure being adequate, and there's a number of other issues about accessibility in terms of what we can actually fit on our bus, and all that sort of stuff. But certainly in terms of the infrastructure it is an issue going forward in either encouraging councils or  
30 Governments to provide funding to at least give us a kick start in this State, because we really don't have very many accessible bus stops, I would have to say.

MR BELL: When you talk about an accessible bus stop, what would be the key

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MR SIM: In terms of the standards an accessible bus stop, I'm talking about, which has tactile surfaces, has the right widths on the pavement, it has the right manoeuvring, turning circles, and it has the right slope. We have a lot of hilly areas, for example, so many of our hilly bus stops would not – in fact they wouldn't be safe  
40 to use with some wheelchairs, for example, because they are on – they're a steep gradient, and they have steep slopes to cross the footpath, as well as being uneven in some cases. So there are some – in my view, some unique circumstances in Hobart, because of the topography.

45 However, having said that, there are a lot of flat areas where certainly with expenditure of some funds we – not we, but collectively we, would be able to provide a better bus service, or more accessible bus service. I think – I don't know how long you expect us to talk for, but I would rather sort of have it so we give

some comment, and some of the issues that we have with trying to provide an accessible service, and then perhaps if there's any questions at the end that you or anyone else would like to ask, and will try and discuss those. I think that's probably the better way.

5

MR BELL: That would be good.

MR SIM: And you mentioned about written submissions. I would like to say also that Metro Tasmania is part of the UITP, International Transport Confederation, I guess, and we would expect them to put in a submission on all of public transport  
- - -

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MS KENNARD: Okay.

MR SIM: - - - and I'm sure you will see that as you go around, the major capital cities, probably in Canberra particularly.

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MS KENNARD: Yes. I think they've actually arranged to come.

MR SIM: I guess the other thing about – just a bit more background. We – as I said, we have 350-odd drivers and one of the areas that we have been trying to do a lot of work on is training with drivers, particularly induction training, disability awareness-type training, and re-training programs. We last – on an annual basis we have different – we try and get through all our bus drivers, and have a different program every year.

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They are the sorts of things that come up, certainly about how to handle people with disabilities, there's role playing and all that sort of stuff. So that we try and get our drivers to appreciate how we can improve our services, even though they might technically not be accessible, we want our drivers, wherever possible, to provide assistance as relevant. However, having said that, that leads to a number of issues, particularly in relation to OH and S and safety for passengers as well as drivers. Mr Lane will probably talk a bit more about that. I mentioned about fixed infrastructure, which is certainly an area that we would like to see more work being done.

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We do – technically, we don't own the footpath or the pavement, we do, however, own or have installed over many years – I mean, we have been going for over 100 years, this company, we have installed bus-stop poles and signs, but well, historically some of them are very old, I would think, probably anything up to 20-or-30-years old. We do upgrades. At the moment, we really don't have any, for example, accessible signs on bus stops because we don't believe that there are any bus stops that are technically accessible and therefore we don't believe we should advertise them. However, having said that, to the best that we are able to provide an accessible bus stop, there are, in reality, a number of users that find our services quite accessible. And what we've tried to do is set up accessible boarding points at key nodes, for example, bus stations in the centre of the city and other areas. So I guess, having said all that, perhaps if I can hand over to Mr Lane to sort of follow on.

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MR BELL: Yes. Thank you.

MR LANE: Right. Basically, we are not trying to provide a detailed response about the technical aspects of the standards and things like that. There are a few – just two  
5 main comments we would really want to make. One is about the clarity of the standards themselves in terms of providing guidance for people that have got to provide infrastructure and services within the framework that is established and as well as that, also talk about the growing use of electric scooters and the fact that there is no standard in relation to the basic unit and it's very difficult when you've got to  
10 invest a lot of money in equipment and facilities when the actual unit that is going to be using those is changing and evolving and there are, if you like, not the same degree of controls about the standards or design of units that can use accessible public transport.

15 The first comment really is about the clarity, the DDAs and the standards have been there to set up a concept which is accessible public transport which is applauded by everybody, but there are situations where the vision of what is accessible public transport varies considerably and the system that is set up at the moment is that clarity in relation to what is accessible public transport is, in the end, going to be  
20 determined by the Courts and that in itself is not an effective or efficient system for most of the players in the process and part of your terms of reference is to look at the efficiency and effectiveness and a lot more can be done to provide clarity and guidance to the people that have got to work within the system that's structured.

25 This issue – I wanted to focus a little bit about bus stops, and that issue is recognised by HREOC because they published on their website, a letter from the Commissioner where he runs through basically the structure of the standards and tries to provide some guidance as to what things apply and what don't apply and it is – one feature of that is the reference, if you like, to waiting area. Waiting area is designed - or it  
30 seems in the standards to be designed around a terminal building or something like that, but quite often people are applying the concept of waiting area to a bus stop and saying that therefore there must be two spaces provided whereas in reality the waiting area around a bus stop can be quite large, some of it is formalised in the form of providing a bus shelter with set spaces within that for both seating and for  
35 wheelchair spaces, but the application that that means that a shelter has to be designed to have two wheelchair spaces within it seems to be – well, it means that some of the facilities that we provide, which generally are accepted and used perhaps don't technically fall within the definition of the standard.

40 Our view is that they are adequate and they seem to be supported and the size of our shelters is such that if we provided two spaces for wheelchairs, we would probably be down to one space for a normal seat. So we're trying to I suppose gain some balance in a situation where our buses will have a limited range of spaces, they're  
45 visiting a long series – a number of stops along a route, so to have two wheelchair spaces at each stop seems to be over – in balance with the capacity that is provided on the bus service. So that is – that gives us problems when we're designing things that have to meet certain target levels at certain time periods, that there is such confusion as to whether or not a bus stop is accessible or is not accessible

A lot of engineering people are used to having nice engineering standards, they know that it's black and white as to whether things fall within and without, and we recognise that performance-based standards are there to encourage innovation, but we would encourage more guidelines from HREOC and others to actually clarify  
5 what is good practice and what is acceptable, so as to enable us to better meet the community's needs in that regard. The second point I really wanted to focus on is that of mobility devices used on accessible buses. So the adoption standards has set in a train a process of providing the public transport system and the accessible public  
10 transport system and in doing that it's built around the concept of the accessible path on to there and within the bus itself, there is a more open cabin space that is there available with some allocated spaces for – designed around a standard or a – what probably was in 1993 or thereabouts, a standard wheelchair.

And those allocated spaces or the internal cabin that has been created for those  
15 allocated spaces, has also created the environment that is used by a lot of other people, which is fine. At the moment, probably the greatest users of that space are young mums with strollers and small children because we now remove the steps to get on so it's much easier to board the buses, it's a lovely place to store the stroller, and they probably are the greatest users of our space. There is also a growing – and  
20 the comments here are trying to look at who else is using the accessible transport which creates an issue about then of – for the bus operator (a) to ration the allocated space and make sure that it is accessible for the people it was designed for, but also to say that there is a growing concern amongst us in the Metro about the broader community's view of what is an accessible public-transport system incorporates an  
25 expanding electric-scooter industry in the market.

And some of those scooters are large, are heavy, they are not manoeuvrable and our drivers are trying to recognise that members of the community are using these  
30 vehicles to get around and the objective of an accessible public transport system is to make the whole public transport system accessible to the broadest range of the community, therefore there is a lot of public pressure to be able to access buses using scooters and the trouble there is that when the scooters themselves are not as manoeuvrable as intended and they don't match the physical dimensions, if you like,  
35 that are provided within the confines of the bus, it is difficult to actually manage that process, particularly as the scooters themselves have got no ready means of identification on them that they have been designed to fit within an accessible bus. We have approached the department here to take forward through the national processes to have in place some form of registration or certification system to enable  
40 people who are manufacturing electric scooters to have their products identified as being suitable for use on accessible public transport that is complying with the disability standards.

MR BELL: So you really want a standard for scooters?

45 MR LANE: Yes, and in that way it would help everybody. It would help those people who are going out and buying them, to be able to be given advice in a consumer-affairs type environment, that this scooter complies and this one doesn't. Now, it's recognised that a lot of people buy scooters for getting around shopping

areas where there is not the same constraint, but it's when people then start to use them on accessible public transport that the problems of that lack of control are very apparent, and it's causing two main areas of concern. One is the OH-and-S sort of issues about impacts upon our drivers where it can be a point of conflict. The person  
5 using the mobility device has probably been told by the salesman that this is fine for use on public transport, on a bus, they come to use it on the bus and they find there are some difficulties, it can't get round the corner and quite often then it's stuck, it's half way on to the bus and someone has got to help to get it out.

10 So people get out and the drivers will help to get it out and you may end up with some claims in relation to that, strained muscles, or a passenger will come and help and try and do it and again there might be then claims on us as a result of that, or the vehicle gets in and once it's in, finds it's got great difficulty turning round to get out and you can have the problems then of the scooter actually causing injury on to  
15 others because people are trying to assist or the person in charge is trying to manoeuvre it and doesn't quite get it right and they clonk somebody, there are all these practical issues which we believe need to be resolved as an urgent priority, so that everybody who wants to use electric scooters can access to a clear designation system that says that these type of vehicles are designed for use on buses, the drivers  
20 then can recognise that and can say quite clearly that that scooter can come on and that one can't. Because otherwise what will happen is, as happened in Sydney, we will get blanket bans on the use of electric scooters on public transport and that is not a good outcome for the community. What we want is clarity, and I think this review is one – if it can come up with a clear outcome on that, it will have done very well.

25 MR BELL: So when we are talking about scooters, we are talking about dimensions, weight, and manoeuvrability, that is to say turning circles and things like that?

30 MR LANE: And also stability, there are some - - -

MR BELL: And stability.

35 MR LANE: Yes. There are some that become fairly high in a centre of gravity, particularly if the passenger is loading up the carrying space available on the electric scooter and so a normal bus operation is going round a roundabout, they can become a little unstable. So there are multiple sorts of factors about them.

40 MR BELL: Thank you.

45 MR SIM: I think it is – as Tony said, I think it's important that there's more recognition given to travel on a bus compared to travel on a train, for example, or a train for that matter, where their routes are much more, well, constrained obviously, their curvatures of turning are relatively yes, straightforward. With buses, obviously they're pulling in and out of bus stops, the road camber varies a lot, particularly in Hobart streets, and it just throws sort of a certain amount of instability through well, the vehicle I guess, but certainly with some mobility devices which are very narrow in their wheel track or short in their wheel base, or the user sits back behind – back

on top of the rear wheel or even in some cases behind the rear wheel of their mobility device, so it actually is sometimes inclined to tip.

5 MR BELL: Potentially going to tip backwards.

MR SIM: So the stability side of it is very important, and we have had actually – we've had fortunately not very many incidents where people have been tipped out of their wheel chairs, but there has been some. Certainly one was a three-wheel wheelchair.

10 MR BELL: A three wheeler.

MR SIM: Which was very unstable. So I guess in terms of the standards, as Jack said, if there could be some clarity on that issue alone that comes out of this review it would be a very good outcome.

15 MR BELL: Is there also an issue about anchoring these chairs in the bus? You would be aware that in the taxis there is an issue about anchoring the wheelchairs and there is no standard for attachment points, so the taxi operators are explaining to us that every wheel chair has a different set of challenges as to how you anchor it. Now, of course, taxis go a little bit faster and probably go around corners faster than buses but I presume the same sort of issues arise?

20 MR LANE: Well, there are no anchoring points.

25 MR BELL: There are no anchoring points.

MR LANE: And the design standard as such that they are not required.

30 MR BELL: They are not required.

MR LANE: It is designed for the vehicle – the mobility device is to be self-stable  
- - -

35 MR BELL: Yes.

MR LANE: - - - to have brakes so that they can – for the floor of the cabin to have a degree of friction associated with it so that there is not going to be the sliding. But it is designed for people to just, if you like, drive in, park, manoeuvre out and whilst they are in there, to be stable in their own right and to create points for securing down, then means that someone, the driver has got to leave, could come back, and secure and then move off. There is a whole reason of not wanting to have - - -

45 MR BELL: The driver.

MR LANE: - - - those sorts of extra delays in to a system that is designed for minimising the boarding time, in order for us to be able to meet our contracts for delivering the services, the time table services. That is a conflict that is in there.

MR BELL: Yes, I think any system that requires the driver to get out if his chair is not a good idea any way.

5 MR SIM: It is not desirable. I mean, certainly the drivers on, obviously have to get out of the bus to deploy the ramp at the front of the bus. We have a flip-over hinge type ramp that requires the driver to get out of his seat or her seat. There are occasions when other passengers will help deploy the ramp. There are other issues however, I believe, associated with constraints in a public vehicle, particularly a bus. Who – is it expected, for example, that the wheelchair user provides their own  
10 restraint and we just provide the tie-down points.

We wouldn't really want to go to the point of having the tie down strips on the floor, I don't think that that – I think that is over the top, personally. And whether we have – we have looked at that in some buses, some of our early, very early buses and it  
15 does have issues about maintenance of the tie-down equipment, using the tie-down equipment and the ongoing integrity, I guess, of the system over time. There can potentially be damage to it and I guess it is an additional cost that will be imposed on us.

20 MR BELL: What sort of weight limit is there on the ramp at the moment?

MR SIM: We initially designed our ramps on the first low floor buses to take a load of – they were designed for 300 kilos and I think the standards at that stage said 250  
25 kilos. Those ramps were broken within six months of operation.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: And they are now replaced with – I think the capacity is 350 we have designed for. I think the standard calls for 300 kilos.  
30

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: However, having said that, there are – we know there are wheelchairs – not wheelchairs so much as scooters - - -  
35

MR BELL: Scooters.

MR SIM: - - - that probably are up around the 350 kilos.

40 MR BELL: And that is before you put the passenger in the scooter?

MR SIM: No, that is with the passenger in there, yes.

MR BELL: With the passenger, yes, because we have heard of examples over 300.  
45

MR SIM: Yes. So the weight in the design parameters and the certification process is as important as the length and the width. The other thing that probably is worth looking at and this sort of relates to the fixed infrastructure, is perhaps – a lot of –

some of the scooters have very small diameter wheels and a very low ground clearance and a relatively long wheel base. So they actually can bottom out - - -

5 MR BELL: As they come up the - - -

MR SIM: - - - on some occasions.

MR BELL: Get stuck at the top of the ramp.

10 MR SIM: Well, they must have difficulties with some our streets, I might add too. So that certainly in the context of an accredited vehicle for use on buses, we think it would be worth considering all those parameters.

15 MR GORDON: If I could jump in – David Gordon from Tasmanians with Disabilities. I will put on my alternative hat as an access consultant for the Paraquad Association of Tasmania. One of the issues that was mentioned about the wheelchairs and the length and belling out on the buses. Now, I have been on occasions on Metro buses where this has actually occurred and part of the problem is with the camber of the road and the location of the footpath and the kerb and how the  
20 – and where the actual ramp is deployed at the time. Now, this is one of the things that I mentioned back in the early days when myself and another couple of gentlemen were working in conjunction with Metro in the very early days of the introduction of the first buses that they bought on line – was that they needed to – there should have been at that stage some work done, in the very, very early stages of  
25 the implementation of infrastructure.

And specific points through the routes that they were actually travelling to make specific stops accessible as we are fully aware with the terrain of the Hobart area, there is no way known that you are going to get a lot of the infrastructure put at every  
30 bus stop. There is no way known that it is ever going to happen. I am giving you one of the instances, Elizabeth Street has a camber on the road that actually goes from the middle to the actual kerb and guttering, that slopes in to the kerb. You come up Argyle Street because it was originally used as a tramway, it is as flat as a billiard table and the actual gutters and kerbs on those are a lot higher than what the  
35 current road surface is.

So it works completely opposite from street to street. Now, five years in, I am still seeing in one particular case there just recently in Clarence, where representatives from Metro and Clarence Council turned up to an access meeting and said we have  
40 put in two new bus stops, one was with a shelter, one was without, neither of those infrastructures complied any where near the standards that are required for accessibility and they were two new bus stops. Now, the thing is the requirements of the standard says that if they are putting in new installations they should be  
45 compliant.

These weren't compliant. Now, somewhere along the line they have got to sit down, with all parties concerned, and the access groups that most of the councils actually have working with them, and have the across the table and try and work out the

system and actually start getting this infrastructure in. Okay, Metro is five years in with the accessible buses that they have currently got and there is other issues that I will bring up about those later, but the whole thing works down to the infrastructure, you know, the compliancy with their fleet was expanded from a 20 to a 25 year  
5 extension, because of the nature of the timelines for those buses being changed.

You know, somewhere along the line this thing about the infrastructure on the footpaths and that is not going to go away. It needs to be worked on now.

10 MR BELL: David, we might let you talk some more about this a bit later. Let me just move the microphone for a moment. Obviously the – you know, when these streets are designed they are designed to – because you have real rain here in Hobart for – it needs to cope with the rainfall and so, sometimes the camber on the street is  
15 determined just by the need to carry away the water. And I take your point, David, that every street is different. I mean, this is what makes it hard for the bus operator because the idea of having a nice standardised stopping arrangement is just not going to be readily achievable.

20 And of course you can understand, David, from the bus operator's viewpoint that all these different stopping points and the different tactics that the poor bus driver has to use each time is a bit of a challenge but I think you have made the point that - - -

MR SIM: Well, certainly, there always is a challenge and whilst, with our best  
25 endeavours we work with all the councils where we operate, as I said there is at least eight that I am aware of, and certainly Clarence is one. And for various reasons, I have to say, we don't get it 100 per cent right. Quite often the circumstances don't allow you to get it 100 per cent right. However we try to give it our best endeavours.

30 MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: I think, from Metro's point of view as a bus operator, under normal  
circumstances probably the only thing we would provide on the side of the street would be that there was a pole with our corporate laid on it if you like, and all the  
35 rest of the fixed infrastructure would be provided by someone else, ie the councils or the Department of Infrastructure. However, having said that because of history it is a bit blurred because we actually do provide bus shelters. We install them, not so many these days but certainly over time we have got about 300 odd bus shelters that we have installed and we own and we maintain.

40 As they, obviously as they decay or whatever we do replace them and that is when we go and partner with – try to partner with the councils to provide a modern, accessible facility. And quite often those bus shelters are in a location where, now, the standards just wouldn't allow you to put one back. For example, the footpath is too narrow and some of our shelters don't have ends on them for example, they are  
45 just a back with a roof hanging out, cantilevered over the footpath. Of course, that caters for a narrow foot path but it certainly doesn't allow manoeuvring areas, for example.

In fact some of the widths of the footpaths probably don't allow access ways, sufficient access ways according to the standards. So we are sort of coming from an environment where there was no hope in Hades, if I could put it that way, of ever complying with a lot of our facilities, even if we replaced them with new or went to  
5 replace them. We would probably have to say, well, look under the new standards we can't replace that bus shelter and that would just become another bus stop with a bus shelter. So they are issues for us that we have to address going forward, we do try and work with the councils.

10 I think probably, as is the case in other states, some other states, certainly Victoria particularly, their Department of Infrastructure has taken a strong lead in – at least mapping out a future for how infrastructure should be designed, how it should be built and in fact, they have provided significant funding, I understand, to help  
15 councils and public transport providers in starting to work towards accessible infrastructure. They obviously have bigger issues because they have multiple modes of transport, they have trains, they have trams but they also have suburban bus services which is basically what Metro is.

20 So it can be done and there is still enough time, I guess, to introduce a truly accessible public transport, over time, but it is not going to be 20 years, it is going to be 50, 60 years, in reality to get properly to 75 or 80 per cent fully accessible bus stops because, as we said before, the topography alone is going to prevent probably in Hobart potentially -I don't know 25 per cent of our bus stops would be on hilly  
25 streets where the slopes are just not compliant.

MR GORDON: And you never will get them compliant.

MR SIM: And you won't get them compliant, that's what I'm saying. So I think whilst it's a great philosophy of trying to get a fully accessible public transport  
30 system, the reality is that some of the infrastructure will not allow it to be fully accessible at certain locations and, you know, I'd invite you to come for a drive to come around some of our routes up through West Hobart, for example. I mean, we're talking about virtually inner-city areas that will never – you know, they'll never be compliant in terms of the slope, for example.

35 MR BELL: No, I know how hilly it is. Yes, they're quite steep.

MR SIM: It was mentioned about the kerbs, I mean, we have so many different height kerbs. I mean, there's old kerbs that are very deep with a deep gutter as well,  
40 so if the wheel of the bus goes into that it comes out at a nice height, you virtually don't need a ramp, but on some, the layers of bitumen have been built up into the kerb and channel, that, in fact, the kerb is probably only about three to four inches high instead of up to six inches high. So again it's a challenge for the public transport provider to get a ramp that fits all occasions.

45 MR BELL: Tell me about the bus – deploying this ramp, the bus driver actually has to get out of his or her seat and lift this piece of hardware?

MR SIM: It's a hinged plaque, if you like, that - - -

MR BELL: And you can't deploy that with hydraulics?

5 MR SIM: No, it's not mechanised, the driver has a sort of a simple hook-type tool, if you like, that hooks into a hole, pulls it out, and it flips out – it opens out, it's about probably a bit over about a metre in length, you can't have it too long because on some of the streets it will go too far back into the footpath and therefore you can't actually get on to the end of it.

10

MR BELL: It has to be fully deployed, you can't pull it just part-way out?

MR SIM: No, it's got to be – it's just a simple hinge arrangement.

15 MR BELL: Okay.

MR SIM: So it just opens up and lies outside the bus.

MR BELL: Okay.

20

MR SIM: And it's located at the front door, it has – the width is okay, we can design for the weight. However, once you go to a bus stop where there is no kerb, just a flat road with a flat-side pavement, whether it's a pavement or whether it's just dirt, the slope of the ramp then becomes steeper than the normal slope that's allowed under the standards. However, we can provide assistance, if necessary, and this is where it leads into the problem with the OH and S, if the driver has to, for example, get out and help someone in a motorised wheelchair or a wheelchair to help them go up or down the ramp because it is steeper than the requirements for no assistance, that is possible, but there are practical issues with that. In fact, there are legal issues with that.

30

MR GORDON: So basically anything greater than 14 and 1 - - -

MR BELL: 14 and 1?

35

MR GORDON: Yes.

MR BELL: Okay.

40 MR GORDON: It's under the Australian Standards of - - -

MR SIM: It depends on the length of – if the ramp is longer than I think 1500 millimetres, then a different slope is specified compared to one that is less than 1500 millimetres for unassisted access and then there's an even steeper ramp that's allowed I think – is it 1 in 4 or 1 in - - -

45

MR GORDON: That's right.

MR SIM: 1 in 4, that allows for assisted access, which means basically the driver can get out of his or her seat and either help the wheelchair on or off.

MR BELL: Okay.

5

MR SIM: And that is where we've had issues with workers' comp particularly. I mean, I'm aware of at least one or two incidents where a wheelchair has fallen off the side of the ramp and the driver has tried to stop it, trying to do the right thing, and has been injured.

10

MR GORDON: It's not so much the approach coming on, it's the actual camber of going in the other direction.

MR SIM: Yes. And getting off is difficult because some mobility devices can get on to the bus okay, going forwards. Once they get on the bus, they can't turn around to come off forwards, they try to come off backwards, and a motorised scooter with someone perhaps that can't see behind them as they're reversing, can't see where the ramp is, it is difficult to manoeuvre down a ramp that's about 850 wide or something.

MR BELL: Well, it would also be a problem if the centre of gravity is too far back on the scooter because that would be quite dangerous backing one of those down the  
- - -

MR SIM: That's right, that's when the issue comes. So the assistance that's provided by the driver is usually just to keep that stability so it doesn't tip over if it's going down backwards.

MR BELL: It's very important. Vertical, yes.

MR LANE: Jack Lane. Just one other observation in relation to bus stops within Tasmania I suppose generally. It's an implicit assumption within the standards that there is clarity as to which organisation is responsible for what and because – and it may well be similar in other jurisdictions as well, but there have been various legislative changes through time which have - as Tony was saying before about the fact that we've emerged from a thing called the Metropolitan Transport Trust and there was a specific piece of legislation for that which gave quite wide-ranging powers.

We are now a bus operator operating within the domain of a thing called the Passenger Transport Act here and the responsibility for infrastructure, there are areas where there's almost a vacuum and therefore whilst we work with councils there is the difficulty that there's not a standard set of piece of legislation you can refer to somewhere that says councils will do this, the Department of Infrastructure will do this, the bus operator will do that, and that creates problems because then we've got to interpret the standards as to what is to be built there, then you've got another level of sort of confusion as to who is going to have the final say. So we have to work within the environment and it does create problems.

MR BELL: Well, look, this has actually been a very useful discussion this morning because my previous one was in Dubbo which, as you would probably know, is very flat, out on the Western Plains. So infrastructure has not been sort of the same issue as it is here in Hobart where you've got quite a hilly terrain and I guess Dubbo is  
5 fairly spacious, the footpaths are wide. So it's not like an historic development of the sort we have in - - -

MR SIM: Well, of course the hilly terrain implies that roads when they were originally built were as narrow as possible I guess to minimise the cost of building  
10 them.

MR BELL: That's correct, yes.

MR SIM: And therefore the footpaths which came, in those days, as a second  
15 thought, if you like, were narrow also.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: So it is a difficult issue and I accept that it's difficult for the councils as well and in these days where there's always limited funding for any sort of  
20 infrastructure development, particularly in Tasmania, I think – I am sure if you talk to the Department of Infrastructure, they will have – they will be able to give you some more enlightenment well, on either the funding or the sorts of issues that they have with managing the road infrastructure, for example.

MR BELL: Okay. Well, look, I think that – Sharon, did you have - - -  
25

MS KENNARD: I was just going to ask you whether there were any other – I mean, we sort of focused quite a lot on mobility and accessibility of wheelchairs, are there  
30 any other issues that you wanted to discuss or - - -

MR SIM: It's really to do – I guess the main issue for us is the mobility devices.

MS KENNARD: Yes.  
35

MR SIM: We do have other people with other sorts of disabilities that don't need mobility devices. I mean, we have the gentleman here with his companion and I know they ride on our buses from time to time, I've seen them on there, and we have a number of other people that take their dogs with them, for example. I guess what I  
40 would like to say there is, I would like to think that our drivers actually support those sorts of people without the need for technology. Whilst we're getting to the point where we have no steps and all that sort of thing on our buses, which certainly will assist people with visual impairment and, you know, we're still coming to grips about whether you have this coloured handrail or that coloured handrail, that's  
45 certainly less of an issue than the actual technical issues of mobility devices.

MS KENNARD: Yes. You mentioned before when you were talking about some of your accessible services that you have a way of actually advertising that particular routes will be accessible. How does that work?

5 MR SIM: We have timetables that we produce which have on them a little – an accessible symbol on the top of the route that has the – and the times that have those particular low-floor-buses on them. Obviously, we can't put a low-floor accessible bus on every route at the moment because we don't have enough buses.

10 MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR SIM: But we do advertise specific times and routes where those – we'll make sure, well, to the best of endeavours, that there are emergencies or whatever or breakdowns, that we'll have a low-floor bus there.

15 MS KENNARD: And what was the process of deciding which particular routes – was that based on demand of particular routes that people had?

MR SIM: I guess that, what we'd call the truck routes, we'd try to get those up to speed first – sorry, not speed, up to accessibility, we don't speed. Not often.

MR BELL: We know what you mean.

MR SIM: But certainly – I mean, initially, it was mentioned by our friend over  
25 there, that we looked at trying, for example, to link the cinemas. We now have three cinemas in – there's one in Hobart, one on the Eastern Shore, and one in Glenorchy, which is the northern suburbs of Hobart, and try to get the core routes that link those, for example, as close as possible. We have a bus station in the centre of Hobart. So  
30 certainly from the bus station to our transit mall over on the Eastern Shore, which is right adjacent to the cinema, and beyond, we provide accessible services to a larger degree on those sorts of routes than we would on a less frequent service.

MR LANE: And we also respond to individual requests. We will have requests for individual services at specific times. They may not end – quickly end up on the  
35 timetables because the timetables are only produced so often, but the idea is that we have – try and respond where there is a particular-identified need as well as doing the general planning.

MS KENNARD: Yes.  
40

MR SIM: In Launceston, where you're going tomorrow and I don't think – we won't be there, but we are doing a major-timetable review up there and we would be looking to introduce some identified, accessible services. However, having said that, there won't be very many because we only have a small number of buses up there.  
45 But again, for example, in the case of Launceston, there may be a need to have the corridor that goes from the centre of the city out to the university, we may start to put – advertise some of the services there.

MR BELL: Is there any data on the usage of buses by people with disabilities?

MR SIM: We don't – well, we have anecdotal data that says certainly, in terms of wheelchair and mobility-device users, that it's relatively low and it may only be – I  
5 don't know, Jack would probably have a better idea, but say six potentially, on average a day, users in our network.

MR LANE: Yes.

10 MR SIM: However, people with other disabilities, we - - -

MR BELL: Yes, you don't count them. Yes, they just come on and off and - - -

MR SIM: Well, we can't.

15

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: I mean, some of them, we don't understand – well, we understand but we don't know if they've got disabilities.

20

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: I mean, there may be, as Jack was saying before, people – what do you call them, prams and so on, if - - -

25

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: We believe that what we're doing is providing an accessible service for a whole range of people.

30

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: And certainly there are issues with a small group of that range that we have, such as the technical difficulties, but elderly people with shopping, for  
35 example, that aren't very mobile use walking frames, that's a mobility device.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: We don't have a problem with those fitting in obviously because they're much smaller in dimensions. There is space on there for them, they can fold them up and put them in luggage rack even in some of our buses and, in fact, some of those people use normal buses as well.

40

MR BELL: Yes.

45

MR SIM: But we don't have specific data on the number of people with disabilities that ride on our buses.

MR BELL: Do you provide any school-bus services?

MR SIM: Yes, about 40 per cent of our patronage is students.

5 MR BELL: Yes, and those are in the urban areas?

MR SIM: Yes, in the areas in which we operate, that's right. Look, I might – I said before that we didn't intend putting a formal submission in. If you're still open to accepting – if I can give you a basic sheet of data, if you like, that I've articulated –  
10 I'm just referring to my notes, I think I might have misquoted the number of accessible buses that we have in the fleet because we've actually introduced some over the last couple of months and my data may be a bit old, but certainly I'd like to do that if that's okay with you?

15 MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR BELL: No, that would be great.

MS KENNARD: Yes, I mean we will accept any - - -  
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MR SIM: I mean I can leave you an annual report, for example, now which has some of the data in there but I can give you some more specific, for example, the number of passenger shelters, we've got as I said about 300 passenger shelters. We have 2500 bus stops in Hobart, 1400 in Launceston and 250 in Burnie, so there's a  
25 lot of bus stops even for the size of our operation. You probably recall that in – certainly in days gone by and also even in the current public transport networks, you like to put a bus stop wherever you think there's going to be people congregating and certainly with our history with trams the bus stops seemed to be relatively close together. So they could be as little as 200 or 300 metres apart in some places. So  
30 you know, I guess because of history in some ways it's a larger problem than perhaps if you were starting today providing mode of transport.

MR BELL: Okay, look thank you very much for coming this morning we do appreciate your time and we would be very happy to receive a letter with that and  
35 we'll count that as a submission.

MR SIM: Okay.

MR BELL: That would be very good and we'd be delighted to take away your  
40 annual report.

MR SIM: Okay. If there's any questions you have that you wish to come back with please call us.

45 MR BELL: No, no, look I think that you've covered it very well and certainly raised some issues which certainly for me are the first time that we've heard them. So thank you both very much. Is Geoff Lewis here? Geoff, do you want to come

and sit down over here? Okay, so Geoff, general manager, Tasmanian Bus Association and you've got a colleague with you?

5 MR LEWIS: That is correct. I have the president of the Tasmanian Bus Association, Shane Dewsbery.

MR BELL: Well, it's great that you can come along.

10 MR DEWSBERY: Thank you.

MR LEWIS: Yes. Pleasure to be here. Just a little bit on the Tasmanian Bus Association. We're the association representing the industry in Tasmania. We have in excess of 200 members of which about 12 of our members are involved in the general access services providing – which come under the Acts that we're talking of today. But we also have members who provide dedicated school bus services and also tour and charter, full gambit operations.

Before I go into it I would like to reinforce what Metro have just presented, particularly on the accessible standards on scooters and so on. And also I think there's one other area that's come out and we're also a member of the Bus Industry Confederation which is the national body who represent the whole of the industry. One of the things that's coming in addition to what they've said is that some of the safety issues that have been created by the two wheel chair access standards or positions is that we're finding now that in the vehicles like that, that elderly people take the first seat that's available at the end of the wheelchair access area. So therefore in the event of sudden braking those people are not able to be restrained and you've created another problem where – and particularly as they also mentioned you've got strollers and all the other things being put in those areas, so I think inadvertently there's perhaps been a safety issue brought forward by having – because a bus, it's safety aspect is by having another seat in front of you, whereas in this position you haven't got one.

MR BELL: I suppose it would be possible on the bus to have a little vertical barrier.

35 MR LEWIS: Well, that's something that - - -

MR BELL: But that would just take up space and limit your - - -

40 MR LEWIS: That's right.

MR BELL: - - - flexibility further wouldn't it.

MR LEWIS: Yes.

45 MR BELL: I understand your point and indeed in Dubbo there was some suggestion that some of these strollers do not have adequate braking and depending on whether they're placed sideways or facing forward – I mean we're getting into some complex technical issues here, but the brakes obviously have to be adequate to restrain the

vehicle in the situation where the bus stops suddenly. And if the carriage is pointing in the same direction as the bus then that puts a fair strain on the braking system.

MR LEWIS: That's right.

5

MR BELL: Yes, I take your point though about those first row of seats, I think that's a very interesting safety issue which will be of interest to our colleagues in the Department of Transport because it's a standards issue just as much as some of these others are.

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MR LEWIS: Because you've got a fairly large area there now with no seating.

MR BELL: Yes, you're right.

15

MR LEWIS: And I think the other side of that which is one that's been featuring quite a bit is the standard of the batteries in some of these scooters, because there is no standards for this type of battery and it needs to be ensured, coming back to the point if a standard could be set there also needs to be a standard on the type of battery because there's different types of batteries in different types of scooters and they need to be ensured that they are safe to be on a bus in the event of something happening.

20

MR BELL: I suppose there are two issues, I mean one is if there's some sort of accident with the bus, but the other is that they need to be able to tip through the angle that they will go through in getting up the ramp without spilling – I mean if they're acid batteries - - -

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MR LEWIS: They can't be acid batteries.

30

MR BELL: No, but I think - - -

MR LEWIS: Like, from a safety point of view.

MR BELL: No, they shouldn't be acid batteries.

35

MR LEWIS: No.

MR BELL: But I bet some probably are.

40

MR LEWIS: So that was just something to reinforce what Metro have put forward because we see that from a national industry point of view, a fairly major problem.

MR BELL: Yes. Well, it comes right back to their point about having a standard for these vehicles and I'm sure that's something that we'll need to look at.

45

MR LEWIS: Yes. We'll come back to Tasmania and particularly the area that we're interested in which is the regional and general access services from the outlying areas. Like Metro cover the urban areas, we're talking the urban fringe and

the regional which we have to cover. One of the points with our members is the timeline of 31 December 2007. It's – operators in the regional areas will very – it will be impossible for them to make that timeline. Some of the reasons for that is going right back to 1997 the Tasmanian Government introduced the new Passenger Transport Act with regulations in 2000 and then there was transitional and consequential regulations in 2000 that were to go through to 2005.

There was to be in that period of time a review of all core passenger services in Tasmania. Every service that was being undertaken in 2000 had to be reviewed, was it a core passenger, was it essential for the needs and if it was it was to be given an interim service contract to June 2005. It came to about June 2004 and the review had no way of being completed by 2005 and the regulations were extended out to June 2008. Now, we're in the process now that the review has been completed on the rural school buses, but we have not had a review completed on the general access and also the regional urban and fringe, which is until that happens at the moment a contractor only has a contract to June next year.

MR BELL: Okay. So what you're arguing is that it's difficult for a contractor to make an investment when the contract period remaining is terribly short.

20

MR LEWIS: That's right.

MR BELL: - - - because you've got to amortise the investment over the lifetime of the contract. I understand that concern, but let me ask you, when you say it will be difficult to meet 2007, I mean you appreciate this is a 30 year implementation exercise of which 2007 is sort of just the first five year point.

25

MR LEWIS: But meet the 25 per cent of your services - - -

MR BELL: You're concerned about meeting the 25 per cent.

30

MR LEWIS: Yes, the first year because they haven't got a contract. Well, it's a contract for six months.

MR BELL: Yes.

35

MR LEWIS: And one of the other things that in the model at the moment of payment, it's the operator only gets paid for the passenger he carries, there's no base payment for him to increase his vehicle because there's no incentive. To give you an example a few years ago there was an operator who was providing general access and he wished to upgrade his facilities in the city to take them out into regional areas. He wanted a small increase on his fare and it was denied because of the fact that that wasn't within the ambit of what could be done. So therefore an operator cannot upgrade a bus and get increased money in his fares because that's unable to be done at the moment with how it's been, so we've got to wait for the new model to come through on passenger fare payment before that can happen, so therefore that's an impediment on anybody investing into a vehicle.

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MR BELL: Am I right in thinking that in other jurisdictions there is a base payment?

MR LEWIS: That's right.

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MR BELL: So Tasmania is different in this regard.

MR LEWIS: We're relying just on the passenger. If we carry no passengers we get no dollars; if full, you get – and then like naturally going to regional areas you don't have big passenger numbers.

10

MR BELL: It's a great incentive to go chasing the passengers, but it makes it difficult for the operator to find the capital to invest, or to even borrow the capital. I mean no lender would come to the party for such a short contract.

15

MR DEWSBERY: Can I just say on that that while the review period is happening the operators are uncertain of the type of contract they're going to have. So whether they have school services or general access services, frequency of services in what areas are yet to be determined. So when we try to work out 25 per cent of our services, until we get a new contract and the type of contract, we're not going to know on what we need to provide for.

20

MR BELL: Okay, so there's uncertainty as to what it's 25 per cent of?

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MR DEWSBERY: Yes.

MR BELL: Okay, I've got you.

30

MR DEWSBERY: Because we're talking about the type of contract, whether it's a school only or it's a general access, and the other one is the frequency of the services into the areas are yet to be determined because that comes down to funding. And the funding arrangement as Geoff said, is going to have a big role to play. So that's why there's uncertainty in whether we're going to meet the timeframe because we're not knowing what we need to work within.

35

MS KENNARD: What areas in Tasmania does this relate to specifically?

MR DEWSBERY: Well, Metro do the urban areas, so the rest of Tasmania.

40

MS KENNARD: Everything else.

MR BELL: This is the rest of Tasmania.

45

MR DEWSBERY: Now, when we talk about dealing with councils, there's 29 councils throughout Tasmania. Some operators probably run through at least 20 of those councils.

MR BELL: Sorry, just let me – this is just showing my ignorance, but how do the councils get involved here?

5 MR DEWSBERY: Well, we talk about just the urban, but we're talking about all the council areas as well that we run through.

MR BELL: That you serve.

10 MR DEWSBERY: So we're servicing all those other councils.

MR BELL: But do they make any sort of financial contribution?

15 MR DEWSBERY: No, but we'll have to address it when we come to the infrastructure.

MR BELL: Yes, okay.

MS KENNARD: Which is related to the point – yes.

20 MR DEWSBERY: Which comes to the point of Metro.

MR BELL: So it's the same as the Metro problem as to kerbs and stops and shelters?

25 MR DEWSBERY: Well, when we talk about remote and regional Tasmania, we're not talking about sealed roads either, we're talking about areas that are unsealed, we're talking about areas that have got no electricity, we're going into national parks, we're going into wilderness areas, those are all the things that we need to discuss and that's where the operators are a little bit uncertain as well.

30 MR BELL: Yes.

35 MR LEWIS: Yes. Well, coming back to the regional area you're not stopping on kerbed road, you're stopping on the sides of a sealed road with gravel which comes back to the point made earlier about the angle of being over the camber and all those.

MR BELL: The camber and all those other issues.

40 MR LEWIS: Country roads are worse for camber than most city roads, so you know there's a greater – it would be fine, you know, if an operator was in the future able to provide a general access vehicle with the accessibility for the person who wants to get on that vehicle, who is going to be quite demanding and then you come to the problem of if it's too steep an incline getting the person on and getting the person off, that you then run into the problems that Metro are finding in the city. That will just  
45 compound itself further out into the country.

I think in to that one of the other areas out there is that you've got a lot of single bus operators doing access, you know, from the east coast into Launceston and from

different areas. Now, like at the moment reading – they’ve got to provide 25 per cent of their services with an accessible vehicle and they’ve only got one vehicle.

5 MR BELL: One vehicle, yes.

MR LEWIS: You know, it’s difficult and they haven’t got the funding to get that one vehicle.

10 MR BELL: Is there other assistance programs available that you can access, or your members can access to get support for modifying buses?

MR LEWIS: Well, the Federal Government won’t support transport. They handball that down to State Government. And I suppose that this is a classic of it, isn’t it, we’ve got a Federal legislation which has been put down onto the States for them to  
15 enact. And so therefore you – the States now have to find the funding for these vehicles to be providing the services that are required.

MR BELL: Yes, I mean, on the one hand, you wouldn’t dispute that it’s reasonable that all Australians should enjoy the same sort of standard.

20 MR LEWIS: Yes.

MR BELL: And I suppose that’s how we come to have the Federal legislation. But it is one of those situations where the burden of the cost falls largely on either the  
25 State Governments or on some of the private operators, ‘cause I think part of the cost obviously falls on your members.

MR LEWIS: Yes. And the – if you like, the total – the Act falls onto the members  
30 - - -

MR BELL: Exactly.

MR LEWIS: - - - if the member can’t provide the service. But if he hasn’t – it’s a  
35 little chicken and egg if he hasn’t got the funding to provide the service.

MR BELL: And your members have a further problem, that if their fares are regulated, their ability to recover the cost is limited.

40 MR LEWIS: Yes, that’s what I mean.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR LEWIS: It’s a real chicken and egg situation, the whole lot. So hopefully the  
45 new model will – but I suppose what we’re flagging is the new model hopefully will be able to - as Shane said earlier, how many services are required to an area, so therefore there will be funding for those services. But I think what we’re flagging is we’re not going to make that first cut-off point for the end of this year.

MR BELL: When do you expect this new model to become public?

MR LEWIS: Well, the regulations at the moment say it has to be in by June 2008, which is 12 months.

5

MR BELL: Okay. So it's still 12 months away, yes. That's what I thought.

MS KENNARD: Are there examples of some of your members who have - perhaps those who have larger fleets who have actually moved towards looking to upgrade their infrastructure?

10

MR LEWIS: Well, the larger fleets, they haven't at this stage looked to upgrade, because they haven't - there's no financial incentive there for them to be able to so

- - -

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MS KENNARD: Right, yes.

MR LEWIS: And at the moment, when you're relying on the numbers of passengers, you know, to give you an example, a lot of operators bring students in on some of their services. Now, when there's no school happening they've got no passengers - well, their passenger numbers drop by a third if they're relying on school children coming in on some of the services as well. So you know, it's quite an up and down when you're relying totally on fares.

20

MR DEWSBERRY: And you asked have any operators invested. There was an operator invested into a low-floor accessible vehicle before 2005, based on 2005 being the end of the review. Once that review got pushed out to 2008, the operator couldn't sustain having that vehicle in his fleet and had to sell it, because it was a more expensive vehicle, and the payments didn't justify having it. So after two years, they sold that vehicle out of their fleet.

25

30

MR LEWIS: And I think coming back, that same operator, he has made comments that he cannot run a vehicle younger than 17 years old on the current payment formula. So 17 years is the minimum age he can run. So therefore he's not going to have a low-floor accessible bus that's 17 years.

35

MR BELL: The estimate that we've been given for the low-wheel access bus with the ramp is an additional \$100,000; does that sound about right?

MR LEWIS: That would be about right, yes.

40

MR BELL: Yes.

MR BURNABY: Sorry, it's more than 100,000 if you're comparing it to 17-year-old vehicle though.

45

MR BELL: Yes.

MS KENNARD: Yes. Okay, it's sort of - - -

MR BELL: Okay. So the comment was that it's more than 100,000 compared to a  
5 17-year-old vehicle, and that's absolutely right, because obviously a 17-year-old  
vehicle's been depreciated. So this is 100,000 compared with a brand new bus,  
which we're not talking about.

MR LEWIS: You're talking 200,000 on a 17-year-old vehicle.

10 MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: Well, can I just make a comment on the value of buses? I mean, a new  
low-floor bus for our fleet, Metro Tasmania fleet, is about \$400,000 without GST,  
and we expect that to probably be a bit higher in the next year or so, because there's  
15 a few other things that we're introducing. But compared to the oldest bus in our fleet  
probably has a market value of about \$30,000. So – and that would be a 17-year-old  
bus.

MR BELL: Bus, yes.  
20

MR SIM: So you're talking about a huge difference.

MR BELL: Huge difference, yes.

25 MR SIM: And I have to say also in the industry – in the used bus market in  
Australia, that there are – you can't buy low-floor buses for love nor money.

MR BELL: No.

30 MR SIM: So you'd probably find a market value of a second hand low-floor bus is  
up around \$400,000 for it – to get one that's even three or four years old, because  
they're like hens' teeth.

MR BELL: Yes. Well, obviously - - -  
35

MR SIM: The market determines the cost.

MR BELL: Yes, which is sort of unfortunate for your colleague, who's obviously  
could sustain keeping the bus but needed – and fortunately be able to get his money,  
40 but not a good outcome for people with a disability.

MR DEWSBERY: And with designing the buses now, we talk about the urban  
buses which – the design is common throughout all the cities, but when we talk about  
regional buses, we need to design these buses that have different safety aspects, such  
45 as seatbelts coming in, there's luggage compartments that we need to consider.  
These services are running 100 to 200-kilometre services in regional areas.

MR BELL: And they're on the – outside the 60 kilometres - - -

MR DEWSBERY: Yes. So there's different technical issues and design problems that we're going through, which adds to the cost as well.

5 MR LEWIS: Which comes back particularly to one we spoke of earlier, that front seat.

MR BELL: Yes.

10 MR LEWIS: You've got - - -

MR BELL: Well, if they're on the road doing 100 kilometres an hour, it's a whole different set of concerns - - -

15 MR LEWIS: That's right.

MR BELL: - - - to being in the city.

20 MR LEWIS: And also you've got the amount of luggage that people – you know, if they're going from – 100 Ks, they're not going to be just carrying a shopping bag.

MR BELL: They – all right.

MR LEWIS: So you've got additional on top of that.

25 MR DEWSBERY: And a lot of these are practicable issues now coming to a head while we're trying to comply with the standards. And this is where the timeframe probably needs to consider the practical issues that we are now facing, and which comes to a point of where co-ordination between operators and councils and  
30 jurisdictions and Governments of all levels need to happen, because at the moment you have the operators going on with their understanding of what they need to do, we have the infrastructure and the councils with their understanding of what they need to do, then we have the different levels of State and Federal Government, but no one's co-ordinating it. You know, to get 20 – or 20-odd councils to talk together and look at the same issue needs to happen, because operators are running through all those  
35 jurisdictions and no one's co-ordinating it. And that's a problem that we're finding, a big problem. We have the councils no doubt at a Federal level, which State's represented, but in the ground level where we've got to operate and implement, you don't get that.

40 MR LEWIS: I think one of the things, you know, that we've got to remember is that, like – and coming back to what Metro were presenting to you earlier, you know, you've been at Dubbo, it's flat; we're hilly. I don't think there's – unfortunately what it seems is the Act is trying to put us all in the one little box, and I think that's something that hopefully can come out of your review, that we don't all fit in one  
45 little box because of the different scopes that are – you know, and the people that are wanting the access, you know, they recognise that on hilly ground they can't get on. Well, you know, we've got – whereas to impose on somebody you've got to have an accessible bus stop on a hill. It doesn't really go right.

And then similarly, you know, to – you could have an accessible bus going to Dover, but the points at where it can get on are very limited. It's got to be able that the people can get on once the bus is provided. And like, the thing is that our operators and our members, if the funding is there to do it, they're glad to do it, willing to do it, providing they can, as you said earlier, there's a scope. I must say, the other thing is, once the review's finished it is a five plus five-year contract, so there is some certainty there with it. But we haven't got to that point.

MR BELL: Yes, so the prospect is that the contract length will be fine. Then the other issue is the extent to which you will be able to recover the cost of - - -

MR LEWIS: Over that period.

MR BELL: - - - the investment of – and for example ramps, you know - - -

MR LEWIS: Yes.

MR BELL: - - - and whether the people who determine the price will be willing to take that into account, yes.

MR LEWIS: And so like, you can take – there are buses where you don't have the side entry door, you've got the lift ramp that goes up over the back, but you lose four seats. And you've got to, you know – there's four seats disappear every time you put one wheelchair in.

MR BELL: Yes. Have you got fold-down seats in the wheelchair spaces?

MR LEWIS: No, you've got to take them right out.

MR BELL: You've got to take them right out, have you?

MR LEWIS: At the moment, that's in the current. But we're talking older vehicles. You know, there's newer type of vehicles coming on all the time. Like, a few years – couple of years ago there's one where you can still have your steps, but there was a lift ramp that came up at the front door and allowed people to get in. So you know, there's new technology coming round all the time for those outside urban vehicles.

MR BELL: Okay. How are we going?

MS KENNARD: Yes, we've still got a long time, yes.

MR DEWSBERY: And I suppose the other thing is that in some of the remote areas where people wanted to get into their towns, they've used the school bus services. And now that's not going to happen because once the school bus starts looking at other patronage, it becomes a general access, which then the requirements step in. So the operators will stay with the school service only, school bus. That means that people, and it may only be one or two people in remote areas, will then lose their access into the city or into the town or to the services, unless a designated general

access service is provided. But again for the low numbers an operator would be reluctant to do that.

5 MR BELL: Exactly. I mean, it seems a shame if there's capacity there not to use it.

MR DEWSBERY: Yes.

10 MR BELL: Certainly New South Wales has been trying to find ways of using a little bit of school bus capacity in other ways. And we certainly have heard of examples where people with disabilities have been allowed to use school buses. Of course, the school bus fleet tends to be old and certainly not wheelchair-accessible, but it's certainly able to assist people with other sorts of disabilities. I mean, whether some of these people really want to be on a busload of rowdy school children is another matter.

15

MS KENNARD: But sometimes it's their only choice.

20 MR BELL: But if that's their only choice, it seems logical that if the capacity is there, it shouldn't be that hard to work around the liability and the insurance and all the other - - -

MR LEWIS: Well, it's not so much that, but at the moment, like, under the regulations or the Act it says that if it's no longer a dedicated school bus it falls under the - - -

25

MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes.

30 MR LEWIS: - - - it's got to comply with the DDA. Like, there's an example at the moment, there's a west coast town who has a school bus going into Burnie every day, and there is a facility for adult passengers to travel on that. But as soon as - that technically now should be complying with DDA. So therefore, for that bus to stay running as a school bus it can no longer - well, or it's going to cost the Government additional money to provide that as a general access service, 'cause coming back to what Metro just said, that the price of a general access vehicle against a school bus is quite extraordinary.

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40 MR BELL: It is indeed. Yes, well these are some quite challenging issues. You mentioned that you also go to wilderness areas. Do you have people with disabilities wanting to go to those sorts of destinations?

MR DEWSBERY: In the tour and charter market we do. We offer day tours to areas such as Mount Field or Cradle Mountain - - -

45

MR BELL: Yes.

MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR DEWSBERY: - - - those areas. They certainly would have the disability wanting to book those tours.

MR BELL: Yes.

5

MR DEWSBERY: Now, then when you get to these areas – a good example would be Cockle Creek, you're going down gravel roads and you're going – and when you get there, it would make it difficult for anyone to get off the vehicle. And there's other areas right round Tasmania the same. On the west coast, there's a track called Frenchman's Cap, which is alongside the road. You know, there may be requests for people to go and travel out there to have a look, but how you cater for that is going to be difficult. I know once you get to walkways, there – the facilities have been put in, Cradle Mountain and that, once you get to the walkways, but I don't think there's – anyone's considered getting off the vehicle to get access to the walkways.

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15

MR BELL: Yes. So there's still some challenges.

MR DEWSBERY: Some big challenges.

20 MR BELL: Some big challenges. All right. Well, look - - -

MS KENNARD: Are there any other - - -

MR BELL: Any other issues you wanted to raise?

25

MR DEWSBERY: No, that was the major - - -

MS KENNARD: That was all?

30 MR BELL: Look, thank you very much for coming along. We really do appreciate your time, and for the information you've provided. It's greatly appreciated. Really, it's very helpful.

MR LEWIS: Thank you, a pleasure.

35

MR BELL: I think that the management are going to produce some coffee in a minute.

MS KENNARD: I think they are. I think they're still in the process of coming - - -

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MR BURNABY: Could we just have a chance to raise some general issues or - - -

MR BELL: Yes, sure, sure. Would you like to come and do that now?

45 MR BURNABY: Yes, that would be good. Dan Burnaby, from the Department of Infrastructure.

MR BELL: Hi, Dan. Nice to have you here, because you're in the same situation as your colleagues in the other States, of course, and we're delighted that you're going to say a few words. Go for it.

5 MR BURNABY: I guess I was mainly focused on your paper and the review scope, and I must say I was concerned when I read that this review was not going to be a technical assessment of the transport standards, because – the reason why I say that is the standards are technical standards; they're not performance standards as such. I refer to Australian standards. As a result of that, these standards have caused huge  
10 problems for industry. The Australian and Rail Association for example have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to get an understanding of the technical implications and requirements of these standards.

15 Some parts of these standards are technically impossible to comply with, and some parts of it are technically ridiculous. For example, lighting requires 150 deluxe of lighting on railway platforms. If you put 150 'lux of lighting on a railway platform, you will have people trying to get a suntan on it. And that right – it is just absurd. Now, if this review's not going to assess those types of problems, it's not going to address the concerns that industry are having, it's not going to progress the actual  
20 accessibility of transport in Australia, because at the moment, operators are expending significant amounts of money on consultants and engineers to try and come up with something that will actually comply with this.

25 On a more local level, our State Government's just spent \$25,000 trying to get an understanding of what is required for a compliant bus stop. The reason why you need to do it is that at the end of the day, this is legislation. You have to comply with it. It's the law; it's not a policy document. And that's seen by the fact that Hervey Bay finds himself in the High Court at the moment, arguing what is a compliant bus stop. So they – the other factor is that people are spending millions of dollars on  
30 infrastructure. You can't afford to get this wrong. You don't want to spend millions of dollars and find at the end of the day you're not compliant. So there's a fundamental question that needs to be addressed in reviewing these standards.

35 Is it going to be a performance-based standard or is it going to be a technical-based standard? Now, if it's going to continue to be a tech-standard, then this review has to be technical review, because otherwise it's not going to address the concerns. And what's more, it's not actually doing what's required under the legislation that requires it – because part 34(1) of the standards requires the review to include any necessary amendments to these standards. Now, where you've got a piece of  
40 legislation that is impossible to comply with, then no one could argue that it's not a necessary amendment to the standards to fix that technical problem that's impossible to comply with.

45 MR BELL: Let me see if I can answer that, and I'm not sure that I can really do a good job, but I will have a go at it.

MR GORDON: Peter, can I just jump in very quickly?

MR BELL: Well, hang on a moment, David. Let's see if we can deal with this, 'cause there's a couple of quite important issues here that I really want to deal with. We will take the 150 'lux, okay. It's not within our capability to determine that that should be 100 or 80 or some other number, but it is within our scope to say that that

5 - - -

MS KENNARD: It's not working, it's not appropriate.

MR BELL: - - - requirement is not appropriate, and it needs to be re-examined, and these are the issues with it. So it's a bit like the previous discussion we've had with the scooters. At the end of this exercise, we're not going to say that the scooters should be less than 900 millimetres in width and, like, weigh less than 220 kilos, but we will have a discussion in our report that says, "These are the issues that have been raised about these standards. These are the problems with the uncertainties. These are the numbers that need to be nailed down," because we understand your point exactly.

Nobody wants to spend a lot of time and money investing in infrastructure, only to find it doesn't meet the standard, or words, that it's been spent on things that were not required. And the other thing I think that this review is designed to do is to lessen the need for jurisdictions to spend time in the High Court. Now, you're right: the way that this has been designed did - has been left - there's been large chunks of it left open to interpretation. This review is an opportunity to identify the areas that need to be nailed down better. And so - - -

25

MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR BELL: - - - our statement is perhaps a little simplistic in the - - -

MS KENNARD: Yes. We will definitely be looking at those Australian standards that are referred to in the standards, and assessing whether they're appropriate in terms of based on practical experience in the last five years. What we won't be doing is then going on and providing - which is probably the job for a technical engineer, which is say, "If it is not this, then it should be this other standard."

35

MR BURNABY: I guess it's not a criticism of your organisation, but - - -

MR BELL: No, no, no, and we don't take it that way either.

MR BURNABY: - - - but these issues have been raised with DOTARS for the last five years, that there are significant technical issues. Even as recent as eight months ago, prior to your commencement of the review, it was raised that whoever undertook this review required the technical expertise to be able to make those judgments on the engineering specifics of these standards. It was recommended that the consultant be a conglomerate of skill sets, because it was the only way you could undertake this review.

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And I guess ultimately, what you're going to achieve is something that's already been identified to a large extent, and I'm sure there will be other areas which you will expand on. But the reality is you've got the significant work done by the Australian Rail Association which, as I said, cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.  
5 They used the best engineers in the country to come up with their interpretations of the lighting standard, colour contrast issues, etcetera etcetera.

So we've got huge bodies of work that identify many of the issues and problems. And what the States and industry were requiring from this review were the  
10 amendments to these standards, because without that many people are going to be in limbo for another five years, until these issues are addressed because no one, realistically, is going to invest the type of money that they are required to invest without the certainty of knowing they are going to comply with the legislation.

15 MR BELL: Yes. Look, of course, let me say firstly, that some of the members of the team do have quite considerable technical expertise. You might have observed I have a PhD in science and am a fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering but when it comes to issues like the design of and the specs for  
20 wheelchairs and scooters, which we have just been talking about, this a matter that really needs a consensus among a group of people that include the manufacturers, the people that are going to carry them, the designers, the disability community, there is a whole group of people need to be brought together just to address that one.

And that is before we get to the problems with the lighting and the colours and the  
25 everything else in the rail sector, so the amount of work that need to be, and I think is quite considerable, what we hope to do in this exercise is to identify the key issues that need to be addressed, pin those down fairly precisely and be quite specific about what we think needs to be done and how soon it needs to be done.

30 MR BURNABY: We appreciate the parameters you have had to work in. But the states were advocating a 12 month, 18 month timeframe minimum for this. Not the 6 – 7 month timeframe that has been proposed. We understood that this was going to be a significant amount of work and we were advocating two years for this review to commence. So as I say, it is not a criticism of you - - -

35 MR BELL: No.

MR BURNABY: - - - but obviously you are trying to acquit the requirements of the Commonwealth under part 34 and from Tasmania's perspective it is not going to be  
40 achieved. And I know that is a similar thought shared by all other jurisdictions, that you are not going to achieve what is actually required by the standards.

MR BELL: I think that we are going to get well into part 34. We won't deliver –  
45 you are right - - -

MR BURNABY: Effectiveness and efficiency, yes, certainly.

MR BELL: Yes, we can do that but we can't take it as far as certainly the states think it should be taken. But we will certainly not be shy about making recommendations as to how far this needs to go and how soon it needs to go because we are – you see, it is not only the uncertainty factors that the councils and the state  
5 governments face, it is also the concerns of the disability community, who want some of these features to be brought on sooner rather than later.

MR BURNABY: Absolutely, because it is frustrating progress for them.

10 MR BELL: Yes, it is. So I see this as a – it is a first and necessary step and there is still, hopefully going to be 18 months left to get the rest of the work done because I mean, I would have thought that getting a standard on scooters should be able to be done in 18 months.

15 MR BURNABY: I would have thought so.

MR BELL: I would have thought so. And that might be just one of a number that we point to as saying these are areas that need urgent attention. So your points are well made and we understand exactly those points. I don't want you to think that we  
20 are not conscious of all of that.

MR BURNABY: No, I assumed you would be.

MR BELL: They are very good points and we understand those absolutely. So that  
25 is why we are on the case to get this step in the process completed.

MR GORDON: Can I make one comment? Just one comment where it comes – about wheelchairs is really concerning me as a member of Tasmanian with Disabilities and the Paraquad Association, when you speak about wheelchairs, the  
30 type of wheelchair that is normally provided for a person that is requiring a wheelchair can range from just their inability to be able to walk, it might be due to, and in the case of paraquads it may be due to spinal injury or a whole range of other disabilities that put them into a specific type of wheelchair. And obviously that we know as a disability organisation that some of these wheelchairs are no way known  
35 going to ever get into the normal run of the mill public transport such as buses.

There is some of the accessible taxi services that are currently provided; they even have difficulty unless they are the really big units, where they would normally put two, up to four wheelchairs, in one the units at one time. It is the huge base cost that  
40 members are really worried about, is say for arguments sake, that you have got to go between here and Launceston, a taxi could cost you anywhere between \$300 and \$400, where the very able bod can get onto a Red Coach Line bus and travel to Launceston for about \$25. We as a disability group are not availed of that cost factor. And that is where the biggest concern is, is that the cost of disability in that  
45 aspect is huge.

And when you are on a limited income, these people just can't do it. Now, with the way that the State is talking about specialising the health system where they are

going to have day surgery held in either Launceston or Devonport, depending on the type of surgery that you may require, means that that person may have to travel from the Hobart area or even further a field south, to those regional areas and the only way that they have got to get there, because the current bus system that we have got, the  
5 public bus system that we have got from Hobart to those areas is not accessible, is through a taxi service which is – prices them out the ball park.

MR BELL: Now, look, we are very – David - - -

10 MR GORDON: And the thing is, with wheelchairs it depends on the person's size, weight and that is all linked into that, so to try and standardise wheelchairs, I don't think you have a hope in hell.

MR BELL: Look, we will come back to this after morning tea. I think that we are  
15 not going to be able to standardise wheelchairs, you are quite right, because there are some wheelchairs that need to be light enough so that they can be lifted onto the roof of a car. And folded up. But the question is the standard. You see, the poor bus driver looks at this large wheelchair sitting on the side of the road and its occupant. It is not possible for the bus driver to assess whether that passenger plus vehicle  
20 exceeds the load that the ramp and the hydraulics associated with it can cope with. So we have some really quite difficult and complex issues here that need to be sorted. And I am sure you are right, there is no one standard but there will be several standards. Let me just say that we have got some tea and coffee, we are going to stop for a few minutes. You are all welcome to have some tea and coffee and  
25 afterwards, David, you are on, okay. So the rest of us are going to grab a coffee, thanks.

30 **ADJOURNED** **[10.37am]**

**RESUMED** **[10.55am]**

35 MR BELL: David, it is you.

MR SIM: We were talking about or David was talking about the cost of travel between regional centres in Tasmania, one thing I would like to point out is for one minute, the uniqueness, I guess of Tasmania, in that we don't have passenger rail  
40 services. If you were in Victoria or New South Wales, there is a fair chance that, for example, there would be a regional rail service that would actually link from the capital city to a major regional centre. So there wouldn't be such a reliance on bus or coach travel.

45 MR GORDON: Such as looking at the situation, say, from Sydney to Gosford or Newcastle.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR SIM: So that is just the point I wanted to make and I know it is restrictive, I guess, the fact that we don't have a rail service in Tasmania.

MR BELL: Okay, David.

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MR GORDON: Right. Well, first I will introduce the State Vice Chair for Tasmanians with Disabilities, Jan Miller, she is here with me.

MR BELL: Yes.

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MR GORDON: I have listened to quiet a few of the issues that both Metro and the general bus services look at. Now, the thing is the issue about the wheelchairs, I know that it is an issue and as I mentioned before, that wheelchairs are designed for the person with the type of disability they have got and it is a range of different shapes, sizes and the requirement for those type of wheelchairs. To try and standardise them, to get down to you know, access to the majority of Metro buses, I don't think there is going to be hope in hell of ever achieving that, that type of requirement.

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20 And I think the majority who are in those type of wheelchairs realise that, you know, that if their wheelchair is too big or if they are laying flat, there is not – you know, they are not going to be able to get on or off those buses with ease, at any rate. The one issue that I needed to sort of raise, it is more a concern than really an issue, is since the introduction of the accessible buses from Metro, I have noted and quite a number of other people have mentioned to me just recently, is that where the first lot of buses that came onto fleet had a long the side, they had three drop down seats. It appears the majority of these accessible buses now, have gone down to two drop down seat on the side, to allow for wheelchair access and an additional seat is actually being put in.

25

30

Now, I realise that Metro, being the type of company that it is now, once it was – it went over from the Government agency, it is a case of put bums on seats because every dollar counts. My main thought is at the moment, that one of the reasons why we are probably not seeing as many people using, wheelchair users using these buses is not knowing where and when an accessible bus is going to be on route. Even though Metro has done their damndest to get out timetables and that but there is – because of break down of vehicles and not having enough back up vehicles to actually say, well, one bus breaks down we will put another accessible one on in that place.

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They just haven't got that availability as it stands at the moment, until the fleet becomes fully compliant, as far as having all the vehicles accessible in way, form or fashion. But it is the infrastructure that seems to be the real bugbear, is where it – to find out that they are at a stop where they can actually get on a bus, even if the ramp is placed down appropriately, it gets down to be able to be sitting on the ground. You can't push something up hill, where the person is going to actually fall out of the chair, even though they have got somebody pushing it. And that was the issue that I

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raised earlier on, it was about the different types of street scapes that we have got, footpaths, gutter heights, etcetera.

5 They are all variable. But I think a lot of the issues that Metro and the other operators currently are having could be probably tackled in a slightly different manner than what has been up to this point, is if they come together both with local government and the majority of the local government councils at the moment have access committees that are involved which have a great, vast of different people from different organisations that are involved on those. There could be, quite easily,  
10 compromises made to look at the positioning of accessible bus stops.

Now, one of the things I said while we were at the break, I was talking to Tony, would be looking at, say, the major bus malls that we have currently got here, like in the south and the same thing could apply in the north and north west, where you look  
15 at, say, Hobart, Glenorchy, Clarence, Kingston – they are major stops where the buses would normally have a turn around, even at New Norfolk, that those particular areas, where those stops are, would be the first ones that would be made compliant. Then you would start looking, and it could be done by these access groups to do an audit of where they feel that an accessible bus stop would be preferable, over one  
20 that is not going to be compliant.

And if, I think, if we get the disability movement working together, both with local government and the service provider, I think we are going to get a better outcome in the long run. The standards – how can I put it, locking something down in stone here  
25 for Tasmania is just not going to totally work. There has got to be some flexibility that, if something doesn't comply, it is never going to comply and - but if you can get three parts of the way there, that is better than nothing at all. And we seem to be locked into this bit about, you know, Metro is concerned about, you know, the infrastructure part of it, councils are worried about the infrastructure.  
30

I can remember a comment quite some time ago from Hobart City Council was that, well, Metro wants the infrastructure, they are going to put it in at their cost. We are not providing rate payers money to do it, and vice versa, I've heard other comments from Metro go back in the same light, but there has got to be even ground across the  
35 lot and maybe if we come together with the access groups and we start discussing the whole issue in an appropriate manner, we are probably going to end up with a better outcome. That's just covering those sort of things with Metro. Since the introduction of the standards, now, even though with the WAC Cabs, we are finding that the service has improved somewhat.  
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MR BELL: These are cabs that are especially designed to take wheelchairs?

MR GORDON: Yes, yes. The biggest problem we're still having here in the State, now, I know that – you know, there is nothing really set in concrete as far as the  
45 amount of these vehicles being in the State, but the biggest problem we're currently hearing about is the availability of them. People are still having the task of having to ring up, anything between 12 and 24 hours sometimes to actually order a cab and then maybe find that it doesn't actually turn up on time or not turn up at all.

We've had instances where we've had people that are in wheelchairs that have been out in the evening, ordered a taxi, they haven't been outside because of the case of it being raining, nobody in a wheelchair is going to sit out in the rain and wait for a cab to turn up, the taxi has turned up, saw nobody actually standing out the front of the building, and driven off. That person has had to be actually carted home in a standard cab after being lifted out of their wheelchair and lifted into the cab and fortunately they had a second wheelchair at home they've been able to utilise. But in the case of that particular person, if they didn't all they would have done is the cab driver may have had to carry them in or assisted them into their home and they would have had nothing, and - - -

MR BELL: Perhaps this is a driver-training issue, in part?

MR GORDON: Well, across the board there's requirements for training both not only with the taxi companies but also with the bus companies as well. I know Tony said that some of them have got training program in place for etcetera, but sometimes you get the odd occasion where you may have a bus driver that is having a bad-hair day and they're not – you know, somebody that may be infirmed, having a problem with getting on to a bus and that and it's taking their time and it's the case of hurry instead of, you know, allowing for that small delay. I realise that they've got schedules that they've got to keep to and sometimes you might have a bus that is, say, ordered for – they're supposed to turn up in a particular spot at, say, 9.20 and it might be 9.30 before it even arrives.

Those occasions happen because of delays in traffic and all those sort of things and it may well be that what someone – that a wheelchair user has needed to get on, but those are the sort of issues we're looking down because the type of State we are – and as Tony mentioned, we've gone from a State that used to have a rail service from Hobart to Launceston to a State that doesn't have that availability now. We've got buses such as Red Coach Lines that currently do not have accessible buses to travel between Hobart and Launceston. One of the points that had been made to me there at one stage, the reason why they operate with the buses – the current buses that they use is because they carry freight.

Now, freight could be carried in a trailer or truck. Now, if they were working as tourists – tourist operators, there is a different scale there once again of the type of vehicles that they're using. There is operators that are currently using smaller vehicles that have actually got some wheelchair access. It may be only one wheelchair, but at least it's something. The infrastructure on the destinations they're travelling to is a problem. Being able to get on and off a bus on a dirt track or a rough-gravel path or something like that, wheelchairs are of absolutely no use in gravel, especially loose gravel, and I think there has got to be a review of the tourist industry across the board as far as the State is concerned, as far as access is concerned not only to transport but also to accommodation because we're finding that some of the claims by some of the accommodation places are saying that they're accessible, they're not accessible.

MR BELL: So with the taxis, are there special licences for these taxis?

MR GORDON: There are special licences for them, the State Government had provided, I think it was 25 additional licences for the new WAC cabs in the last couple of years to encourage more of these taxis to be actually put on, to operate in the State. There has been - one particular person apparently has breached that and  
5 DIER apparently is investigating that one at the moment. This particular person had been operating from Hobart Airport and hasn't actually - in the whole time that he has had his licence, hasn't carried a wheelchair in it or anybody with a disability for that matter. Because they've had the availability of what they call a tariff 3 he's taken it on his boat that what - they make extra money out of it because he's got  
10 more than four passengers in the vehicle he can automatically go to tariff 3 and charge more, which, you know, doesn't help anybody else out in the community that needs to have the availability of an accessible cab.

MR BELL: Well, what about services by air, have there been issues about air  
15 transport?

MR GORDON: Tasmanians For Disabilities held an airlines forum - what was it, Jan, about 12 months ago?

MS MILLER: Yes, yes, and there's a continuing dialogue between various airlines, not only Tasmanians With Disabilities but other disability groups as well about access issues, particularly with people in wheelchairs, being able to access airlines and of course the other issue too is with the no-frills airlines the amount of service, particularly at airports, that people with disabilities can expect to have in, say, meet-  
25 and-assist services which does have a profound effect on the travel plans of some people with disabilities.

MS KENNARD: So that's where someone can help you once you get off the airline - the airplane?  
30

MS MILLER: Yes, and it's basically meet and greet from the front door of the airport through check-in, through handing over to the cabin staff, and then once the cabin staff responsibility is finished on the ground at the other end and that doesn't just apply to people in wheelchairs, it applies to people with a number of disabilities,  
35 including people who are blind and vision impaired and who want to travel alone, as most of us these days, quite often for work and for pleasure as well and not necessarily travelling in a party of other people.

MS KENNARD: And this is something that Qantas provides but perhaps Jet Star or  
40 others don't?

MS MILLER: It is provided but Jet Star doesn't have - they are a no-frill airline and they're not - that's their main claim to fame. So they don't have the same support facilities as say Qantas would. Virgin Blue do have support facilities, but  
45 because these days there are more and more people travelling by air there are going to be more and more people with disabilities travelling as well and maybe at times - and I believe it has happened at times, that the meet-and-assist people are thin on the

ground, just the pure logistics of having enough of them at the right place at the right time.

MR GORDON: So one of the instances that we had with the airlines forum, we also  
5 not only met with the major airline holders – or stakeholders such as Qantas, Virgin,  
and Jet Star, but we also met with some of the smaller operators such as TasAir, Rex  
Airlines, with the type of aircraft that they're using, the availability of being able to  
put things like wheelchairs in luggage holds which are at the back of the aircraft and  
10 the way that they can actually carry – like, there's no use in putting a 200-kilo  
wheelchair into a baggage hold, the moment you put it in, the tail hits the ground,  
you know, it's just not going to be able to take off.

And, you know, they express concerns because, you know, under the requirements of  
15 the standards, you know, they felt that they were locked into a position where they  
had to comply, but after negotiations with groups such as our own and ParaQuad and  
all the other disability groups that they've actually met with through the type of  
forums that we've actually – you know, they've been able to come to a compromise  
where they know that the disability organisations are not out there to just go over and  
20 hit them with a big stick, we're quite able to understand why they can't put those sort  
of weights and the restraints on to those sort of aircraft and, you know, we've come  
to a compromise of what type of chairs that they can actually get on there or any  
particular person with a disability, such as having the requirement of actually having  
to have an accompanying person to assist. Now, Jan and myself, for instance, we're  
25 quite capable of travelling no matter what airline or aircraft by ourselves, but part of  
the regulations the airlines had introduced was that if a person with a disability was  
travelling and they needed to basically undo the top of a bottle of tablets or  
something like that, they would have to take a carer with them.

MR BELL: I think aircraft that hold – that carry less than 24 passengers have some  
30 special arrangements under the standards, but I was keen to ask you about the actual  
airport facilities because how do you get on with airports that don't have air bridges?

MR GORDON: Well, Hobart Airport is particularly like that, Launceston is the  
35 same. The type of facilities that they've got, they've introduced forklifts with  
enclosed-type things which really put the wind up you, especially if it's on a windy  
day and a lot of the times – well, I had one particular instance where I nearly lost my  
dog from underneath it because they didn't have a block rail at the bottom of it when  
they first introduced it and we were half-way down from coming off the aircraft and  
he slipped and here I've got a dog hanging by a choker chain and the scruff of his  
40 neck until we actually got close enough to the ground for somebody to actually grab  
him so that he didn't actually go under the forklift. Obviously, it was a safety issue  
that they hadn't even thought of. They thought well, okay, we're taking on  
somebody that's in a wheelchair, a wheelchair is not going to particularly slip  
underneath it, but they never ever thought of maybe a guide dog having the same  
45 problem.

MR BELL: Of the dog.

MS MILLER: I would say as a personal comment to that, I would opt, if the opportunity arose, not to be on the forklift. I have done it once and I found it rather an unnerving experience because a totally blind person, even though I was accompanied by someone, just walking on to this thing, I had no idea what it was, I'd  
5 prefer to walk down the stairs and that option should be given. It shouldn't ever be assumed by any operator that all people with disabilities cannot walk up and down a flight of stairs and should have the other option which is meant for certain disabilities because we're all different.

10 MR BELL: I think one of the airlines had an unfortunate incident with somebody who slipped on the stairs and you'll notice the stairs now have yellow – well, you won't notice, but take my word for it, they have this special yellow, highly frictional paint surface and they advise you to hold the rail as you're going down the stairs, even at Hobart. But the accident involved somebody who was not in any way  
15 disabled. So it can happen to ordinary people who – I mean, negotiating those stairs is still a bit of a challenge.

MR GORDON: Well, you know, the actual slope of the stairs is fairly steep and coming down with a guide dog in tow and trying to hold on to a rail, maybe with  
20 whatever hand luggage you're carrying at the time is extremely difficult.

MR BELL: Is a bit difficult. I can see that.

MR GORDON: And that's one of the reasons why I've opted to actually use the  
25 lift. I can't just can't – with Hobart Airport there was always - years and years ago, that you could actually see aircraft off from the roof area. I can't work out why they never introduced walkways on to aircraft from down there because they've always had the capacity to do it, but for some reason they just decided they didn't want to.

30 MR BELL: Yes, well the issue about putting wheelchairs in the hold really applies only to the – I think mainly to the smaller aircraft, although there is a version of the Dash 8 that has more than 24 seats in it, so I suppose that's a problem for the - - -

MR GORDON: And of course all the airlines currently they've set requirements of  
35 weights of wheelchairs and heights of wheelchairs going in to cargo holds depending on the type of aircraft that they are actually operating. And it's quite understandable that, you know, if one scratch of paint on that aircraft hold is made he could hold that aircraft up until it's repaired, because of the nature of the aircraft operating it, the heights that they do and the speed that they're doing it's going to cause friction and  
40 that's then putting everybody in danger.

MR BELL: Yes, okay. So we've talked about taxis and we've talked about – and you don't have any trains, and we've talked about aircraft, do we still have ferries.

45 MR GORDON: There is a few ferries operating out of Hobart but they're non-accessible.

MS MILLER: Can I talk about something more in general?

MR BELL: Yes, please.

MS MILLER: But particularly concerning buses, but it could equally apply in other States to train. Everyone is talking about, naturally of course, access for people who  
5 have physical disabilities, particularly wheelchairs, but for a person who is blind or vision impaired access means information access to us. And I've noticed from reading the documentation about the standards this is well and truly recognised, but it seems to be taking a long time for that part of the standards to catch up with the really important parts for other people which is access, physical access to buses and  
10 other forms of transport, such things as: access to information about bus timetables.

Here in Tasmania I had a really enjoyable afternoon over the weekend looking at the Metro website and accessing the bus timetables that way which is all very well and great, but it doesn't help a blind or vision impaired person when they're out and  
15 about at a bus stop. I would like there to be consideration sooner, rather than much later, to having – using technology as it's developed to make in strategic places such as the major bus stations, an information kiosk-type affair with a touch screen, you could get audio feedback onto the same information as is on the usual bus stop signs – timetable signs.

20 Also make sure that all that information – I don't know because I'm totally blind and I'm assuming that all this information is in the relative sized type for people who have low vision because as people are aging there are going to be more and more people who are suffering from such things as macular degeneration, they won't be totally blind, they won't necessarily be using mobility aids but they will have trouble  
25 reading all the signs that they used to always take for granted.

MR GORDON: One of the other things that I've seen around different States etcetera is the availability that some of the buses have got similar to the trains in New  
30 South Wales, you have an announcement that you are arriving at such and such a station. Now, I know for a fact that in Ireland they've got buses that have actually got this availability, whether it's being done from a location type device within 500 metres to 1000 metres it actually gives you an announcement that the next bus stop is bus stop 30 or something like that, so that you know which bus stop that you're  
35 actually coming up on, because a lot of the times we're just guessing whether we're actually – if we're pressing the please stop button that we're getting off at the right stop.

MR BELL: I've had that experience myself. I was in Kyoto and I got on the bus  
40 and the driver, sensing that I didn't understand Japanese correctly, turned on a switch so that the sign at the front alternately displayed the name of the next stop in Kanji or Romanji, the two – one's our character set and one's theirs, but there was also an announcement that came through in both Japanese and English - - -

45 MS MILLER: This would be ideal.

MR BELL: - - - to say what the name of the next stop was. And I noticed though that normally it was only in Japanese, but when he saw foreigners getting on he turned it on to have English.

5 MS MILLER: And I know – the bus drivers can be really helpful in realising you do have a vision impairment and they will offer to let you know when your stop arrives, but it’s really another extra added thing to put on to them - - -

MR BELL: It is.

10

MS MILLER: - - - to expect them to do it and if they inadvertently forget well, I mean, they’re going to feel bad about it, but you’ve overshot your stop anyway. But technology is becoming more and more able to do these things at a lesser cost than it otherwise would have been.

15

MR BELL: Yes. I mean I guess with the Kyoto buses there’s still quite a cost element involved in having that system. For me, of course, it was very useful as a tourist because I could relate the name of the stop to the place that I wanted to go.

20

MR GORDON: The ones they’re utilising in Ireland I think they operate on what they call a proximity centre. So once the bus comes in virtually line of sight of the next bus stop it will automatically make the announcement it’s approaching that stop and once it’s left that stop it switches to the next one that’s on its program, so that once it comes into the next proximity sensor it just makes that announcement.

25

MS MILLER: I mean all these things could be locked in to GPS-type systems and systems that are, you know, are more accessible now than they ever have.

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MR BELL: Yes, I guess the price of some of these things is coming down, the GPS devices are certainly getting cheaper.

MS MILLER: I just wanted to make the point that access, you know, as you are obviously aware, access isn’t just physical access, it’s information access - - -

35

MR BELL: No, we understand that.

MS MILLER: - - - and the more information people have, the more likely they are to be continuing travellers on particular public transport because they feel comfortable using it.

40

MR GORDON: Even to the stage of the current standards, I went on the net there the other day to get a full copy of the current standards. The only place that I could actually access them automatically from – without having to have a pin number or a membership number of something or other else, or a code, was the Attorney-General’s Department and it’s only because apparently they decided they were putting it up for general public information which actually surprised me, I spent a good half hour searching around. Tried several sites, yes, by all means they had it,

45

but you either had to have a pin number or you had to – if it was Standards Australia you would have to pay a fee for it to be able to access it.

5 MR BELL: Just let me ask Metro. Do you have a phone number that people can call and give information on timetables?

MR SIM: We have what we call the hotline number and we also – and I believe it's working is our TTY.

10 MR BELL: TTY as well.

MS MILLER: Yes, and I'd like to compliment you on your website. Timetables on the website are really accessible for using – for blind people using screen readers.

15 MR SIM: Thank you for that. There's a lot of able bodied people that complaint about them, that they aren't accessible enough.

MS MILLER: Well, provided that we use the technology - - -

20 MR SIM: Yes, the technology, I agree.

MS MILLER: - - - that we are given, I mean it's all set up nicely in columns and rows and provided we meet you half way and use the facilities for us being able to match up the columns and rows, it is accessible. I would just like, you know,  
25 technology in the next few years to allow some of that same basic information to be out in the community at major areas. As I said earlier in bus stations as audible output in say a kiosk-type situation that people could go to and use a touch screen.

MR BELL: Yes, because you see the screen reader is a clever piece of software that  
30 converts your nice orderly columns into words that can be heard audibly, so it's quite clever but you can't really carry it around with you.

MS MILLER: No.

35 MR BELL: Well, we shouldn't say that because our colleague here has a clever device, the next generation of which might be able to be plugged into your facility at the bus - - -

MS MILLER: Well, it might be modified as long as Metro were broadcasting in a  
40 hotspot somewhere, their timetable we could be within range and just download the bit we wanted.

MR BELL: So some interesting possibilities.

45 MR SIM: Yes, hotspots for downloading the information, certainly we've looked at that fairly seriously.

MS MILLER: And you wouldn't want all the information, I mean you can have information overload, the website is an ideal place to have everything that you ever want to know, but say if you were in, you know, in the centre of Hobart you could actually only call up certain sections of it, so therefore the need for it to be so  
5 complicated wouldn't be as great.

MR SIM: Yes. We're certainly looking at upgrading our website in the near future.

10 MS MILLER: Yes.

MR SIM: So that is certainly something we will be taking on board. We are also – we're actually assessing tenders for a new ticketing system to replace our very old system and that's going to include GPS on the bus, so that may actually assist with future technology to, for example, announce bus stops as they come up because the  
15 bus will know where it is.

MS MILLER: That would be great, yes.

MR SIM: So I mean that's probably still another two years away before we get the  
20 system installed, but we are sort of progressively doing that.

MR GORDON: One of the points I would like to also make and this has happened to me a couple of times, I don't know whether I'm thick or what, but I've ended up standing on what I thought was a bus stop and found out it was a non-standing zone.  
25 One of the particular ones was outside Ogilvy High School, waiting for a bus where I thought was a bus stop because there's a pole and it's got a sign at the top which I can't read.

MR SIM: This comes back to the, you know, accessible bus stops and what defines  
30 an accessible bus stop.

MR BELL: Exactly.

MR SIM: There's no tactile surface there which there aren't in probably 95 per cent  
35 of the bus stops that we use. For visually impaired people they don't know whether they're at a bus stop or another pole with another sign on.

MR BELL: You need something on the pole that can actually be felt.

40 MR SIM: Well, the standards call up for tactile surfaces on the footpath.

MS MILLER: Yes, indicators.

MR GORDON: Tactile ground surface indicators, appropriate signage which is  
45 Brailled as well - - -

MR BELL: I guess what you're used to - - -

MR GORDON: - - - especially just, even just the location of where the bus stop is and what number the bus stop is. It doesn't mean to say that the whole timetable needs to be in Braille because it would never be maintained, that's an impossibility.

5 MS MILLER: Is there a particular – this is another question from a person who has no vision at all – is there a particular colour that any signage on Metro bus stops is compared to a sign for no standing or whatever else that would be put on a pole?

10 MR SIM: Most Metro bus stop blades have a Metro, either a new logo or one of our older logos if it's a very old bus stop.

MS MILLER: But is it a bright colour so someone who actually couldn't read print, but could still distinguish colour may actually use it as a cue?

15 MR SIM: No, they're not all uniform design first of all.

MR GORDON: That's where I struck my problem.

20 MR SIM: And as I said earlier we don't display the accessible bus stop sign which is a small bluish sort of sign because our bus stops technically aren't accessible, so we believe that we won't put those up until we have accessible bus stops.

25 MR GORDON: Well, once again I think, what's-a-name, if we get to the stage where organisations such as our own and the disability access committees that sit on the local councils could actually get together along with local government and organisations such as Metro etcetera, we can certainly look at the problems that they're having with the infrastructure and maybe do some auditing through those groups to identify what ones could be made accessible and what ones can't be made accessible so that they can actually be ruled out and ticked off that, you know, there's  
30 no way that they are going to be compliant. At least it's a start. At the moment there doesn't seem to be a starting point at all.

35 MS KENNARD: Perhaps – considering we're looking at standards in terms of the first five years since they were implemented, what's been your experience or what's your general view?

40 MR GORDON: The worst part, what's-a-name, that we had was referring back to an instance just recently that occurred over at Clarence Council which absolutely amazed me as being an access consultant with ACCA. I had a chap from Metro and the works engineer from Clarence Council came in to inform the access committee that, "Oh, we've just installed two new pieces of infrastructure at two new bus stops over in the Clarence area," and they showed us the photographs. And the moment I seen the photographs I went, "What?" They didn't meet any of the requirements.

45 They had a bus shelter placed on an off-shoot of like the kerb of the road which was gravel, no footpath coming up in either direction to it, so how the hell anybody with a vision impairment would actually find it I've got no idea. The seating arrangement in it wasn't compliant to the requirements of the current standards. The back of it

had a railing situation where it only had a top rail, there was a drop off the back of it onto a stone beached area, it could have been – for all I know it could have been a metre or more because it was very close to the shoreline – and instantly thought well kids are going to be swinging on that and under the requirements of the standard it's supposed to have a secondary rail on there to stop that actually occurring.

There was no tactile ground indicators placed, signage was non-existent bar from what would've been applied to the actual shelter itself. The secondary one was they placed a seat on a brand new slab of concrete, it didn't meet the requirement and it's a variable size seating and the pole was quite a number of metres away from it sitting down on an old concrete path that went from the original path which had a death trap on it where there was a hole, the concrete had actually broken away. And I said to the works engineer from Clarence Council, "Who's going to pay for the public liability if somebody gets injured on that footpath" to start off with, let alone the requirement of the actual seat they put at the stop not meeting the requirements of variable size and not having a rail at either end to actually assist somebody to be able to get up. I think honestly they just walked away saying, "I don't know." And I honestly don't think that they had actually looked at the requirements. They thought they had done a good job. They hadn't.

MS KENNARD: So is it useful for your organisation to have a document like the standards to – as a reference point for – in dealings with - - -

MR GORDON: Well, with most of the ACA members, because we're access consultants, we're qualified access consultants with that organisation, we utilised the Act of 1428 then through all the schedules 1428(1), (2), (3), (4) and so forth as a guideline to the meeting of the requirements under the standard. Now, there is going to be cases and times where – that you're not going to meet the requirements. As I said this morning I know personally straight out that there is going to be areas that Metro not in any shape, form or fashion is going to be able to meet the requirement of every bus stop in this place.

MR BELL: Because sometimes it is the council, isn't it, so - - -

MR GORDON: And it's vice versa, it's the same thing with the council, you know, they – you know, we have had buildings that we've looked at and they've tried to get access into it one way or another and we've had to look at compromises such as, giving you a rough example, the – under the -there is one part of the requirement of the standards of direct access to a building must be through the main doorway. Now, if that doorway can't be accessed it may be because of heritage, it may be because of some other reason or logistics of where it's located, but there may be another doorway that can be into the same building that can be made accessible. What you do is you redesignate what is your main entry and as far as I can see the same – it's a compromise, yes, but it's a user friendly compromise.

MR BELL: And I think your argument, David, is that you are happy to see compromises of a reasonable nature made?

MR GORDON: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes, and I think - - -

5 MR SIM: Look, can I – Tony sim from Metro. Can I just say yes, that is very – that  
is a great idea that we do work together and what I should say, and I know the  
councils will certainly have an opportunity to talk later on, but as I said before, we  
are within 22 kilometre radius of Hobart. We have to deal with at least five councils.  
10 If you go another five kilometres out there’s probably another three councils,  
Southern Midlands, Derwent Valley, etcetera, so the different councils respond  
differently to access issues for public transport and that is because public transport in  
a lot of councils is only a very small component of what they have to deal with in  
terms of accessibility.

15 You know, there’s buildings, infrastructure and other things that councils have to  
deal with, not just infrastructure for bus stops and public transport and I think that is  
probably one of the difficulties that we have as a bus operator in dealing with some  
of the councils. Now, some of the councils do it very well and my colleague on the  
right here from Glenorchy – Glenorchy do it exceptionally well throughout the –  
20 compared to all the other councils in Tasmania. There’s a couple of other councils  
that do it quite well in my view, which is Launceston and even Burnie, but there are  
other councils that because public transport is just such a small priority, I guess, for  
accessibility-type issues, so it goes further down the priority list because they have –  
well, as we talked about before, I mean, there’s roads without kerbs and footpaths,  
25 etcetera, so there’s other broader issues but certainly the comment, and I am not  
aware of the exact location and it doesn’t matter, but certainly as we install or as the  
councils install new infrastructure we would like them to take account of public  
transport, even if it is nothing but having space at certain points along a road where  
they are putting a new footpath in, to have a turning area and potentially a bus stop  
30 and I know certainly there are a couple of other spots where there has been new  
infrastructure put in in other council areas that would not comply.

I mean, there was bus stop put in recently that doesn’t have a kerb and it’s back  
35 behind – the footpath is back behind a gravel area and the bus stop sits out in the  
gravel. The first thing that is going to happen is the bus will sink into the gravel but  
that is a roads issue, but it doesn’t get the bus to where the people want to get onto  
the bus, so there’s still, I guess, a divergence of approaches from all the parties  
involved and I think that was what we were saying before, if we can get everyone  
together, certainly in Tasmania, it probably is easier than perhaps some of the other  
40 States, but if we can get the councils, the Department of Infrastructure, the State  
Government and perhaps work on a priority of where do we – not only accessibility  
for public transport but accessibility issues because we’re talking about the tourist  
operators and some of them, you know, their businesses are probably marginally  
viable so they can’t afford to go and spend mega bucks on putting a ramp up to the  
45 front of their hotel, for example, or you know, the council probably can’t afford to  
put a footpath along the road past the hotel, it might just be a gravel verge on the side  
of the road now, so there is perhaps a need for us all to get our heads together a bit  
better, but what we’re talking about today is taking away some of the – or filling in

some of the black holes that make it difficult for all those people to actually decide well, what do we do here.

MS KENNARD: Yes.

5

MR BELL: David, was there anything else you wanted to add, or your colleagues?

MR GORDON: That is basically about it as far as I'm concerned. What about you, Jan?

10

MS MILLER: No, no.

MR BELL: You are happy?

15

MS MILLER: Yes, thank you.

MR BELL: Well, thank you very much for coming, we really appreciate your time and thanks for the input. That is very good. Now, we were expecting to have Jane Taggart from the Glenorchy City Council but do we have somebody else instead?

20

MR PEARCE: Yes, we do.

MR BELL: Okay, let me just organise some microphone for you.

25

MS KENNARD: Why don't we just move these ones.

MR BELL: David, would you mind moving and I can come in and move the wheelchair over here.

30

MR PEARCE: This is an access issue.

MR BELL: That is all right, we're going to fix it.

MR PEARCE: Be careful of the height of this little cable here.

35

MR BELL: That is all right. I'm just going to take these chairs out here. Just don't electrify yourself, David.

MR PEARCE: That would be shocking.

40

MR BELL: You can drive right up to the microphone over here. Are you right? We'll park you there, so it is David Pearce?

MR PEARCE: Yes, that's right.

45

MR BELL: So, David, you're from Glenorchy Council?

MR PEARCE: Yes, that's correct, sir. I'm an alderman on the Glenorchy City Council and also one of the aldermen that is a member of the Glenorchy City Council Access Committee . Our access committee is the longest established access committee in Tasmania and we've been in operation since 1988 and we work closely  
5 – work as closely as we can with Metro and other government and non-government agencies and community-based organisations to try and get a whole of government approach to the needs of people with disabilities and at the moment the council is in the process of negotiating a new partnership agreement with the State Government and which hopefully many access issues or many issues in general that relate to the  
10 needs of people with disabilities will be incorporated in that agreement.

And I guess from a Local Government's point of view when you talk about access issues in general one of the challenges for Local Government, regardless of what Local Government is, is that in many aspects under the Local Government Act we  
15 are required to work to the Building Code of Australia standards and not the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act standards and unfortunately in many respects they are not compatible so therefore you have a conflict of what standards you are meant to comply with and as far as possible my Local Government, being the Glenorchy City Council, tries to incorporate both standards with an emphasis on the  
20 DVA standards and we also, rather than work to the minimum standards we try and work to the maximum standards but that is an ongoing challenge.

MR BELL: That is very interesting because you are, I think, the first person who has mentioned the issue of the conflict between the DVA standards and other  
25 standards that we have under other legislation.

MR PEARCE: Yes.

MR BELL: And, of course, you mentioned the Building Code of Australia. The  
30 other source, of course, are the regulations that apply to air transport.

MR PEARCE: Yes, exactly.

MR BELL: And there there has been some work done and I guess that over time we hope that these different conflicts will be resolved and that the Building Code will be  
35 adjusted to be somewhat more in line with the obvious requirements of the DVA standards.

MR PEARCE: Yes.

40 MR BELL: But standard setting unfortunately can be a lengthy process - - -

MR PEARCE: It can.

45 MR BELL: - - - and so I am afraid that it is going to take some more time.

MR PEARCE: Yes. Trying to get greater public awareness can also take a long time as well.

MR BELL: Yes. Yes, I think public awareness generally is a whole issue.

MR PEARCE: Yes, it is.

5 MR BELL: So can I ask – I am looking at this very fine wheelchair you have got, do you know what it weighs?

MR PEARCE: Yes. Well, mine would be over 100 kilo, probably closer to 200 if  
10 you take into consideration the weight of the batteries, they would weight close to – I have two 12 volt batteries and the combined weight of those would be close to probably 30 kilos so it's a very, very heavy chair.

MR BELL: Yes. Have you tried taking it on public transport?

15 MR PEARCE: Yes, I have. I use a wheelchair accessible taxi most of the time and I have tried using a Metro bus and I've got to compliment Metro on the fact that they are more accessible buses coming along each year but one of the issues is that in the Metro buses there is still only limited space for people using large wheelchairs and unfortunately for many people who use wheelchairs their lack of mobility means that  
20 they tend to put on weight so therefore they need large wheelchairs and of course the larger the wheelchair gets the harder it is to manoeuvre into the limited space that is available on Metro buses and so I have tried but it is difficult and also as a private individual I am also concerned with when I get on the Metro buses the actual chair itself isn't secured in any way so in the event of an accident my chair would virtually  
25 become a missile.

It would either run into people as the accident was occurring, or I would end up  
injuring myself or more importantly other people on the bus and also for people who  
use scooters as opposed to motorised wheelchairs now, you've probably seen those  
30 motorised scooters, have you?

MR BELL: Yes.

MR PEARCE: Yes.  
35

MR BELL: I think the definition of a scooter is that it has three wheels and a  
wheelchair has four?

MR PEARCE: Yes.  
40

MR BELL: Is that right?

MR PEARCE: Some of the scooters now have four wheels.

45 MR BELL: Okay.

MR PEARCE: So for many people who use scooters they have a longer wheelbase  
and so for them it's impossible for them to access the limited space on Metro buses.

MR BELL: Yes.

MR PEARCE: And even for people who use access cabs many of the access cabs have a lifting ramp, a mechanical lifting ramp, and for them the issue of – the ramp  
5 itself is only made to the minimum standard, not the maximum, therefore it's very, very difficult to try and fit scooters or larger wheelchairs onto a very small lifting ramp.

MR BELL: Yes, and we have certainly heard some discussion about that problem  
10 - - -

MR PEARCE: Yes.

MR BELL: - - - to do with both weight and size, so we are conscious of that issue.  
15

MS KENNARD: In your role working with the city council - - -

MR PEARCE: Yes.

MS KENNARD: - - - we have had a discussion this morning about accessibility of  
20 bus stops and the relationship between – I guess, the responsibility of bus stops versus operating the actual bus service. Do you have a particular view or had involvement in working with – on this area?

MR PEARCE: I don't have the technical knowledge to be able to answer that and  
25 unfortunately Jane Taggart, who is the Glenorchy City Council access officer isn't here to be able to answer that.

MS KENNARD: Okay.  
30

MR PEARCE: But if you would like to put that in writing to her I will ask her to  
respond.

MS KENNARD: Okay, I can contact her. I think we have got her details.  
35

MR BELL: Yes, because she is not going to be here today but we certainly would  
be interested in a perspective from the council on the issue of the infrastructure, the  
kerbs, the way the footpaths are set up, the bus shelters and things like that, because  
clearly these are local government matters - - -  
40

MR PEARCE: We are - - -

MR BELL: - - - and we would be – so if we can get some comment from  
Glenorchy, I think that would be very helpful.  
45

MR PEARCE: I will see that that happens.

MR BELL: Okay.

MR PEARCE: And from an elected member's point of view, I think there is a need for all local governments to work together to develop a common standard. Even as far as tactile surfacing is concerned, for example. When I come into Hobart I notice that the tactile surfacing is white and grey, well, on days when the weather isn't good  
5 the people who have visual impairment or low vision, the grey tactile surfacing must be very difficult to see. And over time that white and grey surfacing must get very dirty, therefore it blends in with the surrounding footpath.

10 Where in Glenorchy, as much as possible, we try and use yellow tactile surfacing.

MR BELL: Okay, yellow, yes.

MR PEARCE: Yes. Even when we come to painting the rails, we try to ensure that rails in the central business district are painted yellow.

15 MR BELL: Yes. Okay, that is a very helpful contribution, was there anything else you wanted to add?

MR PEARCE: From a personal point of view, I think that – well, I have lived with  
20 a disability all my life because – 48 years and the awareness of people with disabilities is becoming greater but I think that there is another issue as well. As people age they acquire a disability, so for many people this is a new issue for them because they have never experienced access issues. And they have never experienced what it is like to live with a disability. So I think – and also the cost of  
25 living with a disability, it can be extremely high.

I mean, the State Government have a system called the Transport Access Scheme in which they will pay 50 or 60 per cent of the cost of a taxi fare. And the consumer pays 40 per cent. Well, I think that needs to be extended because for many older  
30 people who acquire a disability, they are not aware of such things as wheelchair accessible taxis or wheelchair accessible transport. So provision of information needs to be much wider and also Commonwealth and State Governments need to work together to make sure that the provision of information is much wider and that it is, as you have already heard, the need to make sure access to information is put  
35 out in all formats.

And because unfortunately there is a tendency not for - even for State and Commonwealth agencies not to put information out there in the standard that is accessible and when you speak to them about the provision of information, under the  
40 DVA, they are not aware of it. From my local government's point of view I am proud to say, as much as possible we try and make sure that the information is out there and I think a lot of that is the need for staff members and managers in local government to become more aware. And the way that my local government, the way the Glenorchy City Council does it is that we have a very, very active access  
45 committee made up of people with disabilities, elected members, three of whom have a disability themselves including myself.

And we also ensure that when it comes to the training of or the awareness issue, we have a program running where new staff who begin working with the council, they actually assume the role of a person with a disability for the day and they have to undertake some practical experiences that make them more aware of access issues  
5 and they then have a workshop at the end of the day in which they are able to debrief and give feedback on their experiences and that, we have found, is a way making the staff more, much more aware of the needs of people with disabilities. And the fact that my council is the first council in Tasmania to appoint a full-time access officer.

10 MR GORDON: Can I make an additional comment?

MR BELL: Yes.

15 MR GORDON: David made to the Transport Access Scheme, that I don't think we really clarified this morning was that the way it works at the moment, now, one of the reasons why I mentioned this morning it was the cost of somebody, say for arguments sake, if David had to travel to Launceston via taxi, the Transport Access Scheme only pays for the first \$50 of that trip. The remainder of the trip is at the double tariff, the full distance of the trip. They are only able under that particular  
20 scheme, with David is 60 per cent of that fare is paid by the Transport Access Scheme and 40 per cent is paid by himself. Once that reaches \$50, that is the cut off point.

25 MS KENNARD: So it is capped at \$50, up to 50.

MR PEARCE: Yes.

MR GORDON: So that is why you find out that at the end of the day you end up with a fare to Launceston ranging between \$300 and \$400.

30 MS KENNARD: Is there a sort of - - -

MR GORDON: And there is no other way of getting there.

35 MS KENNARD: Is there a cap in terms of how much you can – how much assistance you can receive from that scheme in a year.

MR GORDON: It is \$50.

40 MR BELL: Yes, but what about for the year? Is it capped?

MR GORDON: No, for the day. There is no cap.

45 MR PEARCE: No. There is no cap, no.

MR BELL: There is no cap for the year.

MS KENNARD: Okay.

MR GORDON: There is no cap in that night.

MR BELL: Because - - -

5 MS KENNARD: So really only, it is mostly focussed on small, shorter trips rather than providing much assistance for longer trips.

MR GORDON: It is \$50 per trip.

10 MR BELL: I should explain to Counsellor Pearce that David Gordon this morning pointed out that with the concentration of specialisation in the health sector, there may be an increased need for longer trips by people with disabilities to get certain sorts of medical care and that that may in fact put more demand on the system to provide help and that if you have to travel some of these longer distances to get this  
15 specialist care, then the taxi fares get to be rather large and \$50 may be a very small part of that fare.

MR GORDON: Yes.

20 MR PEARCE: Well, I can give – as an individual I can give an example. I have an account system with my – the firm that I use for my wheelchair accessible taxis and that is sent to me on a monthly basis and even with the – I mean I pay 40 per cent of all my taxi fares and even with the State Government discount, my monthly taxi fare can – usually averages out between \$100 and \$125 a month. Now, I am extremely  
25 fortunate in that I have the added income of being an elected member but for many people who are on fixed, limited incomes such as some form of benefit or pension, if they are – if they choose to be extremely active in the community as more and more people with disabilities are choosing to be that, but if they are on fixed, limited incomes, by the time they pay between \$100 and \$125 a month, that doesn't leave  
30 them a lot to live on. So it goes back to what I was saying, the cost of living with a disability can be extremely high.

MR BELL: Okay, well, David, was there anything else you wanted to add?

35 MR PEARCE: No, unless you had any other questions.

MR BELL: I don't think so, so look, thank you very much for making the special effort to come.

40 MR PEARCE: My pleasure.

MR BELL: And we are really delighted that you were able to talk to us.

MR PEARCE: Thank you.

45

MR BELL: Thank you very much. So now, I think we are all finished but is there anybody else in the audience who wants to say something. No? All right, well, look,

we are finished then for the day. Thank you very much for coming and thank you for your help. This will be up on the web in about a week. Thanks.

5 **ADJOURNED**

**RESUMED**

**[12.17pm]**

10

MR BELL: Okay. And you're all systems go. So how did you hear about this little exercise?

15

MR POTTS: Well, Jane actually rang me on Friday and said I just recently joined the access committee in Glenorchy with Jane - - -

MR BELL: So you're on the Glenorchy Access Committee?

20

MR POTTS: Yes.

MR BELL: Okay.

MR POTTS: And then she rang me on Friday and said come along.

25

MR BELL: Okay. So how often does the access committee meet?

MR POTTS: I went to my first meeting about two weeks ago.

30

MR BELL: Okay.

MR POTTS: Actually it – and it goes every month, every first Thursday of every - - -

35

MR BELL: Every month. Okay. And do you know – I mean, what sort of issues does the committee look at?

MR POTTS: Well, she's told me they looked at anything and everything from taxis to building access and all that sort of stuff.

40

MR BELL: Okay. Now, our interest, as you know probably, is on public transport. Are you able to use the buses at all?

MR POTTS: I haven't used the buses in Tasmania, but I've used them in Sydney.

45

MR BELL: Okay. I mean, what was your experience like using the buses there?

MR POTTS: In Sydney, it was fine, the guy let me on for – he even actually let me on for free, so I didn't have a problem there. I didn't know what I was doing, but I didn't have a problem, but Jane was telling me that you guys – taxis were - - -

5 MR BELL: Yes, we're looking at taxis and buses and trains, and anything else like that.

MR POTTS: Yes, because I've had quite a few problems with taxis.

10 MR BELL: Okay. What sort of problems have you had with taxis?

MR POTTS: Well, I just can never get one, even if I call – on a Saturday night or whenever, they once – there was one Saturday night when I rang up the taxi company and the taxi company told me – it was like, you know, 4, 5 in the morning,  
15 and I rang up the taxi company and asked them for a wheelchair cab and they told me that all their wheelchair cabs had knocked off for the night.

MR BELL: Oh, okay, so they'd all gone home?

20 MR POTTS: And then so I just asked them for a station-wagon cab and they said that he'd organise me one and I waited 40 minutes and it never came, so I rang them again and he said it was coming and I waited another 15 minutes and I rang him again and he said he was just in Salamanca and I was just at the wharf and I waited another 15 minutes and I rang him back, and I said, "How long does it take to get  
25 from Salamanca to here?" And then he said, "Well, that taxi is not actually working for us tonight and he won't be coming." And by then I'd lost my temper and I might've had words with him and said, "Well, how effing long were you going to wait to tell me that?"

30 MR BELL: Yes.

MR POTTS: Because I'd been waiting for like an hour and a half for a taxi that was never actually going to come. And then I can never hail a cab. If I want to get - - -

35 MR BELL: You have to ring for one?

MR POTTS: Yes. If I want to hail a cab, what I have to do is hide round the corner and get an able bod to hail it for me and then I spring it on the cab driver, and I've had a few cab drivers tell me that they can't take me and drive off once they've seen  
40 me.

MR BELL: But you're able to get out of that and get into the back seat of a car?

45 MR POTTS: Yes, I just get in the front seat, so - - -

MR BELL: You get in the front seat, okay, and they have to fold up the chair and put it in the boot, but it's not very hard is it? Not very hard.

MR POTTS: No, it's easy, and I mean, I can tell them how - - -

MR BELL: You can tell them how to do it, yes, because I mean, they might look at the chair and not know how to fold it up, but it's - - -

5

MR POTTS: It's not complicated.

MR BELL: No, it isn't, is it?

10 MR POTTS: No.

MR BELL: Okay. And do you know how many of these sorts of specialist taxis there are around this part – not many?

15 MR POTTS: I have no idea.

MR BELL: No.

20 MR POTTS: The only way – I used to go out more regularly and the only way I could ever get a cab was I got the personal number of one of the cab drivers and that was the only way, but he's since stopped working and so I'm back to square 1, I can never get a cab.

25 MR BELL: I see. Is it partly because the specialist cabs are in demand and there's not enough of them or do you think that they're just busy taking other passengers?

MR POTTS: I think well, - - -

30 MR BELL: Who knows?

MR POTTS: Who knows, but I don't see anybody else in a wheelchair out when I go out. I might see – there's two other people in wheelchairs that I see out occasionally, but that – I mean, the chances of them being - - -

35 MR BELL: You see, maybe one of the reasons that they're not around at 4 o'clock in the morning is because the demand isn't there at that hour of the day and - - -

MR POTTS: Yes, but I mean, they can take ordinary - - -

40 MR BELL: Ordinary passengers, so you'd think that they'd keep at least one on to meet that sort of demand, yes, well – in Dubbo they turned up with some statistics.

MR POTTS: Yes.

45 MR BELL: And the longest period that anybody had to wait in Dubbo for a disabled cab in June was 18 minutes.

MR POTTS: I might move to Dubbo.

MR BELL: Now, I think if that's correct, which we were assured it was, then I think that's quite good. You could wait 18 minutes for an ordinary cab in Canberra, but it seems that the service here isn't quite as good as that.

5 MR POTTS: No. Like, when I sit at the taxi rank at the wharf – I sit at the taxi rank and I'll sit in line and all the cabs will come pick the people up in front of me and because they're – other people are drunk and they try and skip the queue, well, I'll line up here and the line will get – and I'll get to the front of the line and then the taxis will start stopping - - -

10 MR BELL: Behind you?

MR POTTS: - - - earlier and picking up the people that are skipping the queue and so I'll get to the front - - -

15 MR BELL: So clearly there's an issue here for taxis to address and it might be training drivers as much as anything else.

20 MR POTTS: Yes.

MR BELL: Okay. Well, we can add that to our list.

MR POTTS: And that's – yes, as I said, that's at night time, I don't really catch them during the day after hours, so - - -

25 MR BELL: Okay. All right. Well, that's pretty helpful. I mean, is there anything else you wanted to add?

30 MR POTTS: Well, a couple of years ago I was on a Jet-Star flight and the girl and I – the girl was in a wheelchair, we were refused because we didn't have – well, we weren't refused, they were going to refuse us because we didn't have carers and actually there was a big thing and I was in the ABC – I went on the radio and the - - -

35 MR BELL: All right. What - - -

MS KENNARD: What was the reason - - -

40 MR BELL: Yes, why did they think you needed a carer?

MR POTTS: They say all people in wheelchairs do, they say I might need to take my tablets. They said I might need to take my tablets or go to the toilet on a 50-minute flight. And I said to them I've been away all weekend by myself. I think I can remember to take my tablets over 50 minutes and I can hold on for this flight, thank you.

45 MR BELL: Yes, but this is a case of a one-size-fits-all policy because obviously there are people around who would need a carer, but you don't, and it's – I mean,

perhaps it isn't easy for some of these transport providers to readily assess that. I mean, I can tell from watching you and talking to you that you're pretty able to look after yourself.

5 MR POTTS: Yes.

MR BELL: But obviously if they've had some funny rules or they've got some perceptions that are - - -

10 MS KENNARD: So what happened, did they let you - - -

MR POTTS: They ended up saying to us we've got two Jet-Star flight attendants or something who aren't actually working and we'll just put them down as your carers for this flight and - - -

15

MR BELL: They just happened to be on the flight?

MR POTTS: They happened to be on the flight, and - - -

20 MR BELL: I see.

MR POTTS: And they said the next time we'll need carers. Well, I wrote off to Jet Star and they wrote back saying a fairly high apology and didn't really even say it wouldn't happen again, they just said - - -

25

MR BELL: Yes. I imagine they might have been concerned about precedents and things like that.

MR POTTS: Yes.

30

MR BELL: But it leaves you a little uncertain as to how easy it would be to travel that way again, which is a little unfortunate. I mean, more than unfortunate, but yes - - -

35 MS KENNARD: Yes, it is something that I think would be useful for us to consider a bit more is those general policies in aviation in terms of what people have to have and don't have to have travelling, sort of thing.

MR BELL: So have you experienced being lifted up in this forklift?

40

MR POTTS: I have many times, I play wheelchair tennis, so over the summer I probably fly once a month – well, twice a month thereabouts.

MR BELL: Okay.

45

MR POTTS: And I always fly Virgin now and I never have a problem with them.

MR BELL: Really? Okay. And do you have brakes on your chair?

MR POTTS: I do, yes.

MR BELL: Okay. I heard of somebody who had the brakes taken off because they were racing and when the brakes – when you don't have the brakes then it's  
5 obviously an issue in terms of stability in some public-transport situations.

MR POTTS: Yes, well, I don't even use them, so they're - - -

10 MR BELL: But they are there?

MR POTTS: Yes, they're there, but they're too much for athletics.

MR BELL: Because you can manage the thing without them?

15 MR POTTS: Without them, yes, I can even get up off the floor without them, it's just a little bit – it's technique that holds you back, but - - -

MR BELL: That's a bit amazing. Yes, because I would've thought when you're not sitting in the chair, the chair doesn't have enough weight, so even if the brakes were  
20 on, if you leaned on it, it would slide back.

MR POTTS: Oh, slide, yes.

MR BELL: Yes. So what you're saying is you've got a technique for getting into  
25 the chair that - - -

MR POTTS: Pretty much, when you lift up you sort of lift up and pull and you pull the chair. It's actually easier I find then because as I can lift up, I can lift my body  
30 up and pull the seat underneath.

MR BELL: Okay. So that's how it's done, yes.

MR POTTS: I saw some quads do that when I was at rehab and I was just like, well, I'll learn how to do that, so I spent some time – I mean, I don't – but I've got the  
35 brakes there if I'm on a slope or something like that, that I really want to - - -

MR BELL: Yes, it's useful.

MR POTTS: But most of the time I just use my hands.

40

MR BELL: Yes.

MR POTTS: Yes, but as for getting on planes or whatever, it's a bit of a problem. Virgin even know me, yes, they don't ask for ID or anything, it's crazy.

45

MR BELL: Well, no, I mean, if you're a known customer that's fine.

MR POTTS: Yes, I'm happy flying Virgin, but it's just – I just thought I'd say – other people don't fly Jet Star and they're going to come up with the same issues as what I did.

5 MS KENNARD: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes. Okay. Well, that's really interesting. All right. Well, look, glad we caught you.

10 MR POTTS: Yes, I'm sorry I was late.

MR BELL: No, that's all right.

MS KENNARD: That's okay.

15

MR BELL: That's fine.

MR POTTS: Yes.

20 MR BELL: Thanks for coming by.

MR POTTS: No, it was good.

MR BELL: All right.

25

MR POTTS: Thanks for that.

MR BELL: Leave you to it.

30 MS KENNARD: Thanks.

MR POTTS: See you.

35 **HEARING CONCLUDED**

**[12.27pm]**