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## TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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**THE ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP**

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

**HEARING CONDUCTED AT: KALGOORLIE**

**DATE: 19 JULY 2007**

MR BELL: Okay. We might get started. So I'm John Bell from the Allen Consulting Group and I've got with me Leonie Buktenica, who is from our Perth office, and, as you know, we're doing this review on behalf of the Federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services, and it's a review of the standards under the Disability Discrimination Act as they relate to public transport. It's a first five-year review. As you may know, these standards are to be implemented over quite a long period, in fact, 25 years, but that's because some of the assets – some of the facilities are very long-lived. If you buy a bus, for example, an ordinary bus can have a life expectancy of 20 years. It may go through several engines and sets of seats, but it's still the same physical bus. And so the government has decided to allow an extended period for adopting these standards. However, we've got to the first five-year review point.

And the question is: how much progress has been made; where are the points where the progress is not adequate; what needs to be done? And so the Government has asked us to go round and talk to people and find out how things are going. As you know, there's also a written submission process some people will be writing to us and telling us that they're happy with the way this particular airline looks after people with a disability, or they're unhappy with the way that this other service looks after people with a disability. And so we'll be getting some of that material in, up to 24 August. Some municipal authorities will also be writing in to talk about their bus shelters and their crossings and - their street crossings, and things like that.

So we're travelling round and we're doing these meetings in all the capital cities, and also in a number of selected regional centres. Obviously we can't go to all the regional centres, but so far I've been to Dubbo in New South Wales, and Launceston in Tasmania, and this is my third regional centre. And you'd notice that Kalgoorlie, Launceston and Dubbo are really all quite different in their nature. Dubbo, for example, as the centre of a big agricultural area, has different sorts of issues to the sorts of issues that we think might arise here in Kalgoorlie.

Now, let me explain the microphones. The reason that we're recording it is because there are people who are not able to be here today, but who would like to know what is said and like to, in some cases, respond to things that are said. So we are recording it and we're going to put it up on the internet. And that's fine, but it's only fair to tell you we're doing that. And we do have some coffee and tea. And so we're just going to talk informally. These things are billed as hearings, but we're trying to make them as informal as possible. And I think you've met our colleague, Kim Starr, who is from the Federal Department, who is here. But I might actually just invite each of you to introduce yourselves. I'm going to bring this microphone over so that I don't miss anybody.

MS PETTIT: I'm Kylie Pettit from Disability Services Commission.

MS LANE: I'm Maxine Lane from Silver Chain, but my profile is Commonwealth Respite Carelink, and I'm the coordinator for the Goldfields.

MS HATTON: And I'm Sheila Hatton. I'm an LAC with the Disability Services Commission in the Goldfields.

MR FOOTE: I'm David, and I've just come to the meeting.

5

MR BELL: Thanks, David.

MR FOOTE: Yes.

10 MR BELL: I'm really glad to see you here. Okay. So when it comes to public transport, some of the major issues here – we may get some more people come. That's fine. We'll look after them when they arrive. The major issues are people who have a – in terms of public transport, tend to be for people who have a visual impairment or who have a mobility impairment. And so just let me ask you, how  
15 well do the taxi and bus services work here for people who have a disability? Anybody want to make a comment?

MS HATTON: I guess I'd be quite happy to actually bring – I am actually representing some of my clients with some thoughts that they had, one with a taxi  
20 service. We do believe that, while the intentions are very good out there, it is the lack of getting qualified drivers who actually want to do the maxi taxi. That sort of thing, the waiting periods are still fairly long. And another issue is also probably with the bus routes, that they – for people with disabilities to actually, even if they can access the bus and utilise the bus, sometimes the routing is too far away for them  
25 to actually get to the bus stop.

Probably thirdly, recently I went to assist a client that was going down to the Princess Margaret with Qantas, and it was quite disappointing to find out this individual could not self-transfer, and I had rung Qantas and spoke to the head office  
30 that deal with special handling, and was told that, you know, that was fine. This would be no problem for the carer, they wouldn't have to physically move the individual. But when we got to the airport - I just happened to go, just to see how the process worked, and it was up to myself and another employee of Qantas to physically to put this individual up. And so I think that's a restrictive for all age  
35 groups, whether you are a young person with a disability that can't self-transfer, that dignity of being out in the check-in area, and having two people try and struggle and put you into the little wheelchair that goes on the airplane. I think that could have been done maybe behind closed doors.

And I think, although they do have a hoist that goes up into the aircraft that takes the wheelchair, I think they need to take on that responsibility of getting something where a passenger can be physically lifted, too, because, otherwise, that really means that you start putting – for an individual like that, then they would have to start using  
5 the Royal Flying Doctor service, which costs thousands of dollars, when people are just going down for a routine or annual check-ups, and they're not unhealthy, they just having a disability.

MR BELL: Yes. Okay. So one of the issues you've raised here is the air transport  
10 issue. And I gather that Qantas, and presumably the other airlines, use a modified forklift where they can lift the passenger up to the height of the door. But we've heard elsewhere that the airlines do not seem to have some mechanism for recording the fact that somebody is in a wheelchair when the booking is made. Was that your experience?

15 MS HATTON: No. They actually did record that. It was the fact that that individual, because they had to go into the airline's wheelchair, which is a much smaller, narrower chair - - -

20 MR BELL: Yes.

MS HATTON: - - - they had to be transferred from their own – like, say if David was going on a flight, then he had to be transferred from this wheelchair onto a airline wheelchair, and if he can't self-transfer, that means I, or whoever else of their  
25 staff, would have to physically have to pick him up.

MR BELL: And put him on the other wheelchair.

30 MS HATTON: Yes.

MR FOOTE: I think it was three years ago when I first come here, they used to – and when I come back from Perth once, I went out to the airport, and that's when I found out I had to have shoes on my feet before I could actually hop into the airline. Even a pair of thongs or anything. Then they put me on a small, skinny chair, and I  
35 think they took me out to the air – on the tarmac – got a big special cage with a forklift-type thing. The passengers get on one side of the aeroplane, and they put me on the opposite side. And they got me in that way. And when I got down here they did the reverse, got me off and everything. It wasn't too bad.

40 MR BELL: Yes.

MR FOOTE: I don't know if everything has changed since then.

45 MS HATTON: Were you able to actually physically transfer yourself from this wheelchair on to the - - -

MR FOOTE: I had to – there's two blokes had to get me out of my – this chair into that chair, and then get on the aeroplane then, because one stood at the back – the

normal chair, put his arms under my arms while the other one got my legs, and they both put me on the seat and - - -

MR BELL: So they lifted you into the seat.

5

MR FOOTE: Yes. I think the last plane was one of the planes that go up north, where it had three seats. In the front there was two seats, there was a big space there. You'd bring up the table in and you'd unfold them, got the table in front of you. They just got me in the seat and - - -

10

MR BELL: Yes. Okay. Well, the 737 is not such a difficult aircraft to put somebody in with a disability, but some of the smaller aircraft would be much more difficult, because some of them, when the door opens, it becomes the steps that you use to get up into the aircraft. And, of course, the very small aircraft are not covered by the standards. I've just forgotten the number of seats, but it might be 24, so up to that size, there is not a problem, but beyond that size, they have to be able to take people like David. Okay. Let's go back to the taxis for a moment. You think that there are just the two taxis here - - -

15

20 MS HATTON: As far as I - - -

MR BELL: - - - set up to take wheelchairs.

MS HATTON: That's - as far as I'm aware, yes.

25

MR BELL: And is it a problem - let me ask, are these same taxis used to take disabled children to school?

MS HATTON: They are. We're one of the few areas in the state that actually has - the school actually has the taxis picking up and dropping off the children, which means that, for an adult with a disability, if they have to go to work between the hours of, say, 7.30 and 8.30 or quarter to 9, that transport is really not available to them, because they are so flat tack with their school runs.

30

35 MR BELL: Yes.

MS HATTON: Unlike a lot of other areas, where the school - the Education Department provides the buses for the children.

40 MR BELL: Yes. Just let me ask this gentleman over here, if I can. Sorry, what was your name?

MR RICHARDS: Derek.

45 MR BELL: Derek. Derek, what's your experience with the taxis?

MR RICHARDS: I've - I mean, you know, I've had a few issues over the years, but I mean, I've got my own cab driver now, so I just get him, and it's all fine. But early on, it was very difficult.

5 MR BELL: Oh, that's good to have your own - so you've got a cab driver who sort of understands your needs and can move you around?

MR RICHARDS: Yes. That's right.

10 MR BELL: Well, that's very fortunate.

MR RICHARDS: But I do have to get the maxi sometimes, and that's a bit difficult, and - you know, particularly early on, when I was - started high school and stuff, yeah. But it's become a lot easier now for me. I think that advantage that I have is  
15 I've got good mobility and I can transfer onto chairs and stuff with ease, without having to get assistance.

MR BELL: Okay. So you're able to do your own transfers. That's obviously a big advantage. So let me come back over here. On the buses, what's the arrangement so far as the buses are concerned in Kalgoorlie? Are there buses that have a low \ floor  
20 and a ramp?

MS HATTON: Mm.

25 MR BELL: Well, that's good. How does it work, in terms of getting onto the kerb? Is it generally okay? David, have you tried using the buses?

MR FOOTE: Only once, in the driveway type of thing, because when Yvonne was here, we go up to the corner, just go round the corner, near the motel there, where the  
30 first driveway is, does the bus - because I'm not too sure where the nearest bus stop is, because usually they have to lock - close the doors, lower the end, then put the thing out, open the door up again, and get the person in.

MS HATTON: Just going back to the taxis, and this certainly is not indicative of  
35 Kalgoorlie itself. This is actually, I think, a major thing that's going to the taxi industry now, with a lot of the taxis switching to natural gas, which means they've got the big tanks in the boot, what that does is actually prevents a lot of taxis out there from taking passengers that are able to self-transfer. There's a hesitation - and this isn't just Kalgoorlie, by any means - where people - drivers don't want to  
40 actually have the responsibility of folding up a wheelchair and putting it in the boot, because they see that as extra work, and possibly they may have existing back injuries or, for one reason or another, don't want to be doing that heavy lifting, and so when you're getting taxis that are switching onto the natural gas, you're taking the whole capacity of the boot to hold a wheelchair, which means taxis cannot put the  
45 wheelchair in the back seat, because they can't actually secure it. So then you're taking a whole bunch of taxis away for people that could be self-transferring into taxis, thus placing huge more - or a lot - higher demands on the maxi taxis, which are very far and few between, as it is.

MR BELL: Okay. That's interesting. I hadn't - that's a new issue that you've just raised that I haven't heard mentioned before, but I can understand that because once you've got the gas tank in the boot, then there's not a lot of room for a wheelchair,  
5 even if it's folded up. Yes. And I can understand the concern about having it loose inside the cab.

MS PETTIT: And there's also the issue of wheelchairs that don't fold up, that don't necessarily fit into the - not just electric ones, but manual ones that don't collapse,  
10 that don't fit into the boot necessarily, unless it's a station wagon, and not able to put it in the back seat, because it's not able to be secured.

MR BELL: So, Kylie, for those ones, you would have to have the maxi taxi.

15 MS PETTIT: Pretty much, yes.

MS HATTON: So I guess, on one hand, you know, people are trying to be responsible by switching to natural gas and that kind of thing, but then there is an other element that hasn't been thought of either, and I know, for myself, just even - I  
20 recently came back from overseas, and being at the airport and having luggage, I had two bags that could not fit, and they weren't that big a bags, but they couldn't fit because it was a natural gas, had a great big thing in the back seat - or in the boot. So I mean, that's going to be something that's going to just go across all ranges. And I don't - I certainly don't see where a lot of taxis are switching to becoming like  
25 station wagons, that kind of thing.

MR BELL: Okay. I can just see a train going past, and I'm wondering, is it possible to take a train from Kalgoorlie to, say, Perth?

30 MS HATTON: Yes.

MR BELL: So how accessible are the trains?

MS HATTON: The Prospector, I believe - I haven't heard really anything  
35 particularly negative.

MR FOOTE: As far as the new Prospector, I think you can fit up to two people on it. I'm not too sure if you can fit - - -

40 MR BELL: Two in wheelchairs?

MR FOOTE: Yes. I'm not too sure if you can fit any more on it.

MS PETTIT: Yes. They just - if they - or if you notify them, they just need to take  
45 out seats. If it's someone that isn't able to transfer into a normal seat, if it has to be a wheelchair to be secured directly onto the train, you just have to give them notice, so they can actually remove other seats.

MR BELL: How do they go securing the wheelchair onto the train?

MS PETTIT: I - - -

5 MR FOOTE: Locking it into place like they do in a maxi, don't they?

MS PETTIT: I don't know. I haven't seen it - how they actually do it.

10 MR FOOTE: That'd be the way they do it, wouldn't they?

MR BELL: Do you know how they - - -

MS HATTON: I've actually gone with a couple of clients that have gone the train,  
and there's actually a couple of compartments that they have, so they've actually got  
15 the wheelchair with the seating arrangement, which I thought was particularly good,  
was the fact that their chair - where they were seated on the train, there was a space  
behind them, so if they need to get into the wheelchair and go and use - they have  
wheelchair accessible toilets and things like that on the train now. So they've got the  
wheelchair handy enough where they can actually transfer back into their wheelchair,  
20 if they need to, to go to the toilet, so.

MR BELL: Okay. So that sounds quite good.

25 MS HATTON: Yes. I think it's - - -

MS BROWN: Okay.

MS PETTIT: The only issue that we have found is that the Prospector does  
occasionally break down. Sometime - it has, in the past, more often than not. So  
30 there is the circumstance that, if it does break down and it's stuck for quite a while,  
when people have to transfer then, onto buses, to be transported the rest of the way,  
people in wheelchairs can't get off. So while they're at stations, it's no problem.  
However, if it breaks down in the middle of nowhere, there's no way they can get off  
the train.

35 MR BELL: Okay. Obviously that would be a bit of a problem. Okay. So we've  
talked about some of those issues. What about the general situation of the kerbs and  
the crossings on the footpaths? David was having to come along the street to get to  
us today because there is no crossing just out here for him to come up. How well  
40 organised is Kalgoorlie for getting around in a wheelchair? David?

MR RICHARDS: Can I say something about this?

45 MR FOOTE: There's only a few places there where I have to pull the rope around  
and - if I come off the footpath and onto the road, it's a bit of a drop and - it's like up  
near Red Rooster. If they can do the little - the intersection in there - like, a little  
path going across the median strip, if they took a big chunk out of it so the person

doesn't have to follow the rope around and – because playing with traffic is not very good.

MR BELL: No, no. Let me just ask over here.

5

MR RICHARDS: Do you really want to know my opinion?

MR BELL: Why no.

10 MR RICHARDS: No, it's not very good, you know. I mean, I think there needs to be a fair bit of improvement made to cater for people in wheelchairs to make things a little bit easier.

15 MR BELL: Okay. I noticed this morning that there are some interesting crossings that are made of steel and I wonder how people with a vision impairment would fare trying to get across some of those.

MS PETTIT: I've actually got one client that's just mentioned in passing that the sensory things at the lights point in the wrong direction.

20

MR BELL: The tactile sensor?

25 MS PETTIT: Yes. They actually point into the middle of the intersection so that if she were to – she has some vision so she's able to work out where she's going – but if she were to actually follow them she'd end up in the wrong direction.

MR BELL: Yes. Well, we certainly didn't see many of those sensors this morning, but - - -

30 MS PETTIT: Yeah, in the main intersection, corner of Hannan and Maritana Street where the big – where the most popular intersection is, they're certainly there.

35 MR BELL: So perhaps there is a lack of understanding on quite how those sensors need to be organised. I guess these are fairly new these sorts of developments, and it will take a little time, especially if you've got contractors who are putting these things in and they don't necessarily understand how they work. Does the council have an access committee that advises it? It does? Okay.

40 MS HATTON: And I think, quite often, sometimes if nobody is addressing the council or saying that, "Look, you know, I'm in a wheel chair and I would really like to access this or that," then they're not to know either. It's fine to talk about it but you need to be a little more proactive sometimes, too, and address the council.

45 MR RICHARDS: I was just going to say my sister works at the council and she's always telling me to go down there and sort them out.

MR BELL: Well, some of these things are not obvious. It's like where you put the tactile dots, they need some advice, and so I think there's often a willingness to do

some of this work but the difficulty is in knowing quite what's required and, if it's new, then there's not other examples that you can easily follow. Okay. Who operates the bus service here in Kalgoorlie?

5 MS PETTIT: Golden Lines.

MR BELL: Golden Lines. Okay. And is it – it's a government-owned bus company or is it a contractor?

10 MS HATTON: I'm not sure actually.

MR BELL: Okay.

MS PETTIT: Was it Bus West or Transwest.

15

MR BELL: Oh, it's related to Transwest.

MS PETTIT: I believe so. Is it?

20 MR BELL: We will make some inquiries and find out. It's good that they have some accessible buses.

MS HATTON: Another issue that's really faced by a lot of clients, Kylie actually – I mean, we all cover a different regions, some cover Kalgoorlie and Boulder, but  
25 Kylie actually goes out to Kambalda and Coolgardie, and I go up to areas like Leonora and Laverton, Menzies, that sort of thing. Now, the problem there is there are no buses for people in wheelchairs. If you can't get up the steps and sit in them, then you can't take a regional bus anywhere.

30 MR BELL: So how do they get access to medical services, into town?

MS HATTON: A lot of them don't.

MR BELL: Is there a state government subsidy for people to use a taxi in those  
35 circumstances?

MS HATTON: There is. There is the taxi voucher system, yes. But it's really – for somebody to have to pay from Laverton, which is four hours to Kalgoorlie, to come down in a maxi taxi, I mean, you can - - -

40

MS PETTIT: Not a reality.

MS HATTON: No.

45 MS LANE: See, what happens, a HAC coordinator usually brings it down - that's one of the coordinators up there from the Health Department - but then they have the problem of getting accommodation, and accommodation is very expensive. So you then get lots of problems.

MS BUKTENICA: Are there limits on the value of the taxi voucher in regional areas. I think in Perth they were saying that the taxi vouchers are only up to a value of about \$25 and that really wouldn't get you anywhere here.

5 MR FOOTE: Every time you catch a taxi, they maximise up to \$25, and if you go any further, like from here to Kambalda, it's \$91 each way, and they do it - like, you might have to do about four tickets out of the book per trip. I've got my taxi voucher book here.

10 MR BELL: That's interesting. That's the first time I've actually seen one of these voucher books.

MS PETTIT: Yeah, "This voucher is valid for up to 50 per cent or 75 per cent of the total fare charged to a maximum subsidy of \$25."

15

MS LANE: Yes. So like David was saying, you'd have to take a couple of tickets out of the book.

MS BUKTENICA: Are there limits on the number of tickets that you are allocated?

20

MR FOOTE: Yes. I think you can use the whole book if you - if you go from here to Esperance you can use the whole book. I think he just puts \$25 in each one. Unless you go to Adelaide and you go through about 10 books - the further you go the more books you have to have. That's why I always like to carry about three

25 books. You use one and have three spare books just in case the postage or whatever, or the mail thing is on strike. Yes, if you've got one book and you've only got four tickets left you're in dire straits.

MR RICHARDS: Yes. I've had to - I've had to - - -

30

MR FOOTE: I like to keep extra books to make sure.

MR RICHARDS: Yes. I've had to book about two - like, the other day I called for about three books so, you know, I always try and stay a couple of books in front.

35 You know, but then I sort of say to them, "Make sure Australia Post don't go on strike either."

MR BELL: I don't think they've been on strike for a little while, but I can understand you wouldn't want to be, sort of, running out of vouchers.

40

MS PETTIT: The thing with Kambalda, in particular as well, there is only a bus that comes in to Kalgoorlie in the morning and goes out at night. So if you want to go back the other way, say if you want to go from Kalgoorlie to Kambalda during the day, you can't. You have to wait till 3 o'clock and then come back the next day. So

45 it's - and that's just basically run by a person who lives in Kambalda, so it's not even - and that's certainly not a wheelchair accessible bus. So for people - for all people it's not a fantastic service. The buses up to Laverton are very infrequent and then, if you are looking to go any further than that, say, looking out on the lands you just

basically wouldn't even attempt to get out there. The bus - the train – sorry, what's it called, plane, Nadajarah Air Service is no longer running, so there is basically no way, unless you are in a car, to get out to the lands at all – or in.

5 MS LANE: Otherwise they have to bring you in, don't they? You have to come in by Flying Doctor.

MR BELL: Yes. I guess this is the first centre – the Flying Doctor was in Dubbo but – how is the Flying Doctor Service paid for? Do you know, Sheila?

10

MS HATTON: I would assume it's by us taxpayers and by donations.

MR BELL: Yes.

15 MS HATTON: I think they get some partial funding from the government. I don't know if that's on a state or federal level but I certainly know that they have to do a lot of fundraising over here. But I think that takes away where you're equating a trip that would cost, you know, through the Transport Department - I mean, you are using a specialised service. They can't, just because that person doesn't have a medical  
20 need, say, "Well, we can just fly them down and we won't send our nurses and our doctor." I mean, that's what comes when you book the Royal Flying Doctor, that is how it goes. They are not a transport plane. They are a specialist aircraft for medical emergencies.

25 And I guess it's not just for only medical appointments but it's also to do with the emotional and social well-being of individuals that would like to go back and see family members and maintain, you know, family contacts and things like that. Quite a few people have come down from these remoter areas, a lot of younger people, and their elders and their older family members are up there and they, unless they've got  
30 a car – which brings a whole other issue of problems and things like that – how do they ever get back to see their family and to keep those bonds strengthened. And I think sometimes it's an attitude, "Well, you know, if you're out bush, come and live in town."

35 MR BELL: Yes. So there are some general challenges for people who are in these areas, even without a disability, but for people with a disability it's just that much harder.

MS HATTON: Enormous. Absolutely enormous. I mean, you're looking at areas  
40 where people are living - that aren't paved. You've got wheelchairs that are actually designed more for the street use. You know, you can do certain things and try and get the tyres and that kind of thing, you know, built up with goo and all that kind of stuff and make them more like BMX tyre. But when you've got people there that, on any everyday basis, are trying to go from areas where there's no ramps, there's  
45 nothing, I mean, it's a constant - and that is so isolating for individuals. Another thing, too. It comes down to the fact that we don't very often get our health teams up - our OT and people that can actually do repairs on wheelchairs and things like that - up to these regions. And I know two clients that, for the last four months, have been

housebound because they can't get simple repairs done on their wheelchair, like the tyres fixed, that kind of thing. And if you put yourself in that situation, and think how terrible that must be to literally - and we know there are cases of people being wheeled around in shopping trolleys - - -

5

MS PETTIT: And prams.

MS HATTON: And prams.

10 MR BELL: And that's not good. I hadn't thought of the problem of getting these wheelchairs serviced. The electric ones could be quite complex, in terms of their servicing requirements.

15 MS HATTON: I've got one client that lives in one of the remote areas, that actually has a scooter, and she is more often than not without it, just due to battery issues or some simple - well, not simple, but something that happens to it, and she can't use it and she waits months to get a new battery or to get it fixed. I mean, there's, you know - - -

20 MR BELL: But even a wheelchair like this - this one doesn't have batteries but it still has to - - -

25 MR FOOTE: They have these sort of things go between the silver thing and the wheel. Usually the screws come loose. And it's like with the left one there, if something gets chipped - and you got the movement on the thing - at the moment, I've been waiting seven weeks to get new wheels for the back of the chair, and I'm still waiting.

30 MR BELL: Do they come from Perth?

MR FOOTE: Yes. The hospital here - OT - rings up Perth. I'm not too sure whether I'm getting slightly different wheels for the chair. I've been waiting seven weeks so far and still nothing has happened.

35 MS HATTON: And in defence of our OTs and our physios, I believe they're certainly doing the very best that they can, but they are down positions. It seems to be that thing with the government, where it takes forever to actually hire an individual; you know, that process is two or three months long. So you've got people that are actually covering vast areas, where they might go and see two clients or four clients and they have to travel 400ks to do so. And I do believe that they're -  
40 the individuals are trying their very best to get these things done. I often wonder though, on an upper management level, whether they feel that kind of need is important to everyday people.

45 MR BELL: So when the spare parts do arrive for the chair, who is going to put it all together?

MR FOOTE: I think I just go to the hospital and they take these wheelchairs, they adjust the thing; you press the button and you just take the whole wheel off.

5 MR BELL: But there's somebody out there who has the technical skills to be able to do that?

MR FOOTE: Yes. Sometimes the silver things on the wheels, that I use to wheel myself, if they're loose - when I run down the little slope before hitting the road, and they're loose, and there's a car coming, I can't stop. I have to stop about three or  
10 four metres before the intersection, make sure there's no cars coming.

MR BELL: How do the taxis anchor your wheelchair?

15 MR FOOTE: They just pull the straps - they hook over the back part and then there are two at the front.

MR BELL: And that works all right?

20 MR FOOTE: Yes, it holds me in.

MR BELL: Okay. Well, we've talked about quite a few issues. Let me ask you, do you have sight-impaired clients, Sheila?

25 MS HATTON: Mm.

MR BELL: Do they face some other difficulties, in terms of getting around, or do they rely on helpers to get them around?

30 MS HATTON: That's a good question.

MS PETTIT: We don't have any guide dogs in Kalgoorlie. We're not entirely sure of the reason.

35 MS HATTON: We're in the process now of one client - or one individual that we know in the community is actually on the waiting list and will be getting one.

MS PETTIT: No specific issues have been identified by those people.

40 MR BELL: So this might be the first guide dog that the taxi drivers are going to meet?

MS HATTON: That could be, yes. Although, I do believe a lady was here about three or four years that had one.

45 MR BELL: Okay.

MR RICHARDS: Are they allowed to have guide dogs in cabs?

MR BELL: Yes.

MS HATTON: Guide dogs can go anywhere.

5 MR RICHARDS: It's required by law, is it? That they have to actually take them otherwise?

MS HATTON: Yes.

10 MR RICHARDS: Are they liable if they don't take them - - -

MS HATTON: They can be fined, I think, if they refuse.

MR RICHARDS: Okay.

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MS HATTON: And I guess another issue we have is with ACROD parking areas. Quite often these parking areas might have a - they always get these people, they're in such a hurry that - "I'll just pull in here a while so whoever runs into the shop out of the car - and I'll just wait here, and I can pull out quickly if I need to." But how on earth do they know what vehicle is going to drive in, forgetting that there are people that need to park in these areas, that drive, and that's what they're there for? So, of course, you've got people that are totally frustrated all the time, that are driving around and around, can't get an ACROD parking bay to go and do - you know, whether they're wheelchair access or they can't walk long distances. But there's lack of spots, and there needs to be far more education, and I think a big clamp down by the rangers, fining these people. If the government wants to raise some money in their coffers, then I would be putting up to a \$500 fine for parking in ACROD without a display sticker.

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30 MR RICHARDS: But even then, the bays aren't wide enough, anyway, I don't think.

MR BELL: We had a comment the other day, that some of the bays are not wide enough, or that the ramp is in the wrong place in the bay. So this comes down to a design issue. But let me test you on something, Sheila. As you know, at the moment, cars that eligible to park in those spaces have a little sticker on the windscreen. Do you think that that's sufficiently clear, and that, perhaps, it would be better to have a little thing attached to the number plate?

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40 MS HATTON: I guess it would be up to the individual. I don't know if the individual - because, I guess, for some people they need to have those transferable - - -

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MR BELL: I see.

MS HATTON: - - - where they might be two or three different vehicles, and I don't know if they would actually want that displayed, where everybody knew behind them and in front of them - - -

MS LANE: Because then they're there for attack, too. They're there for attack. If anybody knows that they're disabled.

5 MS HATTON: They can't put them in a vulnerable situation. The interesting thing with the taxi bays, where the maxi-taxis could pull into - it's interesting to note that, when they pull in, the maxi-taxis actually unload from the back, which means you're unloading passengers into the traffic. And I do know - I come from Canada originally, and they did - they redesigned some of their parking bays that were for maxi-taxis for that reason, because people were unloading into the traffic. When 10 they were pulling the hoist down and wheeling the person out, they're right in the line of the traffic going by, and have actually changed them and changed some of the bays to make them more at an angle, so they're actually going a different way and not going into the direct flow of traffic.

15 MS PETTIT: Yes. Well, of course, they might be extra wide, but they're not extra long.

MS HATTON: Yes, that's right.

20 MR FOOTE: It was my suggestion to you that there's problems with parking - like, you're getting people out of the back of the taxis and that - was do New South Wales style. Instead of parking the front of the car in reverse it in. And with these ACROD stickers and that - disabled parking - I made two in Hannon Street which should be shifted - when you park a vehicle in and I'm stuck in the middle of the road I've got 25 no way of getting on to the footpath. Because I know one time a woman parked there, she spent five minutes talking to her daughter or her mother.

She got her mother in and I said - yelled out, "You're parking in my way. I can't get off the road." She turns around and says - replies "I've got a sticker, ACROD 30 sticker." That doesn't mean anything. They should get the thing and move it over to one side so that little runway is accessible for anybody, because I shouldn't have to sit out - if that little island on the middle of the road wasn't there then I'll have to go back to the other side of the road, jaywalk, and then wait for the car to move and I can go back across the road. Because there's two places in Hannon Street - the 35 whole actual bay is at the little footpath area and it's inconsistent because I have to go all the up the street to cross the road and I shouldn't have to.

MR BELL: So these are design problems.

40 MR FOOTE: They should get - leave that little space empty and bring it over two spaces into one, therefore, everybody there that doesn't have a taxi - wheelchair taxi or an ACROD sticker person, they can park in that one spot.

MS LANE: I think when they are designing them they need to go in a wheelchair 45 themselves.

MR FOOTE: Or spend three or four days in a wheelchair.

MS HATTON: Or hire people that live their lives in a wheelchair - - -

MS LANE: Yes.

5 MS HATTON: - - - and have them – get consultants who actually do deal with these issues on a daily basis. You know, people like David and that kind of thing.

MS LANE: Or somebody like Michael – Matthew that actually drives. There is a young man that actually has got his licence and he actually has got a ute and he's got his wheelchair on top and I know that he has a lot of issues, because I know him personally.

MR BELL: Yes. I suppose, you know, 10 years ago there weren't too many of these ACROD spaces – these dedicated parking spaces at all, so we have made some progress, but really what you're telling me is that this needs to be better thought through and this is – I mean, I don't think – I don't think that this municipality is sort of an exception.

MS HATTON: No. No, I agree.

MR BELL: I think this problem is more widespread and we're just getting examples of it here, but that we would find examples in most municipalities.

MS HATTON: Yes. And we certainly notice with the new buildings now that have been built – like, our local Target and Dussons and IGA, whatever it's called now, they have – and with the new Bunnings store – they have taken that into consideration and their design of their parking lot that there are disabled bays there. It might be a time that we need to look back on the older parts of our town that are still a very vibrant part and reassess the need level there.

MS LANE: Bunnings is very good, isn't it? The Bunnings store is very good the way they have got their disabled parking.

MR BELL: Yes. So, obviously, there is advice around on how to do this well and I think your point is probably right, that it's time to go back and look at some of the older areas. Yes. All right. Well, look - - -

MS BUKTENICA: The issue of community buses was raised. I think that was spoken about in Dubbo.

MR BELL: Yes. Do you have community transport arrangements here where, for example, you have volunteers driving mini buses to service various needs in the community?

MS LANE: We did have one but it disappeared.

MS HATTON: We did have one that was functioning and was wonderful but then we found out it wasn't insured and I don't know what happened to it.

MS LANE: And it's disappeared.

MS HATTON: But it was wheelchair accessible.

5 MS LANE: Yes.

MS HATTON: It has a hoist.

10 MR RICHARDS: Is that the community centre bus?

MR LANE: Yes, that's the one. It had been donated.

MS HATTON: The one Robin used to use. It was the centre one.

15 MR RICHARDS: Yes.

MS HATTON: Yes. We do have a local community centre that does have transport. I don't think those drivers are actually volunteers. I think they are actually paid employees.

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MS LANE: They are paid.

25 MS HATTON: So I do know another HAC agency in town here that does transport, it does medical appointments, things like that, but they don't have – they don't have a – no Eastern Goldfields taskforce. As far as I'm aware they don't actually have a multi-purpose vehicle.

MS LANE: No, I don't think they have, Sheila.

30 MR BELL: So we're limited in terms of our choice in transport here.

35 MS HATTON: Yes. And, of course, we have that – those issues where – and I can certainly understand for a lot of the taxi drivers it's very difficult for them, because quite often they may pick up a passenger in the multi-taxi – or a maxi-taxi and they might get an individual that gets in and says, "Oh, I need to go and pick up my sister and she's over here" and she might be on the other side of town "and then we will just go and get a cousin over there or my mother" or whoever, so you're getting four or five people being picked up at once, which, you know, has taken maybe - that trip that you initially thought when you picked up that fare might be a 10 or a 15 minute trip has turned into 45 minutes or longer.

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MS PETTIT: That comes with the culture, doesn't it?

45 MS HATTON: It comes with the culture and it's not – you know, I mean, there's – it's not a – it's not just cultural issues.

MR BELL: No, it's a need that needs to be serviced.

MS HATTON: Yes. And I know on a Friday night lots of young people – I mean – do actually – will get – you know, say, “Well, look, I want to pick up three or four of my friends.” And, myself, I have had occasion if I’m going to another place and we will arrange for all of us to all get together and to come in the one vehicle and share the expenses. So – but that doesn’t help an individual.

MS PETTIT: It just detracts – yes, it’s just another factor that detracts from people being able to use a maxi-taxi for wheelchair accessible.

10 MS HATTON: Yes. And it’s certainly not profitable for that owner to just sit and wait for people in wheelchairs to ring them up either, because they are not getting paid, so they need to utilise – so, yes, it’s - - -

MR BELL: It impinges on the economics of the maxi-taxi.

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MS HATTON: Yes.

MR BELL: But you can’t, if you’re the operator, I guess, predict in advance quite when you are going to be called on to move a wheelchair person. I mean, David, do you use – when you use a taxi do you book them in advance?

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MR FOOTE: No, I usually just ring them up.

MR BELL: Just ring them up.

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MR FOOTE: And wait until they get there.

MR BELL: Do you have to wait long?

30 MR FOOTE: Yes. Last year – beginning of last year I had to wait about two or three hours for a taxi.

MS LANE: It depends on where it’s gone to. It might have gone off to Coolgardie or somewhere.

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MS HATTON: Yes.

MR RICHARDS: Okay, so it takes - - -

40 MS LANE: And that can, you know - - -

MR RICHARDS: Plus another thing too, with the maxis, they only work at – my friend who actually owns the maxi-taxi, he only works during the day, because he doesn’t have a night driver at the moment, so that’s another issue.

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MR BELL: So if you want a maxi-taxi at night it might be a problem?

MR RICHARDS: Yes. And given that there’s only two maxis – two - - -

MS PETTIT: They might not be working either.

MR RICHARDS: Might not be worth it, yes.

5 MS PETTIT: Yes. They might not be on the road at all.

MR RICHARDS: Yes.

MR BELL: Okay.

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MR FOOTE: Yes. The wheelchair taxis start at 6 in the morning and they finish at 10 pm at night. Anything after 10 o'clock at night you can't get a wheelchair taxi. Because I was told that last week, that you can't get a taxi after 10 o'clock because they have all gone home and gone to bed.

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MS HATTON: Another issue that recently has come up and I've been asked to mention on behalf of an individual is the fact that people that are travelling down to Perth for medical appointments – once they go through the airline process and get to Perth Airport and need to be transported to whatever hospital that they are going to, the problem once again for them is it could be a two hour wait for a maxi-taxi and to try and book a maxi-taxi ahead for an individual they won't take, because sometimes the airlines – especially there are some issues with the Qantas flight and quite often for various reasons it's late getting to Perth or whatever. So if they've got appointments at 11 o'clock in the morning they take – they get down at 9. They try and organise a pick-up at 9.30.

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They won't quite often take that booking because the plane may not be there on time. And so then you go into that long queue and they have very few maxi-taxis down there and that rate is very high. And I had a client down there that went down for medical appointments and actually missed her flight back, which was four hours after she had finished at the hospital and had to overnight because she couldn't get a maxi-taxi.

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MS LANE: And then there's a cost incurred there too, because she's got to stay.

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MS HATTON: Yes.

MS LANE: And, of course, HACs pay it and she's got a carer. If she goes down with a carer she gets \$70, but if she's on her own she only gets 35.

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MR BELL: The taxi queue at Perth Airport is very poorly organised, and there seems to be only one pickup point, where as normally for a large airport like that, you might have two or three. I think Tullamarine how has five. And the queue is quite long at times, because of the way that airline services seem to peak, the number of aircraft arriving all at the one time. But I observed a lengthy queue there the other night, with people having difficulties with a maxi taxi, which they had pre-booked, and when it did turn up, they had to scramble through and climb underneath the bars,

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break through the queue to get into their cab, because there wasn't anywhere to park it. It seemed to be incredibly badly designed. I was quite amazed to watch this.

5 MS PETTIT: Yes. Another instance in Perth: we had clients going down on the train, and so we tried to book a maxi taxi to pick her up when the train arrive, but they wouldn't actually take a booking because the train was often late, and so they wouldn't actually take the booking. They said, "Just ring when you get there," but then it was going to be however long until a taxi actually arrived, and - oh, I was going to say another one, too. No, it's gone.

10 MS HATTON: And the other thing, just getting back to that journey, is also if you're actually flying - if you're actually flying and you're flying from Kalgoorlie and you're going to Perth and then transferring on to an international flight, you can actually get the shuttle. But if you're a person with a wheelchair, you can not, unless  
15 you can physically climb up those stairs. So which means you're putting out money again to pay extra and have to take a taxi, which for anybody else, that is free, going from a domestic to the international terminal.

20 MR BELL: Plus you've got all the delays and waiting to get the appropriate taxi.

MS HATTON: For that taxi, yes. So you can certainly see where a lot of people's lives are certainly limited, and not by them wanting to be limited, but to the reality of services out there, and awareness of individuals.

25 MS PETTIT: I think I remember the other one. But you can't actually book a maxi taxi for Perth on the internet. You had to phone and make a person to person booking. They wouldn't actually take a - even though it says on there, "Do you require a wheelchair taxi?" and tick yes, they then rang me up to say, "No, we don't take bookings over the internet."  
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MR RICHARDS: What's the point of that?

MS PETTIT: I don't know.

35 MR RICHARDS: That's ridiculous. If you've got this thing set up and then they ring you up and say you can't do it, what's the point of having it on there?

MR BELL: You'd have to wonder about that, too.

40 MS HATTON: And I guess that - it just goes so much against the grain on - it's - you know, you encourage people to be independent, but it's very hard to, and every time you try to be, some other doors slam in your face, and you know you can't do that, "We don't do that," that kind of thing. And I guess I really think, in a lot of ways, if the government would actually approach not just - they can approach this,  
45 you know, on two other levels, too, and it's for - the access that people with disabilities would need would also benefit young mums with prams, it would also benefit older people that are actually on - have frames, that kind of thing. So you can hit - you know, target the entire population, basically, or aspects of that, just by

making these simple amendments to everyday life. And, you know, if it's, "Oh, that's too expensive because we know that we only have, you know, 2.4 users that are in a wheelchair utilising that," you can take that broader approach and, "Okay." You know, it's like when you're approaching building a house. It doesn't cost you any more to make your doorways wider.

MR BELL: Yes, we had somebody at the meeting in Perth yesterday, who talked about the concept of universal access, and then we stepped out of that meeting and got on the local bus, and there was a lady with a pram, using the bus just in the way that you've suggested. So it's - - -

MS HATTON: Intergenerational.

MR BELL: Yes, the application is wider than just people who have particular disabilities, you're quite right. Well, we've covered quite a range of things here, this morning. Is there anything that we haven't covered, that we should have?

MS HATTON: What about the ferry issue?

MR BELL: Yes. No ferries? I didn't think you'd - - -

MS HATTON: You didn't, because you could always get a person on a ferry.

MR BELL: All right. Well, look, I think we've done a pretty thorough job on this, this morning, so if you don't have any other points, I'd just like to thank you all very much for coming along and talking to us. It's really been very helpful. This is the only way that we can really come to grips with some of these issues, is by talking directly with people who have firsthand knowledge of some of the matters that we have got to address, so - - -

MS HATTON: And there probably would have been more people come that actually are people that use wheelchairs, but they're probably still waiting for the maxi taxi.

MR BELL: All right. Well, thank you very much, and really good to see you. Thanks a lot.

**ADJOURNED**

**[10.58 am]**

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