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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP

REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

HEARING CONDUCTED AT:

**ENGINEERS AUSTRALIA
712 MURRAY STREET
WEST PERTH**

DATE:

18 JULY 2007

MR J. BELL: Well, good morning ladies and gentlemen. My name is John Bell and I'm from the Allen Consulting Group and I've got Leonie Buktenica with me this morning, also from the Allen Consulting Group. As you know, we're doing a review of the standards under the Disability Discrimination Act, but those standards that
5 apply to public transport and accessibility to public transport. So let me say a little bit about these standards and the review.

The standards came into force in 2002 and the implementation period is roughly 30 years. Some of you might think that is rather a long period, but when you look at
10 some of the infrastructure that will need to be fixed, there's a fair bit of work to be done and there is also quite an extensive investment in existing infrastructure, for example, an ordinary bus tends to have a life of about 20 years, indeed, some buses last longer than 20 years.

They may be on their second or third engine and even their second or third set of seats, but they're what we call long-lived assets and so replacing a bus that meets the requirements of the DDA standards is a fairly expensive thing to do and although that might happen over time, it isn't going to happen quickly. Just to give you an idea, the additional cost for a bus to meet the standards is about \$100,000 and that's
20 on top of an existing 3 or 4 hundred thousand dollar investment. So we're talking about quite serious money.

When it comes to bus stops and things like that, a lot of local authorities don't even know how many bus stops they've got, although some of them seem to be out
25 counting them at the moment. So there are some quite difficult issues and that's before we start talking about the airlines and the train systems and I imagine here in Perth you probably also have some water transport and places - obviously like Sydney, water transport is quite important.

So these standards cover a wide variety of issues and the purpose of this - I should explain that we're getting input to this process through a number of channels, but at this stage these are what I call public consultations and we're inviting people just to come and talk to us. We're hoping that a lot of the people that come and talk to us will also produce a written submission. Those are due on August 24th. But we
35 appreciate that not everyone who has an interest in these standards is able to put the work in to preparing a written submission and so for those people these consultations provide an opportunity just to talk about some of the issues that are of concern.

Now, you'll notice I've got a microphone. We are recording this and I should explain why. There is a lot of interest in this review from people who, for one reason or another, are not able to get to one of these hearings. We're doing hearings in all the capital cities and in some regional centres. So that, for example, tomorrow we're going to Kalgoorlie. Yesterday I was in Launceston and one day last week I was in Dubbo. So we are, if you like, sampling some regional and rural areas where the
45 issues are more difficult for people who have mobility or sight impairment in terms of accessing public transport.

Now, we have a website and the words that are said today go up on the website and we've got some special software to make the words extra large and they are also designed so that, for example, people who have a sight impairment can use what's called "Screen Reader Software" to hear the words that are up on the website. So
5 those of us who don't have this problem might be surprised but you can use this software and you can actually hear what was said.

So that's the reason that we're recording this. But I want to stress that these discussions are really intended to be very informal. This isn't the Royal
10 Commission, or anything funny like that. It's really to have an exchange of views. Now, let me just say a little bit about some of the issues that we've encountered to date, because you wouldn't be surprised that we've already heard some quite difficult issues.

15 For example, some of you may have noticed that there are some very modern, high-tech wheelchairs. In fact, they are in the sort of four-wheel drive category and some of them are scooters. So they don't necessarily have four wheels, some of them have three. But some of them are quite heavy and when you put a reasonably heavy person in one of these chairs and try to load them into a maxi-taxi, there's a
20 problem because it seems that the hydraulics in the taxis were really only designed to take 300 kilos.

So there are some interesting difficulties around this issue. It won't surprise you – just to give you another example. Although we have now a number of buses around
25 Australia that have a ramp that enables a person in a wheelchair to motorise up into the bus, the problem is that the kerb isn't always terribly suitable as a starting point to go up that ramp. In other words, kerbs tend not to be flat. Sometimes there is no kerb, it's just straight onto the gravel surface. So there are quite a number of challenges, even if you've got a bus that is suitably fitted out to getting people in a
30 wheelchair into the bus.

Then some of the new scooters have a long wheel base and rather small wheels, so they tend - if the ramp is a bit steep, they get up the ramp and then they get grounded as they go over the top, or they get onto the bus and they find that they are unable to
35 do a 180-degree turn, which is required by the standards. So we obviously have to do some more thinking about scooters, because a scooter, of course, for somebody who has mobility impairment, is fantastic.

Some of these new scooters have quite big batteries, they can even get up to
40 20 kilometres an hour and you can charge off down to the shopping centre. I met somebody who took one out on the Pacific Highway, up near Coffs Harbour. Any of you who know the Pacific Highway would know this is a somewhat dangerous thing to do, because you're tangling with semi-trailers and things, but he has a big flag on the back of it so he's very, very visible and some flashing orange lights and he takes
45 it on the Pacific Highway. I'm not sure I would be game to do that.

So I'm just giving you these examples, because these are some of the sorts of issues that people have been telling us about and the only way that we're really going to

understand what sort of progress is being made in implementing these standards, is if people are happy to say a little bit about how they feel it's going. Now, we have a few people in this audience who I know really are only here to listen to what is said, but I'm hoping that some of you in the audience will be happy to say a little bit, even
5 if it's only what your organisation is doing, or what your concerns are in relation to the provision of public transport for people with disabilities.

MR HAYES: Can I just add something?

10 MR BELL: Yes.

MR HAYES: Could I ask that we have a run round the room just so we know who exactly is in the room?

15 MR BELL: I'm sure that's fine. Let me explain that we have a team over here who is here to record and transcribe what is said, but let me just get the microphone working and we'll do this. Just hang on a second. Would you like to say?

MR HAYES: Keith Hayes.

20

MR BELL: Keith, thanks.

MR MADSON: Greg Madson, Blind Citizens WA.

25 MS WEBB: Erika Webb, Blind Citizens WA.

MR BELL: That's not working by the way.

MR HAYES: Is it recording all right?

30

MR BELL: No, no, it's recording. It's fine.

MR MCLURE: Graham McClure

35 MR STARR: Kim Starr, for the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

MS HANING: Alice Haning, from Planning and Infrastructure.

MR KENNEDY: Michael Kennedy, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

40

MR HUTSON: Mark Hutson, Disability Services Commission.

MR BELL: Thanks.

45 MR HOOK: Mark Hook, from the WA Local Government Association.

MR MULROY: Mark Mulroy from the Ministerial Advisory Council.

MR OFFER: John Offer, City of Stirling.

MS BARR: Denise Barr, from Skippers Aviation.

5 MR BELL: So there you have it.

MR HAYES: Great, okay.

10 MR BELL: So let me explain that probably most of the people who are here from WA government agencies will be contributing, I imagine, to WA government submission to the inquiry. So they're interested to hear what people say about how well they're doing. Don't let that worry you. If you've concerns about the bus service, or about how well the local authority is looking after your needs, don't let that worry you, because everybody is entitled to have their say here. So let me just
15 ask the folk from Blind Citizens Australia, can I just ask, how do you find the local taxi arrangements here in Perth for people who are blind?

MR MADSON: On occasions – I'm actually not a group that actually is dealing with some of these problems. At times there are problems. We've had some issues
20 with guide dogs and people not allowing guide dogs to go in their taxis. That's being dealt with on an ongoing basis and it's more of an education thing than anything. A major concern of Blind Citizens Australia around Australia is being able to identify a taxi if you have an issue with a taxi or taxi driver to be able to identify that taxi. At the moment there is no way of doing that, and that would be things – like, quite often
25 when I have got someone with me, I have been told that, "As we walk up to a rank, three or four taxis will take off and drive away." There is no way I can identify those.

MR BELL: So these are really driver training issues.

30 MR MADSON: They are.

MR BELL: And I guess the taxi industry has quite a turnover of drivers.

35 MR MADSON: Yes.

MR BELL: So it is a challenge for the taxi industry to, you know, train new guys and get them to understand their obligations because these are not optional extras.

40 MR MADSON: No. Well, that's right. One of the things I didn't know about the taxi industry in WA – one of the other things is during peak hours it is very difficult to get a taxi now. If you are blind, you know, you really can't wander. You haven't got many choices and if it's late at night and you ring a taxi, you know, you would like to expect it would turn up in a reasonable time but apparently the taxi industry,
45 probably around Australia, is a best possible endeavour industry. It won't guarantee that you can get a taxi when you ring for one. So quite often there are large waiting periods, especially – mostly during those peak periods. Things are improving but, as

I said, when you are vulnerable and you are out late at night and that is the only choice you have got, well, you are just make basically vulnerable.

5 MR BELL: How about the airlines? Do the airlines - - -

MR HAYES: just a second ago talked about the driver behaviour but he also spoke about identification of taxis which is an infrastructure thing. It is not just training. So I think you need to qualify that component as well.

10 MR BELL: Yes. I must say identifying the taxi is a new issue that I haven't heard so far - and I am just starting to think about how this might be done. Obviously - - -

MR HAYES: It will be in the submission from Blind Citizens Australia.

15 MR BELL: Yes. If you were able to touch the taxi and you could read brail, which of course a lot of people who have visual impairment can, then you could read - you could pick up a number.

20 MR HAYES: Only about one per cent.

MR BELL: Only about one per cent. Okay. But that means you have to be able to touch the taxi to get the - and a taxi that drives off is not one that you can register in that way. Okay. That's an interesting question that I will think about.

25 MR HAYES: But even if you are inside a taxi and there's an issue, whatever the issue might be, or if you are in a taxi and someone refuses to take you because of a guide dog, there is no way of identifying that person whereas for somebody who is sighted, there are several ways of being able to do that.

30 MR BELL: That is true. Sorry. Did you have another point?

MR HAYES: I was merely going to say it is not only tactile. You would know what taxi number or you may be able to use the electronics to overcome that problem which might be far more effective than - - -

35

MR BELL: Yes.

MR HAYES: Just a chit in the dashboard that you push that gives the driver's name and number or the taxi number.

40

MR BELL: Yes.

MR HAYES: Can be a number of things of that nature - - -

45 MR BELL: No. I think you are right.

MR HAYES: - - - you could use. So let's not block ourselves in and it just has to be tactile numbers.

MR BELL: No, no. That was just my initial reaction but - - -

MR HAYES: I know, but I am saying we need to look a lot broader to solve solutions in using technology.

5

MR BELL: No. I like that suggestion. So let's just ask you a little bit about the airlines. How do you – Greg, how do you go on the airlines?

MR MADSON: I find the airlines okay. What I do find with all the airlines that I catch, that although there is a requirement as a courtesy to ring up and say you have got a guide dog coming, which I do do after booking the flight through the Web like other people do, that's all accessible - I can do that, no problem at all, but every time I turn up, no matter how many times I ring up and say I am coming with a guide dog – I ring up the day before - they never know that I have got a guide dog.

15

So it becomes a drama right from the start because, you know, an hour before the flight is going to go, all of a sudden they have got something knew. They have got a guide dog and nobody has told them about it, although you go through all the processes and from what I can understand there is no way that they can flag it on their database in any accurate way that the boarding staff are aware that there is a guide dog coming. I have tried different approaches and it all comes to the same result.

20

MS WEBB: It does seem that when the check-in staff work out that Greg is there with a guide dog, that it is almost like they have to re-arrange every single human on the plane just to put Greg and his dog together. I don't know why it should be that complicated, especially if he gives them advance notice.

25

MR BELL: Yes. I think Greg put his finger on it, though. The database doesn't have a ready means of recording this information and the same problem arises for people with wheelchairs, that – certainly, we heard yesterday about this same problem that the information is conveyed to the airline but the airline doesn't seem to have a ready means of recording it, such that the people at the check-in counter and the people who assign seats know about this in advance. Those are interesting issues and I hadn't picked it up in relation to the guide dogs but obviously if it is a problem for the wheelchair - - -

30

35

MR MADSON: Yes.

MR BELL: - - - it is also a problem for the guide - - -

40

MR MADSON: It is the same sort of problem. It becomes a drama because people are then put off – well, not offside, but they have got limited time to organise what they need to organise when all the processes are in place - - -

45

MR BELL: Yes.

MR MADSON: - - - if they know, but it just doesn't seem to filter down to the people who are actually arranging the plane and the boarding.

5 MR BELL: When the airline is organising the boarding of the plane, the people at the counter are under pressure to do this efficiently and get the plane off on time. So it is extra work for them.

10 MS WEBB: The pre-boarding seems to go quite well, in terms of they put out an announcement that anyone with children or people with disabilities are pre-boarded so that they are on and settled before everyone else gets on the plane. However, Qantas, who claim to have like a brail emergency procedure of the information card in brail, in 12 years of flying I have only seen it once.

15 MR BELL: Yes. Perhaps that comes back to the problem that not many people are reading brail, so they haven't – they rely on the announcement.

MS WEBB: Well, they offer the service. They tell you they offer the service but in 12 years of flying I have seen it once.

20 MR BELL: Yes.

MR MADSON: I would assume it would be a requirement - - -

25 MS WEBB: Every plane should have one.

MR MADSON: - - - that I would think that the Australian government would require that a flight carrier would have to make safety information available to all people.

30 MS WEBB: In all formats.

35 MR BELL: Yes, although I guess – we will actually be talking to Qantas later in the week in Sydney – that they probably feel that their announcement to some degree covers that. The trouble is that the announcement is accompanied with a video which - - -

40 MR MADSON: I must say they do, prior to doing that announcement, come up and explain where the certain safety features are and what they do before they go and - - -

MR BELL: Yes. Okay. Sorry. Did I pick up that there was somebody here from one of the airlines.

45 MR MCLURE: Skywest.

MR BELL: Did Skywest want to make any comment on this?

MR MCLURE: No

MR BELL: No.

MR MCLURE: at the moment.

5 MR BELL: Okay. That's all right. That is not a problem because this is more an issue for I think the bigger airlines. The smaller aircraft, as you may know, are exempt from some of the provisions of the DDA. Okay.

MR MADSON: Although it is a larger player than other states.

10

MR BELL: Yes. I realise that; yes. Okay.

MR MULROY: In terms of wheelchair accessibility for airlines - - -

15 MR BELL: Just hang on a second. Can I just get your name for the – again - - -

MR MULROY: Yes, Mike Mulroy.

MR BELL: Yes.

20

MR MULROY: In terms of the wheelchair accessibility for airlines, we have got a 15-year-old son who is quadriplegic and to get him onto the plane is quite a drama anyway because we have to switch to the smaller wheelchair that they provide which doesn't actually fit very well for the person with a disability. However, once we get
25 him onto the actual plane, ideally - somebody with quadriplegia, or whatever, to left them into the seat you need a fair amount of space. Unfortunately, the only seats that are available which give you that space are by emergency exits and people with disabilities aren't allowed to sit in those seats, and it seems to me that they should make some provision somewhere in the plane that the seating are either a little bit
30 wider, or whatever, so we can actually manage to get the person seated.

MR BELL: Thanks for that comment. I suppose the other issue for wheelchairs is that some of the wheelchairs can't be loaded into the cargo bay of aircraft.

35 MR BELL: Yes. I mean, aircraft such as the Dash 8, which I'm you – don't really carry a full size wheelchair, but there has been some work done to modify some of the bigger wheelchairs just to make them go into the hold. The airlines understandably are reluctant to lie them on their side because of their batteries, although I understand these days the batteries are sealed, so it shouldn't be quite such
40 a problem as it - - -

MR MULROY: Invariably the wheelchair comes off damaged. In a number of cases – when I speak to people in wheelchairs is the damage to the wheelchair in transit, which is obviously quite an issue.

45

MR BELL: Yes, I can understand that because of the way they're designed. Okay. Well, we've covered a few quite interesting issues here. Does anybody else want to make a comment? Can I get a comment from somebody else?

MR HAYES: It's Keith Hayes. I will come back to – basically, my concern is – I think there have been improvements over the last five years. The improvements have been slow, as you had indicated earlier, with a lot of the infrastructure, but one of my major concerns is the issue of exemptions that are granted. I find it difficult to
5 find justification for a lot of the exemptions that are given, and I believe we need to be a lot stronger on that to bring, especially governmental authorities, both state and local authorities to heel. You did mention earlier about bus stops. Well, a major component of our transport is the infrastructure getting you from your front door to the bus or train pick-up point, and I think that's a major one that needs a large
10 amount of work done on and tends to get neglected a fair bit.

We tend to focus on the buses and the trains and the transport will implement itself, but the actual public space area needs a lot of work done on it, and local authorities, I believe it was the officers – at the officer level, are pretty good at this, so I believe
15 there's a lot of work needing to be done at the elected members level. I don't think the commitment by elected members is strong enough to push it as a major priority. If they're deciding between putting in a facility for disabled and putting in a sporting arena, that tends to get a bigger priority very often, so a lot of work needs to be done, I believe, at that administrative level to recognise that there's a path of travel and we
20 need to look at all components of that path of travel, and I believe the infrastructure part of it tends to get overlooked, I think, to a large extent, and exemptions – I think we need to be a lot firmer on granting exemptions.

MR BELL: Do the local authorities in WA have access committees?
25

MR HAYES: They do. Well, some of them they do. There's an indication they should be having them. I don't know what proportion have them but certainly not – I don't think it's a majority have them, but even though you have access committees, access committees are advisory committees. They don't have any administrative
30 authority to direct, so then it comes down – their advice goes to officers and elected members and it's a matter of whether it gets taken up or adhered to.

MR BELL: On the exemptions, there are basically two classes of exemptions that you will find under the standards. One is a short-term exemption, so it's an
35 exemption that's granted to somebody for some specific time period. The other exemptions look like they're longer term, but they're not indefinite. They're not indefinite, but you're quite right. There have been a number of exemptions granted, some of them to particular carriers and companies, some to some local government players, some to state government agencies. Those are all – that's all true. I have to
40 say that if you get an exemption, it's very visible that you've asked from an exemption and it's been considered, and of course this is where the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission comes in, HREOC, because that's part of their job, and obviously as part of this review we will be looking quite carefully at the – at what HREOC has done here, and we will be talking with HREOC at some stage.
45

MR MADSON: Can I just – they used to – the Department of Planning and Infrastructure had a Disability Advisory Council for many years, for about seven years, and it was a great committee and it's one of the reasons why I think that WA is

very much ahead of the game – or was ahead of the game as far as accessible transport goes within Australia, but they chose to close it down several years ago and since then things have stagnated – or not stagnated, but slowed down significantly in the improvements that were being made. That was a great loss. That committee was
5 made up of people with varying disabilities that could advise on – as to how things were implemented and how things were used. Most of those were end users of the transport system, and of course that sort of input is invaluable.

MS WEBB: One of the issues with public transport, and this would be Australia
10 wide, is the different configurations of modes of transport. Like, there could be three or four types of different trains in WA, and in other states, and anything up to five or six different configurations of buses, which leads to confusion for people with disabilities, particularly people with vision impairments. You don't know what type of vehicle you're getting on until you're on it, and then you don't know where you
15 can sit safely.

MR BELL: Yes. I guess for buses where there are lots of them this is perhaps more difficult. I mean, as you know, the airlines have also got a range of different aircraft, but there, I think, perhaps there's often more help provided to actually get you into
20 your seat, which to some extent compensates for that. Do the bus drivers get out of their seat to help - - -

MS WEBB: No. Probably for safety reasons they don't get out of their seat, but it doesn't really help the person who's vision impaired or with any other sort of
25 intellectual disability, because, you know, a lot of the time it's not visible to the average person so they don't think to help you either.

MR MADSON: And consistency helps those people that actually do train mobility – you know, mobility training. You can train someone to catch a bus and things are
30 going to be in a certain place, but basically, you know, if it differs a great deal, it's very difficult to do that. You can only be taught overall general skills to be able – for mobility and try and use those to the best of your ability.

MS WEBB: For example, the difference between getting on a low floor bus and
35 getting on a bus with steps can have quite an impact on you if you don't know what type of vehicle has pulled up to pick you up.

MR BELL: Yes, that's an interesting thought. Yes, I hadn't considered that one, but I see – I can see exactly what you mean. That's a very big difference, isn't it?
40 Yes, I don't know what the answer to that one is. Let me just see whether anybody else wants to make a comment over here. Anybody else want to make a comment?

MR OFFER: Yes, John Offer, City of Stirling. I think that the point that the gentleman over there raised regarding bus stops is – it is a major item. The City of
45 Stirling is attempting to grips with that. We do have money in the budget for both a survey of the bus stops, to see where we are, as well as funds to put those bus stops to rights. Just in the City of Stirling there are between 1300 and 1400 bus stops. A minimum requirement to bring one up to standard at the minimum level would be

about two and a half thousand dollars, so we are talking of a vast sum of money. Across the network I think it's 30,000.

MR HOOK: 13,000.

5
MR OFFER: 13,000 in total. Having come from the UK, I would say that Perth – WA is a long way down the line. It's a lot better than most of the places that I've commuted within the UK and elsewhere within the world, but there is a long way to go. This year is a milestone in that there are certain thresholds that ought to be
10 achieved, which I don't think are going to be achieved. One of the reasons for that sadly is the fact that we're looking at federal regulations with a complete lack of funding from anywhere else, as far as I can see. I haven't been looking at this for long, but what I am doing is putting a briefing memo within the City of Stirling so that we become more aware of what the constraints and the obligations are and how
15 we should move forward. Also, we will be consulting with WALGA and getting a response to WALGA, which at the same time - - -

MR BELL: Western Australian Local Government Association.

20 MR OFFER: Yes, yes. We are a long way from that compliance, and we're being handicapped by the fact that the network is being extended and is not – everything that is being added to it is not necessarily compliant. Simple, basic bus stops which carry a two and a half thousand dollar liability are often not compliant, so every day local authorities in Perth are being given assets which are a cost liability, and
25 something needs to be done along those lines because that should not be happening at this stage.

MR BELL: Yes. Certainly new bus stops should be designed from scratch to be as – at least have a chance of being compliant rather than doing things that perhaps are
30 going to create problems.

MR HAYES: Just as a response, so you know I think it is a typical problem that has arisen there, that there was this year the local government were supposed to get all the bus stops all sorted out, it's indicated there it's a federal requirement, but you've
35 got the funding issue and that's always what comes up. The local government authority will say the state don't give us funding, the state say the feds don't give us funding and it's that inherent intergovernmental relationship that causes a degree of shifting responsibilities and shifting financial demands around and whilst that situation is there you're always going to get major difficulties in getting attention
40 done.

MR OFFER: If I could come back on that way. It's really a question to yourselves. I'm not aware of any state or federal funding available in Perth. Now, I might be entirely wrong, but I'm not aware of any. I am aware that Queensland transport
45 funds has got \$27 million, I believe it is, in the budget over the next 17 years towards this. That would go a long way in Perth towards meeting a lot of those obligations.

MR MADSON: There is funding available for bus stops.

MR BELL: Is that the state government?

MR MADSON: Yes, well, as far as I'm aware, as of last year I'm sure that I've
5 seen emails about the councils wanting to upgrade, you know, bring up to standard
their bus – they could apply for funding and footpaths.

MR HOOK: Yes, but the trouble there – it's Mark from I think the trouble there
is the level of funding. Each council can only have \$15,000 and you know when you
10 go into a full bus stop it depends on the level of whether it's just the tactile concrete,
or you're going into an Adshell type set up.

MR HAYES: But this is because people look at this provision as a provision for
disability rather than universal design and I think this is a big problem that we've
15 got. It's providing bus shelters for the public at large and bus facilities that are
convenient, comfortable and accessible and safe. It's not providing for people with
disabilities. You know, there's heaps of money available for that, each local
council's got money through its rate base to provide bus shelters. They're bus
shelters for the community, not for people with disabilities.

MR HOOK: Yes, I think the other issue facing WA at the moment is the change to
20 the Transperth railway line and the new Mandurah railway line, it's going to be
somewhere around 400 bus stops are going to be altered and changed and, of course,
under the DDA standards they'll have to comply 100 per cent from day 1. You
know, so that's one of another issue that we'll face – WA local government's trying
25 to meet the December 2007 deadline.

MR MADSON: Can I make a point about when something is designed and people
are giving input and it's brought up to standard and it is the standard, what I find
30 happens quite often – well, not quite often, but does happen is say you've designed,
let's say, a railway station, or a bus to the standards, there's been involvement from
disability consultants to design it in a way that's going to be useable for the whole
community and then it's up and running and then a year later down the track
someone decides, oh gee, there's a nice clear path of travel there, that's a great spot
35 for a bloody ticket machine as people walk past and it becomes an obstacle for
people.

An example would be the low floor buses, there's a great area at the front of the bus
for like you say to be able to give a turning circle for somebody in a wheelchair, for
40 babies in prams, people with guide dogs to give them access to the bus, part of the
travel from the – say inside of the bus to the door or from the door to the inside of the
bus and they decided to put the smart rider ticket machine right there at the door, in
my instance, I clip my shoulder on it every time, because the dog slips underneath it,
it doesn't go all the way down to the floor, which is a standard, actually. So I clip
45 my shoulder and I'm sure that there's probably a number of accidents with small
kids, or, you know, even people in wheelchairs that would be at head height.

MS WEBB: It's on an existing pole and it protrudes into your clear logical path of
travel.

MR MADSON: So there's something – another example would be a railway station that's got a clear path of travel that's designed and it's beginning and then someone comes along and again says, there's a great spot to put – well, not venue – to put information about timetables right there because it's nice and clear and everyone's walking past and there's a great spot to put it.

MS WEBB: Rubbish bin or other kind of street furniture.

MR BELL: Yes, some of the public telephones with the big plastic surrounds seem to be a problem.

MR MADSON: So once a station is designed, or whatever it happens to be is designed to the standard and it's signed off on, is there a continuing responsibility to keep that to standard?

MR BELL: Well, of course, the answer is yes. But, isn't this an awareness issue, a community awareness issue so that the people who come along with later pieces of hardware need to be understanding of these issues?

MR MADSON: Yes, that's exactly true.

MR HAYES: It's a regulatory issue surely?

MR BELL: Yes, you're right, it's just a bit hard to regulate for every possibility, perhaps.

MR HAYES: No, it's - regulate but you adhere to the standard. If it's a building code standard and they come in and modify the building, they have to modify it to still comply with the buildings code.

MR BELL: That's true, so I was thinking more about the hardware on the footpath.

MR HAYES: You know, your local authorities have a standard they require with 1.5 to 2 metre clearway on a footpath and then they come and stick things in it.

MR BELL: Let me just change the subject for a moment. One of the issues for people with a disability that we've come across elsewhere has been the availability of information on bus services that cater for people with wheelchairs, or people with visual impairment and even the timetables. How do you find the bus timetables?

MR MADSON: The PDF is something that seems to be favoured by a lot of people around the world, because obviously it's a program that people are familiar with, but it does have difficulties with people using screen readers. It is improving but unless people know how to properly format and release a PDF document, because you can lock these documents in certain ways and if you lock a document it means your screen reader can't get access to it and can't read it and it just comes up as a blank

document, so that's a problem and that can be overcome by making available alternatives, you know, in Word, or plain text for screen readers is a good one, because they're small documents.

5 That is a problem and access to the Web, online forms, or the search facilities, all those sort of things need to be made compliant to some sort of standard and there is a standard – well, there's government standards on how things electronically should be provided on the Web, but not too many government departments seem to even know that they exist, when pointed out to them and in that it actually says that PDF can be
10 problem for using screen readers for your basic document and even recently through the state here there's been a round of disability inclusion plans being done by local governments and local authorities and I don't know how many times that I've been presented – could you have a look at this and comment and it's a PDF document that's locked and I can't get access to. So I can comment on that and I do.

15 MR HAYES: I don't want to monopolise this side, but you know you're talking about information about buses and timetables, brings me to timetables, but I would bring two other dimensions there. Information about buses and where they're travelling, we have a clipper service here that does have an audible announcement
20 that does identify where it's travelling and stops it's stopping at, but the general bus system doesn't have that so you don't know where you are and with GPS systems and that now, that surely could be available to advise passengers generally, what part of the route they're at, what intersections they're at, etcetera. Also the difficulty of knowing what bus is coming down the road when you're standing at a stop and want
25 to stop it. That technology is available to let you know what number bus is approaching, but we don't have that.

MR BELL: This is where you have multiple buses stopping at a particular stop.

30 MR HAYES: Yes. So you know you've got information about buses as, you know, I think three dimensional, it's timetabling, it's about what buses are travelling along the road and where you are on the road. We are covered quite well in WA about route changes and alterations and problems with buses, Transport do put out emails on that and, you know, I think we do well there with trains and bus adjustments.

35 MR BELL: Okay, so we've covered that one. I'm just having a look around to see – anybody else want to make a comment?

40 MR MULROY: comment about public car parks public access, wheelchair access, whether it be shopping centres, whether it be public car parks.

MR BELL: Well, of course, we're looking at public transport but public car parks obviously there's - - -

45 MR BELL: - - - I think that's probably a grey area, but - - -

MR HAYES: It's really design issues in terms of the wheelchair accessible bays which are there. Invariably you've got a, you know, here bays you've got for parking and then they duly put a ramp by the wheelchair bay. Unfortunately, when you park the vehicle, the vehicle blocks the ramp, they don't actually put the ramp
5 where you can actually use it and it's really a design issue and invariably they put these ramps where once the vehicle is in it's blocking the ramp. You just look at some shopping centres when you go round sometimes.

MR BELL: Yes. I was talking to one of the transport carriers in another state and their training for some of the people who deal with these things was quite interesting.
10 To try to sensitize them to these sorts of problems. Because if you have never actually had to unload a wheelchair and use the ramp, then you don't understand what the issue is. Yes.

MR HAYES: Well, you know, I think a lot of the problems, your local authorities back 10/15 years ago had a lot of day staff that did all the infrastructure work out in the streetscape. Now so much of it is outsourced and those independent contractors, whilst you might write in the tender document that they have to be aware of
15 disability requirements, etcetera, they are not as familiar as a lot of government in-house staff would be. So, you do have that major problem, because the contractors are getting different workers all the time, coming in and pouring the concrete for them. It requires – I think that movement away from local governments doing work themselves and outsourcing has caused an element of difficulty in this area, to try
20 and get standards complied with.

MR BELL: Yes. Well, this comes back to this issue of public awareness and getting information out there to a wider group of people about this.
25

MR HAYES: I think it is more – it is not so much public awareness. I think it is economic rationalisation. Economic rationalisation about sourcing local government services.
30

MR BELL: I was thinking that, you know, if you are outsourcing but you have got some simple little explanation that goes with this, that these sorts of people can
35 understand as to what the issues are, then maybe that could help.

MR HAYES: They might do one in six months or something like that. You know?

MR BELL: Not interesting them.
40

MS WEBB: Or it is written but if it is written in a vague sort of way, it can lead to inconsistency. For example in the transport standards themselves, the terminology can be quite vague in terms of tactile ground surface indicators should be colour contrasted as opposed to, say, they should meet the CSIRO luminous contrast which specifies how much colour contrast there should be. You end up with, for example,
45 places like the City of Perth putting tactile ground surface indicators in grey on grey.

MR BELL: Yes.

MS WEBB: That would affect other councils who see the City of Perth's example and emulate it in their own councils.

5

MR BELL: These grey on grey tactile surfaces have been raised elsewhere. They really should be yellow but – or at least a sign - told that yellow is a preferred colour. Yes, we saw the same in Launceston so – and it is not immediately obvious. You know? Even I have to think about it before I realise why that makes sense, that grey on grey is not going to work very well but - - -

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MR HAYES: I suppose think, well, they are blind so they are just using the touch to identify where the hazard is, not knowing that these indicators go wider than people who are blind. People with low vision and - - -

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MR BELL: Yes.

MS WEBB: And the elderly.

20 MR HAYES: - - - the general public.

MR BELL: So, partially sighted people rely on them.

MR HAYES: Yes. Something that I was told when I was on the Disability Advisory Group for DPI was that when they put – started putting tactile ground surface indicators down on railway platforms, they discovered that people were standing behind them rather than close to the platform, because – I don't know. They probably didn't know what they were but it was a line that they could stand behind. That was interesting. It increased a little bit of safety on the platforms which, you know, it wasn't – they weren't designed for that reason.

25

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MR OFFER: I think one point to make is that, you know, we are talking about disability standards and disability access but it really impinges on everybody in a lot of ways. Every single family at some stage has a disabled person who might only be disabled by virtue of their age. One or two years old and needing a push chair or a pram in order to go around. Means that what is being provided and facilities that are being sought is going to help everybody in every family. There are different levels of disabilities and there are some disabilities which come and go and there are some which are inherent in growing up. So, you know, for people – there needs to be an awareness that things that are being done don't just benefit a small minority. It actually applies to everybody and to every family at some stage or in some way.

35

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MR BELL: Yes.

45 MR OFFER: So - - -

MR BELL: That is a good point. I mean, even when you are very small, you are in a pram so - - -

MR OFFER: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes.

5 MR MADSON: It is a point. That is the universal design approach. You know?

MR BELL: Yes. Which was the point made here earlier.

10 MR MADSON: Yes. Why take people with disabilities aside and say, okay, we are putting all this money into making things accessible for you when, you know, you quite rightly – the example is that it makes it accessible for the whole community.

MR BELL: Yes.

15 MR HAYES: That is why we are looking at disability transport standards.

MR MADSON: Yes. Why can't they just be transport standards?

MS WEBB: Yes.

20

MR BELL: I wanted to just explore one other area and that is cost. Is there a subsidy in WA for people who get to use, say, the wheel chair access taxi?

25 MR HAYES: Yes. 50 to 75 per cent subsidy, depending on the nature of the disability.

MR BELL: Is there a cap on that? In other words, a maximum amount you can get per trip?

30 MR MADSON: It is up to about – on – a further 50 per cent is up to a value of \$25 so the full fare would be \$50. After a \$50 fare, you pay the difference. So, that a voucher would be a \$25 voucher. If it is, say, \$60, you pay 35.

35 MR HAYES: The fare cap is \$50. The subsidy can vary depending on what level of subsidy you get. There is no limit on how many vouchers you use per year. I know some of the states have a limit on the number of vouchers per year.

MS WEBB: To give you an idea of how far you can go on \$25, it is about 13 Ks from the city.

40

MR BELL: It is not very far. So, this is an issue for people who live around the fringes of the city or in nearby rural areas where the subsidy really doesn't go very far at all.

45 MR MADSON: The alternatives to that are people like HAC, People Who Care. They have limits on the amount of journeys that you can do within the week compared to what they are. They have got a criteria as to whether they are

educational, whether they are recreational or whether they are hospital needs. So, that they do provide a service. It is a reduced cost but it is limited.

5 MS WEBB: It can only take about two a week.

MR MADSON: It is limited to how many times you can use it. So, you can't get sick any more than once a week.

10 MR BELL: What about – are school buses allowed to take other passengers in Western Australia?

MR MADSON: As far as public transport goes, I don't know.

15 MR HAYES: No, not if there is a designated school bus, no.

MR BELL: I thought that might be the case.

MR HOOK: If it is a normal public transport bus, yes.

20 MR HAYES: No, you can't go on a school bus.

MR BELL: You can't go on a school bus. Because they are designated.

25 MS WEBB:

MR MADSON: No, no. I suppose. If your child is on the bus, I believe the carer can go with you but if you are person with a disability and that bus goes past and you want to go to the shopping centre, no.

30 MS WEBB: Okay..

MR MADSON: Yes. No, general public can't. That is the same in the rural areas for people that are farmers. If they want to ride in with their child, they have to prove that they are there, caring for the child.

35 MR BELL: Yes. I mean, this is – for people in rural areas with disabilities, the school bus might have provided an option. The trouble is that school buses are exempt from the standards so they tend not to be terribly accessible anyway but – okay.

40 MR HAYES: Why would they be exempt?

MR BELL: Good question.

MR MADSON: The cost fee.

5 MR HAYES: Why? What is the cost fee? Is it implying that people with disabilities don't go to school? Kids with disabilities don't go to school? Of course they don't. They don't go to mainstream schools, no. It is a silly situation.

MR BELL: So, how do kids with a disability get to school?

10

MR HAYES: They lock them away and keep in institutions and all this stuff. You know? I am just being the devil's advocate. I think it is – you know, cost is the only rationale and that is not a rationale. That is an excuse. You know, school – getting people – kids with disabilities to school is so crucial and they – they should – they are a typical one that should not be exempt.

15

MR MADSON: Well, I suppose things with – when you do have a disability is isolation. You are being – you are constantly being isolated from the rest of society because of cost or whatever reason. You know? For someone with a disability, a child with a disability, to be able to travel to school with your school friends is very powerful yet most are denied that.

20

MR BELL: Okay, well look, I – where's Leonie? Leonie, is there anything I haven't covered that you can think of, because I think I've covered most of the issues? I even got a good response on the school bus issue. That was a surprise.

25

MS BUKTENICA: No

MR BELL: No, no, that's fine.

30

MR HAYES: The only other thing, you know, I wanted to pick up. I mentioned earlier the issue about buses not having audible announcements on during their travel. Our train system here have audible announcements generally through the travel, letting you know what station you come to and that's quite a bonus. However, when you pull into the central station it doesn't tell you what platforms you land on and, you know, you could be getting on the wrong side – wrong platform that - you think you're at the east end and you're at the west end and things of that nature. It can cause a major problem if you start heading off in a direction and you finish off off the end of the platform or somewhere.

35

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This is purely again a technology issue, you know. Okay, they say the drivers can't always make the announcement, but you can do it without drivers making the announcements. It can be GPS stuff doing that and, you know, because the technology is in the train already to tell you that you're stopping at Burswood, or whatever, it could surely tell you that you're stopping at Perth central, platform 2, you know, and it's there. You know, that to me is just a little bit of an extension of what's there, a little twig, but not doing it.

45

Been requested for years and years and not doing it and then – so, you know, the issue we find frustrating is that we get partway but people won't continue the journey, they won't extend it across and use technology and that. They try and use lots of excuses all the time to get out of this situation. You know, like, blame it on
5 the drivers, blame it on the drivers, but there are ways of getting around that.

MS WEBB: I agree with that because the technology that's actually used in Europe it's and it tells you exactly what platform you're getting off, because I went over there and our trains come from Europe, they're made in Europe. So what's the
10 problem? I don't actually understand that.

MR BELL: I've had the same experience in Kyoto I obviously don't speak Japanese but when I get on the bus the bus driver turns a little switch and so the sign comes up in not only the Japanese characters, which are called Kunchi, but in our
15 characters which they call Romaji. Firstly, I can read the sign, but there's also an announcement in Japanese and English to say what the name of the next stop is and absolutely essential if you're navigating around Kyoto, I can tell you, because it's quite – once you get out of the central part of Kyoto it's difficult to know quite where you are. So I agree with you this technology is quite simple.

20 MR BELL: Yes, it is and it's not just – this is your point, it's not just for people with a vision impairment or whatever, in this case it's actually useful for tourists.

MR MADSON: The same approach could be used here, you know, well mobile
25 phones can do so many things these days. The user could have the access that they needed to access whatever information and you could use something like RFD tags, say the Perth station – around Perth station, so when you walked into the station my mobile phone, for instance, talks to me. Now, there's no reason why it couldn't pick up an RFD tag that as I walk in the station it says Perth station, you know, it could
30 even say the next train is arriving at such and such.

That sort of stuff is reasonably cheap these days but it becomes expensive if you start to try and design the M-user equipment for, you know, everybody, whereas most
35 people with a disability already have some technology that they need to access information, it just needs to link that to the information being provided. But, I mean, the information is not provided at the moment and something like that - again, could be somebody who's from Japan walking down the Hay Street mall, when as they're walking down RFD tags would tell them that they're in the Hay Street mall and, you know, this is a shopping precinct and the shops are open from such and such to such
40 and such. Information like that is – it's happening around the world now and we're in a position to be able to do it but it hasn't happened here yet.

MR BELL: Okay, well - - -

MR HAYES: Can I ask another question about your tours around Australia? Has anybody raised the issue about the potential introduction of electronic vehicles and electronic cars and vehicles on the roads?

5 MR BELL: You mean electric cars which are silent?

MR HAYES: Yes.

MR BELL: Yes, I know the problem, but nobody has raised it.

10

MR HAYES: Well, it's being raised now. The issue that I very much see and nobody in Australia is putting any attention to it, both the government at service provision level, or at, obviously motor vehicle manufacturing level, which would have to be international. It's going to become a problem, when you have electronic cars on the road that you can't hear, especially when they're mixed in amongst the internal combustion motors, I'll be at the edge of the road, hear a gap, there's a gap, I walk across and there can be an electric car right there. The cars have to be – there has to be something done about making them more identifiable. If not, my access as a pedestrian across roads and using transport systems, will be impeded dramatically and I'll just simply not go out in the street, I'll stay at home and lock myself away.

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I don't think they have to be made identifiable by just simply having a bell on the front of them, or some silly thing like that, but there's other ways of doing that and I think we really need, at this level and perhaps through your – I know it's strictly not on the standard at the moment, but it's something that needs to be picked up and started talking about now, because the next 20 years when they're going to be on the road in numbers, it's too late to think about it in 20 years time.

25

MR BELL: Yes, I think we've already introduced some requirements. For example, electric forklifts have to have certain devices on them because exactly the same problem, that they're silent. But I'm sure you're right, nobody has raised this issue about electric cars yet and we are starting to see some now. I mean, I saw one this morning. So you have some here.

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MR MADSON: It's a good point that, you know, there's very little point in creating an accessible bus that does everything that you need it to for you to get to where you want to go, if you can't cross the road to get to the bus stop.

35

MR BELL: Well, let me just ask you one final thing? What do you think would be the one thing that would encourage more people with disabilities to use public transport?

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MS WEBB: Making it a seamless journey, without any barriers. You know, it's great if you can catch say a low floor bus to get you to wherever you need to go, to a train station, but if you have difficulty entering the train station, or if the train itself isn't which isn't the case here, the trains here are quite good, but, you know, a seamless journey, you know, even getting from point A to point B, that's it, a seamless journey.

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MR BELL: I think that's a really interesting response, because, you know, we've looked at all these little bits and pieces of it, but we haven't thought about the entire journey and I think that's - - -

5 MR MADSON: Some coordination would be good too. I don't know how many examples I've heard from – not people with disabilities, but all sorts of people that it's great to be able to jump on a train here in Perth, maybe go up the Joondalup line and you're up there in whatever it takes, half an hour, or whatever and as you get into the station your bus pulls away and you've got to wait an hour and a half for the next
10 one to come. It makes the advantage that you've just had, you know, falls, you know, it just melts away.

MS WEBB: Can I ask a final question? What terms are there in terms of the standards for enforcement?

15 MR BELL: Well, there are provisions for enforcement and HREOC has actually embarked upon some enforcement action. We will have to wait and see, because we're coming to the first review point and I think that there will be some thought given to that issue after the review. It may be that enforcement is not necessarily the
20 right focus, it may be that we need to look at better ways of funding some of this activity. So for example, but I'm sure this isn't going to happen, but for HREOC to go round prosecuting councils for not having got 25 per cent of their crossings fixed, is probably not very productive in terms of getting results. So I think that there's greater interest in trying to find ways to progress this matter without having to resort
25 to that. But, there have been some cases.

MR MADSON: Can I make a point, that you might not be aware of, that might explain why our turnout here is possibly not as much as it should be. At the beginning of the year the West Australian government asked all local governments
30 and government departments to put together a disability inclusion plan to say what's been going on since the beginning of the year as all these disability inclusion plans have been developed and put out to people with disabilities for comment and whatever and there's been a bit of a burn-out of comment from people with disabilities, they just had – you know, I, myself, have been getting three or four or
35 five a week, you know, and these things are quite extensive and you get to a point where you're just given that, that's not my job as well, I do this in a voluntary capacity and I've got a full-time job. A lot of people just got to the point, you know, about a month ago, or previous that they just couldn't comment any more on these things, there were just too many of them going on. So that might be an explanation.
40

MR BELL: No, we do understand that the West Australian government has initiated some work here and that, we hope, will obviously contribute to, in the longer term, greater outcomes on the standards, so just let me - - -

45 MR MADSON: You see, the idea behind it again is taking people with disability outside of the rest of the community and saying, we need to have something developed to include you. I mean the whole point of it, you know, even with the disability inclusion plan it excludes – well, it's excluding you from society.

MR BELL: Just let me pick up a comment from here.

MR HUTSON: It's Mark Hutson. Look, it's an important point that Greg raises and I guess this is really just a comment. The Commission is going to enter into
5 partnership, or has entered into partnership with people with disabilities and the
Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability, and we're looking at doing a
consultation to form a submission to the review of the DDA standards. So Greg
there's going to be another one, but it's going to be a little bit different to the access
inclusion.

10 MR MADSON: Okay.

MR BELL: Okay, thank you very much for that comment. Well, now, just let me
check whether there's anybody with a final comment, or question they want to raise?
15 No? If not, two things. Firstly, there's some morning tea outside and secondly,
thank you very much all of you for coming. We appreciate you're all busy people
with other things to do, but we are very grateful you've come along this morning and
helped to inform this process. So please do feel free to get a cup of tea and coffee
and we'll help some of our colleagues here to do that. But, really good to see you,
20 thank you very much.

AT 10.29 am THE MEETING ADJOURNED