

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF THE DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT STANDARDS.)

I am going to address the problems of complaint handling

As a slightly disabled person with Chronic Illnesses including Arthritis in both knees, ankles hands, wrists and elbows I have difficulties in using Public Transport, but need to do so at least 3 times a week to attend medical appointments, hairdressers, shop and generally lead a normal life as much as possible. Most of my problems are associated with restricted mobility which is not obvious at first sight.

I am concerned that a number of obstacles exists and the Disability Discrimination Act is not being strictly adhered to in many areas of the Public Transport System and it is difficult too make complaints as they are often interpreted in a way to suit the organization to which I complain and my complaint becomes a criticism rather than a helpful tool to use to deal with problems as they arise.

State Transit appears to be making a definite effort to improve their Customer service and on approaching them with my problems two years ago there has been a great improvement with drivers being more aware of the need to (where possible) kneel a bus, come into the kerb, wait until I am seated and generally be more co-operative than was once evidenced. There are still some problems with individual drivers which need to be addressed more strongly and maybe the Disability Standards knowledge could be built into their license requirements

However they are often hindered because of posts, street lights and street furniture causing obstructions. It is not unusual to see bins immediately at the bus stop and this hinders wheelchair and pram access to buses. The QVB is a good example of this.

I also raise the issue of some drivers insisting they only come into a stop only at 300mm which is not close and parallel. It appears this is the way they are trained and this can cause difficulty for a disabled person when leaving the bus as the gap is too wide. This needs to be addressed.

Because of the design of the road often Bus Stops are curved and this means a bus has no hope of being Close and parallel.

I feel Councils and the Roads and Traffic Authority could be more co-operative in resolving the above problems and assist State Transit in their endeavors.

Regrettably, I cannot say the same of Transport Infrastructure and Railcorp

It appears to me whenever I raise an issue in relation to Infrastructure problems usually caused by the re-development of a station, the only response I get is "it is within Australian Standards" I am of the opinion this is a way of avoiding taking responsibility

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for the problem and therefore not taking necessary steps to deal with the issue in an appropriate manner.

An example is Epping Station. During the construction work I am pleased to say any minor problem I brought to the attention of TIDC,(with the exception of one) was always quickly rectified usually with the assistance of the Station Management. However now the Station has opened I have a problem because the escalators are too fast. As it stands, if the lift breaks down I cannot get to Platform 1 at Epping Station because I cannot use the escalators because of the speed , This means I cannot get the train to my destination often for Medical appointments at West Ryde and Eastwood.

It is interesting to note that there are three escalators at Chatswood all going at different speeds. Chatswood also has steps.

Most escalators in Public Places are MUCH slower than at these two stations and I cannot understand why.

NB Following the verbal submission on Friday 20th July, I was able to finally have a meeting with Transport Infrastructure Corp., who again assured me the escalators were to standard, therefore because **I cannot comply** to the standards by walking onto the escalator at the speed they go, I am going to suggest the “Standards” and the “Spirit of the Standards” which take into account the “Human Element”are in contradiction one with the other

Also the Bus Interchange has now opened with the area being curved, therefore buses are unable to come Close and parallel. Therefore I cannot use the buses to Epping as I have difficulty stepping on and off a bus unless it is close to the kerb.

This all translates in my being unable to travel in reasonable comfort and confidence to a newly built Railway Station and Bus interchange.

There are other access issues and again I have been quoted the “Standards” in relation to these issues which includes being locked in toilets at the station, twice.

I submit no lay person should have to know, or understand the standards, if there is a problem (and I believe I am not the only one complaining) the problem should be quickly, quietly and efficiently dealt with keeping in mind “Human requirements” in conjunction with the building standards. It is obvious this is not the case at present.

It is of real concern that my only source of redress is to attempt to prove discrimination through the Human Rights Commission as I do not necessarily believe the problems to be discrimination but rather merely lack of concern and understanding of the Community needs as a whole.

I am most reluctant to go to The Human rights Commission and certainly would not have the funds to go to the Federal Court therefore I would like to see an Independent

organization, along the lines of the Ombudsman to handle complaints of this nature who would negotiate on behalf of the complainant and then, if necessary, forward the complaint on to the Human Rights Commission for further investigation should they be unsuccessful with their negotiations.

I believe this would alleviate frivolous complaints going to the Human Rights Commission and speed up the resolution process.

It is also a fact that many people do not know how to complain and if they ring 131 500 find the response unsatisfactory. I have had many bad experiences with that number.

I would like to see Railcorp and Transport Infrastructure be more responsive to the requirements of the Disabled Public and not just build lifts into station(for which I commend them) but ensure there is adequate infrastructure aimed to assist those with Hidden Disability such as myself. Also I would like them to behave more positively towards concerns expressed by members of the Public.

CONCLUSION:

The complaints mechanism with Railcorp and Transport Infrastructure Co-operation is greatly hindered by “defensive attitudes” of management of these two organizations and I believe attitude problems need to be addressed in order to simplify the handling of complaints and accelerate the rectification of concerns held by the Disabled.

This would have to include stringent training of their Senior Management Officers.

All Organizations need to work together. that is, Councils, State Transit, Railcorp Transport Infrastructure, Road Traffic Authority and all those with the responsibility of delivering a safe environment during Redevelopment Projects not only for the Disabled, but also for the elderly and mothers with prams and young children as well as the community as a whole.

The complaints mechanism needs to be simpler and friendlier for the general public

There appears to be a contradiction with the “Standards” and the “Spirit of the Standards” especially with the development of new stations which will become a serious problem in the future and already indicated at Epping Station..

All new Infrastructure should be subject to a “FULL”External Audit before handover not just a signature of one Access Consultant.