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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 Website: www.auscript.com.au

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP

REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

HEARING CONDUCTED AT: NORTH PARRAMATTA

DATE: THURSDAY, 19 JULY 2007

MS M. O'LOUGHLIN (Chair): My name is Mary-Ann O'Loughlin from the Allen Consulting Group and I would like to introduce, in a sec, Kathleen Forester, who is just down the back, from the Allen Consulting Group. We have got the responsibility of conducting this review of the Disability Standards for Accessible
5 Public Transport. I would also welcome you all, people who have made the time and the trouble to get here and thank you for very much. We're conducting the review on behalf of the Australian Government., Minister for Transport and Regional Services and I would like to also welcome Derek Tarry, who has come from the department, to be here to listen to the proceedings.

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It's the first review of the Standards since they were implemented in 2002, which I think is quite exciting to be able to be in the first review. So we want to assess against the requirements of the Standards if there has been progress but also are there needs for amendments, being mindful that there is a compliance timetable of over 30
15 years. We are not going to assess whether there should be standards because we figure that debate is well and truly over now but it is how effective the existing Standards have been in improving accessibility. We have got for the review a website and we have released an Issues paper and we have advertised for submissions. This is one of a set of hearings being conducted around the country, all capital cities and seven regional centres.

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The opportunity is given to people to come, talk to us, we hope fairly informally, not debate but to present us with their evidence and experience of the Standards and how effective they have been. I would also like to welcome Richard Langereis, who is
25 from the New South Wales Ministry of Transport, from Principal Policy Officer Accessible Transport, and he will also be here to note the Rail Corp's interests, among others. We are transcribing the events today and Mark over here is taking down the transcript, which is why there are microphones everywhere and we put up all the transcripts on to the website. The timetable is that we are accepting written
30 submissions through till 24 August and we then sort of beaver away, pulling together our draft report which will be released 15 October.

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There is then about a month for people to make comments on that draft report, which then goes in a final report to the Minister and I think it is 15 December. Anyway, it's
35 very close to when Santa comes. We will be very glad to see Santa and I am sure to deliver the report. I would also like to say that we have got a carer, Maddy, down the back of the room, who is here to help any and all of us, I'm sure, and like people might need a cup of tea or a glass of water or whatever it is that people might need from Maddy. If you just want to get Maddy's attention or my attention and we can
40 arrange that. We have tea and coffee, as you see. We have water and then we will have morning and afternoon tea provided.

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In case people don't know, to go to the toilets it's just straight down that corridor to the right and then to the left. Very easy to get to and accessible. I think that's it. I
45 just want to pause and say has anyone got any questions before we hear from our first participant? Thanks Kathleen. We have an Auslan interpreter, if anybody needs assistance, let us know.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Can I answer that question? I mean for a start, is there going to be a change, I can't answer that question. I really don't know. We give the report to the Minister. That's our role and our job. Whoever the Minister is, exactly. The important thing I guess in that context it's a legislation. It has a five year review
5 period. So it's in the legislation that we have this review. So I am sure any Minister from any side of the divide will be responsive to the review. Yes. It will have to, exactly. That's almost like saying the government doesn't matter that much but we won't go there. Thank you very much. Can I welcome as our first participant, Digby Hughes, from People with Disability Australia. Thank you, Digby.

10 MR D. HUGHES: Thank you. Thank you very much. I very much welcome the chance to come along here and talk about the review of the Accessible Transport Standards. I believe it is almost fitting that PDW are the first people to address here today because five years when the Standards came in HERIOC and PWD got
15 together to promote the launch and we actually had an accessible bus coming along to PWD from HERIOC and we had a bit of a party to celebrate what we thought was a marvellous event and we still think it's a marvellous event, the Standards. We believe the Standards have assisted in bringing about many positive changes for people with disability around Australia. There is little doubt that transport is far
20 more accessible today than it was five years ago and the Standards have been largely instrumental in driving that, we believe.

I will limit my comments largely to New South Wales but with just a proviso with a comment about trams which I gather you might have heard already in Victoria.
25 Access on trams to me in my visits to Victoria seems inordinately limited and I think there is far more work to be done down there. In New South Wales we have had some very good results mixed with I would say some very average results. I will preface by saying all the figures I am quoting on percentages are accurate as at
30 1 December 2006. Some of the very good results include State Transit buses. 41.5 per cent of the fleet are accessible. Accessible stations in the Country Link area have 93 per cent accessible rates. They are very good figures and way above what is required at this stage of the Standards.

35 There still however are some very poor areas - wheelchair accessible taxis in parts of Sydney and New South Wales in particular and I will return to them later. State buses, as I said, 41.5 per cent accessible. That is the number of buses and does not equate to the number of accessible routes or the routes themselves. In the last few days I have done a bit of trawling through some of the website and just having a look
40 at some of the routes that are available for people in Sydney to get them around to fairly important parts of Sydney. The E68, a morning service that goes from North Balgowlah to Wynyard, one out of six is accessible. The 253 inbound from Lane Cove to the Queen Victoria Building, again very important service getting people into the heart of the city, five out of the services are accessible. Five out of 14 are accessible but none of the services after 9 am are accessible.

45 So if you are going into work it's okay but if you are going in afterwards, after 9 o'clock, then you are in trouble if you're in a wheelchair. The 508 Circular Quay to Drummoyne, only one pm service and that is not accessible. The 628 Epping to Carlingford and Epping loop, there are 28 services on that each day, each work day,

none of accessible according to the website. The X15 Wynyard to Eastwood, one accessible service out of five. The 309 Circular Quay to Port Botany, 74 services, 16 are accessible. A peculiar little one I found too, the 326 Circular Quay to Bondi Junction and return. So in the morning Bondi Junction to Circular Quay there are 26 services. Two of them are accessible. So that is good, you people can get to work. But in the afternoon return service, the 326 Circular Quay to Bondi Junction, there are 27 services but none of them are marked down as being accessible. So people can get to work in the morning but they can't get home if that is the service that they need.

We still hear a number of stories of accessible buses on routes, timetable buses, that are not replaced by accessible buses when the accessible bus breaks down. That is the reasoning that we have been told by the Ministry of Transport that we cannot have a larger number of timetable routes, that you can't have – I understand you can't have 41.5 per cent of the timetable routes but I would have thought 30 per cent of the timetable routes should be the sort of benchmark we should be aiming for at this stage. 41.5 per cent of the buses being accessible. Private buses however were a different story. 23 per cent of the fleet is accessible. I would just like to know which 23 per cent that is.

Some examples again I found in the last few days. Forest Coaches, they run a service, a 270, but only on a Saturday is it timetabled as being accessible. Monday to Friday, according to their timetable, according to what they advertise, there are no timetable accessible routes. A 276 that operates from Terrey Hills to Warringah Mall. Again a very important service to get people to local shops, so they can conduct their business and work. But none of those are advertised as accessible. In regional areas the story varies very widely. Edwards Coaches in Armidale advertise on their website that "our fleet of modern, low-floor air-conditioned city buses are used extensively on our regular services. Please contact our office before making your travel plans to ensure that one of our stepless entry buses is operating on the route you wish to use."

In other words they have none publicly timetabled. So a person who needs to use a wheelchair-accessible bus has to contact Edwards and say can I have one on that particular service on that particular day. On Westbus none are advertised on their website as being accessible. Blue Mountain Buses advertise on their website: "Please contact our depots" and they list the three "between the hours of 9 am and 4.30 pm Monday to Friday for the availability of special wheelchair accessible buses." Again, that is very limiting if on a Saturday morning you decide you want to go out. You have got no way of contacting them even to find out if there will be an accessible bus on the route that you wish. Accessible buses should be timetabled, they should be regular and they should be consistently operating.

While I was also looking through that I noticed the information is not consistent and again, that could be confusing for some people with disability. On the 131 500 website the information re accessibility does not always, is not consistently across the site. For the majority of the State buses a number one means the service is accessible and that's fairly easy to follow. But then the one and an asterisk on the non-State transit buses, non-State government buses does not mean it's accessible.

That could mean a different thing. It could mean it is operating on a different route, it doesn't pick up passengers at certain times, it doesn't take school students at certain times. I believe it is vital that the government actually ensure that the information available to people is consistent.

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I will briefly talk about trains. Again, according to 1 December 2006, there's a claim that 100 per cent accessible for City Rail metro carriages. But with the proviso all City Rail metropolitan and CountryLink carriages are accessible utilising manually deployed ramps and direct assistance. That is not accessible on the way I read
10 accessible. So a person who uses a wheelchair has to contact the station beforehand, tell the station they are going to be there, they will need assistance to get on a certain train, they have to have the station they are going to in the future, when they are going to hop off the train. They have got to be contacted and again the guard be ready to put the ramp down. That is not an independent travel means for the person
15 with a disability.

I do not believe in this day and age it should be impossible for us to have trains that pull into stations and to have, you know, little platforms that go straight out and enable people to head off the trains. It is not only not independent travel. It is also
20 fraught with danger. It is not unknown and the stories are diminishing and that is a good thing. But it is not unknown for people to be missed by the guards and to continue travelling on the train and to continue to travel and travel and travel on the train. That again should never occur but, as I said, at least those stories are becoming less regular.

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Now on to wheelchair taxis. People with disabilities support universal design in taxis. We have had that argument with the government, different governments around Australia for umpteen years and will continue to have that argument. They do operate in other parts of the world and we see no reason why they cannot operate
30 in Sydney and in New South Wales. The biggest plus, one of the biggest pluses for that is to allow the people who use wheelchairs to catch a cab the way the majority of the population, the way most cabs are caught, my hailing them. Most people do not catch cabs by ringing and booking. Most cab fares are at the rank and by hailing. I understand even today, later today, you will hear stories of people in wheelchairs,
35 who use wheelchairs, approaching cabs in the street and the cabbie refusing to take them.

The KPI for wheelchair taxis is equivalent pick-up times. That is inordinately problematic. When I book a cab I don't, you know, it will take a lot of investigation,
40 a lot of effort for the person booking the cab to know if the pick-up time is equivalent. Is 2 o'clock on a Saturday morning, if I have to wait 10 minutes for a cab if I am in a wheelchair, is that the equivalent time that anybody else is waiting for a cab. The person in the wheelchair would never know that information freely and easily. If they do have problems then the question is who do they take action
45 against. That's – again I don't know the answer to that. Do they take action against the company, the cab company? Do they take action against the particular driver who does actually turn up, even if it is an hour late?

Do they take action against the owner of the cab because a lot of the cabs have bailee drivers or do they take action against the network or do they take action against the State Government who regulates it. I am not sure who they take action against.

5 Although the service has improved tremendously in recent years, and I will again give credit to the Minister of Transport for their work there, we still regularly hear stories of people with disability waiting for wheelchair taxis that just do not appear. There are also massive black holes around New South Wales for wheelchair taxis. Some regional areas have one or none available. When it is none, it is really
10 problematic but one is also very problematic. Recent government changes, Federal government changes to Workforce Participation also caused issues here because they have impacted on the availability of often the only wheelchair taxi in small regions. That wheelchair taxi is already busy doing school runs before 10 o'clock. The driver has his set run, he knows he picks up people from 7 till 10. He knows who he picks
15 up, when he picks them up and where he takes them.

They are set jobs every day of the week. All of a sudden to have people with disability being expected to go into the workforce and to use again a very, a limited
20 resource. However, there are some good areas with wheelchair taxis. These have been available in the Wheelchair Taxi Taskforce and also in a report that was done by SCIA a number of years ago. In the very good areas for wheelchair taxis are largely coastal retirement places, Port Macquarie, Forster, Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Nowra. They have very, very good numbers of wheelchair taxis. I see people
25 nodding in the audience. A good sign. They have very good numbers because the market there has shown that there is people up there who are running the businesses, know that they have a market and are now answering their market.

Their market is older, people who are retired, who often have mobility issues. That
30 leads me to probably my final point I suppose and that is there is a need for more work to be happening. Australia has an aging population. There is a direct correlation between aging and disability. The over-85s are the fastest growing population group in our country and the over-65s are the second-fastest population group growing in our country. We need to put in more effort to ensure that in the
35 future our transport is accessible to the people who will need it. People these days do not all go and retire and go and live in retirement villages. People like living within their community, within the society in which they have grown up, where they have raised their children, where their children have gone to school, where they have connections.

40 Aging in place I think is one of the terms for it. For that to occur, and there are massive savings to government when that occurs, people going into aged care use more resources. People staying at home are a big financial plus to the Federal and State governments. We need to have the accessible transport as a cornerstone for that to occur. Thank you.

45 MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks very much, Digby, for that. Thank you as well for sort of giving a review of the issues but also identifying some places where amendments could be made. So I appreciate that. Digby did confess at the beginning that he thought perhaps he wouldn't quite be the 45 minutes, which is fine.

We have allowed longer time than probably many people may wish to use but just in case people did need 45 minutes. We have our next person is due at 10 to 10. So we have 25 minutes if people wanted to get a cup of tea or a cup of coffee.

5 [CONVERSATION FROM FLOOR]

MS O'LOUGHLIN: It's strange. I am not really sure. I was wondering that myself but I think informally I am sure if Digby would be happy for it. I am just saying, would you answer some questions and I said I think informally I am sure you would be happy. Yes.

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[CONVERSATION FROM FLOOR]

15 **ADJOURNED AT 9.47 AM**

RESUMED AT 9.52 AM

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MS O'LOUGHLIN: We will begin our next session. I would like to welcome Greg Killeen here, who is going to make some comments to the hearing. We need a lot of quiet for this session because Greg has a soft voice and so I would ask everyone to be particularly quiet in this session so that everybody can hear Greg. The transcriber can hear Greg through the microphone but it is not an amplifying mike. So thanks very much for your cooperation there. Just to welcome Greg and say, Greg, we have from the Ministry, the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, we have Derek Tarry here, who is sitting in all the hearings today. We also have Richard Langereis from the New South Wales Ministry of Public Transport. Mark is our transcriber. I am not sure if you met Maddy, who is up the back, who is the carer that we have today who can get any assistance for anybody. Welcome again and I will turn it over to you and thank you very much.

30

MR G. KILLEEN: Okay. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present today. Just for the record, I was only made aware that my name was on the list to present today last night. So I have thrown a few things together and to hopefully have some positive input into the review. I have written some stuff, so I might read to that. I would firstly like to mention that I have had a disability quite some time, almost 30 years now, and I have experience of using the increasing number of accessible types of modes of transport including aeroplanes, buses, taxis, ferries, monorail, trams, light rail, trains, also rental vehicles and also had the opportunity to go on a cruise ship and the Spirit of Tasmania. So I am quite au fait with the different types and modes of transport that are around.

40

I really appreciate the increasing number of accessible options there are for transport, inclusive for people with disabilities. I will try to address the issues within the terms of reference of the review, which is basically looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of the Transport Standards and in particular if the five-year compliance deadline has or will be met. In regard to the compliance timetable, although I

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appreciate and understand that there are planning and costs associated with making transport facilities compliant in stages prior to 2032, it is a long time to wait for a bus. I would also like to say that all transport providers and operators need to be held accountable to ensure that they are not only meeting their scheduled compliance
5 dates but their transport conveyances are compliant with the Transport Standards.

In particular regarding the wheelchair envelope, which is a measurement of 1300 millimetres long, 800 millimetres wide and 1410 millimetres high that must be provided in a three-dimensional space as per the Accessible Transport Standards, to
10 ensure that the implementation of any system such as ticketing or information provision is available and accessible for people with disabilities. The New South Wales Ministry of Transport is increasing the number of accessible taxis and accessible buses. However, there are a number of issues that are impacting on the effectiveness and the efficiency of these. In regard to the buses, as I understand it,
15 the roll out of accessible buses by State Transit is ahead of its compliance schedule.

Until the public fleet is 100 per cent accessible, then the accessible buses require appropriate and functional scheduling and timetabling. Providing one accessible bus at 9 am and then the next one at 4 pm is not quite very accessible when you need to
20 be at different places at different times. Also when an accessible bus is scheduled and timetabled, it is essential that there is a fail-safe system in place if a scheduled and timetabled accessible bus breaks down to ensure that it is replaced by an accessible bus. I understand that this might be difficult during peak periods but in non-peak periods a system could be implemented that all bus breakdowns are
25 replaced with accessible buses. This would take out the guesswork with checking to see whether the bus that has broken down was actually accessible and scheduled to be accessible.

I have had first-hand experience with this. The New South Wales Ministry of
30 Transport has also implemented a number of cashless prepaid bus services and of my experience, the one that I have used was 333 out at Bondi to Circular Quay and they are about to increase more between now and December this year. However, not all ticket premises and agencies are actually wheelchair accessible or may not be within a close proximity of where the bus stop is that you want to catch the bus or near
35 where you actually live, creating a ticketing system that I believe is non-compliant with the Transport Standards and discriminatory against people with disabilities. I am not sure that the bus route where I live, 309, runs from Port Botany where the bus depot is out to Circular Quay and that is deemed to becoming cashless, as a prepayer.

I don't know whether it means that all buses will be cashless on that bus route or a certain amount but if it is a scheduled accessible bus and it is prepaid my local agency that sells the tickets is not accessible. So I possibly expect a solution might be that if you can't buy a ticket you should be provided with free access on to the buses. In regard to the taxis, the wheelchair accessible taxis, services in Sydney, I
40 would just like to give you a bit of a background to come to the point we are at now. The accessible buses commenced in 1981 in Sydney. Each vehicle had a two wheelchair capacity until the introduction of the London taxi, which had a one-wheelchair capacity. But these are no longer in existence. The evolution of the wheelchair accessible taxi in Sydney has seen numerous government and industry

policies, procedures and incentives schemes to not only get – I will call them WATs, Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, not only to get the WATs on the road but to increase their numbers and to have the drivers actually pick up people with disabilities.

5 In 1998 there were approximately 130 WATs operating in Sydney. Carl Scully, the then New South Wales Transport Minister, tried to establish 10 per cent of the taxi fleet as being accessible prior to the Sydney 2000 Olympics and Para Olympics by introducing or offering 20 WATs plates, licence plates per month over 20 months. That would have established 550 accessible taxis in Sydney. Unfortunately, due to
10 the unfavourable licence requirements, there was a very slow and low take-up of the WAT licences, this being that the WATs had to have two wheelchair capacity and operating 20 hours a day with a licence fee of \$6000 a year over six years.

Changes were made to the licence requirements, resulting in WATs still requiring a
15 two-wheelchair capacity but with a minimum of operating hours of 10 hours a day and with the licence fee of \$1000 a year. That seemed to assist in getting more drivers taking up wheelchair accessible taxis. After the Transport Standards were implemented in 2002 the Ministry of Transport changed the WAT licence requirements to a minimum of one-wheelchair capacity for a number of the licences.
20 It was done on the basis that there were numerous WATs with two-wheelchair capacity and the fact that approximately 90 per cent of WAT bookings are for only one person using a wheelchair.

So looking at the mix of the cabs, two chair capacity compared to one chair capacity.
25 Now there is a continuing number of different makes, models and conversions of vehicles that have been approved by the New South Wales Ministry of Transport to operate as WATs and I question their compliance in regard to the wheelchair envelope and the certification registration and licensing process. There are many people with disabilities who are using wheelchairs that now find themselves unable
30 to access the increasing number of these WATs in question. Although the New South Wales Ministry of Transport has an accessible transport action plan, it is expected to provide and/or approve accessible public transport, I question what systems are in place to ensure that transport operators and providers operate using the Transport Standards in regard to approving vehicles to meet, that actually meet the
35 standards.

Does that make sense? If the transport providers and operators are not held
accountable then the Transport Standards are not really worth the paper they are
written on. The fact is that an increasing number of these taxis, that have a
40 wheelchair envelope that is so small that it impacts on the compliance timetable in regard to December 2007 of having equal response times. Currently people are experiencing that the taxi might turn up within the acceptable response time only to have the vehicle turn away because you actually can't get in it. This is not only impacting on the passenger and the taxi driver but also on the system, the booking
45 system, where the taxi has to be recalled. It is sort of pot luck. You never know who is going to turn up and you never know whether they are actually going to be able to fit into the taxi.

It is unfortunate that the Accessible Transport Standards were implemented in 2002 and the type of vehicles that are turning out now, becoming increasingly less accessible. There is also an issue with these makes and models and conversion of the vehicles where they are a universal taxi and they may seat up to seven people without
5 someone in a wheelchair and when they move some seats they provide access. The issue is there that depending on the type and make and model of the vehicle, if the back seats need to be pushed forward to provide the wheelchair envelope, they push the back seat, if there is two back seats, they push the back one against the next one and they push them both up against the driver. Resulting in me only, and other
10 people with disabilities, only being able to travel with one other ambulant passenger.

So if I book a taxi and I have got more than two people with me, those taxis are not an option. Which means that it is increasingly impacting on the availability and the types of vehicles people can get into. Albeit that there are other taxi seating
15 specifications that say that taxis in New South Wales, when it comes to wheelchair accessible taxis, don't have any minimum seating requirements in the taxi. However, all taxis have seats. Under Part B it says that where there are seats, there needs to be a minimum of 180 millimetres or 6 inches clear space between the seat – the front of the seat and the back of the seat in front of it when the seat is unoccupied. So in
20 other words, when there is nobody in the cab there needs to be that much gap.

However, when someone in a wheelchair gets in the back and they push all the seats forward, the taxis don't comply with their own taxi seating specifications. So you have got an issue with the Transport Standards and you have got an issue with the
25 taxis not complying with their own Public Transport Regulations. The overall impact is it is increasingly hard to get accessible vehicles, if they turn up on time that we might be able to get into them and if you have got more than one other person with you, it's not an option either. These have all been approved by the Ministry. That's about all I sort of have to say in regard to from where I am coming from. Do
30 you have any questions?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: We may be interested because you started by saying it being sort of experiencing the transport system for about 30 years, is that right?

35 MR KILLEEN: No, the taxis have been in since '81.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: '81. With the introduction of the Disability Standards, have you seen over the past five years, even though there are still improvements to be made would you have thought there was a qualitative shift with the introduction of
40 the Standards? Has it been something that really you can see a very distinct, maybe very slow progress before and a differential type of progress after?

MR KILLEEN: The increasing roll-out of accessible buses, I have noticed that. Some infrastructure around that there is some difficulties with the bus shelters. I
45 mean you have got so many stakeholders, bus shelters are I believe the responsibility of the local councils. So they contract, there is a French company that puts out all these bus shelters and often they have been put in places where you don't have access between the bus shelter and the kerb or you can't go around them because it doesn't allow enough space behind it. So there are some infrastructure problems

there and I believe the councils are involved in that. So but in regard to the number of buses they are rolling out, if you have got them in your area or if you can judge them, work out the timetables they are not too bad. Getting on trains, with the ramps, portable ramps, accessing trains, not that I access trains myself that much but
5 if you are aware where the accessible train stations are, which is a roll-out of the updating of the train stations throughout Sydney, is obviously going to be of assistance.

10 Ferries, as I mentioned, there is a lot of public transport is accessible. However, there is an issue with the wharves. You can't actually get to all the wharves, if you are catching different ferries. So you can't actually plan to go by ferry to certain locations because the wharves are not accessible.

15 MS O'LOUGHLIN: Has the past five years matched, do you think, your expectations of the implementation?

MR KILLEEN: I am not sure.

20 MS O'LOUGHLIN: You are not sure whether things are going as fast as I suppose you would have hoped or expected given the Compliance Standards?

25 MR KILLEEN: The Compliance Standards at the moment for this first five year milestone is response times for cabs and a certain percentage of conveyances being accessible. I suppose within that period, yes, there is some improvement but the disappointing part is that I have found that the accessible taxis, which I am a happy user of, is becoming an increasing cause of angst with them being that we now have
30 Standards and that we now have taxis that are harder to actually get into. I mean I was on the DATAS Technical Committee that created the actual wheelchair envelope, on a technical committee, and so to be involved in that and the standards come out and then over five years the taxis become increasing difficult to get into, yes, it is actually quite frustrating for all concerned because drivers are turning up and being sent away.

35 You just wonder how it all comes about and certain operators and providers need to be held accountable. You are saying that the Transport Standards are there as – what I have read in the Issues Paper – are a – I think it said that they are not a way of determining discrimination, is it? Unfortunately I don't have the Issues Paper with me.

40 MS O'LOUGHLIN: Let me see if I can find it.

45 MR KILLEEN: It is in the introduction to it but it's not a way of measuring discrimination but it is a way of making people who are aware, transport operation providers, that there are these standards that they need to comply with. The issue is that where the systems are in place to ensure that when an operator or provider implements a ticketing system, that it is not discriminatory. How can they put on cashless buses and not provide a means of buying the tickets. How can they put vehicles on the road that clearly don't comply with the wheelchair envelope, yet they have been approved and passed. So who is overlooking, who is overseeing the –

because it is the States that provide the transport. It is a Federal Act in regards to the Transport Standards.

5 So who is ensuring that States comply in the provision of their obligations. There has got to be some sort of checks and measures.

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

10 MR KILLEEN: particularly when it comes to the government.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks Kathleen. Kathleen has raised a good point which is you mentioned at the beginning that you had had quite a wide experience of different transport avenues. Cruise ships and planes, monorails, very different things that we have heard from so far. Can you comment on your experiences there?

15 MR KILLEEN: My experience with ships?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Yes, I guess the whole opening up of opportunities for broader holidays, leisure activities.

20 MR KILLEEN: Yes. The ship I went on is now no longer in service, which is Pacific Sky. But the Pacific Sun, which I have not experienced but I understand it is a big ship. It has got more accessible options as in more cabins, accessible cabins. More options between two, three and four berth cabins that are accessible. More
25 options between ones with portholes and ones without. So there is obviously a scale of what budget you can afford. So it gives you a good bunch of options. You have to be aware that destinations you might go to may not have accessible facilities, like Vanuatu has got no accessible taxis and the tours that were available weren't
30 accessible either but you do research and you make your judgment on what you wanted to go and see and do. So yes, that's that.

I mean the monorail, I have been on the one in the Gold Coast and the one here in Sydney. A monorail is a monorail. It's a means of going around, in a loop around the city, getting on and off. I mean personally I don't have any issues with the
35 monorail. The only problem is when it turns up and it is completely full, you have to wait for the next one. What was the other question?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Planes?

40 MR KILLEEN: Yes, with planes. I haven't flown for about four years now but back then there wasn't too much of an issue. The only main issue was a lack of communication at the time when they were disconnecting the cables off the battery terminals and it arrived back at the destination and all your chair is half apart, with no explanation of what took place and why. But I understand it is more in the
45 process now and people are more aware of the needs and reason why. At that time it seemed to be just like they were starting to do that, that I was aware of.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Have you flown recently with the security measure changes?

MR KILLEEN: Yes, well, I did and my issue there was that I have special cutlery that I use, forks and stuff like that, that I actually carry in my bag in carry-on luggage, which also had a knife in it. So you have an issue there where if you have got special cutlery that you need to be able to feed yourself on the plane, if they
5 confiscate that you have got an issue of being able to actually eat while you are on the plane for some people.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Did they confiscate or give it back at the end?

10 MR KILLEEN: They gave me an option of confiscating it or actually putting it my luggage that went in the stow, which I chose to put it in the luggage in the stow and had someone give me a hand with my food.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you very much. Just if there is anything else you
15 wanted to say?

MR KILLEEN: No, that's about it. I think I haven't gone over my time, have I?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: No.
20

MR KILLEEN: Don't want to hold up the show.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: No, no, you're fine.

25 MR KILLEEN: Okay. Thank you.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Great. Thank you very much, Greg. Welcome people who have joined us. We are going to have a break for morning tea and rejoin at 10 to 11. So it is about half an hour break. If people need assistance we have a carer who can
30 bring morning tea or anything else.

ADJOURNED AT 10.20 AM

35

RESUMED AT 10.55 AM

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Welcome our next participant, Simon Darcy, from the Faculty
40 of Business, UTS. Thank you, Simon.

MR DARCY: Thank you very much. I understand the room, there's no mike amplification. So if anyone has a little bit of trouble hearing what I say please raise your hand and I can repeat, etcetera. I do have a powerpoint. It's just how I work.
45 So it's a bit of a focus for people as we move through. Again, if people want to clarify things or just want to chat or do whatever, feel free to come in and interject, etcetera. I will just get used to using the tech. I have got sort of a lot of areas that I want to have some comment on. I just want to preface with a few things firstly. A little bit of a bio. I am an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business but I have

got a sort of town planning qualification, a bit like a few other people here, I am qualified in the Access Auditing area. My PhD area looked at travel and tourism experiences and the way that the accommodation sector and the tourism marketing authorities but you can't do any of that without a fair transport hit-up and I also had
5 six years with the New South Wales Transport Minister's Accessible Transport Forum as well.

So I have been around these issues at a series of levels. So I want to move through these topics, review the oversight, cost participation for the hearing, para-transit
10 systems, taxi design, wheelchair footprint research, tourism, the way that charter services relate to it, the lack of systematic inclusion of benefits, service provision requirements and sort of just general cost inequities. I suppose because I spent half my life with sort of 17 to 19 year olds, I realise I have got to capture your attention at least for the first minute or two and so I thought I would do a sort of the good, the
15 bad, the ugly, just a quick oversight from both my perspective as an individual but also my work that is currently in the tourism area.

I have got three major research grants running in tourism. I am looking at urban accessibility, another one with vision-impaired experience at tourism and the third
20 one around business cases. So those business cases cross the sectors, accommodation, transport, charter operations etcetera. I have just got some things to say about that. Then the other sort of research I am working on at the moment is with protected area agencies across the country. So 14 of them are all the national parks. It is really interesting in looking at systematic approaches how common a lot
25 of the underlying issues are, no matter what the context is that you work in. So good, Sydney Ferries have always done a reasonable job on the major services, getting you on and off as a mobility person.

The other thing that we need to recognise I think within these hearings or the review
30 is that it is almost about vision, hearing and cognitive access and a great deal of the time we do forget about that. One of the things that I am really interested in is the way that information is both produced and consumed and Greg has already picked up on some of the things to do with, well, it's not just about the carriages, it is also about the ticketing, it's also about the infrastructure, it's also about all the other facilitation
35 of the transport experience. So Sydney Ferries, about the same. They get you on and off. The guys are pretty blokey sorts of guys and nothing is too much of a problem but for some people it is confronting where you have got the little half-moon ramps that do move about a bit.

We have still got a whole series of infrastructure problems to do with fixed wharves
40 as opposed to floating pontoons. You have still got idiots like Piers Ackerman having attacks on the refurbishment of fixed wharves in the Pittwater area and can't understand why we want to get these people on board various ships, etcetera. So Sydney Ferries, with their main one, you know, you can't come to Sydney and not go
45 on the Manly Ferry. Sydney Light Rail, I absolutely love it. I work down at Markets Campus at UTS a fair amount and if I want to zip around to the fish markets for lunch, I want to lose some money on the blackjack, you know, light rail is a great way to get there. They have got a pretty good system. It's a small operation and they are friendly and they have got ticketing people on board these days and that is

largely because somebody used to keep pushing paddle pop sticks into the ticketing machines and so they have conductor-types that talk with you and take you money and give you a ticket back. Human interface. Rather an interesting approach these days.

5

Low floor accessible buses: where they have been introduced both public and private it has been terrific. I will talk later about why people are or are not giving it patronage and this consistency word I think it is a really important word and whether people feel confident that when they go down to a bus stop that they are actually going to get a bus that appears on the timetable at a particular time. But definitely the local introduction has been terrific. Increased numbers of accessible taxis: I will say more about accessible taxis later. I am talking Australia-wide. I travel a bit and in certain centres you are really well serviced, in other centres it's terrible. I will come back to that. Increase in the numbers of accessible railway stations: what I will say particularly in other States of Australia that have got a much later built railway station set-up that it is easy to get on and off.

One thing I do like about City Rail is that there is a strategy for upgrade and as a researcher and somebody who works in the policy area, I can understand what it is and I can understand why they are doing it and where they are spending their money and I think that is really important. It doesn't necessarily mean I am going to be able to use the rail system any better in the short term but hopefully, although I missed out on a stop at the campus I am on but hopefully when Chatswood is upgraded for example there will be two or three spots I can actually use on the north shore rather than the one or two at the moment. So that is sort of the good. The bad and the ugly and you make your decision where this lies. I really believe airlines have gone backwards. The ITC, Independent Travel Criteria, I think is a cover for a whole range of other issues to deal with introduction of low cost airlines and the rather thin yield that a lot of the airline systems are working on.

30

OH&S is also being used as a bit of a ruse to bring about changes in approaches to people with higher support needs that need to travel. We all know of course if a plane plummets 30,000 feet that everybody is going to be conscious and raring to go and able to get themselves off the plane just as easily as anybody with a disability as well. But I think there are some real issues with airlines. So airlines are better than others. I would certainly like to see Tiger's approach to people with disabilities, just been introduced to the country, and what that is going to mean again for air travel around the country. I have never felt more threatened travelling by air as I have in the last year. Whether it's narrow body jets, only being able to take one power wheelchair, which is the greatest nonsense I have ever heard, literally thousands of kilos of luggage go on and off airlines all the time.

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But with the narrow body jets they have made a decision only to put one space for one power chair. I was at a conference in Tasmania in November where I made my booking online, I got phoned up the next day and told I couldn't do that flight because there was already a power wheelchair user that had booked before me. So they bumped me in Melbourne, where I had to sit on the tarmac and wait. Okay. It's a socially constructed reason that they have made a decision only to have one space for a power chair. Coaches: I don't think there has been any real apparent

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improvement. I know there are isolated examples but if you want to go for a day trip from any major tourist destination in the country you are not going to do it by coach at the moment. I don't think they are going to make their compliance. So charter operators: I have just got a question, why were they excluded. I think it's heinous that they were excluded.

Why should people with disabilities not have the same options to hire a limo that's accessible if they want to hire a limo that's accessible and pay market rates for it. Similarly with charter operations with particularly I like to fish, I like to get out on the water. It's almost impossible to find a charter boat that is accessible even though ones that we have had in Sydney in the past, all they had to do when they were getting the boat made was to actually make the entrance-way to the boat wider so you were actually able to get on. Accessible toilets and everything else like that, that's another question but to get on and go for a fish, go for a tour around the harbour should be something that charter operators should have provisions within their fleets and there's actually some wonderful examples of charter operators that are doing it and seeing the benefits and by the time we do the paper submission I will put in evidence of that for it as well.

Infrastructure is a big weakness. Infrastructure with accessible public transport, all the basic stuff around kerb cuts, gutter heights, where bus stops are located etcetera. So I think that is a major ugly actually and something that needs to be addressed systematically. There's almost a dearth of research or the research that is taking place isn't publicly available and I will touch in a particular instance of that at a Commonwealth Government level with the statutory authority as we move forward. Richard made a point earlier when Greg was presenting that it's not compliance and it's not about policing, it's about complaints. But where you have got situations where you once something is heard at a complaint level, and it moves to the Federal Court and it is a costs jurisdiction, it's absolutely decimated people willing to go to that next level.

They are not willing to risk their personal assets to go to that next level. Okay. So that's my little school board area. Review: Oversight of costs of participation: this comes from the Allen Consulting document and I realise Allen are responding to a tender that was put out by the Attorney-General's Department. I think it is absolutely heinous that we have got a hearing about accessible public transport, the document itself recognises that people with disabilities face higher costs yet there has been no inclusion to meet those costs for people to participate today, for people that may be economically disadvantaged. Now I just think that is wrong. So there's no taking into account of material hardship.

I won't put anyone from Allen on the spot here today, that is not their point to answer but I wrote to Allen Consulting about this and I received a response and I won't name who I got the response from but the response was that: "It is very important that you are aware that at the start of this review Allen Consulting Group review team discussed with the Australian Government Department of Transport of Regional Services and the Attorney-General's Department the issue of whether to pay attendees for costs associated with attending consultations. The decision was made by both government departments at that time that there was no funding would

be provided.” I think that is just an absolute awful thing for the Commonwealth Government to do. I would be surprised if people from Allen weren’t having their travel costs met to come here as part of tender.

5 Many disability organisations are here but we are missing the voice of individuals, that may have made a decision not to come because they couldn’t afford it. Outside the taxi subsidy, today has cost me 65 out of pocket to get here and it will be a little less going back. For many people, that is their pension for the week or for the two weeks. So I think this is a failure by the Commonwealth Government to encourage
10 people with disabilities to participate in all levels and all areas of citizenship. I recognise the advocacy groups do a great job but that is not the point and I think that needs to be brought home to the Attorney-General’s Department in particular.

So that is what I see as an oversight. I want to start off just with para-transit systems.
15 Could somebody give me a 10 minute warning too. I do tend to go on a bit. Para-transit systems. We know that they are a much higher cost and I have just got comments, it’s not so much to do with the Standards but it has certainly got to do with the way the Standards are operationalised. In those areas where people are restricted to para-transit systems there also has to be recognition that the subsidy has
20 not increased in many States since they were first introduced. So effectively people with disabilities in 2007 have relatively less subsidy that people with disabilities in 1981 or ’82. Did I stuff the date up that it was introduced. ’81. So that in that time the subsidy has remained the same. \$30 up to a \$60 fare but because of CPI increases, taxi fare increases etcetera, etcetera, that \$30 subsidy actually takes you
25 less for your money. Substantially less for your money.

So there is a general inequity with that subsidy system in the way that it hasn’t been increased to deal with increases in the cost of transport and that has reduced the travelling citizenship of people. There is also an inequity in subsidy between States.
30 There is also an inequity in access to para-transit systems from region to region. I spend a lot of time in Newcastle and a lot on the F3 going up and back from Newcastle but in Newcastle, for example, there is also six accessible cabs for the – five, is it. They just lost one, thanks Richard. Five cabs for the whole of Newcastle. They are refurbishing the harbourfront. Fantastic refurbishment. Great infrastructure,
35 kerb cuts, pedestrianisation, lovely cafes, all that sort of stuff. They were going to stop the train at Broadmeadow too, weren’t they? It is going to keep on going to Newcastle. But you can’t get out and see the great sights of Newcastle.

I think it is just an awful thing and there has been a lot of newspaper articles up there
40 about some of the problems with Newcastle people being left for inordinate periods of time. Response time is improving but it is inconsistently frustrating. So that this minute was a two minute job for me. Tomorrow it may be an hour. I don’t live out in the boondocks, although some people think Terrey Hills is. But it is one of those things that if I am going to make sure I am on time for work then I will do a private
45 arrangement. We shouldn’t be doing that in 2007. We shouldn’t have to do that in 2007. Taxi design: this comes back to that compliance thing. Taxis are currently being approved that do not comply to the Disability Standard. There is no doubt about that. I could not get into a brand new Toyota Tarago that came to pick me up less than a month ago. The door couldn’t be shut at the back.

Why? Well, there's every cab driver's – I think they all see themselves as not necessarily a cowboy but rogues, lone wolfs out servicing the community, etcetera and each of them might get their vehicle converted at a different place and there are different conversion places. This was done by a reasonably new conversion place
5 and if that complies, you know, I will eat my hat. I will do any of those things. It just doesn't comply. Tray length, head clearance and the other one, and I am not sure of the technicalities so maybe Mark or Richard can help me out or John, retractable lap sash seatbelts. Are we the only group of consumers not to be
10 guaranteed our safety and comfort through the provision of retractable lap/sash seatbelts.

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

MR DARCY: No, if you go into some of brand new maxis, Toyotas, you can't
15 even find a lap/sash, let alone be offered one to be put on you. I find the lap/sash tremendous assistance just with stability and also my feeling of safety when I am with certain drivers. But that has been a terrible oversight not just in the Hi-Aces but in a number of the other vehicle types that are out there at the moment. The Mercedes whatever it is called that Lime have put on. It is the Veto, the new version
20 of Veto, is it, and a number of others. So if the internal dimensions do not allow a standard wheelchair user access then the Disability Standard is not fulfilling the spirit of the DDA.

Visibility: are we the only group of consumers not to be allowed to see where we are
25 travelling. So the Hi-Ace can't see out of them. All I see is footpaths and legs. If they're good legs, well, yes, there you go. But as a person, particularly if I am going to new environments, I like to be able to try to orientate myself. When I was in Perth last and the time before, a number of their Hi-Aces have actually put windows on the top section so you can actually see out. So these are things that, you know, the
30 general public take for granted. I mean if you put somebody in a regular taxi and black the windows out, there would be all hell to pay. But for us, as a group, it is not seen in that way. Visibility. Wheelchair footprint research. Now this is going a little bit left field but I mean these Standards are based on the research that was done into the wheelchair footprint, the old A80 standard.

35 I think the whole system of that footprint is based on rather questionable research in both a validity and a reliability sense. Future trends in wheelchair design: increasing scooter use and the aging of the population will further make a mockery of this dimension. I have been very lucky. I have just been to the States, Vegas and San
40 Francisco. I am calling it the Vegas effect. I have never seen so many scooters in all my life. It's a combination of two things. America, as we know, has got a high level of obesity and Vegas is just bloody hot. So if people walked around they would be passing out. Literally scooters are used for convenience. There was a newspaper article I have got and I will circulate it to those who would like it. It was a 23-year-
45 old woman, able-bodied, that uses a scooter because of the heat and she didn't want to damage her new 4 inch heels. Scooters are everywhere and charging stations for them are everywhere as well.

But I would like to bring it back to the aging of the population. We know scooter use is going up. How are the Standards dealing with that issue? The ABCB Commission research into wheelchair footprints a few years ago never made it public. I would like to ask why. Secondly, why is no further research been
5 commissioned by either the Attorney-General, the Australian Building Codes, Standards Australia or the Taxi Councils over this issue to see how we can be more inclusive of what will be a future trend. I can tell you from a tourist point of view this is a phenomena that is addressing all our major inbound markets. All of them.

10 My little bits in red. Tourism: this comes back to why are we excluding limousines, hire cars and charter boats. I see that as a competitive, a significant competitive disadvantage internationally for the country and one that again with aging population, what we are creating is a series of segregated services. So that in a tourism sense, in a day trip sense, in a recreational travel sense, we are creating
15 opportunities for niche operators but we are not embracing the mainstream. I will show some of the disadvantages to that in a moment. It is also a contradiction to the Commonwealth Tourism White Paper, that has identified accessible tourism as a niche and is encouraging unique Australian experiences to be developed. But these unique Australia experiences will be segregated and not mainstream experiences.

20 Coach and charter services: incredibly important to obtaining quintessential experience, sense of place. What is Coffs Harbour with the bananas. But how do you get out to the bananas, the beaches, etcetera, if your charter operators, your coach operators, your day trip operators are not accessible. So there is a call for
25 whether the major coach companies will make their compliance standard in this area. Some of you can comment further on that. Bus and Coach New South Wales is certainly working very hard to educate their operators. The CEO out there, I have just forgotten, Daryl Mellish, is certainly do the right things to try and bring about an industry change and I think that is to be commended. There are a number of small
30 niche operators and I think that is terrific and there has been some good businesses kicked off there.

Certainly in the business cases that I will present in the written papers, we have got very good evidence that when access is opened up that the operators are seeing a
35 change in the consumer base they are getting. They are getting older people, they are getting people with disabilities and they are there with their families and those people that they are holidaying with. There is a very good Whale Watch charter that has come up from Merimbula, fully accessible, that is doing some great business out of Sydney at the moment. Terrific stuff and stuff that we should publicise more. Now I
40 am not picking on AAT Kings but I am just using that as an example. If I had a friend visiting from overseas today or inter-State today and they wanted to go to the Blue Mountains, could they get there by public transport and get off and see around?

No, they cannot. Is there a mainstream operator that can take them out there?
45 Unfortunately not. So what are people left to do in a mobility sense? In a mobility sense they can have a segregated para-transit hire, approximately \$400 as directed as opposed to \$116 and look what they are missing out on. They are missing out on a series of other experiences that these operators are very, very good at delivering. They do collaborative marketing between a series of organisations and provide a

wonderful experience. I am excluded from that experience. When I travel overseas to different areas I am not necessarily, sometimes I am, sometimes I am not. In areas in the US it is not a problem at all. They swing an accessible coach on. I am part of the mob. So what happens when somebody has to take a segregated experience in
5 Australia? Well, it's higher cost. There is a loss of social interaction and that is what a lot of us want. We want to live connect lives of citizenship. We want to meet people when we are out and about doing these things. Transport is the facilitator.

10 There is a feeling of being devalued. Why won't they take me? Why aren't I as good as other tourists and there is a loss, and I think this is a really important one, a loss of interpreted experience. So you are missing that wealth of experience that these very good organisations have. You are not getting that. You mightn't be getting it also in a vision or a hearing sense as well if they haven't created alternative
15 formats and if they are not providing that information to those particular groups as well. But the other big one, third from the bottom, you are losing the loss of discounted product. They get tremendous discounts. If I was to do all that individually it would cost a lot more than \$116. So you are missing the discounts that the industry can leverage.

20 I am getting a lower quality experience and I am getting a lack of choice. Depending on the driver I get, I might just have a bloody lousy experience. If I get a maxi, I am not going to see out of it while we are touring around in any case. So in a tourism and recreational day trip, this becomes really important because we know and sorry, when I say we, the research that I published in the past and the research that is being
25 updated at the moment by the time you get the written – the ABS, the government's own stats, the Bureau of Tourism Research, Tourism Research Australia's own data shows that transport is a significant constraint to both general travel, day trips and overnight trips. People with disabilities have substantially different patterns because of those constraints.

30 In fact, in a tourism sense, people who are blind or have ongoing mental health issues are people who are the least likely to travel. Okay. The stats are blatant about that. Statistically significant. I will just give you one stat. 10 per cent of the travelling public are people with disabilities but we are 20 per cent of the population.
35 Significant latent demand. One 1 per cent of those people identified their impairment as their constraint in not wanting to travel. It's not my spinal cord injury that stops me from travelling. It is the socially-constructed constraints, whether it's transport or accommodation. This research is consistent with overseas research from US, UK, New Zealand and the EU, as well as a series of other one-off studies that
40 have been done and reinforced last year.

I will not address the issue of airlines, although I have spoken briefly about it. Robin Banks from Public Advocacy I know will be doing a fair bit on that and what is
45 happening at the moment. Okay. I have estimated that the latent demand is about 2 billion. At the moment nobody has even tried to estimate the impact of overseas people with disabilities visiting Australia. Sitting at the cricket, watching the Australians flog the Poms earlier in the year, I was amazed at the number of Pommy wheelies that were over. Almost every one of them said to me, what else can I do while I am here? They have had trouble finding out. Okay. So it's one of those

things that hasn't been well discussed but it is definitely a form of latent demand. I think one of the other things re the Standards that are interesting is there has been a reluctance to quantify benefit. A lot of that benefit research has been or a lot of the cost and benefit research has been generated by industry and there has been very few studies that have really stood up to a robust interrogation.

I mean some of the draft RIS figures for both the access to premises and the transport way back where, I mean they were just laughable and now low floor buses are the economy of scale and nobody is making nay noises about it. Now there are some other issues around costs but if you are looking at the demand side, this is just some stuff that I have thrown up that I know are benefits to myself when we make decisions to travel into town. Forest Coach Lines on the weekend only run low floor accessible buses and I know I can go to the bus stop 50 metres away, hop on a low floor and go into town, rather than paying the taxi fare. Terrific. Why wouldn't I do it. I am \$25.85 better off on a single journey when going into the city and I am \$35 better off when going out to Homebush for the rugby or a concert or something else.

The price of citizenship – it is priceless to be able to do that. Why don't people necessarily take it up I will look at in a moment. We are not even talking about employment and education. First job I got offered I couldn't take because the building was inaccessible. I hadn't even thought about how I was going to get there. Our education level is generally for people with mobility, hearing and vision is a higher level than the average Joe on the street. But our employment levels are significantly lower. When are we going to start generating those benefits into it? Mark Bagshaw has done some good work at looking at the cost of ongoing welfare and the tag that is put on that. Transport is a facilitator to employment and other forms of citizenship.

Who is providing the evidence? Why aren't we seeing research that is looking at benefits. Benefits continued: this stuff all seems pretty straightforward. Improving employment, citizenship. It requires more than policy. It requires positive support. This is a bit outside the scope of the Transport Standards but transport can facilitate this movement towards more inclusive citizenship that does what John Howard wants to do and gets people of the Disability Support Pension but they have got to recognise that there are costs to participation that need to be met as well. There are people are a lot more able than I that aren't employed and they are not employed because of the gap between being on social welfare and taking lower level employment as your first step. It's very difficult to do.

Identify what socially constructive constraints that disable people with impairments and provide those universal solutions. I think that is a really interesting approach to look at, particularly in the area of transport, particularly in the area of para-transit. I was absolutely appalled at poor Mark Macauley being stuck on the train. Nobody had thought about the emergency egress and then to find that the design of the carriage hasn't even incorporated egressing people with disabilities in emergency situations. That is just unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. How is somebody going to be confident about using that service? So improved patronage. On the left. Consistency, predictability, ease of use. Why not? To have that you have to have – there is a lot of talk in the paper about effectiveness and efficiency.

There is not a lot of talk about appropriateness. The Standards and the strategies that are in the Standards I think are sound but some of the underlying basis are not necessarily appropriate. Another example I use in the tourism area, I get on the 1800s Kuranda Rail and I go up to Kuranda and I wander over to Sky Rail, built in the 1990s and I can't get on. Not a universal solution. Ridiculous. So we can adapt an 1800s railway system, get me up there and I still can't get on a 1990s. Appropriateness of solution, inclusiveness. Improved patronage won't come where there is an inconsistency and an unpredictability, a complexity. A lot of people say why bother. Information is a key to that. If it says there is going to be a bus there and I am there and the bus that comes along isn't accessible and there hasn't been notice of that in some way, well, that's an inconsistent system.

If I have to go through the catacombs at Central Station and then the ramp isn't there because the person isn't there, well, it's a bit too complex for my liking. Light rail again is a good example. The ramps on board, they see you, they put the ramp out, you get on. Now I am not trying to say that we haven't got complex industrial relations issues to deal with, I know we do. But there has got to be sensible solutions to a lot of this stuff so that people feel confident that they can use the system. I love using public transport when I can but I won't risk it if I have got, if I have got a major commitment to go to. The rest of this is just a bit of – this is just some sort of niceties at the end. It's about citizenship, rights of powerment, inclusion, getting a live core of being human. This is stuff that is central to the DDA.

I go back – I hate having to go back to the Olympics. If you are an employee, if you are a participant, if you are a volunteer, if you are a spectator, they did some pretty good stuff during the games and some of you people sitting around the room really contributed to that. Why is it that we have got to go back to a 2000 example instead of looking forward. Now I will say there are a lot of good examples now. I think the events industry has done some really good stuff and they have done it in a way that is systematic as well. Okay. Getting a life. Transport is one of the foundations. There should be homes before that. Transport, good environment, all that other stuff, dreams and desires. Why shouldn't we be able to do what we dream, what we desire and achieve that within these processes.

That's why I think things like the long-term strategy for the Transport Standards, it's sensible. It's not going to be done overnight. There's good processes in place. Are those compliances going to be met. Obviously this came from a different presentation. I won't get into sexuality here unless people would like me to. Again, these are some things when it all works. Access Expo 1996, I got on a coach down in Melbourne. That was the last time in Australia I got on a coach. This was an accessible charter fishing boat that used to be in Sydney harbour. They sold it down to Adelaide after the Olympics. You can see the only thing they had to do, it's a Stebercraft 10.5, the only thing they had to add into the contract was having the door a bit wider. Now this version didn't have an accessible loo on board but, you know, we were big boys, we knew that before we got on and we had strategies to address that while we were there. We did some great fishing both in the harbour and not up the Parramatta River and outside of the harbour. Terrific stuff.

Recreational experience: snow skiing, being able to park, all those things as well. So universal design, lovely photo, again out at Homebush. Two friends sharing a wonderful experience. Why shouldn't we have it like that in transport all the time. So, look, I think I will just leave you with that image. If anyone wants to ask me anything, feel free as well. Thanks a lot.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks, Simon. One question that I had was as someone who has watched the world go around, I understand the good and the bad and the ugly and it is always going to be a bit of a mix, would you say though over the past five years that the progress has been as good as what you might have expected, granting that there is room for improvement or do you think you have been disappointed with the progress?

MR DARCY: Look, I've always been a glass half full person. I certainly would like to point to the things that have gone particularly well and I am sure others in the room are going to be able to tell me about proportions of rolling stock and the percentage of fleets and everything like that. I think as a user it comes down to has it improved my quality of life and I think in some areas it has. So I am not going to give a blanket yes because it depends a lot on the area you have to live in at the moment as to whether you see that. So if you are on a dedicated route with low floor buses, like I am on the weekend, it has been fantastic. I never thought Forest Coach Lines would move as quick as they did. They really have gone through a cultural change and I think that's – I think for many operators, I mean we were talking earlier, there was an ex-notable in the bus industry that the quote I heard was that there would be no low floor buses over his dead body.

Is he dead? No, still alive, okay. So when you have gone from that attitude to each time I get on a Forest Coach Lines the bus driver welcoming me and giving me time to brace myself into position and take off, then that is something that I didn't think I would see that that quickly. But in other areas like, you know, coaches for example and you guys can tell me about the compliance criteria again, I think we have got December they have got to meet some bars that they mightn't quite get near. Then I am disappointed because I like to do that sort of stuff. With City Rail, you know, albeit what has happened over the last week, I can see the logic they are using and I know where the next lot of maintenance improvements are going to be but I would rather be in Brisbane or Perth and be able to get the train at the moment.

So I can see the compliance issues are a long way out for people to think about but certainly we are in a much better position than we were 10 years ago.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: I was taken this morning with Greg's point which was a specific point about the buses and the no pay buses, which on the face of it you would go, yes, fine, good idea, efficient, you know, blah, blah, blah but not thinking through the implications of where you buy the tickets and are those access points accessible. I guess that is the specific case of a more general point which is that there can be lots and lots of changes that on the face of it don't look like they have accessibility issues for people with disabilities but because people don't think through the broader context surrounding them. Just on this, in terms of the plane transport, I noted that was one of your bad ones. But I am also curious if you think

the security changes have – again another issue that we all put up with but people mightn't have thought through the implications there?

5 MR DARCY: I said I have just come back from the States and I am glad I landed before what happened at Edinburgh. I was swabbed for explosives each time because they can't physically take me out my chair to check all parts of the chair. The normal pat down body search. I am happy with security because I don't want to see anything blow up etcetera. I think certainly this time – I have flown with Qantas, I have flown with Virgin, I flew with United this time, I think the staff training has
10 been pretty good. They are very aware of those issues, they explain things that go on. I think the security issues aside, I think the real issue with airlines is the human resource issue with the porters on the ground, the level of training that goes in the porters. It was interesting while I was overseas there was a big news story out of LAX where the porters at LAX have taken industrial action to get training to assist
15 people with disabilities.

There have been a number of critical incidents where people have been dropped or mishandled or equipment was damaged and the porters said hey, we haven't been
20 trained, that's why it happened. So I think that human dimension is an important one and that while we are talking about a lot of infrastructure and carriages and stuff like that, the ongoing need for not only awareness training but practical training around handling and occupational health and safety is really important. They do it all the time with luggage. Why can't they do it with people with disabilities. So I am not intimidated by the security checks except I do wonder each time when I am being
25 swabbed whether it is going to come back positive. It does make me a bit nervous being stuck in an American facility for a number of months.

I think the other areas around exemptions and airlines are real threats to people with disabilities. Certainly some types of planes are just impossible to fly in, like you are
30 not going to get me into a double prop Cessna or something. But with a lot of the others, there are solutions and we need to keep looking at those solutions and we need to keep resourcing it. As I said, I had never been questioned about my right to fly until the last 18 months and it has been a real change around where I am starting to feel like I am being victimised for my disability and not facilitated in my
35 citizenship.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you.

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

40 MR DARCY: That's a bloody good question, Greg, and I don't think they are and it is something I will take back to both Tourism New South Wales and some other stuff I am doing at the moment because that is a major oversight. One of the nice things again when I have been away and even in – I really like Fremantle and their CATs
45 bus systems over there are just wonderful. I didn't go near a para-transit system the whole time I was staying in Fremantle. Got on the CAT, got off the CAT, got on the train, got on the wine tasting. I thought that was a really nice system that was both a free – is it free, the CAT system. Yes, it was a free system. I felt part of the city. The rail system was a cost system but I was able to get on and off. Subiaco as well,

which was good. You felt like you were part of the city. I don't feel as part of Sydney as I do as part of Fremantle but I am a Sydney-sider.

[QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR]

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MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you very much again.

MR DARCY: If anybody wants a card, I have left some cards up the front.

10 MS O'LOUGHLIN: Our next participant, Mark Relf. Thanks Mark.

MR M. RELF: Can I say that I will be making a presentation.

15 MS O'LOUGHLIN: A presentation. So do you want to use the powerpoint?

MR RELF: No, I am not using powerpoint.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks very much, Mark.

20 MR RELF: Thank you. Firstly I would just like to say that I will be making the presentation on behalf of the Association for Consultancy and Access Australia, not Accessibility Solutions as is listed in the program. We will be making a formal written submission later on in the program I suppose but today we would just like to raise a few points. We won't cover everything in the allotted time but we will look
25 to go through the various modes and make some observations. Some of this is largely I guess in a New South Wales context with some spattering of interstate and overseas experience along the way. First of all, just looking at taxis, I generally concur with everything that Simon had said earlier. In many respects it still operates on almost a para-transit system model as opposed to being I guess an integrated
30 aspect of taxi travel.

That is even more so I think outside the Sydney metropolitan area and in similar to what Simon had said about the limited number of taxis in Newcastle, I think Wollongong also has an absolute handful, maybe four taxis for the whole area of
35 Wollongong, yet you could go to places like Lismore and there could be I think 10 or a dozen accessible taxis in the country town of Lismore where obviously everything is integrated and the accessibility of the taxi fleet is more universal. I think the fundamental flaw within the DDA Transport Standard is the milestones for measuring whether the taxi travel is actually meeting the expectations for the DDA.
40 I don't believe that the response times is a satisfactory measure of determining as a lone measure, as determining whether or not people are getting equitable access to accessible taxi travel.

45 It seems as though there is no mechanism in place for public scrutiny of whether or not taxi companies are actually delivering their taxi services in a manner consistent with what the DDA Transport Standard aims for. The State Government agencies that certainly – well, certainly in New South Wales, as far as I am aware, the State Government agency hasn't been able to develop a monitoring system that would be able to tell whether or taxi operators are meeting their – on an annual basis. There

may be some working being happening but it is certainly something I am not aware of at this point in time. Although on some data collection aspects you know the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme had been measuring the number of pick-ups of people that are part of that scheme but I am not too sure that that is publicly available either
5 or whether or not the department is using that as some de facto measure of trying to evaluate the effectiveness of the taxi system.

Putting that aside for a moment, we go to vehicle design and I guess – first of all I would just go back one step. If we ask the question of whether the DDA Transport
10 Standard has made a difference in accessible taxi travel, I think the broad answer would be no. Accessible taxis had been around since the early 80s and they had been gradually growing ever since but some of the problems associated with it is that it is the various co-ops that have licenses to deliver taxi transport is not – there is no
15 requirement there within individual co-ops to have say a minimum number of accessible taxis within their fleet, which I think is the other important measure to try and determine whether or not you have the capacity to meet that first monitoring mechanism of response times.

So there needs to be a combined or a number of measures built into the DDA
20 Transport Standard. On taxi design, the comments that Simon made earlier about the so-called accessible taxi, not being able to get him into the taxi were absolutely true. Again I think whilst the Transport Standard has nominated a spatial footprint area on the floor and an entry height to get into the vehicle, they forgot about the fact that the shape of vehicles has, means that sometimes you might not be able to close the door.
25 What that means is that in some vehicles they have measured 1300 millimetres length on the floor and measured the entry height to get inside the vehicle and that's it. Without taking into account the curvature of the rear door on say a Tarago van or something like that. So clearly the Standard is inadequate in communicating to vehicle modification industry what they need to do about an appropriately-sized
30 vehicle.

Secondly, the comment about view is absolutely true. There are very few vehicles out there that have actually been modified in an equitable manner to facilitate equal
35 view for passengers who use wheelchair. Then of course the issue of seatbelts. There is an Australian Standard on seatbelt installation. It is maybe a little bit difficult to understand but you would think that engineers who work in the field would be able to comprehend the objectives of the Australian Standard and deliver an appropriate outcome. However, very, very, very few taxis ever have restraint
40 systems installed in an appropriate manner. They're lash/sash systems that you can pull across your chest and over your shoulder and appropriately secure you in the vehicle.

So in short, I think that the licensing body such as maybe the Roads and Transport Authority, who give licenses out for taxi vehicles, should be empowered to do closer
45 checks on vehicle modifications before granting licenses to the vehicles and should be monitored fairly stringently. So a particular type of modification should be first passed by whether it's the RTA or the Ministry of Transport or whatever agencies but there needs to be some tighter control about vehicle modifications. In a recent or when I say a recent trip, probably two years ago now when I was in Perth for a

couple of weeks I noticed that the taxi system there was similarly operating on a more para-transit model and seemed to be in crisis at the time. In fact I remember some drivers saying I think I will have to bail out of this, it's just not working for me. Dah, dah, dah, dah. There's a crisis meeting with the Minister of Transport next
5 week, etcetera, etcetera and I think this is just symptomatic of trying to operate in a para-transit mode as opposed to looking at the entire fleet being universally accessible or at least the vast majority of vehicles being universally accessible.

That's the way I think we need to be going in the future and not looking back at what
10 people have continually used over the past 26 years or so. All right. Moving on to route buses. Now obviously from some of the evidence that we see here in Sydney about government bus services, there has been I guess a very significant improvement in the number of accessible buses in Sydney. It's not a blanket scenario. It tends to operate on a depot by depot basis and some of the depots have
15 had a slower uptake of accessible buses but it is getting better and soon I can foresee within the next five year period that there will be enough critical mass that people who use a wheelchair will be able to with reasonable confidence step out and catch a public bus service and be reasonably assured of being able to not leave but get home as well.

20 We will see more accessible timetabled services be made available. On the private bus operator side of things it's a little bit more patchy with some operators having somewhere around 10 per cent of their fleet accessible whilst others might be 25, 30 per cent of their fleet being accessible. So it is still very patchy in that part of the
25 sector. The other significant aspect about bus transport, however, is the lack of accessible infrastructure. In other words the footpath networks to get to the bus stops and be able to board and get on to the vehicle. In my view the local government agencies responsible for the infrastructure are more focused on signing up contracts with JC Deco or Adshield for a revenue return on their shelters, as opposed to
30 scrutinising the footpath networks to get to the bus stops in the first place.

So I think that is a negative aspect so far. I don't think that the local government agencies have done enough in that area to date. One failing I think of the DDA
35 Transport Standard is the lack of wheelchair restraints in buses. While some people may not necessarily need to use or have available wheelchair restraints, I think that they should be a mandatory item in route buses. I guess some of that comment is borne from personal experience and observations of the speed at which buses will swing around corners, change direction and no matter how good your braking systems are on your wheelchair, there are times where you are not going to be able to
40 control your wheelchair from swinging out into the aisle and taking someone's ankles out from underneath them who might be standing adjacent to you in the bus.

So I do think that the Australian system should be something that is incorporated into the Transport Standard. In terms of tourist type bus transport, I suppose it's a
45 quandary, I find it a bit of a quandary as to when is a tourist van classified as a coach and what is classified as a charter vehicle, if you like. So I think there is a great ambiguity within the Transport Standard about tourist vans and obviously the lack of accessible tourist vans or gross inadequacy anyway. It's fairly difficult to identify accessible tourist coach services and just this week I was inquiring about the

possibility of catching a coach interstate to Melbourne and was advised that there were zero available from any company that I could contact. The general comment was catch a train. So I think the coach industry, long-distance coach industry has been extremely neglectful in observing their obligations under the Transport Standard.

The inquiries were not positive even when talking to some of the vehicle body builders, like, who manufactured the coaches here in Australia either. So that is one negative I think of that part of the industry. I guess it is still mystifying as to why school buses should be completely exempt from the DDA Transport Standard. I don't think there is a good case for that. I think that really if bus operators were concerned about cost issues that maybe it's just a case of maybe a slightly more generous timeframe for the implementation. I don't believe that there should be a complete exemption from the DDA Transport for school bus transport school buses. On the tourist front, I think there is a great opportunity missed by some of our providers here in Sydney.

As Simon mentioned, the small, what they call CATs bus service in Perth is just a fabulous little vehicle. It's a mini bus in length I suppose, it probably has the capacity to take about four or five wheelchair users at any one time and about a dozen seated passengers and it just circulates throughout the city network. There's two or three routes linking key destination points to rail transport within the Perth city and just a fabulous service. Last year when I was in Auckland similarly the private bus operator there, Stage Coach, also had a variety of free wheelchair accessible buses operating throughout the Auckland CBD area and probably within about a six or eight kilometre radius of the city centre.

Sadly Sydney has not sought to do something similar. Similar to some of Simon's comments about scooters, I think we need to revisit some of the issues about bus dimensioning within the DDA Transport Standard. Up until now there is I think a restriction for a 760 millimetre opening between the wheel arches in the front of the vehicle, which is quite a significant and limiting factor for many scooters, who might be able to fit within the general wheelchair footprint and the circulation manoeuvring area within the Standard of 1540 x 2070 but be unable maybe to get through those tight wheel arches and tight turns through the front entrance of some buses into the main passenger compartment area.

So I think there should be some further research on that and some revision of the capacity for scooters to get on board. Moving to the area of trains now, I think that the DDA Transport Standard has facilitated and enabled significant improvement in the area of train travel. I will make that comment on the back of the fact that 80 or more stations in the City Rail network are now wheelchair accessible and more are on the way. They are rolling out anywhere between five, six, seven and eight stations per annum. Most of the stations to date have been higher patronage stations, so it's quite a good progress to date. I am not saying we are there yet. There are still quite significant gaps on many rail lines where you might need to travel half a dozen stations between two accessible points.

So those sorts of significant gaps are meaning that you are probably not going – as a provider, City Rail are probably not going to see an appropriate take-up if you like, or increased patronage as yet because we haven't quite reached an appropriate critical mass of accessibility. I think we probably need to do a lot more in that area before we see the real benefits of it flow through. Putting aside the issue of wheelchair accessible stations or putting that to one side for a moment, the issues about trains themselves are still lagging behind, mainly because the fleet is still aging and we have only had one new train come into service through the millennium train in recent years. There has been some retro-fitting of other trains. Slowly, mostly outer suburban trains.

One new outer suburban rail car system is now heading the – starting to hit the fleet that has been delivered and it includes an accessible toilet on board and lots of good features that would be useful to people with other disabilities, including visual impairment and hearing impairment, which is good for outer suburban travel between Sydney-Central Coast, Sydney-Newcastle, Sydney-Wollongong and so on and so forth. Blue Mountains etcetera. Obviously we will need to see more of those in the city network before we again see a good take-up of or increased patronage of wheelchair users on board. One of the failings, however, of the rail system is still the need to use boarding ramps to get on board and the staff assistance to use those boarding ramps.

On a slightly positive note, there is a policy to put a boarding ramp on every platform, on every station throughout the City Rail network regardless of whether or not it is accessible, in order to assist with detraining, as they call it, or evacuating people from a train if it becomes disabled or whatever at a particular station. However, like Simon said, it was pretty ghastly hearing of the experience last week of the chap being left on Sydney Harbour Bridge in a train and his call, I understand the call he put through to City Rail to inquire how he was going to be assisted, have assistance at the evacuation, the response was they would get back to him in two or three days. Clearly that was a fairly unacceptable response and maybe there was some ignorance on behalf of the telephone operator who was providing that advice, but that was what I understand to be the case.

It is a good story, it is a good story and I believe he was eventually evacuated by some construction workers who were nearby to Milsons Point station or something. I am not quite too sure of the detail on that. But clearly that highlights one great vacuum within the DDA Transport Standard and it's about emergency egress from premises and buildings, railway stations and from evacuation procedures from conveyances. I think it will be an area that will be growing in interest and I understand the Australian Building Code's Board has been funding research into this area for buildings and I think there is some flow-on effect from that obviously to railway stations and other similar types of maybe infrastructure. But it needs to be extended as a condition I think of operation for transport providers about having emergency evacuation procedures for people with disabilities of all types and I don't just mean wheelchair users assisting people with sensory impairment and cognitive impairments as well, in terms of getting them off.

That has been highlighted by a lot of studies that have emanated or evolved since 9/11 in America as well and the cyclones in southern America, Katrina and so forth, about emergency preparedness and the lack of preparedness really by instrumentalities and it's an area of greater focus now overseas and it needs to come to the fore here as well in the area of public transport. With the evolution of the draft DDA premises standard, at the moment they way the draft stands and I guess the movement of the premises portion of the DDA Transport Standard into the Premises Standard, at the moment there is some inconsistencies that have not yet been picked up in any discussions, I suppose mainly because most energy has been spent on the Premises Standard but it is evident to me from looking at the two sections within the overall document that there is some inconsistencies and that should be resolved.

I can't go through right now but we will put some of that in writing in the formal submission. So we need to revisit that before it gets written in stone, if you like. In the area of standards for conveyances, I think that there are still some challenges in the area of trying to make an accessible toilet within a train, for instance, comply with phase 1428.1, which was a standard developed for buildings. I think the only way to resolve some of this and give some greater certainty to transport providers is to do some more funded research into this area and to be able to come up with a standard purely for conveyances. This also extends into the area of long-distance train travel. Recently I have been inquiring about the capacity to undertake long-distance train travel and it seems like it may be achievable in some areas as long as you happen to have a wheelchair which is only 570 millimetres in width, which obviously no independent wheelchair user would be able to achieve.

So for instance if you wanted to travel on a train, a long-distance train such as maybe the Ghan or the Overlander or whatever, you would be either isolated in your sleeper cabin or isolated in the buffet car and the only way to get between the two is to transfer into an aisle chair and have carer assistance move you up and down the train from one area to the other. Clearly, in my view, this is not an example of equitable access in terms of long-distance train travel and does not provide any possibility I don't think for people who are dependent wheelchair users, if you like, as opposed to people who might be able to stand and transfer and only have an occasional need for wheelchair use. So there needs to be more – clearly, in my view, the long-distance train providers have not met their obligations under the DDA Transport Standard.

In the area of trains still, ticketing machines remain a problem. Many of them are inaccessible to people with limited hand function. People with vision impairment. One hopes that new technology maybe in the area of integrated ticketing, Smart card technology might be able to alleviate some of that problem but it hasn't come to the fore as yet as far as I am aware, although I may be corrected on that by some emerging programs, I am not sure. Sorry, one more thing about trains and train stations, I think in the area of assisted listening devices or hearing augmentation on train stations there is still I guess ambiguity or a reluctance by rail providers to provide appropriate or equivalent access to information for people with a hearing impairment.

Just yesterday it was reported to me that – and this may not be correct but this is a report that came to me, that City Rail has a policy not to provide any assistive

listening systems on railway stations, which means that people with a hearing impairment that use hearing aids would not really be afforded equivalent access to public address system announcements about delayed trains and so on and so forth. Whilst a significant number of their ticket windows might have a hearing loop
5 installed, there needs to be more than just being able to purchase the ticket. There needs to be across the board with the PA system as intended by the Standard and really even the existing Building Code of Australia would elicit such a need as well. So I don't know why City Rail would think that they have no need to do so.

10 Although with some pleasure I can say that the new underground rail system between Chatswood and Epping will incorporate hearing loops on railway stations and concourse areas within those stations as well. I think within the area of timetable information on railway stations, I think that many of the existing display systems, especially the plasma screens and similar, I think they are quite inadequate for people
15 with a vision impairment. I think the typefaces, sizes, the scrolling speeds don't really afford appropriate access to that information for people with vision impairment and I think there should be alternative formats in audio where people with a vision impairment might be able to step into booth or some other means of gaining audio equivalence to the timetable information.

20 I guess 131500 could be useful but I don't think it should be the only mechanism of delivering timetable information for people with vision impairment. In the area of air travel, like Simon I think air travel is getting harder not easier for people who use a wheelchair. I couldn't help but feel on a couple of recent trips that maybe I may or
25 may not be provided or permitted to travel, depending on which plane might be flying in and out of the airport on that particular day. Other people have reported the same thing to me. Even Sydney to Perth there was some question mark as to whether Qantas could provide or would permit me on board simply because my electric wheelchair may not fit into the hull, or the baggage compartment of the aircraft.
30 It's astonishing that after all these years that they are building aircraft to specifications which do not meet the needs of the travelling public. One would think that it would be an inherent part of their design criteria, that they be able to carry appropriate sizes of luggage, including electric wheelchairs and not be working to exclude people. It seems like cost cutting and OH&S issues are also having an
35 impact on the ability for people who use a wheelchair to travel. I understand that some airlines require you to travel with a carer. Heavens, we feel like we are stepping back 25 years with that sort of draconian treatment. Although I would commend Qantas for developing a hoist system to assist people into their seats, which overcomes many of the OH&S issues involved with transferring passengers.

40 Obviously this only is available in larger aircraft but it is a good step. It also helps to prevent personal injury to the person being transferred too. So I commend Qantas on that score. In the area of ferries – look, over time wharves have been improving. Certainly in the inner city, metropolitan area. Generally speaking, you know, you
45 can get access to a lot of ferries out of some of the more significant patronage areas but it is not across the board as yet and more work still needs to be done but of course the Transport Standard still gives that opportunity for more time for that to happen. Similar to comments by Simon, I believe that charter cruises should not be completely exempt from providing accessible options.

Possibly there could be a threshold in terms of the size of the charter vessel but I don't think there should be a complete exemption and it has been a failing of the Transport Standard since it was adopted. I think I am just about to the end of the
5 main points I wanted to raise today but obviously if there is any questions, I am happy to take them on board and answer them now. Thank you.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks very much, Mark. That was very comprehensive and very well thought out, moving through all the different avenues. So I appreciate that.
10 We just started to talk, I was interested in following up something that happened earlier this morning when people talked about cruises. Holiday cruises. Interested in any experience you might have had or heard about people's accessibility to those sorts of means of transport.

15 MR RELF: Look, I did have some friends that travelled to Tasmania on the Spirit of Tasmania before it closed down and they enjoyed that experience, I believe. But other than that I don't have any knowledge. Certainly you can – ferry travel up and down Sydney Harbour or the Swan River or other scenarios like that seem to be reasonably available but in terms of – and I have heard of some isolated – is Simon
20 still here or has he gone?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: He's gone.

MR RELF: I have heard of some isolated examples of maybe river cruises on the
25 Murray but I am not – I don't have any comprehensive knowledge of that, no.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Okay. Okay, thanks. The monorail, we have heard good things about the monorail?

30 MR RELF: The Sydney monorail?

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Yes?

MR RELF: Yes, it is not bad. It's – the area inside each of the carriages is fairly
35 limiting and you have to sit transverse to the travel, which is the direction of travel which is whilst everyone else is sort of sitting there staring at you. So it does feel a little uncomfortable I guess in some respects but if you happen to be occupying the carriage with your friends, then it is quite an acceptable form – it can be a quite acceptable arrangement I guess.

40

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

MR RELF: I think pretty well all of them are through assisted, some of the access is
45 I guess assisted, if you like, through adjacent buildings. I am trying to think of one on Pitt Street.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

MR RELF: Yes, you have to go through a building. You come out of the station into a building and then take a lift down to the ground floor. I did get off at the stop near the corner of Market and Pitt once but it has been a few years ago. I can't remember the details exactly. Obviously when they built the Avion Hotel on the corner of Liverpool and Pitt, that delivered improved access to that station as well because previously when it was just mainly a construction site there was a horrible stairway platform lift that used to run up the side of a stairway and break down more times than not and leave people stranded on the lift and so on and so forth. So yes, the buildings are the ones that deliver the access usually.

10 MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you.

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

15 MS O'LOUGHLIN: They are good points because with the internet now being such a widely used tool, that you think if you can't – seems like something is a great tool actually to be able to provide the information. Thank you. All right everybody. It is time to break for lunch. Lunch isn't provided here but we have some ideas about where we can go the people who manage the centre have given us. The first option is the Parramatta Leagues Club, which is next door. I came this way so I am presuming it's that way. So people exit at rear of building and take the path around the children's playground. Option 2 is the takeaway shops and cafes. Enter front of building, turn right, travel up to the roundabout, there's KFC and other shops and you can see them from that point.

20
25 Option 3 is there is a courtyard at the front right-hand side of the building, if people have lunch with them or they want to bring takeaway food back and eat it here. This room will be locked while people are having lunch and we are due to come back here at 1.15. It is half past 12 now, at 1.15. Thanks very much.

30

ADJOURNED

[12.29 PM]

35 **RESUMED**

[1.15 PM]

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Welcome you all back to the hearings and in particular representatives from the Physical Disability Council of New South Wales. Thank you very much for joining us. We have had a morning's session so far and I just wanted to say that it is being transcribed and Mark is over here, transcribing. So if you could introduce yourselves for the transcription it would be good. Also then it is over to you for your presentation.

45 MS A. FURMAGE: Thank you very much. My name is Ann Mason Furmage and I am President of the Physical Disability Council. I am joined today by Jordana Goodman, who is of the Physical Disability Council of New South Wales and we are going to speak about accessible transport. I will take the subject of wheelchair accessible taxis and trains and Jordana will be discussing buses and

ferries. One of the problems about wheelchair accessible taxis, and there are many problems, they generally fall into the category of the number of wheelchair accessible taxis that there are, the Standards that are applied to them and the waiting times experienced by people who have to use wheelchair accessible taxis.

5

So there are number, size issues and service issues. The number of wheelchair accessible taxis - the Physical Disability Council of New South Wales feels that the wheelchair accessible taxi is or should be an anomaly. The Physical Disability Council of New South Wales feels that all taxis should be accessible to everyone.

10

It's not a difficult thing to do. So far as we are concerned it's a lack of will that is preventing taxis from all being accessible. Currently about between five and seven per cent of the taxis in New South Wales are wheelchair accessible. When you look at the fact that approximately 14 per cent of the population has mobility difficulties that are noticeable and bothersome, you can see that five per cent of the taxis being wheelchair accessible is really not appropriate. It also means that people who use wheelchairs cannot use taxis the way everybody else can use taxis.

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I, as a wheelchair user, cannot simply hail a taxi. In fact because of the way the regulations are, taxi drivers believe that even if they are a wheelchair accessible taxi at a rank that they can't pick up a wheelchair passenger unless they are told to by the Taxis Combined Service. So I have had actually, I have had bizarre little experiences of being at a wheelchair, in front of a wheelchair accessible taxi at a taxi rank and having to ring the wheelchair accessible taxi number and say I am looking at taxi 2542 and he is telling me that he can't take me because you have not issued a job to him. Of course this usually happens in the pouring rain because that is how life is and it illustrates the lack of training and the lack of will and the lack of accessibility and the lack of dignity that is available to people who use wheelchairs.

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I think that has to do with the number of wheelchair accessible taxis there are. Now the Standards in converting regular taxis to wheelchair accessibility are not being enforced properly and so the Standard says that the minimum space for a single wheelchair should be 800 millimetres x 1300 millimetres and the headroom should be 1410 millimetres. Now my wheelchair is 700 millimetres x 1160 millimetres x 1300. So my wheelchair is well within far less than the Standard height, weight, size and length. Yet my wheelchair can just barely get in to many taxis. Now I brought this along to show. This is the difference between my wheelchair and the Standard. That's the length. There's this much difference between my wheelchair and the Standard length and yet there are many times when I can just barely squeeze into a taxi. Now someone who happens to be taller than I and require a larger wheelchair is out of luck in many cases because they cannot fit into a taxi.

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The Standards are not equivocal about it. The Standards are very clear about what the sizes should be. But for some reason there are taxis that think that they are wheelchair accessible when they don't meet the Standards. Now somebody is not enforcing the Standards or somebody is not making the Standards clear or somebody is deciding that if you have a certain amount of space in the floor of a taxi, that complies and they're forgetting that in fact wheelchairs are three dimension. We don't just occupy a space on a floor, we also occupy a space in the air.

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

MS FURMAGE: My chair is less than, it's not larger than. My chair is less than. My chair is smaller than the Standard. That is my point. My chair is smaller than
5 the Standard and my chair just barely fits in to many taxis. If I were at the Standard or larger, they would say oh well, there you go, but that is not true. My chair is smaller in every dimension than the Standards. Significantly smaller than the Standards in every dimension. I have had many situations where my wheelchair is too long to very close to too long, in spite of being 140 millimetres smaller than the
10 length Standard. I have had many situations where my chair is too wide, where the Standard is 80 and my chair is 70. I have had many situations where I was able to only ride in the taxi my scrunching myself down, to use a technical term, in spite of the fact that my height, to the top of my head from the floor is 1300 millimetres and the Standard is 1410.

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So I am smaller, my chair and I are smaller in every dimension than the Standards. Yet, somehow I don't fit into some taxis.

[QUESTION FROM FLOOR]

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MS FURMAGE: I think that is one of the problems. I think for instance if that were a test applied to taxis before they could go on the road in which a cube or a solid material of the dimensions described in the Standards had to be inserted into the back of that taxi, I think you would find that there are a large number of taxis that
25 don't comply. I think that would absolutely end the arguments about do I or do I not comply. I think if you had your magic Styrofoam cube and put it in there then a taxi would know that if that cube could go into the taxi he was complying and if it couldn't then he didn't comply, end of argument.

30 MS J. GOODMAN: I guess also not using the back area as a storage area

MS FURMAGE: Yes because one of the problems that occurs of course is that when the taxi driver arrives he turns on his meter. I mean that is not his problem, that is not a problem, you know, we understand that. But then after he has turned on
35 his meter, he then unloads his various items of equipment from the space where your wheelchair is going to go. So that by the time the taxi starts to move, there is maybe \$7 or there can be as much as \$10 on the meter before you ever move away because there is going to take a certain amount of time with loading to get your wheelchair fastened down properly and all that and everybody accepts that but an inordinate
40 amount of time is taken because taxi is not ready for hire when they roll up. Now my understanding is the taxi is supposed to be ready for hire when the meter goes on but, you know, apparently that is not always the case.

45 Now all of these problems that we have with the number of taxis and so forth is just incredibly worse in country towns and in country areas. It is our view that not only should all taxis be accessible but that this is particularly true in country areas. That in country areas that all taxis should be accessible because frankly in some country towns there is only one taxi. If that taxi isn't accessible then a person who happens to live there, who happens to use a wheelchair, has no access to any taxi at all. Now

one of the reasons we are so firm about our requirements of wheelchair accessible taxis is that really until all the other modes of public transport become accessible taxis are quite often the only option for people who use wheelchairs.

5 On that note I am going to turn to trains. With trains we have City Rail, metro light rail, monorail, CountryLink. Now CountryLink has stations that are 93 per cent accessible. Only 10 per cent of those stations are only accessible if you have someone to help you. The Physical Disability Council thinks that that is discriminatory, that the assumption that a person with a physical disability needs
10 someone to help them is discriminatory. It is somewhat less patronising than why are you out by yourself, dear? And it is somewhat less patronising than what does she take in her tea but it is still patronising. For those of you who don't understand what I just said, please know that anyone who uses a wheelchair has had people in restaurants ask anybody who happened to be standing up next to them how we had
15 our tea, as if we weren't able to make that decision ourselves.

Train transport is very good, very useful, very nice, it's lovely. Unfortunately the stations are a problem. For instance, I live in the local government area of Marrickville. It has quite possibly one of the highest populations in the country.
20 Very high density of population and in the Marrickville local government area, around there, there are eight different railway stations. Most of you would think that they would be accessible, no, none of them, not one, not one of those stations is accessible. This means that as an aged pensioner, I am an aged pensioner, and so therefore I am eligible for concessionary travel and I can travel all day for \$2.50. It
25 is a wonderful plan except that I can't get on the train because I can't get into the station or I can't get to the train in the station.

I can go into Newtown station where I am confronted by an enormous flight of stairs down to the tracks. Now because I can't take a train and I am not going to discuss buses, Richard, because that is Jordana's. Richard always tells me I should take a
30 bus but I don't take buses. But because of that, instead of \$2.50, if I want to come to Sydney from Newtown it costs me \$30 round trip and that includes the 50 per cent voucher that I get to reduce my cost of taxi travel. So I believe that that is extremely discriminatory against me because I am a pensioner like any other pensioner and I
35 don't get any more money in my pension. So I believe that I should be able to take public transport and I believe that everybody should be able to take public transport but I can't because it is just not accessible.

Now in addition to the stations not being accessible, there is the whole problem of
40 the height of the platform and the height of the train. I find it amazing that in the year 2007 the people who build train stations and the people who build trains can't talk to each other about what height the platform should be. They can in other countries. For instance, in Kuala Lumpur you can roll straight into a train from the platform. There's almost no gap between the platform and the train. Now Malaysia
45 is not sort of in the forefront of major countries of the world. On a list of world powers and super powers I don't think Malaysia figures but in Kuala Lumpur they are able to build trains and platforms that actually can be used together. It must be wonderful for people who have physical disabilities and mothers with prams and everybody else who wants to get in and out of a train.

But somehow in New South Wales those two, the train-making people and the track, the station-building people don't seem to be able to talk to each other and we believe that that is wrong. We believe that trains and the platform should match, that they
5 should be the same height. Then you wouldn't have to ask a railway employee to get a ramp for you. I have had any number of experiences where I had to shout to schoolgirls on the platform to get the attention of a rail employee so that he could get a ramp because otherwise I was on my way to Lidcombe and I did not want to go to Lidcombe that day. It's a lovely place I am sure but I just didn't live there. I think
10 that that is a problem that we shouldn't have to have. Why – I mean I can understand why it would be a problem for railway employees, who probably have plenty of other things to do, to find the time to get ramps out and so forth, when they also have a train in the station that is going to leave any moment.

15 I can understand that but why can't we have trains and platforms that are the same height so that nobody has to worry about that. I still remember the time I was at Central station and I had just come back from Wollongong on the train and I had to wait 20 minutes until a railway employee found the time and the energy to get a ramp for me to get off the train and that whole time I was thinking, you know, all of
20 us shouldn't have to do this. The railway employee shouldn't have to do this and I shouldn't have to do this. If the platform and the train were the same height we wouldn't have this issue. I feel a little foolish having to speak about it. It's so obvious but the fact is that people are kept from using public transport by simple things like this. By the height of a platform, by a step. They are small things.

25 The only thing that is lacking, I believe, is the will to change it because I think if there really were the will to change it, that means would be found to do so. Now, Jordana, would you like to give them a serve about buses and ferries.

30 MS GOODMAN: Rightio. First of all I will start off with buses. in December 2005, of Sydney buses are accessible and with the private companies 23 per cent. I would like to know is there any Standard measure for both public and private as to how many of those should be out on the road each day. With 41, nearly 42 per cent of vehicles providing access and only a small amount are on regular
35 timetables. I was wondering whether there was any Standard measure or what would be the worst and the best scenario and how many of them would be out at any one time. Which leads me to private buses. Although they are a small fleet of buses, very few bus operators are advertising that they provide wheelchair accessible routes. This is particularly crucial in the country and rural networks where public transport is
40 limited. In Sydney, if an accessible bus doesn't turn up, we need to ensure that it is replaced by an accessibly bus rather than any old bus that is waiting at the depot. It can be really frustrating when one bus that is accessible doesn't come and then the next bus that does come does have an accessible ramp but it doesn't work or the bus driver can't operate it.

45 Without maintenance, without staff training, no one likes being kept at a bus stop for 30 minutes unnecessarily. With the buses there needs to be more cooperation between the local councils and the Department of Transport so that bus stops are located more appropriately so that a person in a wheelchair has enough clearance to

manoeuvre behind the bus stop and manoeuvre in front of. Otherwise why have a bus stop if you can't

5 MS FURMAGE: Excuse me, may I interject something here? Everybody who uses
a wheelchair has stories about transport. I have stories about taxis and my friends
have stories about buses. They can be the sort of stories that makes you wonder what
is going on in the world. I have a neighbour who one day it took her over two hours
10 to get into Sydney from Newtown by bus and I have to tell you that had she had a
motorised wheelchair like I have and it takes one hour to go by motorised wheelchair
from where we live into the city and it took her two hours to get into the city by bus
because one of the buses broke down, the next bus that came wasn't accessible, the
next bus that came was accessible and the ramp broke after she was on the bus so
that she couldn't get off the bus.

15 This kind of story does not give other people who use wheelchairs tremendous
amounts of confidence to use that kind of vehicle because it is really frightening to
be trapped on a vehicle. When you use a wheelchair it is very easy to feel trapped
because you know that you have limited options for getting out of situations and
when you get trapped in a vehicle, that is a very frightening experience. It also
20 indicates that the planning that goes into the provision of accessible buses is possibly
not as advanced as we would like it to be because with 40 per cent of the buses
accessible you would think that there would be much less in the way of a problem
than – that there would be fewer problems than there are. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to
go on and on but you know how I get.

25 MS GOODMAN: Okay. Just moving on from local councils and the
communication between the local council and the Department of Transport, in my
previous job I had an experience where a very major bus route had to be taken off for
a while at the time because buses were damaged on roundabouts and speed bumps.
30 So there needs to be a lot more coordination so appropriate bus routes are selected.
This was a very significant bus route that so a real disappointment when it was
taken off. Just also with buses, now this is to do with community transport. In a
report that was commissioned by the Australian Taxi Council, it makes out that the
community transport organisations should be playing a bigger role in the
35 transportation of people with disabilities and as it is, many community transport
organisations struggle to provide emergency services, taking people to hospitals and
doctor's appointments, without taking younger people starting work or shopping,
without taking up the role of taxis.

40 Moving on to ferries – there needs to be greater coordination between local councils
and Department of Transport so that wharves that are owned and managed by local
councils are made accessible and maintained.

45 MS FURMAGE: Is there where we talk about the percentage of wharves? There
are 49 ferry wharves, of which 28 are not accessible. That's 57 per cent of the ferry
wharves are not accessible. This is according to information supplied to us by the
Minister of Transport, I think.

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

MS GOODMAN: Would you just be able to clarify which wharves are owned and managed or the responsibility because I think with the changeover from New South Wales Maritime being responsible for a number of wharves that were previously
5 managed by local council?

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

MS FURMAGE: It doesn't seem like – for a service that would like to advertise
10 itself as being accessible, it seems a bit less than honest to do so if in fact the ferries are accessible but the wharves aren't. It's like the trains are accessible but oh, too bad, can't get into the station. It's really not helpful. It frankly does not promote a sense of well-being amongst those who have to use the public transport or wish to use public transport if the information they receive turns out not to be entirely
15 adequate. Sorry, I did it again, didn't I? I interrupted, I'm sorry.

MS GOODMAN: That's okay. So I wanted to finish off by saying that in the Issues Paper there were a number of questions asked by asking about differences in the previous five years. Has there been any noticeable differences? Is there any
20 documentation of how much accessibility there was at this time in 2002, like how many stations were accessible then and how many, so we can make a valid comparison?

MS FURMAGE: I think the only sensible answer though, so far as we are
25 concerned, is that all stations need to be accessible. I understand that in the country there are some stations that are not and probably will remain inaccessible. They are stations where there are only three people get on or get off the train every week and I can understand why it would be uneconomic to make a station like that accessible. It would also be very bad luck if you happened to be one of the three people and you
30 happened to use a wheelchair but I can understand that there are limits to the resources that government is able to give to making trains and buses and any other public transport accessible. We believe that accessibility is something that should be planned in from the start and should not be added on as an afterthought because every single one of us is aging.
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The entire population is aging and with aging comes disability. We don't want to be in the position of waking up 20 years from now and wondering why nobody can get on a train, nobody can get on a bus, nobody can get on a ferry because we are all very old and we all have mobility problems. We don't want that to happen and we
40 are hoping that you can help to keep that from happening. Thank you.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you both very much for addressing the issues and for putting forward a number of clear ideas for ways to improve things. One question which we are asking people and people have addressed which I would be interested
45 in your views is even with the problems and the issues that still remain to be addressed, do you think looking backwards to 2002, and probably, Jordana, it goes a bit to your last point, do you think looking back that there have been improvements with the Disability Standards, that things have improved because of the Standards being introduced?

MS FURMAGE: I think they have improved. I think that of course when you are in the position of needing the Disability Standards nothing is ever going to be fast enough or good enough. Of course that is to be understood. 100 per cent is my only
5 satisfaction point but I think there have been some marked improvements. However, one of the things that we keep noticing is that Standards are shaved, people do everything they can to try and do just little bit less than the minimum compliance. Frankly, there doesn't seem to be any mechanism for enforcing the Standards and that is unfortunate because it means, for instance when you are buying, when you are
10 converting a taxi it is going to cost you a certain amount of money to convert the taxi. If your taxi is then not converted to meet the actual Standards you have wasted your money and nobody is satisfied.

The person who is driving the taxi isn't happy because his taxi, he can't take the fares or she can't take the fares that he or she would like. I mean, after all, that is
15 what taxi drivers do for a living, they take fares, so presumably that is what they want to do. So the driver isn't happy. The people who are trying to use the taxi aren't happy. Nobody is happy and that's I think this business of having lose/lose situations, that is not what we are after. I think if the Standards in each area were
20 more firmly enforced, there would be a lot better result.

MS GOODMAN: Just taking on re the taxis, I guess one of the issues is that there is so many stakeholders in that one industry and my complaints goes more or less to the
25 Taxi Council. So there is very little independence in looking at the complaint objectively. I believe there have been strong improvements but with the buses, because there is only one bus per, ie three hours, if you are unlucky enough for that bus not to work or not to arrive or whatever reason, your whole arrangements are put out of sorts. If you can only catch one bus within three hours, it means that you don't have the same flexibility, spontaneity, as anyone else. But I guess we have to
30 start somewhere and this is certainly a starting point. Thank you to the Ministry of Transport and Richard for having done so much in the first five years.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you.

35 MS FURMAGE: Thank you.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thank you very much for coming here today. We will take a little short break.

40 **ADJOURNED AT 2.11 PM**

RESUMED AT 2.17 PM

45 MS O'LOUGHLIN: for Spinal Cord Injuries Australia. So thanks very much for coming.

MR LOMAS: First really to introduce myself, my name is Sean Lomas, as you have just heard. I am the Policy and Information Manager for Spinal Cord Injuries Australia. We have sort of come along today really to talk about an accessible transport survey that we have just commissioned, we sent out in January and we are still in the process of combining the results. So I apologise to everybody assembled for the lack of detail that you are going to get from the results but you will get a bit of an overview really of where we are looking at and some of the things that come back. I am working on a rough timeframe of about a week and a half to have the entire thing ready, which will actually work quite well for Richard's group. I should have all the pure stats ready to go for that.

Just to give a bit of an overview, we had such a phenomenal response, 228 respondents, and the number of questions we asked, we asked about 40 or so questions and the detail that people have given us on each and every one of those questions is just staggering and the number of times that people have interpreted pounds meaning kilograms or kilograms meaning pounds and height in inches meaning height in centimetres or height in millimetres and all of that has to be filtered through. So it is quite an exhaustive process. We have got here the purpose. The aim of conducting a survey of Australia members on the subject of accessible transport in Australia was to clarify issues, to provide real tangible data and to not only look upon transport as a policy issue but as a personal issue through people's stories.

This information is to be published and used to lobby for issues that are raised for the survey with the aim of being a resource to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Review and supporting all transport related action. Process. This is all the boring back end of the survey. The questionnaire was drafted by our policy department and thrown open to internal consultation by six people to check for relevance and ensure that the questions were as wide-reaching as possible. One thing we wanted to do is we didn't want to be guilty of being metro centric in our survey, so we tried to make sure that we covered as many types and areas of person that you are going to find and that is actually demonstrated well in a future slide that comes up where we look at our density of people, whether we have got metropolitan, we have got regional hub or regional rural.

The question of design to be anonymous and easy to use with no cost to the respondent. Obviously to increase the number of responses we get back. In order to reach as many wheelchair users as possible, the questionnaire is also marketed through our Accord magazine and with organisations such as PDCN, where the Paraquad also participated in that and a couple of other disability organisations, so that we could reach as many people as possible. The groups are targeted via an internal database, were members, clubs, press and organisations. You will see through the distribution of people that responded to the questionnaire that we have actually got quite a large density of people within in New South Wales, largely because that is where our membership largely sits.

For those who have got really, really good vision. What I will do is obviously when we have actually got this thing ready to go and publish we will be providing proper sized questionnaires for everybody to see, as well as all the data that goes on the back

of it but that just sort of gives you a bit of a snapshot view really of the questionnaire as put out. We did it all on a big A2, and then we sort of folded it so it actually worked out to be quite a user-friendly document that people could either fill in on our website. They could fill in in pen and mail back to us, they could fax it to us, we
5 even had one person relay their thoughts over the telephone, which was something that we hadn't thought was going to happen but did, which is easy, we just typed it into the computer as we went through.

Here is the big one. There is our respondent details. We had 179 people respond
10 from New South Wales, 24 people weren't quite sure or didn't state the State or territory where they lived. South Australia four, Victoria eight, Queensland seven, Western Australia four, ACT, I said this before and I will say it again, bit disappointing because we have quite a few people in the ACT and we really wanted to get a decent number back from there and one fellow up in the Northern Territory.
15 This is just a little bit of an overview of the people that responded. We have got 121 or 53 per cent of the respondents said that they lived in a capital city, so ie Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane. 51 or 22.4 per cent of respondents lived in a regional centre. This can sort of be I suppose in New South Wales, Armidale, places like that, maybe Wollongong.

20 23 or 10.1 per cent live in a rural area. So there we see we have got a kind of decent break-out because we have got 53 per cent, 22.4, so we have got half, one quarter and then 10 per cent, which is very, very representative of a standard geographic spread of the general populace in Australia. We have 159 or 69.7 per cent stated that
25 they had a mobility disability. We did get a lot of responses from carers as well as people that didn't state necessarily. 58 or 25.4 stated they had not and 11 didn't state. This is something quite interesting for the Standards. One of the questions we wanted to try to ask was what kind of chairs people were using, what kind of sizes, weights. The reason why we put weights in actually was after we had, I was in a taxi
30 with one of the team, one of my team from SCIA, and the wheelchair accessible taxi driver was complaining that his transmission on his cab kept breaking because the weight of wheelchairs was increasing.

He was having to replace his transmission every 12 months, which was costing him a
35 small fortune. So I thought, let's stick weight in there and let's see how heavy these things are. Now I need to clarify the weight, 161.4, because it could be pounds, it could be kilos, it could be ounces, could be anything. So I need to really go through all these again. I need to look at what wheelchairs are generally in use and average those out and then see how it applies to the figure I have got down there. So I have
40 got here 211 people providing details of the wheelchairs used. 63 or 29.8 per cent use manual wheelchairs and 59 or 28 per cent use power wheelchairs. The remainder scooters and a few able bodied people. One thing we have purposely tried to do as we have been going through this whole thing is to really focus in on the wheelchair user, the manual and the power, not really look at the scooter because
45 there is a whole load of other issues that comes with the scooters such as travelling on buses, spacing on trains and really in our thoughts a scooter is not the same thing as a wheelchair.

That a wheelchair is a prescribed medical piece of equipment whereas a scooter is something you can purchase off a shelf or be recommended by your doctor that you should use. Sizes here. Power chair average length 1260 millimetres. Average width 705.5, average height 1250.5 and average weight 161.4 something. You see in relation to the Standards how close we are actually starting to get to the wheelchair footprints. These are the sizes here for manual wheelchair user. Average length 637 millimetres, average width 687.5, average height 1100 millimetres and average weight 52.3 something. So lighter and generally smaller than your power, as you would expect.

So the overview now. I am just going to go by different sort of area headings as we go through this. We have got 13.6 per cent of respondents chose trains as their preferred form of travel. Their reason for choosing rail were availability, cost and accessibility. Of those 13.6 per cent the most popular use of trains was for work, 35.5 per cent and then for recreation 32.2 per cent. There is quite an interesting thing when we start looking at the number of people that use a certain method of transport for work because then we start looking at cost factors, which I think Ann started to touch on in her presentation, that the cost of travel is something that can be quite prohibitive to people with disabilities, people wheelchair users and getting into the workplace.

Rail is relatively inexpensive, so you would expect to find quite a high percentage of people using it for work. I just put down a couple of typical comments because I thought these were quite amusing to have down there because they really highlight some issues that people have. So have to travel in the entrance to the train, I don't tidy up any of the grammar in any of this, this is as it was written. "I have to travel in entrance to the train. I call it the dog box." This was actually from someone in New South Wales who was on a CountryLink train. They said the fumes from the engines were being sucked up through the gratings in the doors and the generally felt gassed as if they were a dog in a box. "We now have an accessible station, all stations should be accessible."

Findings taxi: 45 per cent of respondents listed which accessible taxis as their preferred mode of travel. Of those 45 per cent, only 12 per cent used wheelchair accessible taxis for work. So less than trains. Standard use for wheelchair accessible taxi was identified as recreation with shopping and medical appointments come in next. So work is even further down the list. The average passenger cost of taking wheelchair accessible taxi in Australia is \$27.80. For the purpose of when we actually publish this report I intend to extract all these figures by State so that we can see the differences in costings because each State is setting its own pricing. It is going to be different. That is just averaged out across the whole of the country and if you think we have got only one person from the Northern Territory and they do actually use a wheelchair accessible taxi but they say it gets bogged down in the wet season. So it costs them more when it is raining.

Findings for bus: we have got 35 people, 15.3 per cent respondents stating that buses were their preferred method of travel. All States were represented except Queensland and the Northern Territory, which is a little bit interesting. 83.3 per cent of bus travellers were within New South Wales and in particular Sydney. I think that

is probably owing to the State Transit having their high percentage of accessible buses. It certainly is a very, very big plus point. Another thing is where the excessive costs of taxis as well in New South Wales. Some of the typical statements we received were: “Jerky buses, difficult to hold on.” Gas operated buses were highlighted in that. So I mean that stands, that is not just for wheelchair users, it’s for the elderly, the infirm.

We are aware of issues around when the bus driver depresses the accelerator gas buses don’t feed straight through and then there is a little bit of a jerk and then they get under way. Long waiting times for an overcrowded accessible bus echoed again by my colleagues before. Live close to a centre, so buses are fine in Victoria. So maybe that even starts to look at if you live in a densely populated area, your chances of getting an accessible bus are greater because you have more routes going through. Buses are shown to be only used for work when frequency is not an issue. I can even say this, I am an able-bodied person so my perspective on this is probably slightly different but I drove into work one day, it takes me 40 minute. So I took a network of buses to get there, it took me 2 hours 10.

Now the next one, findings on air travel. 148 people stated that they had flown, which is 65 per cent. The majority of the trips were on an annual or longer period. Aircraft stowage restrictions had affected 15 per cent of travellers. Issues identified by airline and plane. Qantas 747, three chairs crushed and one lost. Virgin Blue 737, chair crushed. Japan Air 747 chair crushed. Lauda Air 767 passenger turned away after giving prior notice of needs and Rex Airlines, Saab 340, passenger denied access to plane owing to space restrictions. Now those statements there have quite a lot of significance behind them because if you think Rex Airlines, when they are going through their booking procedure to go on the plane, they obviously have highlighted that we have a mobility disability, so why were they allowed to go that far down the chain before being turned away.

There is also an issue around once a chair is crushed it is looked on as baggage by the airlines as opposed to a mobility aid and under the classification of baggage they receive a certain percentage back in compensation. Each and every person there that actually responded to that said that their chair was replaced with one that was far cheaper and didn’t have all the extra features that their one had on it. So they were actually disadvantaged and had increased – well, it didn’t work out for them. They just couldn’t get around. This one here is very, very boring. Ferries. We had two people say that they had used the ferries. The Victorian ferry user didn’t really say anything. A Sydney ferry user described the experience as excellent. So I can’t say anything. This is what they have put across to us.

Okay. Initial conclusions: owing to bus frequency issues often the only form of transport available to working wheelchair users is the wheelchair accessible taxi, with an average single journey fare of \$27.80, \$55.60 for the day. Wheelchair users are being penalised for entering into the workplace. It’s a fairly straightforward statement and with figures like that, when I can travel into work, I did travel in on the bus for about \$5 I think for a whole day, 5.10 or something, for a whole day’s worth of travel. Compare that with a wheelchair user who has to take the taxi and it costs him \$55.60. There is quite a significant difference. Wheelchair footprints in taxis of

1300 x 800. The maximum size that we found in the survey was actually 1700, which means it is way out of the size.

5 I mean this is a trend that we have been monitoring and it seems to be down to
wheelchair manufacturers, that they are making their chairs bigger and heavier and
there is obviously an issue with that and it is not just really a beating the transport
providers over the head over this. It also has to be a question of talking to the
wheelchair providers and saying look, you need to rein in the sizes that you are going
10 because you are getting too large and it is causing problems and it is further
disadvantaging people because they buy your product because they think it is going
to increase their mobility and it actually acts to decrease. So that is something quite
interesting. We found that compliance with the Disability Standards were in parts
tokenistic. We haven't seen a consistent approach to it in any of the findings from
the survey and in fact in our own organisation's findings.

15 In cases you will find that certain providers will go above and beyond and really start
to get out there and really start to make themselves accessible. Other ones will
ignore the Standard or go up to the level, others will just say what Standard. I can
provide details of that and I will do when I put this forward properly, so you will
20 have tangible correct information on that. Safety of travel is paramount to the
majority of travellers. You think - that was actually echoed through quite a lot of the
people who responded to this and you think that when I get on a bus my main issue is
is the bus going to get me there on time, what is the cost of the travel. I don't usually
get on a bus and think about safety as being my number one priority but it shows that
25 wheelchair users are to a certain degree sceptical about their safety chances on the
accessible transport network, whether it be buses, they think is the bus going to break
down, am I going to be able to get on it?

30 Are there bus restraining straps, if in metropolitan Sydney, going to hold out for me.
Are there bus restraining straps if I am in regional New South Wales because there
seems to be a push at the moment that the regions don't seem to think that they need
retaining straps on their buses, which we are working on. Even on trains, you know,
what happens if my train breaks down, am I going to be safe, can I get off the train.
So national strategy needed for accessible transport as it varies too much in
35 implementation by State. We found this by looking at the State-wide data that you
may well have. I mean New South Wales is quite proactive. I am not going to sit
here and berate New South Wales because they have done some tremendous work.
You contrast that with some of the other States, the ACT, Western Australia have
done well in parts.

40 The Northern Territory, you see a very minor change, if a change at all. So the
Disability Standards is supposed to an Australia-wide document really, really need to
be enforced and pushed as an Australia-wide document that changes by State are not
acceptable. There has to be a Standard that everybody adheres to irrespective of
45 where they are. I think that's me.

MS O'LOUGHLIN: That is really interesting.That is a great contribution.

MR LOMAS: Has anyone got any questions or anything they want?

[QUESTIONS FROM FLOOR]

5 MR LOMAS: That's because we primarily polled our members and although we
are SCI Australia, we are largely based in New South Wales and our membership
database is largely in New South Wales. It was a very unfortunate bi-product of
being that sort of organisation. I we are trying to grow ourselves outside of New
South Wales more and I thought that by using or approaching PDCN, I think we
10 approached PWD as well, Paraquad, that we may well be able to get greater
representation throughout Australia but we just didn't get it in. It's a shame. A
really big shame because this has the capability to be really a strong survey.

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

15 MR LOMAS: Yes, if we have the money, yes.

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

20 MR LOMAS: One thing that is good and this actually addresses Jordana's
statement earlier on when she was talking about data and seeing data progress
through the years. Something like this once written up into a proper format would
act as a data resource for 2007. So you have your snapshot of issues in 2007. So you
can measure the Standards against this in another five years and say actually what
25 kind of feedback are we getting from this.

[COMMENT FROM FLOOR]

30 MS O'LOUGHLIN: It made me think that it is such an opportunity to, as you say, to
get the good basic data and tracking data and hats off to you for

MR LOMAS: I think the point that Richard made is very, very valid because we
have to make sure that throughout this entire process we are not just smacking the
heads of government. Where good practice has been shown and people have worked
with the Standards, statistics and data can actually reinforce that and say yes, these
35 have been positive changes. There is still an awful lot to do but hey, you know, stuff
has happened.

40 MS O'LOUGHLIN: In some ways the Standards recognise there is a lot to do
just because of the compliance timeframe. So that is sort built in that understanding
but, as you say, to be able to track progress over the years is very valuable.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

45 MS O'LOUGHLIN: I think the other thing from today is we are Richard,
although pretty well every speaker has noted progress, quite a few speakers have
pointed to areas where they feel things have gone backwards and certainly not
progressed and that has been a surprise to me.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

MR LOMAS: There's a good point about the shape of the chair, the shape of the space it has to conform to inside the taxi because as she held up the tape measure, I am making the point outside, is that if you divide that in two, so you have got a space fore and aft and then you draw your line up to the height, then you draw the angle,
5 then you have the sort of shape that you can realistically fit into and it is not a cube.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

MR LOMAS: We are actually working on that case. We are the ones that pushed
10 them to go and see State Transit but they are saying that the work, the restraining
and my good friend up in the Northern Rivers is working on it.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

MR LOMAS: I think what broke it was that we took one of the managers on a hair-
15 brain bus ride with this lady and our representative and the managers just had to
watch her slide from side to side in the bus and they were okay, yes, fair enough.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

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MR LOMAS: When you say the majority of people that do have accidents on buses
are actually standing up or moving back to seats or moving to get off the bus.

[COMMENTS FROM FLOOR]

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MS O'LOUGHLIN: Thanks so much, that was great. We have afternoon tea, which
is very nice.

30 **MATTER ADJOURNED at 2.48 pm UNTIL 20 JULY 2007**