



2022 Review of the Disability
Standards for Accessible Public
Transport
Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the fourth statutory review (2022 Review) of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards), providing an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards in removing public transport discrimination against people with disability over the five-year period to December 2022.

The 2022 Review has considered the views and experiences of more than 1,000 respondents, including more than 600 people with disability, as well as carers and family members, disability service providers and advocacy groups, government departments, public transport providers and operators and access consultants.

Progress towards removing discrimination and achieving compliance with the Transport Standards

In contrast to previous reviews, very little quantitative data was provided by public transport providers and operators on specific levels of compliance with the Transport Standards. Conclusions have therefore been predominantly drawn from the qualitative information provided across survey responses, submissions, webinar comments, round table discussions and focus groups.

Responses show that significant efforts have been made by public transport providers and operators over the past five years to improve the accessibility of public transport and remove barriers that discriminate against people with disability. There were numerous examples provided in review responses that highlight where things have improved. However, it appears that change has been incremental and patchy, leading to overall perceptions amongst public transport users that little progress has been made.

There is evidence of many pockets of great practice across the country. However, continuing accessibility challenges in some areas of public transport, combined with a lack of accessibility within elements that sit outside of the responsibility of individual public transport providers and operators, or outside the scope of the Transport Standards themselves, can mean that, ultimately, the impact on the accessibility of an individuals' journey may be limited.

Many concerns were raised about compliance with the Transport Standards, as currently the only mechanism for monitoring or enforcing compliance is through complaints made by, or on behalf of, public transport users. There are no national requirements for public transport providers and operators to report on compliance with the Transport Standards and therefore no way of accurately gauging levels of compliance and identifying where future efforts might best be focused.

Public transport providers and operators report that the greatest challenges in achieving compliance relate to retrofitting existing assets with accessibility features, due to the significant cost, disruption and technical issues involved. Responses suggest that newer public transport is being designed and developed to comply with the Transport Standards – increasingly with the input of people with disability, and is producing great accessibility outcomes as a result.

The need for greater consultation, collaboration and co-design with people with disability was a significant theme across responses to the review. Large numbers of respondents noted that truly accessible public transport can only be achieved through the involvement of people with disability



across all aspects of design, procurement and implementation of public transport, including the design of the Transport Standards and supporting documents.

Awareness and understanding of public transport accessibility

It is clear from responses to the review that members of the public have a low level of awareness of the Transport Standards, its supporting Guidelines and the Whole Journey Guide. Public transport users were keen for public awareness raising, not only of the Transport Standards, but also of the needs of people with different types of disability when accessing public transport – particularly in relation to seating and getting on and off conveyances.

Whilst public transport providers and operators are well aware of the Transport Standards, it appears that they may not be consistently understood or applied, particularly by public transport staff in frontline roles. There were many calls from public transport users for more training of public transport providers and operators and their staff in relation to their obligations under the Transport Standards, as well as in relation to supporting and communicating with people with accessibility needs, including those with hidden disabilities. Many respondents suggested that involvement of people with disability in the design and delivery of this training would result in better outcomes for both public transport users and staff.

Accessibility across the whole public transport journey

The many hundreds of responses from people with disability and those who support them provided valuable insights into the experiences of people with disability in using, or not being able to use, public transport. A lack of accessible public transport can have an immense impact on the lives of people with disability in terms of safety risks, injury, inability to access health and other services, and social isolation arising from the inability to participate in employment and social engagements.

Public transport users reported several areas of notable improvement in public transport accessibility, including better access to information to assist with journey planning and journey tracking, improvements in ticketing, seating, shelter and boarding access (particularly on buses and some tram lines), assistance animal toilets in some airports and more friendly and supportive public transport staff, particularly bus drivers.

However, significant accessibility barriers still exist in relation to:

- **Journey planning** – in terms of incomplete, inconsistent and/or unreliable accessibility information, information not meeting the needs of a broad range of disabilities, and needing to navigate multiple sources of information to ascertain accessibility
- **Stops, stations and terminals** – in terms of lift access, seating and shelter, signage and announcements, access to toilets, crowding and sensory overwhelm
- **Getting on and off** – in terms of stairs, gaps between vehicles and platforms/curbs, availability of assistance and time allowed for getting on and off
- **On board** – in terms of difficulties accessing priority seating and spaces, announcement of stops, unsafe driving and refusal of travel with assistance animals
- **Journey disruptions** – in terms of lack of information to respond to planned disruptions or to know what to do when faced with unplanned disruptions, and lack of consideration of the



needs of people with disability when providing alternative transport, often leaving them stranded or with long waits.

Barriers are often even greater for people with disability living in rural, regional and remote areas, due to limited availability of accessible public transport and a lack of alternative forms of transport in the event of journey disruptions.

Numerous concerns were also raised about processes for making complaints about discrimination, including for making complaints via the Australian Human Rights Commission. Significant scepticism exists about the value of making complaints due to the time, effort and costs involved and doubt as to the likelihood of it achieving a meaningful outcome.

Issues related to the Transport Standards

Responses to the review highlighted a number of issues about the scope, wording and application of the Transport Standards, including:

- some confusion, conflict and lack of consistency between the Transport Standards and other related standards
- exemptions or lack of clarity around coverage by the Transport Standards of certain public transport types, including school buses, small aircraft and rideshare services
- the balance between minimum standards for compliance and a focus on achieving good practice outcomes
- the dependence of accessibility across the whole journey upon factors that sit outside the scope of the Transport Standards.

A number of emerging issues were also noted, including the rise of autonomous vehicles and on-demand transport, changes in mobility devices and enabling technology, increasing awareness of hidden disabilities and the impact of inaccessible public transport on NDIS funding and other subsidies.

Opportunities for action

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the review, which present opportunities for action in relation to the Transport Standards and public transport accessibility.

1. The Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide are not widely known or understood.
2. A lack of mechanisms for measuring and enforcing compliance is a significant barrier to removing discrimination from public transport.
3. The Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide have not kept pace with change.
4. The Transport Standards alone do not enable a fully accessible 'whole of journey'.
5. There are some specific aspects of public transport that pose particular accessibility challenges – including complaints processes, journey disruptions, and travelling in rural, regional and remote areas and air travel.
6. Engagement of people with disability in the design and implementation of public transport leads to better accessibility outcomes.



Some of these issues were identified through the recent Reform of the Transport Standards and are being addressed to in whole or in part. Others will require further consideration into the future.

Further information about the reforms can be viewed on the [Department of Infrastructure website](#).



1. Introduction

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards) detail the obligations of public transport providers and operators to make their services accessible and fulfil their obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA). Every five years, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, in consultation with the Attorney-General, is required to review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards.

This is the report of the fourth review of the Transport Standards. It provides an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards over the five-year period to December 2022, based on extensive consultation with stakeholders. The report examines progress towards removing discrimination against people with disability from public transport and identifies opportunities for action to improve the Transport Standards and their implementation.

2. The Disability Standards for Accessible Transport 2002

The DDA makes it unlawful to directly or indirectly discriminate against a person with disability in the provision of services such as public transport, as well as other areas of public life, such as employment and education. Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule or policy that is the same for everyone has an unfavourable impact on a person with disability.

The DDA gives the Attorney-General the power to make disability standards in relation to any area where unlawful discrimination may occur, in order to promote equal rights, opportunity and access for people with disability. Standards are legally binding legislative instruments set by the Attorney-General under the DDA. These standards provide more detail on rights and responsibilities under the DDA about equal access and opportunity for people with a disability.

The Transport Standards outline requirements for public transport operators and providers to make their services accessible and remove discrimination against people with disability. A public transport service is defined under the Transport Standards as “an enterprise that conveys members of the public by land, water or air, and covers both publicly and privately owned services including trains, trams and light rail, buses and coaches, ferries, aircraft and taxis”.¹ The Transport Standards came into effect on 23 October 2002 and were amended in 2004, 2005 and 2011.

In addition to the Transport Standards, disability standards have also been developed for education and public buildings. These are the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Education Standards) and the Disability (Access to Premises — Buildings) Standards 2010 (Premises Standards).

The Transport Standards set compliance target dates for each five-year period from 2007 until 2022, for public transport operators and providers to progressively meet Transport Standards requirements applicable to their conveyances, premises and infrastructure. Operators and providers of trains and trams have an additional 10 years, to 2032, to ensure their conveyances fully comply with the Transport Standards.

¹ The Standards do not apply to charter boats, limousines and self drive rental cars. School buses and small aircraft are exempt from many requirements.



A note about terminology

Conveyance: As per Transport Standards section 1.12, Conveyance: A conveyance includes any of the following, to the extent that they are used to provide a public transport service: aircraft, buses or coaches, ferries, taxis, trains, trams, light rail, monorails, rack railways, any other rolling stock, vehicle or vessel classified as public transport within its jurisdiction by regulation or administrative action of any Government in Australia. A conveyance does not include charter boats (including water taxis), limousines (including chauffeured hire cars) self-drive rental cars.

Premises: As per Transport Standards section 1.21, Premises: Premises are structures, buildings or attached facilities that an operator provides for passengers to use as part of a public transport service.

Infrastructure: As per Transport Standards section 1.18, Infrastructure: Infrastructure is any structure or facility that is used by passengers in conjunction with travelling on a public transport service. This does not include any area beyond immediate boarding points (for example, bus stops, wharves, ranks, rail stations, terminals).

3. Previous Reviews and Reform of the Transport Standards

The Transport Standards must be reviewed every five years. The reviews must consider whether discrimination has been removed as far as possible, according to the requirements for compliance set out in Schedule 1 of the Transport Standards; and any necessary amendments to the Transport Standards.

Since the release of the Transport Standards there have been three reviews – the 2007 Review, the 2012 Review and the 2017 Review. These reviews identified a number of key barriers impacting the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards. An overview of actions taken in response to the 2017 Review can be found in Appendix A.

Further information about previous reviews is available on the [Department of Infrastructure website](#).

In 2019, Infrastructure and Transport Ministers agreed to reform the Transport Standards. Extensive public consultations were held in 2021 and 2022 to investigate the impacts of the proposed reforms. These reforms were agreed by the Attorney-General on xxx, and work is underway to update the Transport Standards.

These reforms aim to address the recommendations of previous reviews of the Transport Standards, to ensure they remain efficient and effective, are fit for purpose and meet the current needs of people with disability. The reforms will support more people with disability to undertake independent travel on public transport, improving access to work, education, healthcare and the



community. Further information, including detail about the reform areas, is available on the [Department of Infrastructure website](#).

4. Approach taken to the 2022 Review

The 2022 Review has considered the efficiency and effectiveness of the Transport Standards, including:

- whether discrimination has been removed, as far as possible, according to the requirements for compliance set out in Schedule 1 of the Transport Standards; and
- any necessary amendments to the Transport Standards.

This report focuses on:

- assessment and reporting of public views
- analysis of progress towards removing discrimination for people with disability on public transport services
- assessment of public transport operator and provider compliance with the requirements set in Schedule 1 of the Transport Standards
- identification of areas of potential reform to the Transport Standards

Public consultation for the review was open from 22 December 2022 to 30 June 2023. The consultation process involved:

- Preparation and dissemination of a discussion paper, outlining the scope of the review, what feedback is required and how to have a say. Stakeholders could respond to the discussion paper in a variety of ways, including:
 - in writing via email, mail or upload to the webpage
 - by video or audio recording
 - by phone
- An interactive webinar
- Preparation and administration of two surveys for:
 - public transport users with disability (user survey)
 - public transport operators and providers (operator and provider survey)
- 7 focus groups with people with disability, including:
 - People with physical disability
 - People with intellectual disability x 2
 - People who are blind or have vision impairment
 - First Nations people with disability
 - People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disability
 - People who are deaf and blind
- 2 round tables – one each with:



- disability sector stakeholders
- public transport sector stakeholders.

The consultations were designed to put the lived experience of the disability community at the forefront of discussions. Consultation sessions were delivered or co-facilitated by people with disability, and captions and Auslan were used to further increase accessibility. To support engagement in the consultations, written materials were also prepared in various accessible formats. This included short summaries, and translations into Easy English, languages other than English and Auslan. Materials were also designed to be screen-reader compatible.

More than 1,000 people contributed to the review (see Table 1), including over 600 people with disability. Some people contributed to the review through multiple methods.

Table 1. Participation in engagement activities for the 2022 Review

Engagement activity	Number of participants
Submissions	114
Webinar	160
User survey	646
Operator and provider survey	22
Disability sector round table	10
Public transport sector round table	34
Focus groups	74
Total	1,060

The full set of responses to the review, including survey responses, submissions and feedback from the webinar, round tables and focus groups, were analysed using qualitative and quantitative software to identify themes, which are presented in this report.

Copies of public submissions made to the review can be found on the [Department of Infrastructure website](#).



5. Progress towards removing discrimination and achieving compliance with the Transport Standards

A broad range of stakeholders, including people with disability, public transport providers and operators and governments, were invited to participate in the review. However, few submissions were received from public transport providers and operators, only three responses came from state/territory governments, and very limited data was provided on compliance with the Transport Standards. Therefore, assessment of progress towards the removal of discrimination is predominantly informed by feedback to the review from public transport users and disability advocates.

5.1 Respondents' views

The Transport Standards were established to provide a minimum set of requirements for public transport providers and operators to progressively meet in order to remove discrimination from public transport. The 20-year target for 100 percent compliance with the Transport Standards for all public transport modes (apart from trains and trams which have until 2032) has now passed.

Whilst respondents to the review acknowledged particular areas of improvement in accessibility, the prevailing view is that progress is slow and patchy and that there has been little overall improvement in the past five years in removing discrimination from public transport services. People with disability are still facing barriers due to lack of accessibility and lack of awareness of accessibility issues amongst other members of the public and public transport staff.

Generally speaking, our view is that while the Standards have provided guidance and prompts to pockets of change, they have not succeeded in transforming public transport infrastructure to respond to the needs of people with disability, nor are they fit for purpose given the urgent imperatives to develop a sustainable, accessible, modern transport system which meets the needs of an ageing population. (Advocacy for Inclusion submission)

There are observed improvements in recent years to public transport across NSW, with the introduction of new conveyances produced through codesign with the disability community. However, discrimination is still a regular experience for people with disability using public transport, as older conveyances lack the accessibility of newer designs, accessible infrastructure remains an aspirational goal without sufficient progress, and the attitudes of both staff and the general public towards people with disability remain an issue. (Physical Disability Council of NSW submission)

Several public transport providers and operators also acknowledged that while there has been improvement, there is still some way to go to remove discrimination from public transport services.

Although public transport is improving, it is evident when consulting with people with disability, that discrimination still exists, as barriers to public transport still exist. (City of Sydney submission)



A poll of participants in the webinar conducted as part of the review highlighted that those who work for public transport providers and operators were more likely to believe that discrimination in public transport has been getting 'much' or 'slightly' better, compared to the majority of webinar participants (who were people with disability, disability advocates or who worked for a disability organisation), who felt that accessibility was 'about the same'.

Some participants in the five focus groups conducted with people with disability were positive about improvements in public transport accessibility. However, the majority felt that accessibility has not improved, or in some cases, is worse, with participants noting a range of significant barriers they still faced when trying to access public transport.

Across the responses to the review, commonly suggested reasons for the lack of progress in removing discrimination from public transport were:

- a lack of compliance reporting, monitoring and enforcement processes
- ineffective complaints processes
- a lack of action on issues raised in previous reviews (although several submissions noted that the outcomes of the current reform process are yet to be realised, and are likely to address many of the concerns raised)
- the cost of upgrading public transport networks, particularly those that are large, old, or in rural, regional and remote areas.

... there is burgeoning frustration that despite three reviews to date nothing has changed for the benefit of Deaf people. Technological advances have rapidly marched across these three reviews; yet these advances have not been incorporated as part of making Australian public transport first class. (Deaf Australia submission)

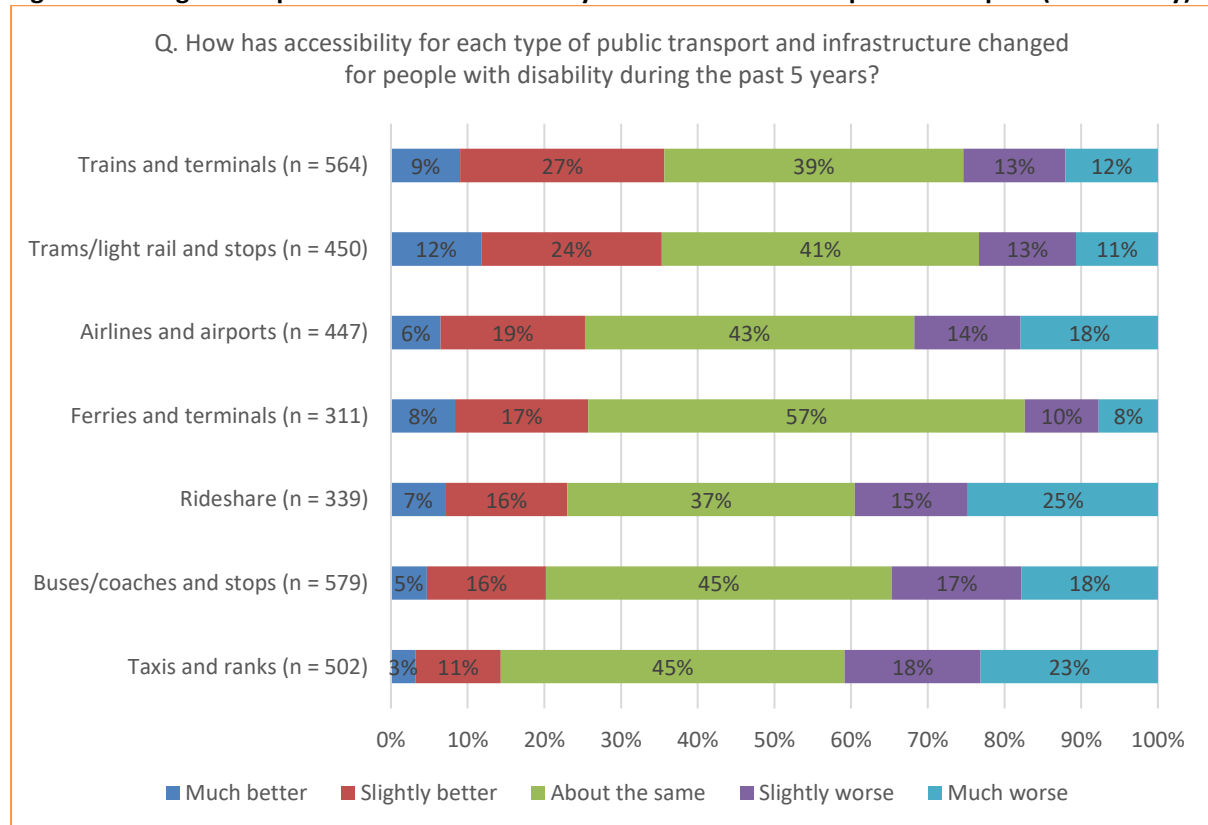
The Commission is concerned with the lack of timely progress on the reforms stemming from the 2017 review, alongside the absence of full compliance with the legislative targets set 20 years ago. This means that people with disability in Australia continue to face discrimination in the provision of public transport services. (Australian Human Rights Commission submission)

5.2 Progress by modes of transport

The hundreds of responses to the transport user survey highlighted a prevailing view that accessibility of public transport and infrastructure has remained much the same over the past five years. Figure 1 below illustrates respondents' perceptions of the extent to which accessibility has changed over the past five years for different types of public transport. The greatest reported improvements were in relation to trains and terminals and trams/light rail and stops, with 36% of users of these forms of public transport reporting that they were now slightly or much better. At the same time, large proportions of respondents felt that the accessibility of taxis and ranks, rideshare services, buses/coaches and stops, and airlines and airports has worsened. Between 32% and 41% of users of these forms of public transport felt that accessibility had become slightly or much worse.



Figure 1. Changes in experiences with accessibility on different forms of public transport (user survey)



5.3 Examples of improvements – public transport users

There were a number of areas in which public transport users commonly noted improvements in the accessibility of public transport. These centred around some common themes.

Improved ticketing and trip planning, often enabled by technological advances

This included:

- more, and improved, phone apps to assist with journey planning, including the ability to live-track the conveyance you are travelling in to help work out when to get off
- inclusion of more detailed accessibility information or features in online journey planning tools (e.g. the option to select ‘wheelchair friendly services’)
- more, and more accurate, real-time information, especially in relation to potential journey disruptions
- indicators of level of crowding provided by Google Maps
- on board next-stop displays or announcements, including introduction of next-stop announcements on some buses
- greater accessibility of online and app-based journey planning tools
- provision of arrival information at stops and stations (through visual displays, QR codes, or phone numbers to call – for example, Brisbane City Council provides a Visually Impaired Passenger Telephone Service that covers the 6,000 plus bus stops in its network.)



Improved accessibility of conveyances

This included:

- introduction of new accessible light rail/trams on some lines
- availability of more accessible buses, including the entire bus fleets in Brisbane and Perth.

Improved accessibility of infrastructure

This included:

- more lifts at stations and better signage for finding them
- greater autonomy in using trains with the creation of more “roll on roll off” (i.e. no gap) trains/platforms
- raising of bus-stop platforms to reduce the gap between the footpath and bus.

Improved accessibility of premises

This included:

- creation of assistance animal toileting facilities in some airports.

Better design of public transport

This included:

- more seating for people with disability and more space for people using mobility devices on buses, trains and newer ferries, as well as better signage of seating reserved for people with disabilities
- greater engagement of people with disability in the design and implementation of public transport, which was achieving better accessibility outcomes.

More friendly and supportive public transport staff, particularly bus drivers

This included comments about drivers and other public transport staff:

- providing more time for passengers with disability to get seated or to get off the bus
- “speaking up” for passengers with disabilities
- generally being more aware of people with disability and assistance dogs.

5.4 Examples of improvements – public transport providers and operators

Public transport providers and operators also noted numerous improvements they had made to enhance the accessibility of public transport within their field of responsibility. These centred around some common themes.

The use of technology to improve accessibility of journey planning

For example:

- proof of concept trialling in Brisbane of the application NaviLens, to allow people with visual impairment to scan colourful machine-readable codes on their phone to access real-time information, wayfinding and audible experiences



- successful trialling of near-field communication (NFC) at selected Brisbane bus stops, allowing people to tap an NFC-enabled smartphone on an NFC case to open a webpage containing the stop timetable, real-time bus information where available, service notifications, and other general stop information – without needing to download any apps or search the web
- development of an online Accessibility Map for the City of Sydney, which provides information about lifts, mobility parking, accessible public toilets, key transport nodes, and barriers such as stairs and steep inclines, and where available, additional information such as whether a kerb ramp is available at a taxi rank, or whether an accessible toilet is a left- or right-hand transfer toilet.

Implementation of initiatives to enhance accessibility for a broader range of people with disability

For example:

- development and publication of Easy Read versions of public transport documentation including complaints policies and procedures and other factsheets
- introduction of ‘sunflower lanyard’ and other hidden disabilities programs to assist with identification of people with hidden disabilities.

Collaboration to deliver accessible public transport solutions

For example:

- collaboration between local, state and Commonwealth governments and various modes of public transport to create an accessible ‘whole of journey’ experience as part of Sydney’s George Street pedestrianisation project
- regular meetings of the Australian Railways Association Accessibility Committee in which rail transport providers and operators can share ideas and lessons learned.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) described their Accessible Transport Advisory Committee, which provides independent advice to TfNSW, with the aim of improving public and private transport access for people with disability and older people. They also pointed out the priority placed on accessible public transport in their Disability Inclusion Action Plans. They reported that “67 percent of suburban, intercity and regional stations are wheelchair accessible (250 of 373 stations)” and that “more than 93 per cent of transport customer journeys in NSW begin from locations which are accessible to people with disability”.

Queensland’s Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) reported making significant progress in the past five years towards removing discrimination for people with disability in public transport, through a comprehensive approach that involves:

- a policy foundation that includes an Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy, Accessibility and Inclusion Plan 2023–2024, a Disability Services Plan 2022–2025, Creating Better Connections for Queenslanders, and an Interim Disability Action Plan 2023–2024
- a range of engagement mechanisms that involve people with disability in public transport planning and improvement, including an Accessible Taxi Services Working Group,



Accessibility Reference Group, Accessible Transport Network, New Generation Rollingstock accessibility upgrades program, and Queensland Accessible Transport Advisory Council

- a series of initiatives to support the accessibility of public transport, including public transport concessions, School Transport Assistance Scheme, Taxi Subsidy Scheme, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Grant Scheme, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi lift fee, Customer feedback processes/methodologies, Passenger Transport Infrastructure Investment Program, Passenger Transport Accessible Infrastructure Program, and Smart Ticketing project.

5.5 Accessibility across the ‘Whole of Journey’

A common issue raised by both public transport users and public transport providers and operators is that while certain parts of a journey may be supported by accessible public transport, many parts are not, which then impacts on the overall accessibility of a person’s journey.

You can only do so much. If you don’t have a footpath that’s connected correctly to the train station, for example, it kind of all falls over. (Transport Sector roundtable participant)

The challenge, as expressed in a number of submissions, is that:

significant parts of the journey fall outside the jurisdiction of operators and providers of public transport services... As a result, people with disability often face barriers to accessing public transport, even if the vehicles and facilities themselves are accessible...

Public transport systems are mobility systems embedded within urban, suburban or rural landscapes and they depend on the accessibility of these landscapes for their efficacy. The precincts in which the public transport systems are located must be accessible. Until this occurs, public transport systems will not be fully accessible to people with disability, even though they may be fully compliant with the DSAPT. (Queenslanders with Disability Network submission)

Many providers and operators spoke about the challenges in creating accessible public transport when it intersects with areas for which they have no authority (such as construction of kerbs and footpaths, decisions about bus routes and bus stop locations, and provision of subcontracted services such as maintenance or security).

Some suggested the need for better coordination between public transport providers and operators, local government, contractors and private entities.

It needs a whole-of-government approach, including local government, as highlighted in the Whole of Journey Guide. (Person with visual impairment and psychosocial disability, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

Others spoke about the intersection between the Transport Standards and the Premises Standards. However, sometimes the issue falls outside the scope of either set of disability standards. This can leave gaps in the accessibility of public transport journeys for which there are no clear lines of accountability, nor dedicated funding to address accessibility barriers.



Some jurisdictions are attempting to solve this problem through policies and planning approaches based on concepts of the whole of journey or whole of precinct.

5.6 Concerns about compliance

Concerns about levels of compliance with the Transport Standards and the lack of mechanisms for measuring, reporting on and holding providers and operators accountable for compliance, were raised across all respondent groups. This included not only public transport users and disability advocates, but also public transport providers and operators themselves.

Currently the only formal mechanism for monitoring or enforcing compliance with the Transport Standards is through complaints made by, or on behalf of, public transport users through the Australian Human Rights Commission. State and territory governments and public transport providers and operators also have their own processes in place for pursuing complaints. However, much of the burden of holding public transport providers and operators accountable sits on the shoulders of individuals.

It is clear that many of the bus, train, and tram systems around the country have failed to meet their targets. What is unclear, however, are the consequences for States and Territories in their failure to comply. The current system of anti-discrimination law and accountability mechanisms have remained reactive rather than proactive in addressing issues. This relies on individuals being willing and sufficiently resourced to make a complaint in relation to unlawful discrimination. This can be a difficult, dangerous and daunting process. (Advocacy for Inclusion submission)

The Commission's complaints process remains the primary mechanism to address breaches of compliance under the Transport Standards. The conciliation process has been raised as a 'significant area of concern' for people with disability due to the power imbalances that exist between complainants and the transport industry. This also places an undue burden on people with disability to hold transport providers responsible for non-compliance, requiring a level of understanding and self-identification of breaches to the Transport Standards which are highly technical. (Australian Human Rights Commission submission)

5.7 Levels of compliance

In previous reviews of the Transport Standards, submissions included notable amounts of quantitative data on compliance achievements against the Transport Standards. In the 2022 Review, only four submissions received from public transport providers and operators contained specific data on levels of compliance against the Transport Standards. A couple of other submissions provided some statistics around accessibility of public transport, but not specifically referenced to the Transport Standards.

Responses from some public transport providers and operators indicated that they were waiting for the Transport Standards reform work to be completed before undertaking further reviews of the compliance of their public transport services.



Those submissions that did contain compliance data highlighted achievements such as:

- Brisbane City Council providing a bus fleet that is 100% compliant with the Transport Standards and upgrading more than 80% of bus stops, with plans underway to complete the remainder
- City of Sydney installing 330 new fully-compliant bus shelters in 2022-23 and working with Transport for NSW to upgrade remaining bus stop infrastructure across the city
- Sunshine Coast City Council achieving almost 100% compliance across the bus stops it manages, with the remaining 11 stops unable to be upgraded without significant financial investment.

Many respondents to the review suggested that the 2022 compliance targets were far from being achieved and that the 2032 compliance targets for trams and trains are also unlikely to be achieved given the current trajectory of progress.

5.8 Measuring compliance

Many respondents to the review noted that in the absence of consistent and publicly available data, it is virtually impossible to gain an understanding of the level of compliance with the Transport Standards and therefore to gauge overall accessibility of public transport. Some respondents suggested that there may be reluctance on the part of providers and operators to conduct audits or to publish results due to fears of reputational risk.

... from the perspective of community sector stakeholders, it is difficult to gauge how effective the Standards are when the systemic underpinnings (monitoring of compliance, a culture of accountability and the application of learning to support continuous quality improvement) are weak. For example, at a systemic level, it is hard to get an accurate and holistic picture of all the levels of accessibility and barriers that exist, because we don't have line of sight to clear data on operator/provider compliance. It is also still unclear how many parts of the system have been audited. For those parts that have been audited, the results are not often shared with the public, making it difficult to know whether issues are due to a failure to meet the standards or inadequate standards themselves.

(Victorian Council of Social Service submission)

Responses from public transport providers and operators described processes for measuring compliance with the Transport Standards that included audits, inspections, user feedback and references to technical documentation.

Several providers and operators suggested that compliance data alone does not provide enough of a basis for decision-making around public transport. They felt that more data around useability, such as user-based rating systems, or tolerance measures for non-compliant legacy infrastructure that are based on impact on accessibility, would be helpful for prioritising upgrades and investment, as well as being more transparent to public transport users.



5.9 Compliance challenges

Public transport providers and operators highlighted the challenges involved in attempting to achieve full compliance with the Transport Standards. Some of these challenges are due to factors outside of their control, such as topographical constraints surrounding public transport stops, or situations in which other parties are responsible for aspects of public transport provision and infrastructure.

Responses to the review suggest that newer public transport infrastructure is being designed and developed in compliance with the Transport Standards and is increasingly designed with the input of people with disability. The challenges lie in the retrofitting of accessibility features to existing and legacy infrastructure due to the significant cost and disruption that can be involved, as well as technical issues that can arise.

Other commonly reported challenges include:

- lack of available funding to make public transport fully accessible (an issue that is even more pronounced in some regional areas, due to smaller budgets than their metropolitan counterparts)
- complying with prescriptive standards, such as gap dimensions
- complying with requirements regarding equivalent price, costs and service pick-up times.
- meeting access and clearance requirements for bus shelters in crowded precincts, or during busy times of day.

Airlines and airport operators described particular challenges in meeting the Transport Standards, whilst also meeting regulatory requirements and obligations related to aviation safety, transport security, management of potential emergency situations, space and weight restrictions, carriage of dangerous goods, privacy and employees and contractor health and safety. For example:

- electric wheelchairs/mobility aids must meet Dangerous Goods requirements (i.e. battery types and size)
- boarding devices are required to comply with work health and safety requirements to ensure the safety of employees operating them, as well as the passenger
- positioning and harnessing of assistance animals on board must ensure aircraft safety and safe egress in accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Authority requirements
- all passengers and their baggage must undergo mandatory security screening, with the *Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005* (Cth) specifying who is authorised to carry out screening.

Currently, the Disability Standards do not clearly account for the interaction of these regulations when setting out the requirements as they relate to airlines and aircraft. While we always prioritise the provision of requested assistance to customers with disability, the nature of air travel and the aircraft environment means that there will always be space and weight limitations. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to provide certain assistance in the manner requested, noting the operational capacity of the aircraft and the restrictions in



making modifications to the physical aircraft; as well as staffing and engineering requirements to provide the requested assistance (e.g. purchasing or hiring relevant equipment and undertaking specialised staff training). In these circumstances, airlines should be able to make adjustments to the assistance provided to facilitate access, which are reasonable, taking into consideration particulars of the airline industry such as operational capacity, weight, space and aircraft safety. (Virgin Australia submission)

Challenges in providing accessible journeys also exist due to responsibility being spread across multiple operators and contractors in airport settings.

Unlike other nodes in Australia's public transport network, most airports are a 'system of systems' where a range of industry participants operate to deliver services to passengers... In this environment, the ability for the aviation industry to provide a wholly accessible journey remains challenging, particularly where interfaces between industry participants exist, including the 'kerbside' interface between ground transport and the arrivals/departures area, the 'landside' interface at check-in and the baggage drop/collection, the 'airside' interface at the security screening point and the terminal, and the 'gateside' interface between terminal and aircraft. (Australian Airports Association submission)

Public transport users and disability advocates have acknowledged that there are genuine challenges for providers and operators in achieving compliance with the Transport Standards, but at the same time were critical of the lack of priority and investment given to meeting the standards.

The Transport Standards were introduced to ensure that public transport is accessible to people with disability. However, 20 years later, many parts of the journey are still not accessible. This is because jurisdictions and asset owners have not rigorously planned, costed, and funded the work necessary to make public transport accessible. Those who develop and approve jurisdictional and industry budgets have not treated the Transport Standards with the priority it deserves. As a result, people with disability are still facing barriers to accessing public transport. (National Disability Services submission)

It was noted by one respondent that the remaining upgrades required to achieve full compliance with the Transport Standards were likely to be the most expensive, relative to the likely accessibility benefits, which can make them "unattractive" investment priorities for public transport providers.

5.10 Enforcing compliance

In addition to calls for mechanisms to measure and monitor compliance, many respondents to the review spoke of the need for processes to enforce compliance with the Transport Standards. Suggestions included independent audits of public transport, publication of compliance data, recognition of good practice, and implementation of penalties for lack of compliance.

A number of respondents called for the end of exemptions being given to public transport providers and operators. However, the Australian Human Rights Commission reported that since 2018, only



four exemptions have been brought for consideration by the Commission; two were granted, one was granted in part, and one was not granted.

Several submissions endorsed a proposal from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) that the Australian Human Rights Commission be:

- a. funded to provide independent oversight of reported compliance and Action Plans of public transport operators and providers
- b. empowered and funded to enforce the Transport Standards, including to:
 - i. proactively and directly observe all modes of public transport to monitor compliance
 - ii. conduct reviews or audits of compliance relating to systemic issues
 - iii. investigate and inquire into potential breaches and provide recommendations to achieve compliance
 - iv. issue fines for breaches of Transport Standards
 - v. issue compliance notices specifying the action an operator or provider must take, or refrain from taking, to comply
 - vi. apply to the federal courts for an order to direct compliance with the compliance notice
 - vii. enter into enforceable undertakings with operators and providers.

Stakeholder suggestions for improving compliance and removing discrimination

Responses to the review included many suggestions for improving compliance with the Transport Standards and removing discrimination from public transport, including:

- making more funding available for upgrading of public transport infrastructure and conveyances
- establishing consistent measures for monitoring and reporting, which both encompass minimum acceptable standards of compliance and allow for innovative solutions and design for accessibility
- introducing mandatory reporting requirements for public transport providers and operators, including reporting against complaints received
- conducting an independent audit of public transport conveyances against Schedule 1 of the Transport Standards to establish an accurate assessment of compliance and create a baseline for future reviews and to support enforcement
- collecting and publishing compliance/accessibility data (including publication of the findings of independent audits)
- introducing mechanisms for enforcement of Transport Standards (aside from complaints processes)



- making non-compliance 'unlawful', with associated penalties considered
- establishing an independent oversight body, with power to enforce the Transport Standards (potentially the Australian Human Rights Commission)
- conducting more frequent evaluation against the Transport Standards.

6. Awareness and understanding of public transport accessibility

6.1 Public awareness and understanding of the Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide

Previous reviews of the Transport Standards have predominantly attracted submissions from disability organisations, advocates, and public transport providers and operators, most of which were responding from a context of familiarity with the Transport Standards.

The 2022 Review involved consultation processes that also captured the views of more than 600 people with disability, as well as significant numbers of family members and carers. This has provided valuable insights into the views and experiences of ordinary users of public transport, alongside the perspectives of those with an existing interest in the Transport Standards.

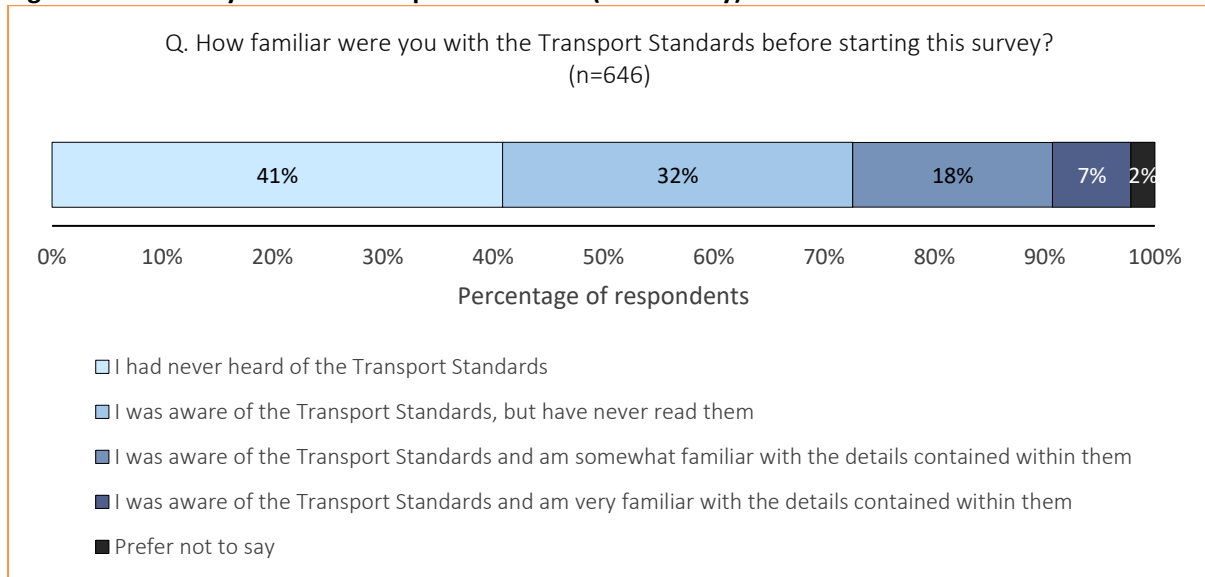
Several themes emerged from across these views of public transport users.

There is little awareness of the Transport Standards amongst the general public

Almost 75% of the 646 respondents to the user survey were either not aware of the Transport Standards, or knew of their existence but had never read them (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Familiarity with the Transport Standards (user survey)



This lack of awareness amongst public transport users was widespread across all jurisdictions and age groups.

I have been using transport for over 40 years. These standards and codes I've never heard of. (Person with disability, 45-54 years, Victoria, user survey)

I am a regular train traveller and I have never heard of these standards. (Person with disability, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

Two BCA members said they were aware that the Transport Standards existed but had little understanding of the content. Worryingly, one of these members believed the transport operators' complaints hotline workers they had spoken to were equally perplexed about the content of the Transport Standards. (Blind Citizens of Australia submission)

Make the Transport Standards something that everyone knows about and make it easy to access (online, pamphlets, etc). I had no idea they existed until now. (Person with disability, 18-24 years, Queensland, user survey)

Participants in the webinar had a greater awareness of the Transport Standards, with most people indicating that they knew of the Transport Standards. However, almost half of the webinar participants still felt that their understanding of the Transport Standards was low.

Some focus group participants reported they had attempted to find the Transport Standards online to prepare for the discussion but had difficulty finding or understanding them.



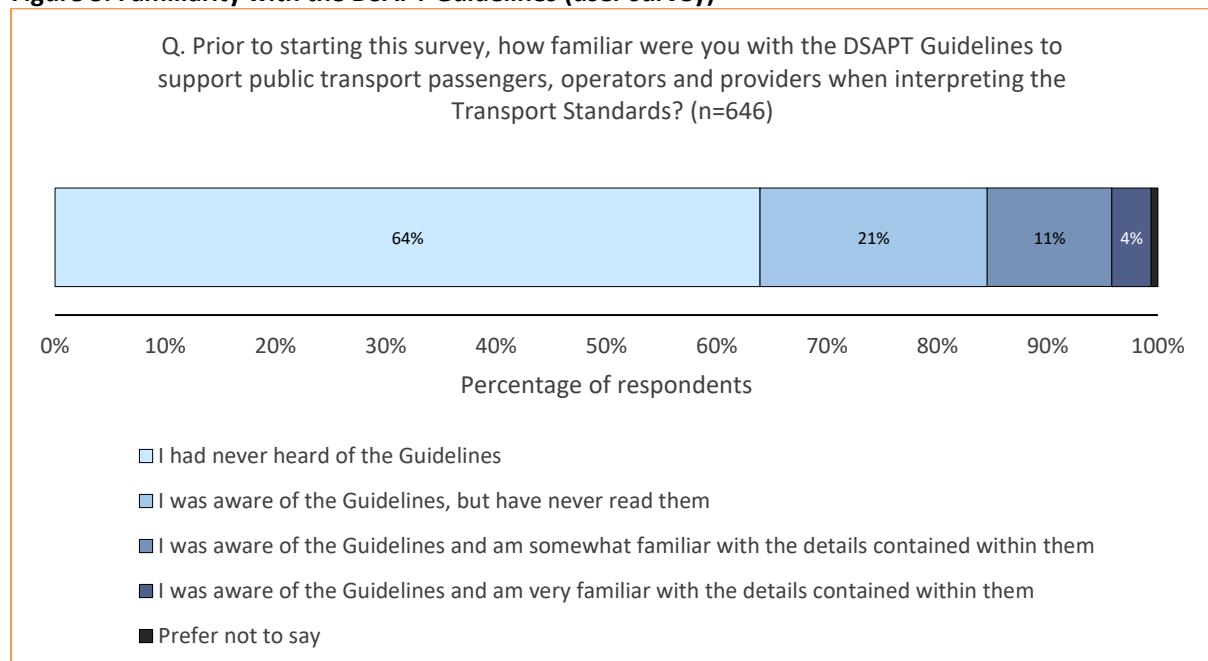
Familiarity with the Transport Standards Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide is even more limited

The Transport Standards are supported by a set of Guidelines² to assist with understanding and interpretation of the Transport Standards. In response to previous review findings, *The Whole Journey: A guide for thinking beyond compliance to create accessible public transport journeys* (The Whole Journey Guide)³ was published in 2017 to give public transport providers and operators guidance on how to go beyond a purely compliance focus in planning for public transport and to consider the 'whole journey'. This includes working across government and other boundaries to improve accessibility across the whole journey for people with disability.

Amongst respondents to the user survey, 64% had never heard of the Guidelines (see Figure 3) and 78% had never heard of the Whole Journey Guide (see Figure 4).

Those who were somewhat or very familiar with the Whole Journey Guide were more likely to be disability advocates, access consultants, disability service providers, or employed by government or the transport sector.

Figure 3. Familiarity with the DSAPT Guidelines (user survey)

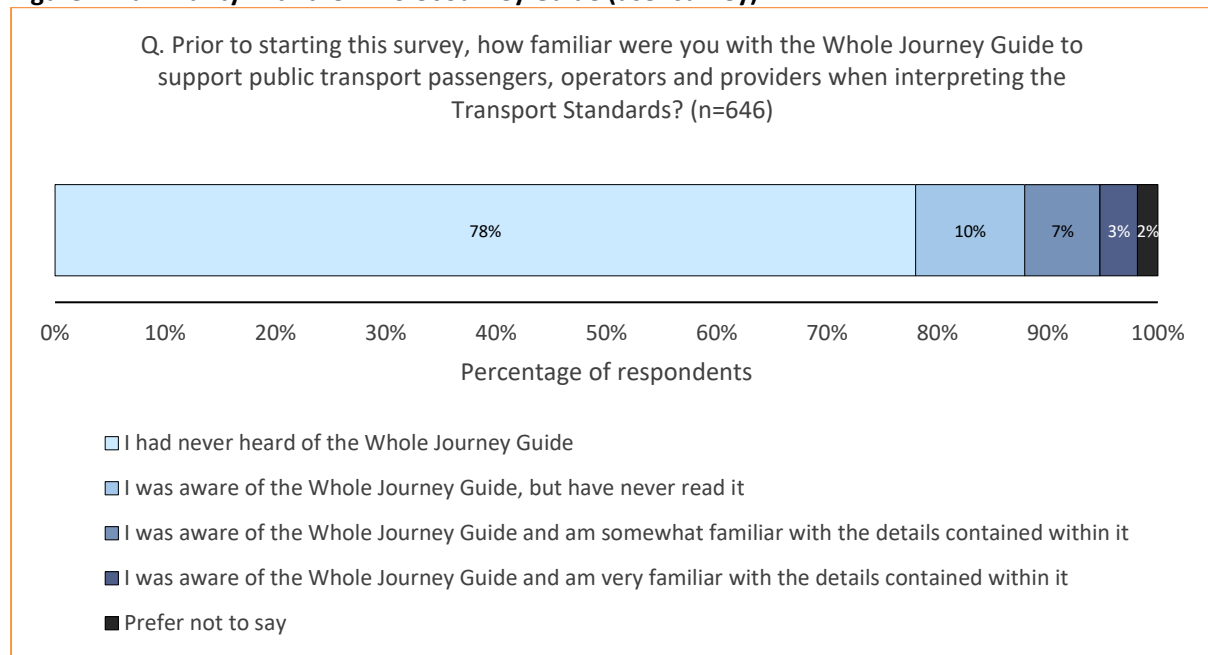


² legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005B01059/Supporting%20Material%203/Text

³ infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/transport-accessibility/whole-journey-guide



Figure 4. Familiarity with the Whole Journey Guide (user survey)



Many respondents spoke about the need for raising awareness of the Transport Standards across the general public. This included raising awareness of the Transport Standards amongst people with disability so that they understand what they should be able to expect from public transport providers and operators, as well as raising awareness amongst other members of the public and public transport staff, so that they have a better understanding of how to consider and respect the needs of people with disabilities when using public transport.

The Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide would benefit from updating and simplifying

There were only a small number of comments about the Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide across the broader set of responses to the review. Those who did comment raised issues about the currency and ease of use of these supporting documents.

The Transport Standards Guidelines have not been updated since 2004 and many respondents highlighted the need for them to be updated more regularly to keep pace with changes.

A number of respondents also noted that the Guidelines are complex, technically focused and difficult to access and understand, with many suggesting a need for a simplified version that can be used by staff of public transport operators to better understand their obligations.

Only at the start when the Transport Standards came into effect, I read the guidelines also. Otherwise no longer read the guidelines. Don't really read it as it does not provide very clear explanation. It is not well noted that there are guidelines attached to the Transport Standards. (Anonymous submission)

Look at the guidance prepared for the disability standards in education. Their codesign process was amazing and the products are outstanding. (Family member/carer of PWD aged 13-17 years, ACT, user survey)



These documents are enormous and difficult to read. There needs to be a shorter, clearer guide for drivers and station staff to help them understand their obligations. (Person with a disability/carer of a PWD, 35-44 years, NSW, user survey)

Guidelines should be updated more regularly to adopt best practice wherever possible. Legislation is hard to change but guidance can keep with the times. (Access consultant, Queensland, operator and provider survey)

The Whole Journey Guide was developed in 2017. However, several respondents suggested that it was also out of date and needed to be reviewed more regularly. There were many suggestions provided of new areas of content to include and ways of making the guide accessible to people with disability, not just public transport providers and operators.

The Transport Standards and guidance materials play a critical role in ensuring the safety, accessibility, and efficiency of public transport services. However, it is important to note that these standards and guidelines are not static, and should be updated and revised regularly to reflect changing circumstances and best practices. Moreover, it is crucial that these standards and guidance materials are accessible and easy to understand for all stakeholders, including public transport providers, operators, regulators, and the general public. The language and format of these materials should be clear, concise, and consistent to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. (Person with a disability, 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)

Stakeholder suggestions for improving awareness and understanding of the Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide

Respondents to the review had many suggestions for improving awareness and understanding of the Transport Standards, including:

- promoting the Transport Standards in mainstream and social media, posting information at public transport stops, stations and terminals and on operator websites
- providing information about the Transport Standards when issuing all new public transport payment cards and travel vouchers
- providing a summary format of the Transport Standards, or information about them, in plain English, easy read and other accessible formats, suitable for people with disability
- providing simplified versions of the Transport Standards suitable for public transport staff, which makes their obligations clear and easily understood
- building the Transport Standards into standard clauses in all public transport project and service delivery contracts
- developing and promoting clearer understanding of what is meant by 'accessible'
- making the Transport Standards easy to find and removing cost barriers to accessing Australian Standards referred to within them



- providing greater detail to remove ‘grey areas’ of the Transport Standards
- developing a central repository for sharing learnings about the application of the Transport Standards to assist with more consistent application across agencies.

Suggestions were also given for improving the usefulness of the Guidelines, including:

- updating the Guidelines more regularly and consulting with people with disability to inform the updates
- providing a summary format of the Guidelines in plain English, Easy Read and other accessible formats, suitable for people with disability
- providing simplified versions of the Guidelines suitable for public transport staff, which makes their obligations clear and easily understood
- writing the Guidelines in more ‘layman’s terms’, similar to the Premises Standards or Education Standards Guidelines
- making the Guidelines easy to find.

Suggestions for improving the usefulness of the Whole Journey Guide included:

- simplifying the language into plain English and providing the Guide in a range of accessible formats, including Easy Read
- updating the Guide regularly with input from and co-design with people with disability
- organising the structure according to transport modes
- expanding the content. For example:
 - more coverage of personal safety, including taking into account how safety considerations for different intersecting identities impact journey planning
 - coverage of sensory issues such as noise and chemicals.

6.2 Public awareness of accessibility and disability

A strong message emerging from responses to the review, is the need to improve the general public’s understanding of the experiences and needs of people with disability when using public transport. This included raising public awareness of different types of disabilities, including hidden disabilities.

While buses have designated seating for people with disabilities, there is no enforcement of that seating and seemingly little awareness in the community about what the designation means. There needs to be an ongoing education campaign to educate the general public about the need to leave designated disability seating for people with disabilities. (Person with a disability/carer, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)



...access to education materials for commuters regarding how to best support someone who has a disability on public transport. Transport for NSW's recent invisible disability campaign was a strong example of what this can look like in practice as it provided education to staff who could stand in solidarity with people with invisible disabilities, however they were also able to raise awareness within the community providing the invisible disability bracelets that commuters could pick up. (Hireup submission)

Some public transport operators also spoke about the need for people with disability to be provided with sufficient information and understanding of how to use accessible services.

Despite these ongoing challenges, some responses from people with disability noted improvements in disability awareness amongst drivers, onboard staff and the general public, with many comments made about positive changes in attitude.

The public are more aware and are usually willing to offer to help me if I am stuck. (Person with physical disability, 65-74 years, SA, user survey)

There has also been an observed improvement in disability awareness from staff. (Physical Disability Council of NSW submission)

Passengers and Transperth staff are much more helpful and more supportive towards people with physical disabilities. They help me & others get on/off trains & buses safely. They also are more likely to offer their seats. (Person with physical disability, 65-74 years, WA, user survey)

6.3 Awareness, understanding and attitudes of public transport providers and operators

Not surprisingly, responses to the review from transport providers and operators indicate that they are very aware of the standards, although some suggested that this understanding may not extend across all local councils or contractors working for public transport providers and operators. Transport sector respondents also noted inconsistencies in the way the Transport Standards are interpreted by auditors, consultants and understood by public transport workers.

Deficiencies in awareness about the Standards and related obligations extend to ancillary services and infrastructure, such as local governments and shopping centres that manage points of access to public transport. They reported that differences in the application of regulations creates barriers. (Transport sector roundtable participant)

A number of public transport providers and operators suggested that the capability and performance of access consultants and auditors could be better addressed by the Transport Standards. They noted that formal certifications are available for consultants, and that there is a professional body they can join, but that neither is currently required under the Transport Standards.



Several public transport providers and operators spoke about their training requirements for staff in relation to the Transport Standards.

The City provides online training on Disability Awareness and Inclusion to all staff to complete as a part of the induction and training program. In addition, the city requires transport related roles to have an in-depth understanding and working application of the Transport Standards. (City of Sydney submission)

Council is committed to providing targeted training to relevant staff to ensure that awareness and application of the Transport Standards occurs throughout the organisation. Council currently conducts mandatory disability awareness training for all bus drivers, and 'Core Inclusion' mandatory training modules are planned to be included for Council officers to further improve capability and awareness in this space. (Brisbane City Council submission)

... accessibility specific modules are included in the training provided to point-to-point transport drivers (i.e. taxi and ride-share). Discussion of accessibility training and compliance are routinely included on the agendas of taxi industry conferences. (Australian Taxi Industry Association submission)

VA strives to ensure staff are appropriately trained to meet the needs of all customers, including those requiring specific assistance. Customer complaints are thoroughly investigated to ensure that staff are following current policies, procedures and standards, and will take further action (e.g. conducting further training) in circumstances where these have not been followed. VA also reviews policies and procedures to consider opportunities to better address customer needs, and, if required, training is provided as soon as practicable. (Virgin Australia submission)

Some public transport providers and operators also expressed interest in opportunities to share knowledge and learnings around improving accessible of transport for people with disability.

Staff availability and behaviours impact the experiences of people with disability when using public transport

Many respondents to the review recounted negative experiences due to the knowledge and attitudes of public transport operators. A large number of respondents spoke about the availability of staff or the unwillingness of staff to assist people with disability at stops, stations and terminals. Issues included unmanned and unmonitored stations, lack of security staff, lack of assistance with luggage, tickets or boarding, unhelpful taxi drivers, rudeness and 'not my job' attitudes by staff, lack of customer service, rough treatment by staff, incorrect handling of equipment, and difficulty accessing assistance due to hidden disabilities.

Drivers of public transport don't know how to help those without a viewable disability. I need help getting on, but don't have a wheel chair. Traveling alone is a nightmare. (Person with a physical disability, 35-44 years, Victoria, user survey)



A common theme in BCA members' responses was the lack of disability awareness demonstrated by staff members from public transport operators and providers. Worse still, many train and tram stations have no designated staff at all. BCA has previously flagged the lack of trained staff as a major impediment for people who are blind or vision impaired using public transport. The lack of trained personnel has forced one BCA member to rely on kind-hearted members of the public to help her at train stations. Another BCA member said she needed urgent assistance from members of the public when she fell through a gap at a train station. (Blind Citizens Australia submission)

Respondents are calling for more training of public transport staff

Large numbers of respondents spoke about the need for more training of public transport operators, as well as contractors. Some respondents shared support for the Transport Standards to include requirements for the provision, development, and implementation of staff training.

Other recurring themes included:

- The need for training around hidden disabilities
- Training in how to manage mobility aids safely
- Training for bus drivers in how to use ramps
- Skills for frontline staff in communicating with people with a range of disabilities and being respectful
- Involvement of people with disabilities in design and delivery of training
- Ensuring all staff understand their obligations under the Transport Standards
- The need for regular training refreshers.

Staff need yearly training. Staff tell a blind person with a guide dog to read the board for next train. [They need] a better understanding of all disabilities. (Person with vision impairment, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

It's difficult for providers and operators to know every disability and how they should be handled, however they should be provided better training in how to deal with the individual person with respect and dignity to help figure out a solution. (Person with a disability, 18-24 years, ACT, user survey)

People with disability and with special needs have shared that many public transport operators are not well educated about the diverse needs of people with different kinds of abilities. Poor driver training has been identified as one of the key reasons why people with disability are prevented from accessing public transport conveniently and safely. It is even more crucial for people with invisible disabilities such as intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. (Western Sydney Forum submission)

Through the Reform process, the Australian Government has decided to amend the Transport Standards to include requirements for staff training and communication. This will require public



transport providers and operators to conduct disability awareness training to meet the specific roles and responsibilities of staff.

Equivalent access provisions may not be well-understood

There was a small amount of discussion about Equivalent Access provisions within responses to the review.

Amongst the 22 respondents to the provider survey, 4 were not familiar with Equivalent Access provisions in the Transport Standards, 9 had some understanding and 8 were very familiar. Only two respondents to the provider survey had implemented equivalent access solutions in the past 5 years.

Comments in submissions to the review revealed a divide between those who see Equivalent Access provisions in the Transport Standards as a basis for creating innovative solutions and those who think they are being used by public transport providers to avoid obligations to meet prescriptive requirements.

Some examples were given of the use of Equivalent Access provisions to achieve excellent outcomes for people with disability, through the effective use of Accessibility Reference Groups or Project Working Groups. This included Queensland's Cross River Rail and Gold Coast Infill Stations projects.

The results have been outstanding cooperation between parties, design excellence even on 100 year-old rail stations, and ringing endorsements from the disability sector regarding process and outcome. (Dr John McPherson submission)

Other respondents, however, raised concerns about potential lack of rigour around consultation on Equivalent Access solutions.

Apparently, an operator can just ask 3 people with a disability for an opinion. The 3 people might not be very representative of the diverse needs of people with disability. Approval of the EA approval should be conducted by a recognised, accredited, independent body that has a wide variety of people with disability in decision-making positions. (Person with disability, 55-64 years, Queensland, user survey)

There were also suggestions that some public transport professionals confuse Equivalent Access with Unjustifiable Hardship and that more education is needed on the nature, process and outcomes expected of Equivalent Access.

More advice on Equivalent Access and Unjustifiable Hardship. Government seeks certainty for investment and these two provisions have a perceived lack. Greater clarity around the purpose and application of these two provisions would assist government in addressing challenging compliance matters. (Access Consultant, Queensland, operator and provider survey)

Through the Reform process, the Australian Government has decided to develop an online repository of equivalent access examples, to support public transport providers and operators to develop new equivalent access solutions.



Stakeholder suggestions for improving awareness, understanding and attitudes of providers and operators

Respondents to the review provided a range of suggestions for improving the awareness, understanding and attitudes of public transport providers and operators, including:

- establishing platforms that facilitate knowledge-sharing, feedback and collaboration among stakeholders in accessible transport spaces, including state and territory agencies, operators and community representatives. This could include opportunities for:
 - sharing learnings and successful practices,
 - identifying best practice from other countries,
 - collaborating on ongoing actions, including continued modernisation
 - undertaking collective decision-making to determine and prioritise the legacy upgrades that will have the most immediate and significant benefit for people with disability
- implementing a broad-reaching communication campaign that clearly defines responsibilities of public transport providers and operators to comply with the Transport Standards
- introducing requirements for regular training for public transport providers and operators in relation to the Transport Standards, and disability awareness. This could include training that:
 - builds awareness and understanding of disabilities and the different needs and experiences of people with disability, including of those with hidden disabilities
 - addresses specific aspects of accessible public transport, such as safely handling mobility aids and employing ramps, as well as in respectfully communicating with people with different types of disabilities
 - improves understanding of Equivalent Access and Unjustifiable Hardship provisions
 - assists public transport staff to understand the Transport Standards from the perspective of people with disability, and builds a genuine understanding of accessibility, inclusion and discrimination
 - includes a focus on cultural safety and the unique experiences of First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities with special needs
 - includes people with disability in its design and delivery
- introducing training requirements for access consultants and auditors
- liaising with institutions that offer professional development training to the procurers, designers and builders of public transport assets, as well as engineering and management students, to seek incorporation of training on accessibility and community engagement
- co-designing education programs tailored to suit particular audiences, including designers, managers, builders, access consultants, certifiers and members of the public,



and supporting delivery of these programs in various formats by the Australian Human Rights Commission, jurisdictions, industry and the disability sector to their respective constituencies.

7. Accessibility across the whole public transport journey

7.1 The impact of inaccessible public transport

The large numbers of responses to the review from people with disability have provided valuable insights into the level of accessibility of different aspects of the public transport journey and the impact this has on people's daily lives. Lack of accessibility of public transport reduces the ability of people with disability to participate in employment and social engagements, and access health and other services, often leading to social isolation.

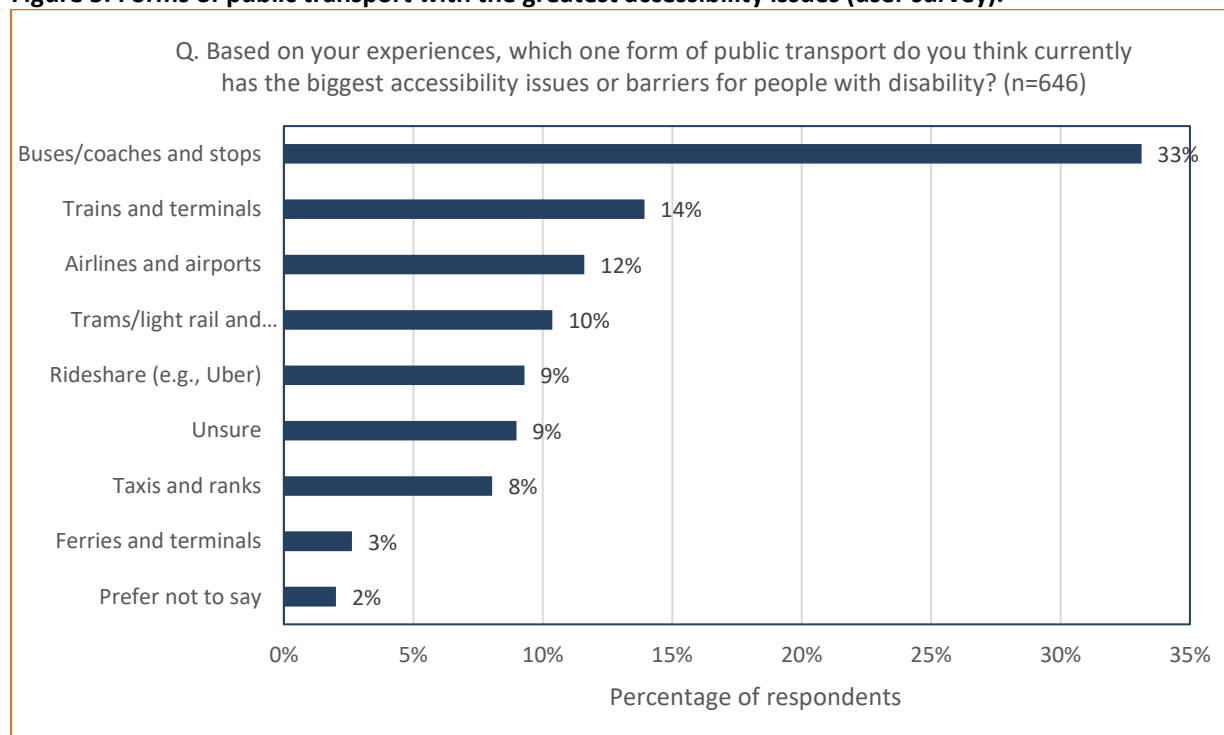
People in wheelchairs are left stranded on trains when they stop as there are no ramps in place to get us off a train that isn't beside a platform. This makes us feel very vulnerable. When trains have planned outages and buses are put on, they forget that wheelchair users can't jump on a bus. They had one wheelchair accessible bus working between the Gold Coast line and the Ipswich line out of Roma St. We waited for 3hrs for that bus to come back and pick us up. A usually 1hr trip became 5hrs due to them not catering for the disabled. (Person with disability, 55-65 years, Queensland, user survey)

Planned disruptions up here usually means needing to take a taxi which is more expensive and may have a driver which refuses to take wheelchairs, this can cause missed appointments, skipped outings, and decreased social interaction due to a lack of access to community venues. (Person with disability, 25-34 years, Regional city or town, Queensland, user survey)

When asked which form of public transport had the biggest accessibility issues or barriers, a third of respondents to the public transport survey selected 'buses/coaches and stops' (see Figure 5). Whilst this is likely a reflection of buses being the most common form of public transport used by survey respondents, the comments provided in survey responses and in submissions to the review do highlight a large number of commonly experienced challenges related to buses, coaches and stops. This included inaccessible bus stops, inaccessibility or difficulties getting on and off buses and coaches, lack of seating and space to manoeuvre onboard buses, sensory issues, lack of announcements of stops and concerns about safety due to poor ventilation, and 'erratic' or inconsiderate driving.



Figure 5. Forms of public transport with the greatest accessibility issues (user survey).



The accessibility of air travel was also raised as a particular issue in several submissions, with issues experienced in relation to the inconsistency of procedures within and across different airlines, inaccessibility of ticket booking processes, refusal of travel due to assistance animals, limits on the number of people requiring special assistance, access to boarding, long waits to disembark, and loss of and damage to mobility equipment.

Inconsistent performance of airlines - Some are brilliant at supporting people with a disability and some are terrible... Airlines disassembling wheelchairs to put in the hold is a big issue as airline staff at the other end may not know how to reconnect batteries etc. New wheelchairs are not supposed to be disassembled by anyone other than wheelchair technician (Knox Disability Advisory Committee submission)

Airports have become increasingly inaccessible over the past five years. Tactile Ground Surface Indicators are not used to mark entrances and check in stations, even though the path toward them has become increasingly complex and hazardous due to the adoption of self-serve check-in and luggage drops. At the same time, the availability of direct assistance has greatly diminished. In all of my past 10 flights it has not been provided (even though it was requested and booked). Over the past five years the inconsistency in procedures applying to service animals at airport check-in and security has also greatly deteriorated, giving rise to unpleasant conflict and misunderstandings with airport staff. (Person with physical disability and visual impairment/disability advocate, 45-54 years, Victoria, user survey)



There were also a number of comments about security screening areas and processes, including needing to wait in long queues, not having anywhere to sit while waiting, having no access to toilets inside security areas, belongings being left unattended while physical searches are conducted, difficulties in removing braces and prostheses, and in moving through security with an assistance dog. Issues were also raised about security staff not being trained to assist appropriately with people with disability and treating people roughly or with a lack of dignity.

Security screening sits outside of the scope of the Transport Standards. However, these experiences do illustrate the range of challenges for people with disability when using air transport.

A number of submissions called for specific standards to be developed around air transport, to recognise the complexity surrounding airports and air travel. References were made to regulations for accessible air travel in other countries, such as the USA and Canada, as potential models.

*The Transport Standards [should] be amended to include a Schedule with specific standards for accessibility relating to air travel. These standards should be co-designed with people with disability and representative organisations. In developing specific standards for air travel, the Department should refer to the US regulatory framework, as a starting point for the appropriate level of detail.
(Public Interest Advocacy Centre submission)*

We endorse PIAC's recommendation that there should be separate, co-designed standards for air travel. We especially support their argument, which has been made in previous submissions, that: Air travel encompasses a number of elements including booking a ticket, checking-in, transportation of mobility devices, security screening, moving within the terminal, boarding and disembarking aircraft. Each of these elements can present access difficulties for people with disability. The Transport Standards fail to adequately account for and address all these elements of air travel, and the level of complexity passengers with a disability encounter when travelling by air. (Inclusion Australia submission)

The Australian Government is also considering matters about disability access for air travel through the Aviation White Paper. Feedback provided in response to the Aviation Green Paper – the precursor to the Aviation White Paper – will be used to help set the policy direction for the aviation sector out to 2050. The Aviation White Paper will consider matters both inside and outside the scope of the Transport Standards, and will complement opportunities for action determined through the 2022 Review.

7.2 Journey planning

Almost one third (32%) of the 600-plus respondents to the transport user survey felt that journey planning had improved in the past five years. At the same time, 24% of respondents felt that it had worsened. Respondents in regional and rural areas in particular reported that they have failed to see improvements.



Every variable of the accessibility of the public transport system affects journey planning, making the planning process complex and time-consuming

People with disability report that planning their journeys to account for the accessibility limitations of different parts of the public transport system can take a considerable amount of time. Each variable of the public transport system has the potential to either enhance or limit the capacity of an individual to plan for and complete their journey. This includes the frequency and reliability of transport, accessibility and services at stops and stations, distances between platforms, the accessibility of conveyances, staff availability, knowledge and attitudes, public attitudes, alternative transport options and individual capability to respond in the event of service disruptions.

*“Disability means you plan every trip out of the house in detail to the extent possible. Over time we have worked out what routes we can manage etc.”
(Person with physical and neuro disability, 45-54 years, ACT, user survey)*

“Buses and trams with stairs are completely inaccessible, so having to wait for an accessible one means it’s hard to time your day like anybody else. My local bus stop isn’t even accessible, so I have to allow extra time to travel further away. All this makes journey planning very stressful.” (Person with physical and psychosocial disability, 25-34 years, Victoria, user survey)

The need to account for and seek information about a myriad of variables means many people with disability and their supports need to invest inordinate amounts of time in planning.

There have been vast improvements in the accessibility of information, but not all people are benefiting from that

Many people with disabilities noted vast improvements in information to assist with journey planning. The most significant improvements reported by respondents were access to more and better information through apps and websites provided by public transport providers and operators and third parties. Access to timetable information at stops and stations and to information phonelines were also emphasised as being important.

The staffed phone information options have improved. They are answered reasonably quickly and are staffed by people who appear to have had disability related training. (Person with disability/disability advocate, 65-74 years, Victoria, user survey)

Although apps and websites have greatly improved journey planning for many, those without the resources or skills to access online and mobile options continue to experience challenges. Some public transport users reported fewer opportunities to access direct personal support on account of the rise in online and app based information. Others highlighted that information provided through apps, websites, print, signage and displays is not always optimised for diverse accessibility needs. Access barriers include use of complex terminology, difficult to interpret information, visually confusing presentation, lack of speech-to-text and text-to-speech functionality, small print timetables, and lack of information in other languages – including Auslan.



Online information has improved which is great if you can use a smartphone, but not so good for low vision. (Person with disability, 45-54 years, Victoria, user survey)

Journey planning apps require a smart phone or computer skills & internet access, so not easy to use for all people with a disability. (Person with physical and neuro disability, 55-64 years, Tasmania, user survey)

The planning process is so technology focused now that it is hard to be able to just call someone to get help with planning, less people in call centres means it takes a lot longer to speak with someone when needed. (Person with vision impairment, 25-34 years, SA, user survey)

The available information is not always comprehensive, is spread across multiple information sources and can't always be relied upon

Although there is now more information to assist with journey planning, many public transport users reported it still doesn't provide enough detail to help them plan for time required between different stages of their journey, or the range of accessibility needs that might be relevant. Users noted a disproportionate focus on information relevant to wheelchair access, but not for issues such as other mobility or sensory needs, facilities for personal hygiene or health, or access to staff. Lack of information about the accessibility of the area surrounding stops and stations was a significant challenge. A number of respondents described needing to navigate between multiple apps and websites to piece together information about timetabling, accessibility of stops and stations, and accessibility of the surrounding area.

There is no way to check what train stations are accessible, do they have a lift or ramp? Do I need to exit the platform and cross the level crossing to get to the other platforms. This information is not easy to find I often rely on word of mouth to find this stuff out. (Person with physical and psychosocial disability, 45-54 years, SA, user survey)

People must often use several databases to journey plan. This puts them at a disadvantage to need to meticulously research every detail of their journey. For example, Queensland Rail publish a station accessibility guide that must be referred to in conjunction with the TransLink Journey Planner. Having been given a route and destination station by a Journey Planner people will often have to use software such as Google Street View to estimate the accessibility of infrastructure and access paths leading to their desired destination. This research option does not work for people who have a vision impairment and may not work for some people who have cognitive or intellectual disabilities. (Dr John McPherson submission)

Responses from public transport users suggests that accessibility information, when provided, is often incorrect. Numerous respondents commented that when waiting in wheelchairs, with mobility aids, or with assistance animals, they have been driven past by buses, taxis and rideshare vehicles, or left behind at train stations, despite planning ahead to use a service thought to be accessible.



Similarly, on airlines and regional trains, respondents reported experiences of their accessibility needs not being met despite making arrangements long before their travel.

Real time tracking offers enormous benefit when it is available and accurate

Public transport users explained that reliable real-time information offers enormous benefits to help them prepare to board and disembark and also to plan mentally and in practical ways if a delay or disruption occurs. While apps were reported to be of particular value, real-time updates via signage and audio announcements at stops and stations and onboard conveyances were also reported to offer great benefits. Some public transport users reported that the accuracy and functionality of apps still needs significant improvement, and their use needs to be expanded across all transport types and locations. Real-time information about variables that affect accessibility is also needed (e.g. lift outages, staffing at stations). Recent improvements in mobile reception were reported to have made real-time tracking more consistently accessible.

Lack of consistency across transport modes and jurisdictions impacts the accessibility of journeys

Inconsistencies in accessibility are a source of significant frustration and present many practical barriers for people with disability. Variability exists within fleets of the same type of conveyance and across modes of transport. Between jurisdictions additional variability exists in relation to infrastructure, fares and ticketing systems, tools to support journey planning, and the nature and extent of support available to access and use public transport. Lack of consistency appears to have a particular effect on people using assistance animals and those using wheelchairs or who experience other mobility challenges.

At airports, Qantas, Virgin, Jetstar, Rex etc, all have different disability systems in place which makes it very confusing for us. Especially for those of us who have assistance dogs. It is very hard to get our assistance dogs on a plane with us. This has not improved since 2008. Paperwork and rules need to be the same for every airline. (Person with multiple disabilities, 55-64 years, Queensland, user survey)

Stakeholder suggestions for improving journey planning

Respondents to the review made a number of suggestions for improving journey planning, including:

- Maintaining options for in-person journey planning support at stops and stations and by phone (including the National Relay Service)
- Providing unmetered data access on and around public transport
- Meeting Easy Read standards in the provision of all journey planning information
- Aligning the hours of information lines with the hours of the public transport system
- Using a 12-hour clock with AM and PM for all public transport timetables
- Establishing nationally consistent public transport pictograms
- Creating comprehensive databases of all stops and stations and loading zones



- Improving information filtering for journey planning to include variables such as effort mapping, exclusion of unusable routes and modes of transport, maximising accessibility rather than speed
- Ensuring real-time tracking utilises GTFS Realtime or similar live data feed specifications.

7.3 Stops, stations and terminals

There are ongoing problems with lifts being out of order, not available or hard to find

One of the most common barriers raised by respondents in relation to stops, stations and terminals was the lack of access due to lifts being broken down (sometimes for several months), or not available (particularly in some of the older or regional stations). Respondents also commented that lifts are often not well signed, or tucked away and hard to get to. Some also noted that lifts are too small.

The lifts are regularly broken which means that while you can get off the train, you may not be able to get off the platform.... There are many train stations I physically cannot use, as they can only be accessed via stairs or huge/steep ramps (which I can neither navigate on foot or using a wheelchair) which are difficult (sometimes impossible) to get up unassisted. (Person with multiple disabilities, 25-34 years, WA, user survey)

Train passengers are more likely to be stranded and trapped at the location of abandonment, stairs are not an option for everyone. Broken lifts are common and not fixed in timeframes suitable for trapped passengers. (Person with physical disability, 45-64 years, Victoria, user survey)

There have been some improvements with seating and shelter, but there is still a long way to go

A handful of respondents noted improvements to seating and shelter at stops, stations and terminals but the majority of feedback on this issue was negative. Some respondents noted that accessible seating is not close to the accessible entry and that people with invisible disabilities are not prioritised for seating.

A large number of respondents raised issues around shelter, with shade and protection from rain a particular issue at bus stops.

An hour used to be added to a regular bus journey of mine, because I needed a stop with seating because I couldn't stand for more than a couple of minutes. I would have to travel in the opposite direction. (Person with physical disability, 55-64 years, Victoria, user survey)

There is often limited seating at transfer points and, again, if you have an invisible disability, nobody will give you a seat. (Person with vision impairment, 55-64 years, Queensland, user survey)



Not having shade to wait for public transport - one of my disabilities can cause fainting when having to stay in the sun. (Carer of person with autism, 25-34 years, SA, user survey)

Long distances between pick up/drop off points, gates and platforms increases the burden and inaccessibility of travel

The distance to walk between the entry to stations, interchanges or airports and the actual departure point is too far for many people with disability. Respondents reported that the problem is exacerbated by having to travel through dark tunnels or along paths in poor repair.

The appalling lack of horizontal travelators is third world stuff. The new terminal 4 is particularly bad in terms of the distance between the boarding gates and the terminal entrance. Other international airports overseas provide far more passenger assistance in terms of travelators, elevators, less floor changes etc. (Carer of person with physical disability, 55-64 years, Victoria, user survey)

When using trains I am expected to walk such long and isolated distances to gain lift access from platforms, yet walking is my problem. How ironic. (Person with physical disability, 75-84 years, Victoria, user survey)

Crowding, noise and sensory overwhelm is a significant barrier for some

People with sensory and other neurological conditions often find the noise and crowds at terminals and stations stressful and confusing. Some respondents reported that they found stations too noisy to hear announcements. Crowded stations and terminals are a sensory issue, but also create blockages in access for people with disability.

Noise pollution for a hypersensitive person like myself, cannot be anticipated via the best app, and when I know an area, I take into account this factor. (Person with physical, psychosocial, sensory and other neuro disabilities, 35-44 years, Victoria, user survey)

The level of noise on public transport stations, stops and terminals with overstimulating information which can be difficult for some users with hidden disabilities such as autism to fully process crucial information. (Hireup submission)

Many stations are often very crowded due to bottlenecks which poses barriers to people with sensory disabilities and social anxiety. (Support worker for person with autism, 25-34 years, NSW, user survey)

Signage and announcements are not always clear

A large number of respondents with disability raised issues about signage at stops, stations and terminals. Some said there was insufficient signage or confusing signage, especially when there are temporary changes. Others spoke about inconsistent labelling, fonts being small or hard to read due to colours or lighting, signs being placed too high, directions and maps that are hard to follow and lack of information provided in alternative formats.



There were also several comments about announcements at stops, stations and terminals being unclear and hearing loops not being activated.

I can't read the LED bus displays until they are close, which wasn't as much of an issue with the old manual numbers (lights become blurred and streaky for me). I have very mild vision impairment and this is the only part of daily life I have difficulty with in terms of my vision. (Person with ADHD and vision impairment, 25-34 years, NSW, user survey)

Signage or lack of it at major stops and interchanges can be confusing and designed for upright persons and not those in a wheelchair. (Person with a physical disability/disability advocate, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

Signage is rarely in braille, or text-to-speech accessible. (Disability service provider, Victoria, user survey)

Clean, safe, accessible, unlocked toilets and change rooms are not always available

Although it is an issue that more often relates to the Premises Standards than the Transport Standards, a large number of respondents raised concerns about access to toilets and change facilities at stops, stations and terminals. They reported that accessible facilities are often closed and locked, with no easy way of getting them unlocked. Other issues included not having any or enough accessible toilets and change rooms, having to travel a long way to access them, or facilities being not fully accessible, not clean or well lit, not well signed, and not big enough to be accessible for mobility scooters. A lack of toileting facilities for assistance animals was also raised as an issue.

Disabled toilets are often locked and it is hard to find staff to unlock them, I have had a few accidents while trying to find someone to unlock door so I can go to toilet. (Person with intellectual and physical disability, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

Public Toilets at Train Stations need to be upgraded to accommodate all degrees of disability and wheelchairs. (Person with physical, psychosocial disabilities and hearing impairment, 35-44 years, Queensland, user survey)

Stakeholder suggestions for improving the accessibility of stops, stations and terminals

Respondents put forward a number of suggestions for improving the accessibility of stops, stations and terminals, including:

- Placing ample seating as close as possible to the accessible entry to the platform
- Implementing signage that reminds passengers that not all disabilities are visible, and that people with disability may ask for a seat
- Installing more lifts at stations
- Better lighting at bus stops and in and around train stations
- Improving visual displays and schedule updates at bus terminals and railway stations
- Delivering travel information via large, bold text and auditory announcements



- Providing more designated accessible drop off and pick zones for rideshare at major shopping, health service and community places
- Ensuring people with disability are able to call for assistance from staff when needed. For example, having railway staff near the entry to the station turnstiles, or placing a call button near entry / exit gates
- Providing assistance dog toilets at major transport terminals and hubs. They could be as simple as grassed areas and bins located near public transport entrances.

7.4 Getting on and off public transport

Many of the accessibility challenges experienced by people with disability occur when attempting to get on or off public transport. Many respondents with disability commented on the lack of independence resulting from having to ask for assistance to board and disembark, as well as concerns about the impact on other passengers and the embarrassment that can arise from this. In addition, assistance isn't always available or willingly provided when needed.

I am mindful of how extra time to get me on the bus affects connection times for other passengers. It's embarrassing for wheelchair user. Really the ramp should be automated. (Person with physical disability, 65-74, Victoria, user survey)

A few times we have missed a train because we could not find staff to provide a ramp. (Carer of person with intellectual disability and physical disability, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

My experience with using the train is that I've started asking for boarding assistance: For example, now, that consists of asking the staff at the top of the train station for boarding assistance and they'll radio through down to the staff on the platform, organising an accessible ramp to get on and off the train. The reason I use this is because the gap between the train and the platform is about 20-25cm wide. And it is extremely dangerous. And I've found that when I haven't used an accessible ramp, getting on and off the train, I find it very difficult. And I fell down between the train and the platform once. There are sometimes when I have been forgotten. (Person with disability quoted in Physical Disability Council of NSW submission)

Other common themes related to getting on and off public transport are explored below.

Many conveyances, including buses, coaches, trams and aircraft still have steps for boarding and disembarking

The most common issue raised by respondents in relation to getting on and off public transport was the use of steps to enter coaches, buses and trams, making boarding challenging or impossible for some people with disability. Steps are a particular issue with older style trams and with coaches. However, they were also raised as an issue in getting on and off airplanes, due to the lack of aerobridges at some airports. The issue seems to have been exacerbated since the COVID pandemic, as smaller planes are being used more often due to a decrease in traveller numbers.



People with disability travelling in regional areas are particularly affected, due to the common use of coaches for public transport.

Coaches are also frequently used as rail replacement buses when station and track work is being conducted, creating significant journey disruption issues for some public transport users.

Some buses are not wheelchair accessible as they are the older style buses that have steps and do not have a ramp fitted. These buses should have been scrapped a very long time ago. (Person with physical and neurological disabilities, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

Unable to climb steps to board and disembark from a tram and unable to step up from train platforms onto a train, making ingress and egress on trams, buses and trains impossible, so not utilised at all, thus limiting travel to the extent of non-existence. (Person with physical disability, Victoria, user survey)

Having to use stairs to get out of aircraft and then having to climb stairs to enter terminal buildings or the reverse without assistance from staff. (Person with physical disability/disability advocate, 65-74 years, NT, user survey)

People are still having trouble boarding trains due to the gap between the train floor and the platform

A number of respondents have noticed better boarding access for people with physical disabilities in some train stations, with platforms being at same height as train floors and gaps being smaller. However, many people with disability are still struggling to access trains because the platform is not aligned with the train floor and/or the gap between the train and the platform is too wide. On some trains, portable ramps still need to be used which rely on a driver or station staff being able or available to assist.

I've had several near misses with personal injury due to this gap, and have witnessed dozens of issues over the years. Wrenched my ankle while using my cane and detraining with a 20+cm gap. The next trip I was in a wheelchair and the gap is terrifying even on a ramp. (Person with a physical disability, 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)

The Australian Standard sets a maximum step height of 200mm. Most platforms and especially the newest trains create a step nearly twice that. It is dangerous and physically difficult. A friend with CP has no option but to sit in the doorway and roll into the train and then cannot get up off the floor. (Person with visual impairment, 35-44 years, NSW, user survey)

Gaps between buses and the kerb can also create challenges

A number of respondents noted that bus stops that are much lower than the floor of the bus, or that are on grass or slopes, next to gutters or drains, or in places where the footpath is in disrepair, make it difficult for people with physical disabilities or vision impairment to board and disembark.



Other public transport users also pointed out that buses “in a hurry” sometimes don’t pull up close enough to the kerb or may not be able to do so due to cars, capital works or other barriers on the road. A bus operator also highlighted this issue, reporting that barriers can make it difficult to pull up close to the kerb.

If there are no cut outs for the bus and it can't get close to the curb then I find it very difficult to get on the bus. (Person with physical disability, 45-54 years, SA, user survey)

Buses should not be co-located with storm drains such that one has to risk getting a foot caught and possible broken bones to get on and off the bus due to the front door being immediately over a storm drain. (Person with physical disability, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

I have had to sit down on the floor of the bus in a \$350 dress, flip my feet over the edge, and stand up from a seated position, to alight from a bus when the driver refused to park the bus close enough to the kerb side for it to be safe even after they lowered the bus as far as it would go. (Person with physical disability, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

There is often not enough time allowed for people with disability to get on and off public transport

Several respondents raised the issue of doors on public transport conveyances closing too quickly for people with disability to disembark. This was a particular problem on crowded buses and trains, where it can take longer to reach the door. Respondents also reported that sometimes they didn’t know which door to use, which impacts on the time taken to disembark.

Getting on and off with a person with a disability takes longer especially when they are overwhelmed with noise, crowds and the speed required to use the service. (Carer of person with autism and physical disability, 35-44 years, NSW, user survey)

Slow moving people almost always miss a train, just as we get to the doors they close so we have to be standing too close to the next train as it arrives to make sure we can get on. The same thing happens when getting off, the doors close while we are trying to get off. (Person with vision, hearing and physical disabilities, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

I cannot stand up until after the last jerk when the bus stops, by which time the driver is often starting to shut the doors. I have twice been hit by closing doors when alighting so will not use rear doors any longer. (Person with physical disability, 45-64 years, WA, user survey)

There has been a significant increase in the availability of ramps and gas lifts for boarding and disembarking, but they are not used as standard practice

Some respondents noticed an increase in numbers of buses with ramps or drop down entrances and some have said that such buses are now the norm where they live. However, many pointed out that



older style buses without ramps are still prevalent and that lifts and ramps on buses are not being used consistently to help people board and alight. Multiple respondents reported experiences of bus drivers not lowering the entryway. Others noted that some drivers will lower the entry for people who use a wheelchair or a walker, but not for others who also have difficulty climbing stairs.

Stakeholder suggestions to make it easier to get on and off public transport

There were a few themes across respondents' suggestions for making it easier for people with disability to get on and off public transport. They were:

- Making the lowering of entryways on buses standard practice, regardless of whether or not the driver believes there may be a person with disability using the service
- Providing information at each train station on the process for accessible boarding of the train and how to access help if needed
- Creating ways for people with disability to obtain assistance or extra time for exiting public transport safely. For example, Perth trains have a button that can be pressed on to give the travellers extra time to disembark the train safely.

7.5 The onboard experience

When asked about how their experience of accessibility onboard public transport had changed over the past five years, just over a quarter (26%) of respondents to the user survey felt that it was better. However, another 27% felt that accessibility had gotten worse over that time.

Across the broader set of responses to the review, there were a number of common themes related to public transport users' onboard experiences.

Difficulty in accessing priority seating or space for mobility devices is a common issue for people with disability

Many respondents to the review had experienced disrespect from other passengers when using public transport, including when other passengers refuse to vacate priority seating or make room for mobility devices. More than 100 respondents reported concerns about this issue, whilst another 140 respondents spoke about the lack of space for wheelchairs and other mobility aids onboard public transport.

Some respondents noted that there are now more designated spaces available for wheelchairs and mobility scooters in trains, trams, taxis and buses, but others noted that the spaces are too small, particularly for newer models of wheelchairs and mobility devices, and there are still not enough spaces available. Many respondents reported a lack of wheelchair accessible rideshare services.

Users of electric wheelchairs also raised issues about airlines disassembling wheelchairs and not being able to accommodate heavy wheelchairs.

People still block the disabled spots and I have seen non-verbal people unable to voice their issues. (Person with physical disability, 65-74 years, Victoria, user survey)



Often insufficient space provided for wheelchairs and also not enough spaces as more and more people in wheelchairs are using public transport now and will only increase. (Person with physical disability, 45-54 years, user survey)

I use a mobility scooter because it suits my needs best. There is not enough room on buses especially when they buy buses that force you to leave by the front door so you have to turn it around. Impossible while it is moving without injuring someone or damaging your scooter. (People with Disabilities Western Australia submission)

Newer trains and trams have more room for wheelchairs, better door opening mechanisms. (Person with physical disability, 18-24 years, Victoria, user survey)

Wheelchair access is not kept up to date to cater for new models of wheelchair. (Carer of person with physical disability, 75-84 years, NSW, user survey)

The need for priority seating for people with invisible disability is not always recognised

People with invisible disability experience judgement by other passengers when accessing designated seating. The introduction of access cards and lanyards that enable people with disability to show evidence of their disability, or explain the assistance they need, has been seen by most respondents as a positive development that requires further promotion. However, some respondents felt that it can be stigmatising.

You get judgement from passengers if someone is young or doesn't look disabled. I generally chose to be in pain rather than try to convince someone that I need a seat if they're all already taken. (Webinar participant)

It can be quite uncomfortable if you have an invisible disability and a bus or train is full and someone with a visible disability boards because of the general expectations to give up your seat. Both issues can be dealt with by having more accessible seating. (Person with physical disability, 18-24 years, ACT, user survey)

Invisible disability means that I often feel very defensive about my need to sit in the reserved spots, especially as a younger person. People glare at me if an older person gets on. (Person with physical disability, 35-44 years, SA, user survey)

Audio and video announcements can be unclear or not activated

Many respondents to the review welcomed the increase in the number of buses, trams and trains providing audio announcements and visual information to help passengers navigate their journey. Announcement of stops, however, is still not widespread across all conveyances, and users reported that audio announcements can often be unclear or not activated. Some respondents who have vision impairments also noted that buses do not identify their route number to waiting passengers and some bus drivers are unwilling to help with identifying stops.

Buses may not have audio or visual announcements of stops, which can make it difficult for passengers with hearing impairments or cognitive disabilities to



navigate their journeys. (Person with hearing impairment and psychosocial disability, 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)

Audible announcements on buses are not always activated and are often inaudible, especially if you have to sit further back than front seats. (Carer of person with vision impairment, 65-74 years, ACT, user survey)

New bus drivers do not offer help or take interest in making sure that blind people could get on/off the bus safely. Some drivers refused to tell us the stop and gave responses such as "I don't know, I am just going to drive straight to my destination". (Person with vision impairment, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

People with assistance animals are being refused access to some public transport

Numerous respondents spoke of having been denied access to public transport due to travelling with assistance animals, particularly by taxi, rideshare services and airlines. Inconsistency of policies and practices related to assistance animals both within and across different airlines was frequently raised as an issue. Some respondents also noted a lack of space for their assistance animals on public transport.

The issue of refusals for guide dog handlers on taxi and rideshare has increased exponentially, leading to significantly increased isolation and mental health difficulties within the community. (Person with vision impairment, 25-34 years, NSW, user survey)

When Uber drivers want to avoid you in future as someone with an assistance dog they can give you bad ratings to not be matched with you again. This negatively effects your uber account, even banning you for 3 months. (Person with disability, 25-34 years, Queensland, user survey)

Taxis will not pick you up or will drive past. They make you wait longer or they say they are allergic to dogs. (Person with vision impairment, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

I can't get consistent information from any airline about flying with my assistance dog. (Person with neurological disability, 45-54 years, Victoria, user survey)

People with disability have some safety concerns on public transport

The most prominent onboard safety issue raised by review respondents was the driving behaviour of some bus and tram drivers, with large numbers of respondents raising concerns about issues such as rapid take-off before people can be seated, jerky driving, speed around corners and sudden braking. A number of respondents recounted injuries as a result. However, others noted improvements in driving behaviour.

Some drivers drive fast enough round corners so my chair tips over and then they blame me. (Person with physical, neurological and sensory disabilities, 35-44 years, SA, user survey)



The drivers also don't seem to account for having passengers on the bus in wheelchairs because more often than not they do not go slower around corners....they travel far too fast and this throws the chairs off balance due to the force. Even with the brakes on the chair the force is too strong and staff are often not strong enough to stop the chair from moving around let alone stopping it from falling if it starts to get momentum and go over sideways... it is frightening and very dangerous. (Disability service provider, Queensland, user survey)

Most of the time bus drivers will wait until people with disability have located their seat or space before moving off. (Disability Advocate, 65-74 years, Tasmania, user survey)

Poor ventilation on public transport was another commonly raised issue. With masks no longer required, many people with disability are concerned about the ongoing risk of COVID and other respiratory diseases, particularly on crowded conveyances with poor ventilation. A number of respondents said they stopped using public transport when the mask mandate was withdrawn.

Other safety issues raised by respondents related to fears of harassment from other passengers and lack of security staff to deal with this.

Many people with psycho-social and sensory disability find public transport stressful due to noise, lights, smells and crowds

A number of respondents with disability, particularly those with autism, psychosocial and sensory disabilities, said they find public transport stressful due to the noises, lights, smells and crowding. Fragrances were a particular issue for some. The introduction of quiet carriages on some train lines is appreciated, but these are not widely available.

Overcrowding due to limited services at peak hour again pose barriers for people with sensory disabilities and social anxiety. (Support worker for people with autism and psychosocial disabilities, Queensland, user survey)

For people with anxiety or sensory processing disorders, excessive noise can be an issue. It would be nice if larger transport like trains had a "quiet carriage" or similar. This would be useful for a wide variety of people, not just those with medical conditions that need it. (Disability Advocate, autism and psychosocial disabilities, SA, user survey)

Provide vehicles, trains and ferries that provide low-light areas to help minimise photophobia-related impacts. (Submission from person with disability)

Stakeholder suggestions for improving accessibility on board public transport

Respondents had many suggestions for improving accessibility on board public transport, including:



- Universally available accessibility provision on trains and trams, including voice recognition software, large print maps, Braille signage, regular audio station announcements, help points, multiple accessible boarding points, and more priority spaces/seating
- Provision of quiet carriages on trains that can be used by people with sensory disabilities
- Ensuring announcements are audible
- Providing greater guidance on mechanisms for safely securing wheelchairs on public transport
- Providing next stop notifications through visual displays to reduce noise, and use opt-in apps to provide notifications for people who are vision impaired
- Providing more security on trains at certain times of day
- Harmonisation of taxi subsidy schemes across jurisdictions
- Educating public transport staff about travel with assistance animals on public transport, including finding ways to address issues around travel with assistance animals in rideshare services.

7.6 Journey disruptions

The nature and impact of journey disruptions for people with disability is broader and greater than it is for other members of the public. For the general public, public transport disruptions are generally thought of in terms of delays and disruptions to timetables, or the replacement of usual services with alternatives when repairs and upgrades to public transport infrastructure are being made. For people with disability, disruptions also include factors such as:

- lifts being out of order at stops and stations
- staff unexpectedly not being available to assist with boarding and disembarking
- not being able to board a conveyance due to lack of seating or space for a wheelchair or mobility aid
- the expected accessible conveyance being replaced with an inaccessible one
- taxis or ride share services refusing to pick them up because of assistance animals
- changes to platforms or times of connecting transport that do not allow enough time for the person to respond to.

While individuals may be in a position to accommodate disruptions when prior warning is available (including deciding to delay travel completely), unplanned disruptions have more complex consequences for people with disability, including being left stranded.

It is troublesome when lifts are out. But when I know this from home, I can plan my journey around it. If I get to a station and find out after alighting the train that the lift is inoperable, it's a major drama for me to travel down a ways and then travel back (if there is a second lift I can access), find an alternative way to my destination from the next stop down the line, or discontinue the trip and



return home from the next stop down the line. (Person with physical disability, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

We actually had to go two stops further, disembark, use the only working lift to change to another platform with a train going in the other direction, then go back to disembark at the original destination on the only operating platform. As a Deaf, wheelchair user this had me in tears and brought on a panic attack. Able bodied commuters were able to disembark as usual. (Person with disability, 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)

There is poor coordination of accessible replacement transport, with rail-replacement coaches being a particular issue

Many public transport users explained that when there is a significant service delay or disruption, and replacement services are required, there is limited consideration of the needs of people with disability. Systematic, coordinated organisation of accessible replacement transport does not appear to be occurring. Numerous people referred to being 'stranded' or left with the only option being an accessible taxi or ride-share, which can be expensive and unaffordable for some and often reported to be unreliable or involve inordinately long waits.

The most frequently cited challenge was in relation to rail replacement services and the use of coach and bus replacements that are inaccessible for wheelchairs, difficult for people with other physical disabilities and sometimes unwilling to take an assistance animal. Only one respondent explicitly reported a positive experience of the transport operator proactively organising and providing accessible alternative transport during a service disruption.

I met someone in a wheelchair who had to wait four hours! because none of the replacement buses could accommodate a wheelchair. (Person with disability, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

Can take a dog on the train, but if it's bus replacement, I need to pay for a taxi (and find one that takes dogs). (Family member of person with disability, Victoria, user survey)

The health and safety risks of journey disruptions can be significant for people with disability

The impact of journey disruptions on health and safety was raised as a significant issue by people with disability, based on their actual experiences, as well as concerns about potential risks. Health and safety issues were noted across a range of circumstances, including when people with disability are on board a vehicle but delayed or compromised in disembarking, are at crowded and chaotic stations, and when finding their way and waiting at alternative stops and stations. Respondents explained that issues arise as a result of factors such as extended exposure to the elements, lack of seating and shelter, delayed access to hydration, food, and medication, toilets and change rooms being unavailable, needing to traverse longer distances on difficult terrain, crowding and poor ventilation, high levels of stress and uncertainty, and exertion beyond their usual capacity. Numerous people also expressed concerns about risks to their personal safety when left waiting after dark in unfamiliar places.



If left standing for more than a couple minutes, I start feel very sick, then faint. Disruptions have caused me to have to sit or even lay down. Most the times, there's not even seats available. Changing of my trip plans also throws me for six. It's overwhelming and hard to get my head around a new plan. (Person with disability, 25-34 years, Queensland, user survey)

If a disabled person is travelling to an unattended station at night and the lift is suddenly out of order (particularly in a wheelchair) the person is stranded and at risk of assault by thugs who often frequent stations. There will be large gaps of time between trains and no way to access help to extricate oneself from the situation. (Person with disability, 75-84 years, Queensland, user survey)

Information about journey disruptions is not always timely or accessible to all people with disability

The same challenges described above regarding accessibility of information for journey planning are further exacerbated by journey disruptions. Many respondents reported that access to timely, comprehensive and accessible information about planned and unplanned delays and disruptions is a significant challenge. Even when planned disruptions are communicated in advance, they are not always communicated in ways that are accessible for a range of disabilities. Similarly, unplanned disruptions are often communicated at stops and stations or onboard conveyances through a single mode (e.g. an audio announcement or display), which may not be accessible to all.

Respondents to the review frequently reported that information about journey disruptions often lacks detail on what to do next, whether accessible alternatives will be available, or where to get assistance if they need it.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of having capable staff, who understand the needs of, and potential risks for, people with disability, available to assist at times of delay and disruption.

"I am Autistic and I panic when things change and what I am supposed to do is unclear. (Person with disability, 25-34 years, Victoria, user survey)

Having trained staff to assist when there is a disruption to journeys is important. It would be beneficial if they understood invisible disabilities. (City of Sydney submission)

Stakeholder suggestions for improving processes for responding to journey disruptions

Respondents to the review made a number of suggestions for improving processes for responding to journey interruptions, including:

- Providing systems for transport users to receive real-time notifications of delays, disruptions and replacement services for specific routes through a range of communication tools (e.g. SMS, Messenger etc.)
- Providing explicit information about whether delayed services will meet connections on time



- Establishing communication systems between original services and replacement services regarding the accessibility needs of people on board
- Prioritising replacement services for people with disability
- Establishing a helpline for people with disabilities needing assistance using public transport generally and during planned and unplanned delays and disruptions
- Providing more replacement services to minimise risks and crowding.

7.7 The experience for rural, regional and remote users

People with disability who live in rural, regional and remote areas appear to experience greater barriers to accessible travel due to a general lack of public transport, on top of lack of accessibility of available public transport. This means that in the event of journey disruptions, people with disability living outside of metropolitan areas are often left with no alternatives for getting to where they need to go, including sometimes being stranded at stations.

I am no longer able to drive, cannot walk very far or well, unable to get on a bus or get to trains and living remote only have one bus in and one out of my town daily.... I have no transport bar the one school bus in and out where I am. (Person with disability, living in remote area)

There is simply no transport options if the services are interrupted or ceased. (Person with disability living in rural area)

When there are disruptions, I cannot take public transport AT ALL. There are no accessible alternatives like busses. Sometimes the train experiences an unplanned disruption while I am on the train. I have been stuck on a platform when everyone disembarked as that station was not accessible and I couldn't go up the stairs. (Person with disability living in regional area)

No other alternative public transportation option. Only taxi. If wheelchair taxi needed it can be a 6 hour wait. If interruption happens between 1am-5am, no taxis are available, so you are stranded. Police assistance is not an option unless in immediate danger and not a priority event. Police are often not available here outside office hours Mon to Friday. Being alone and vulnerable during these hours is very risky here as drug use, antisocial behaviour and violent crimes tend to occur here during that window and at stations because of bathroom availability. (Person with disability living in regional area)

A number of respondents spoke about the difficulties in boarding coaches that service rural and regional areas, either as a regular service or when being used to replace regular train services.

Physically very hard to onboard a VLine bus. VLine driver can opt out assisting a disabled passenger board. Trainline was removed from service the year I moved here. Only the diesel VLine long haul high buses are here now. (Person with disability living in regional area)



Sometimes Vline or Met trains are replaced by coaches at no notice. This risk makes night time regional trips too risky for the wheel chair users as coaches don't accept them. (Person with disability living in regional area)

Inaccessible public transport creates even greater barriers for people who live in rural and remote areas

Darwin Community Legal Centre provided two case studies that illustrate ways in which inaccessible public transport is creating greater levels of discrimination for people living in rural and remote areas.

The first case study highlighted that due to the tropical wet season in the Top End of the Northern Territory road access is impeded for months of the year, leaving many remote communities with small aircraft as the only option to travel. Small aircraft are currently exempt from providing accessible boarding options, often isolating people with mobility needs and preventing them from accessing health care and social and cultural activities.

The lack of accessible transport has resulted in members of the community not being able to take their required flights. People have had their safety jeopardised, and their dignity demised by requiring members of the public to carry them up the stairs or forcing people to explore other methods of climbing stairs such as bum crawling backwards up the stairs. This poses a direct risk for the person with a disability and those helping them increasing risk of injury and also can cause humiliation, shame and guilt. (Darwin Community Legal Centre submission)

The second case study concerns the lack of accessibility of a jetty that supports the only ferry services between Darwin and a number of communities located on a nearby peninsula that is 15 minutes away by ferry and more than an hour away by road. Lack of accessibility of the jetty means that community members with physical disabilities must rely upon private transport or pay up to \$400 for a taxi to get to Darwin to access services and supports.

Whilst the required changes may be unachievable due to tides and costing, the standards could do more to encourage governments to actively engage with community to identify other accessible and appropriate options for transport. For example, government could provide an accessible shuttle bus if the ferry is not a viable option in the present day. (Darwin Community Legal Centre submission)

Access to taxis and rideshare is limited in rural, regional and remote areas

A number of respondents from rural, regional and remote areas spoke about challenges in accessing taxis and rideshare services, including refusal of drivers to take people with assistive devices or assistance animals, or using taxi mobility cards.

It was also noted that many accessible taxis are unable to accommodate electronic bariatric wheelchairs, which are larger and heavier than other wheelchairs and exceed the dimensions for access recommended in the Australian Standards. In rural, regional and remote areas this can mean that people using these mobility devices are dependent on carers to transport them.



In a regional place where there is the bus or nothing, disruptions means either no alternative, or an expensive option such as Uber or Taxi, which are difficult to access in their own right. (Person with disability living in regional area)

Huge problem with number of Maxi taxis and drivers not wanting to take people with a disability. (Person with disability living in rural area)

7.8 Complaints

Large numbers of respondents to the review raised concerns about processes for making complaints about discrimination in public transport, including the processes for making complaints via the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). Given that complaints to the AHRC are currently the only mechanism for enforcing the Transport Standards, this was seen as a significant issue by respondents.

The Australian Human Rights Commission reported that in 2021-22 complaints under the Disability Discrimination Act accounted for 52% of all complaints received by the Commission, but that few complaints refer specifically to the Transport Standards. Complaints related to air travel are by far the most common.

In the 2022–2023 reporting year, eight complaints were made under the Transport Standards. Of these, six were associated with air travel, the remaining two were train and tram complaints.

In the six years since the 2017–2018 reporting year, there have been a total of 86 complaints made under the Transport Standards, accounting for 10% of total disability standards complaints, and 1% of all complaints made under the Disability Discrimination Act.

*The commonest themes raised in complaints concern assistance animals, inaccessible platforms and stations, and inaccessible vehicles.
(Australian Human Rights Commission submission)*

Responses from public transport operators and providers indicated that they have most commonly received complaints about:

- staff behaviour
- supporting infrastructure such as bus stops and footpaths
- inaccessibility of steps
- lack of available drivers
- lifts
- treatment of service animals.

There is significant scepticism about the effectiveness of making a complaint

Many respondents are reluctant to make complaints due to the time and effort involved, being unsure about how to make a complaint or who to make it to, or a belief that nothing will be done about it. It was noted that scepticism about complaints processes is founded in real experiences,



with people with disability having made complaints and had nothing come of them. Respondents suggested that complaints processes “lack teeth”, with those who have made complaints reporting that complaints are often overlooked, not believed, or take too long to achieve an outcome.

*I wouldn't [complain]. More trouble than it's worth, for no real change or result.
(Person with a disability, 25-34 years, Victoria, user survey)*

People just don't have the time, the capacity, even the resilience at times, to have to follow those processes, particularly when they're doing them over and over and over again. (Disability Round Table participant)

The energy, time and potential cost are deterrents to making complaints. (Person with a disability 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

Several respondents reported feeling threatened by transport operators and providers when they indicated that they would be making a complaint or spoke of fear of the repercussions of making a complaint. One respondent reported being told by taxi drivers that if they were to make a complaint they would end up blacklisted. Others spoke about difficulties in navigating complaints processes.

Two participants reported making a complaint about public transport accessibility. One reported an issue verbally over the telephone and the other participant, who was a support worker, utilised the online reporting process. The support worker indicated that the online form was tricky to complete as it required a lot of information. There was some discussion by participants about challenges of knowing the details to make a complaint, for example the bus number, the time and bus route. Some participants agreed that they may not remember those details or know how to get it. (Intellectual Disability focus group participant)

VCOSS members note that the complaints process, as it stands currently, is a complex, tedious, and often expensive process. During the 2021-22 financial year, the Public Transport Ombudsman received a 10% increase in complaints. Complaints about accessibility specifically also rose (82, up from 35 in the 2020-21 financial year). However, given people are often reluctant to complain or do not know where to go, the true figure is likely much greater. VCOSS members have noted the time-consuming nature of the complaints process, with some cases taking up to three years to be resolved. (Victorian Council of Social Service submission)

Under the Transport Standards ..., there has been a strong desire to see fair and equitable complaints mechanism services, however from the consultation with our community they felt a lack of trust with existing complaint resolution mechanisms. Our survey of Hireup clients found that 53.1% of clients had reported negative experiences when making complaints, compared with 31.3% of clients having neutral experiences and 15.6% of complaints reporting a positive experience with making complaints... Secondly, the issue of escalation in making a complaint has been widely noted. One member of our community advisory



group noted the overwhelming frustration they had faced in having to rely on external contacts such as community groups, ministers or legal officers and judges to escalate their matters. (Hireup submission)

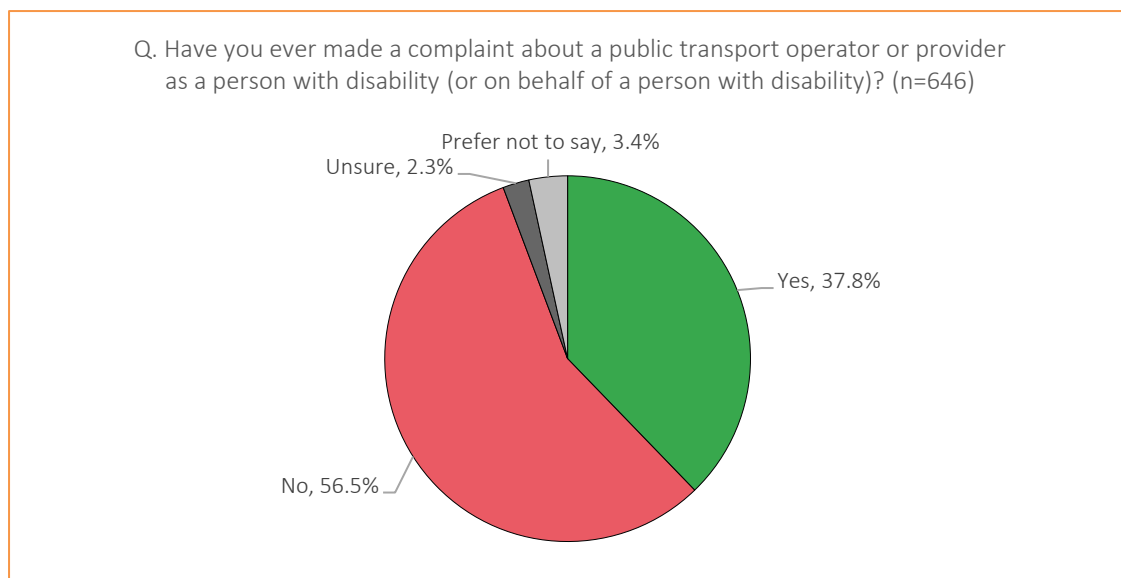
Several respondents spoke about processes for making complaints through the Australian Human Rights Commission being complicated and taking too long to achieve outcomes.

The complaints process, which is mediated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), brings the complainant, normally a person with disability, and a respondent, normally a public transport operator or provider, together to negotiate a settlement. The person with disability is normally only able to represent themselves, while the respondent often has a team of lawyers. Because of the inherent unfairness of this system, the resulting negotiated settlement, if one is reached, may still not result in compliance with the Transport Standards. (Australian Federation of Disability Organisations submission)

The case settled through mediation. But it took months from the original complaint to when the case settled. It is a long process and if you don't have legal representation, it's a battle between the disabled person as an individual, and the legal team representing the transport operator. (Person with a disability, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

Amongst respondents to the public transport user survey, almost 38% reported they had made a complaint about a public transport operator or provider (see Figure 6).

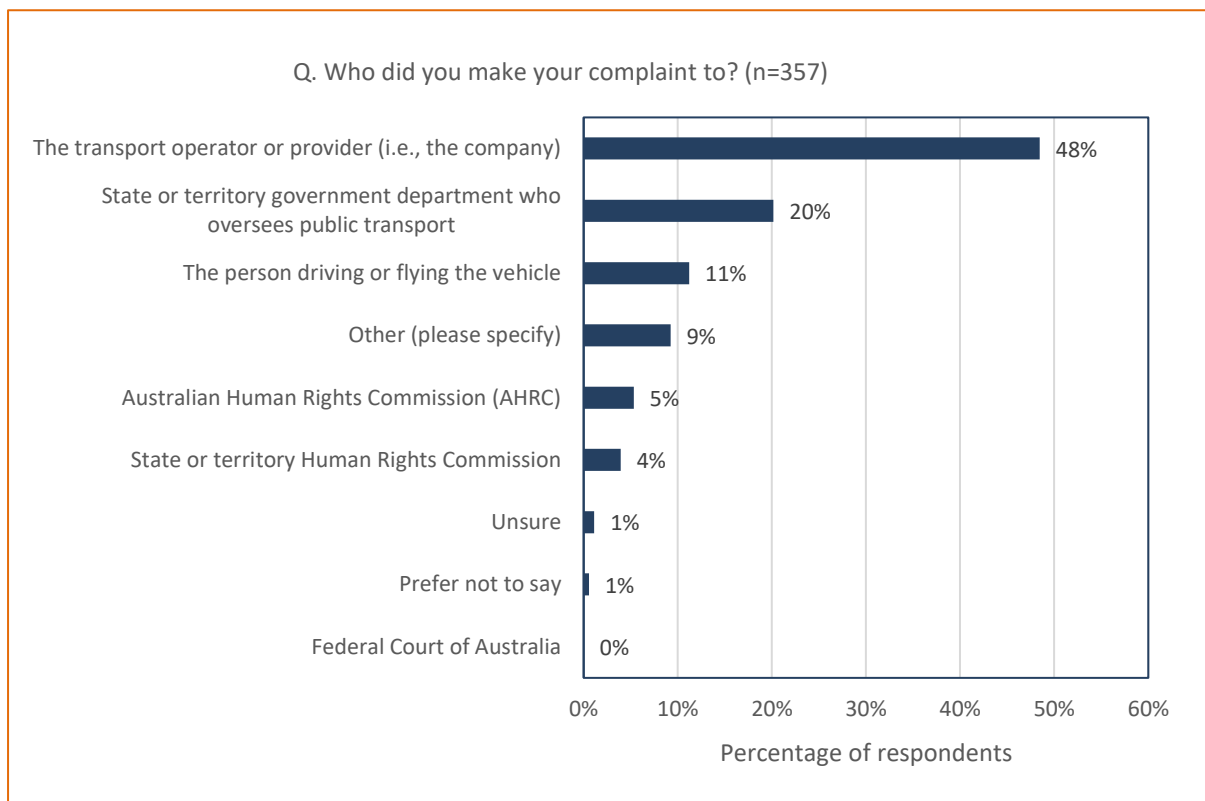
Figure 6. Complaints about public transport (user survey)



Of the respondents who indicated they had made a complaint, the large majority reported they had made the complaint directly to the transport operator or provider (see Figure 7). Fewer than 10% had made a complaint through the Australian Human Rights Commission, or a state or territory Human Rights Commission.



Figure 7. Where complaints about public transport were made to (user survey)



Across the broader set of responses, public transport users mentioned reporting complaints to the public transport operator, organisation responsible for/hiring the operator, state department of transport (or other relevant body), disability discrimination bodies for the relevant jurisdiction, transport ombudsman, local, state and federal MPs, Australian Human Rights Commission, PIAC and social media.

It would depend on the public transport being used. The Transportation Ombudsman would be my first choice, then the Australian Human Rights Commission would be my second place for advice and to lodge a complaint, as such is a breach of human rights and also a breach of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. (Person with a disability, 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)

Would report it to AHRC, but would not expect prompt action to investigate nor sanction provider. (Disability Advocate, Queensland, user survey)

Despite the majority of respondents reporting that their complaints were ignored, unresolved or responded to with a standard email/letter, some complaints have resulted in successful outcomes. This has included public transport operators issuing an apology, making a follow-up phone-call to discuss the issue, providing compensation, providing additional training for staff, removing staff from particular roles, or making changes to infrastructure.



The operator was required to put in place arrangements for provision of braille bus timetables where these were requested. (Person with a disability/Disability advocate, 65-74 years, ACT, user survey)

Compensation was paid to charity as an apology. (Carer of a PWD, 45-54 years, ACT, user survey)

One of the best outcomes we ever had of a complaint about some works at Oxley Station not being suitable for people using wheelchairs was when QR staff came out to actually see what difficulties we were having in a real life setting. They came and met myself, the person using the wheelchair and the support staff. After QR staff physically trying to push the gentleman in his wheelchair up the new ramp themselves that had been installed they realised first hand that it was inadequate and it needed to be changed. I doubt if they hadn't have come out it would have been something that was never resolved but would have plenty of complaints lodged. (Disability Service Provider, Queensland, user survey)

Public transport users and public transport providers and operators would like to see complaints processes improved

A large number of responses to the review highlighted the need for better processes for complaining about discrimination in public transport.

Some public transport providers and operators reported that it can be challenging to respond to complaints when the source of the problem is outside their control. They too would welcome the introduction of more effective complaints processes, including better coordination of the parties involved and opportunities for learning from each other about how to address complaints effectively.

Participants indicated that opportunities for knowledge-sharing between stakeholders about addressing complaints can be valuable. A participant gave an example of a forum in Victoria bringing together representatives from operators and other key stakeholders where they can learn from each other about the complaints they have received and how they have addressed them. (Transport Provider roundtable participant)

Stakeholder suggestions to improve complaints processes

Respondents provided a range of suggestions for improving processes for complaining about discrimination in public transport. These included:

- Reducing the costs for people making complaints of discrimination and seeking legal action for breach of the Transport Standards
- Providing free legal aid to disability discrimination complainants
- Providing easily accessible information on available public transport complaints processes. For example:



- a reference card reminding public transport users of rights, responsibilities, reporting flows and useful state/region contacts
- signs on train stations/ buses with a QR code for passengers to access
- complaints phone numbers made visible/accessible at stops and on board public transport
- Ensuring complaints processes are accessible for people with disability. For example, simple webpages for lodging complaints or clear ring/write hear information. Basic webforms with categories & free text fields
- Establishing specific timeframes for public transport providers and operators to respond to complaints, and requiring responses to be given of outcomes/changes made as a result of the complaint
- Implementing staff training (particularly for those who work on the front-line and in customer service centres) in handling of accessibility complaints and communicating with people with disability.

8. Issues with the Transport Standards

Some common themes were evident in issues raised about the scope, content and application of the Transport Standards.

There is some confusion, conflict and lack of consistency between the Transport Standards and other related standards

A small number of respondents mentioned confusion, conflict or lack of consistency between the Transport Standards and the Premises Standards, Australian Standards, National Construction Code and Workplace Health & Safety regulations.

Of particular note were comments about references to Australian Standards being out of date (particularly in relation to technology, information provision and signage) and conflicts between the Transport Standards and health and safety requirements, particularly in relation to mobility devices.

The DSAPT references AS1428.2 in a number of provisions which are inconsistent with the Premises Standards, AS1428.1, the National Construction Code and best practice. This needs to change to ensure currency and consistency is maintained at all times... Australian Standards ME64 committee are in the process of updating AS1428.2 to be AS1428.6 which is expected to be released for comment in late 2023. Similar to the matter identified for the international symbol of accessibility, a flexible mechanism is required in the DSAPT to adopt new and revised standards between five yearly reviews. (Australian Institute of Architects submission)

The DSAPT has not seen any significant update to the referenced Australian Standards since its publication. By using outdated technical standards operators and providers are able to claim full compliance with DSAPT. New technologies such as smartphones, electronic ticketing, digital screens have emerged and been



*missed by DSAPT. QDN supports the call for reform of the DSAPT standards to be inclusive of this technology so that access standards can be updated.
(Queenslanders with Disability Network submission)*

There were also some comments noting confusion about the relationship between the Transport Standards and Premises Standards and inconsistencies between the two. Through the Reforms process, the Australian Government has harmonised requirements between the Transport and Premises Standards to promote alignment and consistency, and to simplify regulatory requirements where the two standards intersect.

Concerns were raised about exemption of certain conveyances from the Transport Standards

Many respondents, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, felt that school buses should not be exempt from the Transport Standards.

Country school buses are often the only bus service in many towns but are exempt from the DSAPT and this should end ASAP. (Person with a disability/access consultant, 65-74 years, NSW, user survey)

Currently, dedicated school buses are exempt from certain physical access requirements in the Transport Standards. This means that school buses only have to provide a small degree of accessibility and are not required to be accessible to all students with a disability, particularly those with mobility impairments. School buses that are not accessible, or do not provide services to children with disability, create further disadvantage and barriers to education, particularly access to mainstream education. (Australian Human Rights Commission submission)

Likewise, we strongly believe that dedicated school buses should be subject to the Transport Standards in full with a clear compliance schedule and deadline. The UNCRPD applies to all people regardless of age and the rights of children to accessible transport should not continue to be excluded from parts of the Transport Standards. (Purple Orange submission)

The exemptions for dedicated school bus services included in the Transport Standards were considered through the Reform process. Although issues relating to social exclusion and a lack of optionality were identified during consultation, there was not a strong evidence base to determine the scale of the problem or to identify an appropriate solution. Further investigation, research and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken by the Australian Government to identify a way forward.

The exemption of small aircraft from the Transport Standards and the impact of this exemption on people with disability living in remote communities was also raised (see Section 7.7 for details).

A number of responses also called for the inclusion of rideshare services under the Transport Standards.



Public transport users would like to see greater regulation of rideshare services, with large numbers of respondents raising issues about lack of accessibility of vehicles and booking services and frequent refusals by rideshare drivers to transport people with assistance animals and mobility devices.

rideshare offer NO SERVICES for people using large motorised wheelchairs and who don't use an app. Because the flood/glut of rideshare vehicles have decimated taxis, there are far fewer Wheelchair Accessible Taxis on the road, no drivers for them and, even if booked, they don't reliably turn up, or are hours late. Legalisation of a glut of rideshare services - that offer NO SERVICES to People With a Disability have destroyed the ability of People With a Disability to access ANY form of transport. (Carer of a person with disability, Queensland, user survey)

Uber needs to pay more attention to making their app accessible to people who are blind/vision impaired. (Person with vision impairment, 55-64 years, ACT, user survey)

Rideshare refuse to pick up people with disabilities and refuse service animals. (Carer of person with disability, ACT, user survey)

Uber has destroyed the taxi industry including reliability and availability of taxis including wheelchair accessible taxis. (Person with disability/disability advocate, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

There are different views as to whether rideshare is considered public transport as defined by the Transport Standards. Through the Reform process, the Australian Government investigated how rideshare services could be covered by the Transport Standards. During consultation, stakeholders noted linkages between rideshare and other similar modes of transport, which could impact the effectiveness of the proposed requirements. To determine an appropriate path forward, the Australian Government will convene a working group to undertake a holistic review of the point-to-point transport sector, including rideshare.

Some debate exists around the use of prescriptive standards

Some public transport providers and operators suggested that prescriptive standards can undermine a focus on best practice.

It's possible for us to deliver a brand-new train station where every single element that's covered by DSAPT is out by one millimetre, or a degree, or a level of contrast, as an example. If I ask people with disability to test that station and give us a rating, I'm sure they would rate it as being highly accessible, except because every single DSAPT element is just a millimetre out, because our standards are very prescriptive, that piece of infrastructure is 0% compliant. Is that going to help you plan a journey? No. Is that going to guide investment? Do you want a government to spend money at that station? No. (Transport sector Round Table)



Prescriptive technical standards do not reflect the breadth of ways to achieve accessibility improvements and limit flexibility to respond to changing priorities of people with disability. (Australasian Railway Association submission)

However, others suggested that public transport providers and operators, as well as access consultants, need to think beyond simply meeting 'minimum standards' and focus on achieving good practice outcomes.

Minimum standards are not good enough, need best practice guidelines and training to support implementation. Needs a whole of government approach, State transport authorities and local government need to work hand in hand together with providers. (Older person, NSW, user survey)

Accessibility depends upon a whole of journey approach

An issue raised in responses from both from public transport users and from public transport providers and operators, is that the accessibility of public transport for people with disability depends upon accessibility across the whole of a journey (including "the first and last mile") and that many elements of journeys fall outside of the Transport Standards.

The Transport Standards have not been able to deliver an accessible "whole of journey" outcome. This is because significant parts of the journey fall outside the jurisdiction of operators and providers of public transport services. These parts of the journey include infrastructure and premises controlled by local authorities and private entities. (National Disability Services submission)

One respondent suggested that the Transport Standards were not the right instrument to address all of the poor behaviour people with disability routinely experience when navigating a journey, particularly when it involves intersecting responsibilities and practices (for example, booking flights, navigating check-in, security and boarding, and getting a taxi or rideshare). The Whole Journey Guide, published in 2017, provides information to public transport providers and operators to encourage thinking beyond compliance and the physical and governance boundaries of services and infrastructure and focus instead on people's accessibility needs across their whole journey.

Several submissions noted that a whole of journey approach requires better coordination between different stakeholder groups.

"QDN acknowledges the DSAPT has defined a minimum standard of service that people with disability can expect in a public transport system. However, not all parts of the journey are covered by DSAPT. Public transport systems are mobility systems embedded within urban, suburban or rural landscapes and they depend on the accessibility of these landscapes for their efficacy. The precincts in which the public transport systems are located must be accessible. Until this occurs public transport systems will not be fully accessible to people with disability, even though they may be fully compliant with the DSAPT." (Queenslanders with Disability Network submission)



Stakeholder suggestions for improvements to the Transport Standards

The key areas in which respondents made suggestions for improvements to the Transport Standards were:

- Emphasising the importance of a whole of journey approach to public transport, including consideration of:
 - accessibility at a whole-of-network design level, as well as the level of individual stops and routes
 - the distances people need to walk to access public transport
 - footpaths and bikeways
 - accessibility across precincts
 - the need for some people with disability to travel with carers, support workers and assistance animals.
- Increasing the focus on good practice, not just minimum standards, including through:
 - good practice guidelines
 - sharing of good practice
 - training on good practice implementation of the Transport Standards
 - implementation of universal design principles
- Removing conflicts and inconsistencies between the Transport Standards, Premises Standards and other relevant standards
- Ensuring that any standards referred to under the Transport Standards are not hidden behind paywalls
- Considering the impacts of exemption of school buses and small aircraft from the Transport Standards
- More clearly defining the coverage of rideshare services by the Transport Standards
- Supporting better coordination and information sharing between all levels of government and public transport providers and operators. For example, by:
 - creating an action plan under Australia's Disability Strategy for improving transport accessibility and compliance with the Transport Standards
 - developing mechanisms for sharing information and good practice
- Ensuring the Transport Standards and supporting documents encompass and provide guidance on all types of disability

9. Consultation, collaboration and co-design

Large numbers of respondents believe that there needs to be greater involvement of people with disability in the processes of making public transport accessible to ensure that the Transport Standards and public transport services genuinely support and meet accessibility needs. This includes building lived experience consultation, collaboration and co-design into:



- Design of public transport conveyances, infrastructure and premises
- Public transport procedures and practices (e.g. timetabling, announcements)
- Procurement decisions
- Staff training
- Design of the Transport Standards and supporting documents.

Several respondents noted that newer public transport assets that have undergone co-design from the outset are often much more accessible than their legacy counterparts.

*Government needs to let disabled people be on the ground giving input at the design and implementation level rather than constantly leaving us to notify them through some painstaking and often inaccessible method after the fact, which then costs them more money and often takes them years to fix. If they are prepared to include disabled people in their planning, these people need to be contracted and paid equally to anyone else already hired to do these jobs.
(Physical disability focus group participant)*

Disability organisations suggested that consultation and lived experience input should be used throughout the process of public transport planning, design and delivery, so that designers, engineers and others involved are able to understand the needs and successfully implement solutions. Several participants suggested lived experience is also an important attribute for access consultants working on public transport.

Participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring the diversity of disabilities is represented, as well as the diversity within the disability community and the intersectionality of cohorts such as culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability and First Nations people with disability.

I think transport operators for the most part, see compliance only from the point of view of cost. If that could change in a more positive way that acknowledges how improvements fundamentally have a positive impact on the disability community and its users. So possibly this is about changing attitudes. Consultation with stakeholders including people with disability, when infrastructure is proposed would be a way or improving services but also improving trust between people with disability and the operators. (Person with disability/disability advocate, 45-54 years, NSW, user survey)

Employ more people with disability and older persons to assist develop Transport Standards, who can provide real world, real time access and inclusion advice. (Person with a disability/Disability advocate, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)

You need to have disabled people test out your public transport both before and during operation to make sure it's both accessible and that employees are helping when needed. (Person with disability, 14-17 years, NSW, user survey)

“It has been identified that First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities encounter additional barriers when it comes to accessing transport facilities. When these intersect with disability, accessibility becomes even more



complex. Therefore, Western Sydney Community Forum recommends that future consultations on the Transport Standards consider these factors and incorporate strategies for broader engagement with people with disability from these groups. This should be through in-language information and resources and working with the organisations and peak agencies that support people with disability from First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to broaden reach and meaningful engagement. (Western Sydney Community Forum submission)

Some submissions noted that while Equivalent Access and Unjustifiable Hardship provisions in the Transport Standards require transport providers and operators to consult with people with disability, prescriptive solutions do not. They suggested that consultation with people with disability should be a requirement of the Transport Standards regardless of the type of solution in order to ensure public transport is not only compliant, but is also ‘fit for purpose’.

...one of the problems with the current Transport Standards is that there is often a gap between what is formally required of governments and operators for accessibility and the actual access needs of people living with disability, which will only be avoided in the updated version if opportunities for input from the disability community are maximised. (Purple Orange submission)

Public transport operators and providers noted that initiatives like the National Accessible Transport Taskforce (NATT) have been very successful, and recommended use of similar forums into the future.

Some respondents also suggested the creation of a national disability advisory body to provide input to the Transport Standards

Whole of journey accessibility requires consistent and reliable access to enable participation based on best practice and innovation. Consultation, collaboration and co-design is necessary at all stages of the journey to identify issues or barriers, solutions and opportunities for improvement. The City continuously learns from its highly valued Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel, their expertise and lived experience is invaluable towards creating a more accessible and inclusive City of Sydney. [We recommend] that the Australian Government work with the disability community to establish a national disability advisory body to involve people with disability in the decisions on reform, modernisation and implementation of the Transport Standards. (City of Sydney submission)

We acknowledge the work of the National Accessible Transport Steering Committee and the National Accessible Transport Taskforce in developing the updates, however we believe that there would be many benefits gained from utilising co-design for the remainder of this reform process to ensure that there is maximum alignment between the new requirements and the full breadth of needs within the disability community. It is also more likely to deliver outcomes consistent with Australia's declared ambitions for an accessible inclusive society, including our obligations under the UNCRPD. (Purple Orange submission)



10. Emerging issues

Many of the issues raised in responses to the review related to topics that are already covered by the Transport Standards or are being addressed through the current Reform processes. However, some issues relate to developments that have only emerged over the past five years, largely due to changes in technology and the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Rise of autonomous vehicles

With autonomous vehicles now being trialled in Australia, a small number of respondents spoke about the potential implications for people with disability of autonomous vehicles being used for public transport. The main concern is that many people with disability rely upon direct assistance from public transport staff, including drivers of buses, trains and trams, to board and alight from public transport. The use of autonomous vehicles in public transport would remove this important form of support and force people with disability to rely on other members of the public for help.

Respondents reported "I would think that I will rely on human interaction at some point throughout practically every journey. If I had an App that was linked to that autonomous vehicle, it would simply alert me to the stop I'm about to arrive at, such as "The next stop is Flinders Street." When using public transportation, many people with disabilities rely on direct help. The Transport Standards omit some tasks that drivers generally perform yet are crucial for people with disabilities (People With Disabilities WA submission)

I rely on public transport operators to help me out when moving from trains.... I ask for them to meet me. When they are not there, I end up relying on the public to help me. (People who are deaf or blind focus group participant)

Changes in mobility devices and enabling technology

As technology changes, so too do the mobility devices used by people with disability. Numerous respondents spoke about newer wheelchairs often being too large for the spaces or equipment dedicated to wheelchairs on public transport, and for accessible toilets.

Other concerns were raised about handling of newer electric wheelchairs by airline staff, which points towards the need for ongoing staff training.

One participant raised onboard spaces for wheelchairs and other mobility devices as an issue and suggested that an attempt should be made to adjust spaces to allow for future changes in the dimensions of new models of wheelchairs and devices. (Disability Stakeholder roundtable participant)

All current standards pertaining to wheelchairs, such as doorway widths, ramps, lifts, on-board parking areas, train carriages, clearways, corridors and thoroughfares, [need to] be changed to accommodate large mobility scooters. (Erica Eele submission)

Not all wheelchair taxis have a wheelchair lift big enough for all wheelchairs and mobility scooters. (Person with disability 45-54 years, Queensland, user survey)



Several responses also suggested that greater use could be made of emerging technology to better assist people with disability to access public transport.

What has also changed in this time has been the exponential development and access to digital information platforms and devices afforded through 3G, 4G and 5G networks and the almost ubiquitous adoption of 'smartphones' devices since the mid-2000s. The profession of Architecture and the allied profession of Accessibility Consultant practitioners see an important role, when designing public transport infrastructure, to design into buildings these technologies which provide assistance and aid the independence of people living a diverse range of conditions. (Australian Institute of Architects submission)

Emergence of on-demand transport options

The broadest definitions of on-demand transport cover any form of “transport of passengers for hire or reward where the passenger or hirer determines the locations for the beginning and end of the journey, as well as the time of travel”⁴. This includes taxi and rideshare services.

Numerous submissions reported that the rise of rideshare services has significantly affected the number of wheelchair accessible taxis available for hire, often resulting in very long waits for service, even when the taxi has been booked in advance. Many respondents also complained about the lack of accessible rideshare services. The combination of these two factors has greatly reduced the availability of accessible on-demand services for people with disability.

I would have to say that it would be over 50% of the time that the people we support are having to wait with their staff member for up to 1.5 hours waiting on a Maxi Taxi to arrive to pick them up to take them back home. (Worker from a disability service provider, Queensland, operator and provider survey)

There is an insufficient supply of taxi services in the area. I have had to wait up to two hours for a taxi to arrive... Due to poor taxi availability, I cannot get to or from work. (Submission from person with disability, Queensland)

There are not enough access taxis available in Adelaide. We have had people who have mobility aids wait hours for an accessible taxi. (South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability submission)

A number of jurisdictions are trialling and implementing on-demand public transport services that utilise conveyances that can transport larger numbers of passengers, such as vans and buses, with fares that are lower than that normally charged by taxis and rideshare services.

Jurisdictions describe on-demand public transport as a new way of transporting people within local communities and helping to address ‘first and last mile’ gaps in existing fixed route public transport options. They connect people’s homes, or close by their homes, with destinations such as medical services, shopping centres, and other transport stops and stations, usually within a defined geographic zone.

⁴ <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/On-demandTransport/what-is-on-demand-transport.asp>



There were a couple of favourable comments about these types of on-demand services. However, one submission highlighted the need for consideration of accessibility issues in the design of new on-demand services.

Shared on-demand mobility services emerge at a fast pace and can rapidly change the landscape of public transport. However, shared mobility services are largely designed without considering the access needs of people with disabilities. This puts these passengers at risk of exclusion. (Advocacy for Inclusion submission)

Impact of e-scooters on accessibility of public transport

This rise in use of e-scooters by the general public is impacting on some aspects of the accessibility of public transport. Several respondents spoke about being unable to access wheelchair spaces, board public transport and manoeuvre onboard due to e-scooters. Others mentioned the impact on accessibility of footpaths, which sits under the broader Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), rather than the Transport Standards, but nonetheless affects accessibility around public transport stops and stations.

E-scooters are often left abandoned at points of public transport, for example, North Quay ferry has lots of scooters parked there and this blocks access. (QDN member, quoted in Queenslanders with Disability Network submission)

People with electric scooters are taking up the wheelchair places on the tram. They often use the disability spaces or if full then they leave them in aisle-ways so people can't get past. (Person with physical disability, 65-74 years, user survey)

E-scooters and bicycles blocking gangways and parked blocking access to seats, usually disabled seats. (Person with physical disability, 75-84 years, user survey)

Increased awareness of full range of disabilities, especially hidden disabilities

In line with increasing awareness of a broad range of disabilities, many responses, particularly submissions from disability-specific advocacy organisations, highlighted areas in which the Transport Standards could better support the needs of people with hidden disabilities. This included greater consideration of the needs of people with cognitive and sensory disabilities, hearing impairments and psychosocial disabilities.

These broadened understandings of disability, driven in part by the introduction of the NDIS, have implications for the scope of the Transport Standards, as well as the understanding of disability by public transport providers and operators, and other members of the public who use public transport.

The Standards could be made better by including a focus on the cognitive accessibility of public transport. Presently, the Standards contain varied level of detail with some elements being highly prescriptive and others being quite general. But cognitive accessibility is not adequately considered. (Council for Intellectual Disability submission)



The CAG [Community Advisory Group] identified in our survey that it would be helpful for them to have an ID card that's nationally recognised to help identify people with disability that need extra support in situations on public transport. The hidden disabilities sunflower on NSW transport is a positive step in the right direction but there is still more to be done in the form of identifying how to support people with disability on a national scale.” (Hireup submission)

The AAA would welcome the consideration of non-regulatory guidance to the public transport industry improved accessibility for travellers with hidden disabilities. Airports have shown great initiative in ensuring their facilities are inclusive environments for all users. Provision of specific guidance for creating inclusive environments for those with hidden disabilities would assist airports in delivering a consistent and inclusive national airport network. (Australian Airports Association submission)

Some respondents also raised the need for greater consideration within the Transport Standards of the role of carers and support workers in supporting people with disability while using public transport.

Carers NSW continues to believe that in order to ensure optimal independence for people with disability, the Standards should be updated to ensure coherence with current accessibility standards and evidence based best practice. Furthermore, while person-centred approaches to disability inclusion are intended to optimise usage and prioritise the rights and needs of people with disability, the Standards should also recognise the role of carers as partners in care and ensure that the Standards, such as allocated space, and doorway, stairs, and toilets sizes, reflect the common need for a carer. (Carers NSW submission)

Wheelchair areas on trains and trams often don't have seating for carers, who are often old and have issues of their own. (Carer of person with disability, 75-84 years, Victoria, user survey)

Lifts are getting smaller and often cannot contain a wheelchair user, their carer and their baggage in one trip. (Carer of person with disability, 55-64 years, Victoria, user survey)

Impost on NDIS funding and other subsidies due to lack of accessible transport

The completion of the roll-out of the NDIS across the country in 2020 has seen changes to the ways that accessible transport for people with disability is funded.

Several respondents reported that the lack of accessible public transport is resulting in an over-reliance on NDIS funding, mobility allowances and other taxi subsidies to fund transport costs.

Some responses also suggest that since introduction of the NDIS, other transport subsidies have been reduced, as it was expected that mainstream services like public transport, would improve their accessibility for people with disability who do not receive an NDIS package.



This is resulting in a situation where some people with disability are unable to afford taxis or rideshare and unable to access other forms of public transport, leaving them isolated and unable to participate in everyday activities.

Conflict between State-based and NDIS transport funding can influence service viability and result in reduced service standards. In a changing environment for Point 2 Point public transport options people with disability have been overlooked and as a result have suffered greater disadvantage from the changes (Public transport sector worker, SA, operator and provider survey)

Lack of reliable and regular service means the person with disability often cannot use public transport and I am forced to transport them or arrange taxis or NDIS transport. (Support Worker, Queensland, user survey)

I am using far too much of my funding on a support worker to assist me with transport. I have very small transport funding [through the NDIS]... I need to think about my support hours. (QDN member, metropolitan area in Queenslanders with Disability Network submission)

Some respondents also noted that with an ageing population, the demand for accessible public transport is only going to grow. Furthermore, if public transport is made accessible for people with disability, the whole community, including those who are aged and frail, also benefits.

This population of older people, particularly those with mobility issues and people who are frail due to ageing, also benefit from accessible public transport.

This population group relies on effective Transport Standards to actively participate in society and for quality of life. The evidence is clear that what benefits people with disability and with special needs also benefits the whole society. (Western Sydney Community Forum submission)

If we get improved access and inclusion for people with disability and older persons, then that is half the population. However, when we add parents with young children/prams, injured workers etc. we assist the majority; everyone benefits! (Person with disability/disability advocate, 55-64 years, NSW, user survey)



11. Opportunities for Action

A. The Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide are not widely known or understood

It is clear from the responses of people with disability that there is a general lack of awareness of the Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide amongst the broader community.

It is understandable that the general public may not have read the Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide, as they are predominantly aimed at public transport providers and operators. However, the lack of awareness of their existence means that people with disability may be unaware of their rights and what they should be able to expect in terms of accessibility of public transport. It also means that other members of the public may be unaware of the accessibility needs of people with disability when using public transport and how to best support these.

Many respondents suggested that the Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide need updating and that both documents, as well as the Transport Standards themselves, need to be made available to the public in formats that are accessible and able to be understood by people with a wide range of disabilities.

Responses from public transport providers and operators suggest that while the Transport Standards are generally well known within the public transport sector, the requirements and responsibilities for meeting them may not always be well understood. They also noted that the Transport Standards are not always interpreted in a consistent way, creating confusion around requirements.

There are some particular 'grey areas' in public transport that create confusion, including the intersection and inconsistencies between the Transport Standards and Premises Standards, and the Transport Standards' application to services such as rideshare and charter buses.

Respondents expressed concerns about the balance between necessary prescriptive standards and outcomes-based standards and potential barriers to the achievement of best practice, which suggests that the intent and application of the standards, including Equivalent Access provisions, may not be well understood. It also highlights the importance of the Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide in providing clear guidance on the intent and best practice application of the Transport Standards to create accessible outcomes for people with disability.

Large numbers of respondents would like to see the introduction of requirements for regular training for public transport providers and operators and their staff. This includes training related to the Transport Standards and their application, as well as training that builds awareness and understanding of different types of disability and what accessibility means from the perspective of people with disability, not just from a compliance perspective.

Through the Reform process, the Australian Government has decided to amend the Transport Standards to include requirements for staff training and communication. This will require public transport providers and operators to conduct disability awareness training to meet the specific roles and responsibilities of staff.



B. A lack of mechanisms for measuring and enforcing compliance is a significant barrier to removing discrimination from public transport

Concerns about compliance with the Transport Standards were raised across all types of responses to the review, by both users and providers/operators of public transport, and by major advocates of accessibility, including the Australian Human Rights Commission. Many respondents asserted that a lack of accountability and enforcement of the Transport Standards is a major contributor to lack of progress towards removing discrimination from public transport.

Whilst the Transport Standards contain very clear guidelines and timelines for compliance with the standards, there is currently no requirement for public transport providers and operators to report on their levels of compliance, nor are there any mechanisms for compliance to be enforced beyond complaints processes.

The lack of enforcement mechanisms places the burden of holding public transport providers and operators accountable for meeting the Transport Standards onto individuals. As noted in numerous submissions, current complaints mechanisms do not adequately support individuals to do this and rely upon individuals' willingness and capacity to make complaints. Respondents to the review largely believe, or have experienced, that complaints do not result in outcomes. Some positive outcomes have been achieved through Australian Human Rights Commission channels, but this relies on the individual's capacity to fund and commit to reportedly long and arduous processes.

A lack of compliance data is also a major impediment to determining progress towards improved public transport accessibility. Feedback regarding levels of compliance in the small number of responses from public transport providers and operators was limited. Those who did respond noted improvements that have been made across conveyances and infrastructure, but at the same time, acknowledged that compliance is far from uniform.

Similarly, a small number of providers and operators mentioned the use of a variety of mechanisms for assessing their compliance with the Transport Standards, including audits, inspections, user feedback and data from operators and asset owners. At the same time, they spoke about the challenges of ensuring compliance when there are no consistent reporting measures in place and no means of holding other stakeholders outside of their control accountable for playing their part in delivering accessible public transport.

Some respondents suggested that there may also be a reluctance amongst providers and operators to invest in audits or to make audit results public, as the highlighting of non-compliances can be seen as a reputational risk.

As noted in submissions from several disability advocacy groups, the lack of compliance data makes it very difficult to gauge levels of accessibility across public transport systems, to identify areas in which there are significant barriers to be addressed, or to accurately determine whether the standards are effective in removing discrimination.

Through the Reform process, the Australian Government has decided to develop guidance to encourage operators and providers to develop and publish plans on how they are meeting, and



progress towards compliance with the Transport Standards. However, the Reform process has not considered mechanisms for enforcing compliance.

C. The Transport Standards, Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide have not kept pace with change

The rapid change that can occur in a five-year period creates challenges in ensuring continued alignment of the Transport Standards with changing technology and understanding of accessibility needs. The introduction of the NDIS, the rise in recognition of hidden disabilities and advances in technology are all examples of changes over the past five years that have implications for the effectiveness of the Transport Standards in removing discrimination from public transport.

Emerging issues such as the introduction of autonomous vehicles, the rise of on-demand transport, and changes in mobility devices will also have implications for application of the Transport Standards into the future.

Many respondents to the review have called for the Transport Standards and supporting documents to be more regularly updated to reflect such changes and that people with disability be involved in the process of reviewing and updating them. There is recognition by some respondents that as a legislative instrument, the Transport Standards are not easily updated. However, updates to the Guidelines and Whole Journey Guide, were suggested as a way to maintain a contemporary understanding of the application of the Transport Standards.

As a result of the Reform process, the Whole Journey Guide and Guidelines will be updated to reflect changes to the Transport Standards and to incorporate new content.

D. The Transport Standards alone do not enable a fully accessible ‘whole of journey’

Several of the issues raised in the review sit outside the scope of the Transport Standards, but they highlight the fact that accessibility across the whole of a journey relies upon interactions between the Transport Standards, Premise Standards, the broader Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation.

Respondents are calling for better coordination and information sharing between all levels of government and public transport providers and operators to support a whole of journey approach and ensure the accessibility of precincts surrounding public transport infrastructure and premises.

Exemption of some transport types from the Transport Standards also impacts on the accessibility across a whole of journey approach for some segments of the community. Numerous responses, including the submission from the Australian Human Rights Commission, called for the removal of current exemptions that apply to school buses in order to avoid further disadvantage or barriers to education for children and young people with disability. The exemption of small aircraft from the Transport Standards was also raised as a barrier for people with disability living in remote communities.

A lack of accessible rideshare services also creates a gap in the overall accessibility of public transport systems, particularly given that the rise of this form of on-demand transport has impacted on the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis. Through the Reform process, the Australian Government consulted stakeholders on the application of the Transport Standards to rideshare



services. To determine an appropriate solution, a working group will be established to conduct of holistic review of point-to-point transport services, including rideshare.

E. There are some specific aspects of public transport that pose particular accessibility challenges

Complaints processes are an area of particular concern, due to the complexity of processes, the time, effort and costs involved and doubts about the likelihood of achieving meaningful outcomes. In the absence of any other mechanisms for holding public transport providers and operators accountable for lack of compliance with the Transport Standards, the lack of effective complaints processes is seen as a significant issue.

Journey disruptions create significant barriers and risks to safety and security for many people with disability and the impact of disruptions is generally much broader and greater for people with disability than for other members of the public. It appears that not enough consideration is given by public transport providers and operators to accessibility issues when planned and unplanned disruptions occur, particularly in terms of timing and accessibility of notification of disruptions, availability of assistance, and lack of accessibility of the alternative conveyances or stops/stations/terminals provided. Frequent refusal of public transport services to transport people with mobility devices and assistance animals compounds this issue.

A lack of accessible public transport alternatives increases the **transport barriers for people with disability living in rural, regional and remote areas**, particularly when faced with journey disruptions. Review respondents would like to see greater consideration of the needs of people with disability living in rural, regional and remote areas in the application of the Transport Standards, particularly the provision of accessible alternatives for public transport services, infrastructure or conveyances that are temporarily unavailable, or unable to easily be made compliant with the Transport Standards.

Whilst support for **journey planning** has improved for many people with disability, largely thanks to technological advances and improvements in accessibility of information, planning processes are still much more complex and time-consuming for people with disability than for other members of the public. This is due to the need for navigating multiple sources of information, as well as incomplete, inconsistent and/or unreliable accessibility information.

Significant barriers also still exist at stops, stations and terminal and onboard conveyances in relation to **access to priority seating and spaces, accessibility of signage and announcements, lift access, and getting on and off** public transport (including **availability of direct assistance**).

Airports and airlines operate under particular circumstances that impact upon their accessibility and compliance with the Transport Standards. Numerous submissions have called for specific standards to be developed in relation to air transport, that better recognise the complexity of interplay between different regulatory requirements and responsibilities of different providers and operators.



F. Engagement of people with disability in the design and implementation of public transport leads to better accessibility outcomes

Numerous responses to the review called for greater engagement of people with disability in areas such as the design of public transport infrastructure and services, procurement decisions and the design of the Transport Standards and supporting documentation. They also cautioned against “tokenistic” engagement and consultation fatigue and highlighted positive forms of engagement that included advisory groups and genuine consultation processes, as well as comprehensive co-design processes.

Many responses identified a particular role for people with disability in the design and delivery of training for public transport staff to assist their understanding in how best to interact with and support people with disability in accessing public transport.

Examples have been provided of newer public transport assets that have been developed through co-design with people with disability from the outset, which are much more accessible than their legacy counterparts, and of successful engagement of people with disability to solve particular accessibility issues.



Appendix A: Actions arising from the 2017 review of the Transport Standards

Recommendations from the Third Review	Government Response	Progress
Recommendation 1 Reform and modernise the Transport Standards	Supports	<p>In 2019, Infrastructure and Transport Ministers agreed to reform the Transport Standards. These reforms aim to address the recommendations of previous reviews of the Transport Standards, to ensure they remain efficient and effective, are fit for purpose and meet the current needs of people with disability. The Australian Government announced the reform package on xxx, and work is underway to update the Transport Standards.</p> <p>Further information, including detail about the reform areas, is available on the Department of Infrastructure website.</p>
Recommendation 2 Increase the involvement of the disability community	Supports in principle	<p>The National Accessible Transport Taskforce was established in 2019 to provide high-level oversight of the reforms and included a number of people with disability.</p> <p>The reform process and 2022 Review of the Transport Standards involved extensive consultation with people with disability.</p>
Recommendation 3 Foster an environment for innovation	Supports	<p>The Commonwealth are working with academics at LaTrobe University's Centre for Technology Infusion to develop Connected and Automated Vehicle guidelines. These guidelines will assist developers of this emerging technology to ensure their products are accessible for people with disability.</p> <p>Through the reform process, the Australian Government agreed to develop a repository of equivalent access solutions. This will support innovation through the use of equivalent access solutions.</p>
Recommendation 4 Improve coordination and promotion of the Transport Standards	Supports in principle	<p>There has been extensive consultation and promotion of the Transport Standards through the Reform process and 2022 Review consultations.</p> <p>Through the Reforms process, the Australian Government has harmonised requirements between the Transport and Premises Standards to promote alignment and consistency, and simplify regulatory requirements where the two standards intersect, as well as other industry requirements such as the National Standard for Commercial Vessels and the National Construction Code.</p>
Recommendation 5	Supports	<p>While public transport is primarily a matter for state and territory governments, the Australian Government plays a role investing in the construction of rail and road</p>



Recommendations from the Third Review	Government Response	Progress
Invest in accessible public transport		infrastructure through the Infrastructure Investment Program. Public transport projects funded by the Australian Government are required to comply with Transport Standards.
Recommendation 6 Improve the quality of accessibility data to identify problems and craft policy/legislative interventions	Supports	The Australian Government recognises the importance of a national framework for data collection and reporting. Through the Reform process, the Australian Government has agreed to develop guidance to encourage operators and providers to develop and publish plans on how they are meeting, and progress towards compliance with the Transport Standards.
Recommendation 7 Champion accessibility beyond minimum standards, particularly in staff training and universal design	Supports	The Whole Journey Guide has been developed to encourage providers and operators of public transport to think beyond compliance, and more about accessibility across the whole public transport journey. As a result of the Reform process, the Whole Journey Guide will be updated to reflect changes to the Transport Standards and to incorporate new content.
Recommendation 8 Address uncertainty around the lawfulness of contravening a disability standard	Noted	
Recommendation 9 Increase support for individuals to make a complaint under the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth)	Noted	

