

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia's response to the NSW Accessible transport action plan 2007 draft

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Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) supports the integration of accessible transport services. This 'whole of journey approach' is one that should produce real results. It would certainly be an interesting result if the DSAPT was to follow suit and enshrine accessibility targets under this 'whole of journey approach'.

The term accessible means different things for different people applied differently to different transport modes, one of the greatest challenges of transport providers.

Comment provided only on points of interest. If no comment given – we agree.

Page 8

There is no mention of regional bus operators. I understand through a conversation with Premier Illawarra that they think that regional operators are at the same percentage as private operators under the metropolitan bus fleet.

Page 11

SCI Australia supports the move for an establishment of a Passenger information review group (PIRG). Each member of that group should be tasked with consulting amongst other disability organisations to identify their needs ensuring that as greater a breadth of requirements will be understood by the ministry and providers.

Page 12

We support the idea of increased staff training in announcements for guards and drivers once a train journey is underway and would like to see 'next station' announcements happening soon after the train has left the prior station to enable the passenger with a disability (who may take longer to alight) to get into position to exit the train.

Page 15

We would support a move to ensure that all pre-pay and regular ticket outlets are accessible or when proved they are not they are subsequently identified by having no symbol in literature. Multi-formatting for material is fine as long as the information is relevant and we hope that by placing an emphasis on accessibility icon usage you may even be able to apply pressure on some outlets to make their premises more accessible.

Page 17

The issuing of receipts should be expanded to include all taxi journeys whether cabcharge or not and include:

Time of pick-up

Time of Drop off

Distance driven

Taxi number

Taxi driver number

Break down of costs (flagfall, journey etc...)

This will give a formal record of all journeys and allow the passenger to see exactly what they have paid for. This information could also help in conflict resolution and identifying illegal drivers.

Page 20

Transport coordinators need to receive formal disability awareness training with real life scenarios. Such a vital role should understand the needs of differing people with disabilities and be able to apply this knowledge in their role.

Page 22

Further investigation into onboard ramps needs to be conducted as discussions with train manufacturers have them saying that fixed ones are a mechanical nightmare and non fixed may end up being stolen. It is our thought that fixed could work, although you run the risk with a jammed ramp of taking an entire train out of the system. The idea of onboard ramps is certainly the way to go with many stations being either one person staffed or unstaffed. An onboard automated ramp can also give more independence to an individual as with a simple button they could operate the ramp themselves at a station of their choice although this is open to abuse. This is the reason why I think this needs further investigating.

Page 23

The definition of accessible needs to be modified here as in the recording of statistics 50% of country link trains are presently accessible but in our findings these trains are not accessible. Yes it can be argued that a wheelchair is able to enter and exit a carriage but once aboard that carriage in the narrow confines often the wheelchair user is subject to brake dust coming up through the door vents, the hustle and bustle of passengers, lack of access to bathroom facilities (this is a minor point) and general discomfort. These are all issues that have been brought to SCI Australia's attention of bad experiences on country link trains.

Page 24

Needs to ensure that all stakeholders are discussed and local councils should be added to the list of consultations.

Page 24

SCI Australia would certainly welcome being apart of the consultative process on regional bus contract reform.

Page 25

The statement that the 'government to purchase only low floor accessible buses' is incorrect as many purchases of non accessible school buses have been approved. We would welcome seeing a blanket policy that ALL bus purchases are accessible and fitted with restraining straps in the accessible spaces. When a school bus is non accessible and a young student with a disability attends that school either they can be conveyed by their parents or as we are finding under the SSTS and using WAT's which then has the knock on effect with so few taxis in some areas of NSW that other people are house bound.

Examples we have heard of centre around appointments and employment. Both of these can be halted by there being no taxis. If all bus purchases are accessible this will halt.

Page 25

No mention of regional accessibility again.

Page 29

SCI Australia supports the work of the RTA in establishing standards for a variety of safety restrains for public transport. We would like to see these fitted to all buses.

Page 31

Under fixed transport we feel that applying the word consideration to what should be a requirement dilutes the effectiveness of implementing physical access. A building for all should be the enshrining value with full accessibility and this should be stated.

Page 34

Under retail concessions, there should also be a section calling for the auditing of all existing ones to ensure that they are compliant or where not that either they are assisted to become accessible or others are sought to replace them.

Page 37

We certainly support the move to make reapplications for the MPS more streamlined as the present way is difficult. We would also like to see provision that where a disability is in no way temporary that person receives provision to not submit a doctors certificate upon reapplication (further cost to the individual) stating that they have a disability. This is non-sensical and only increases the administration and cost.

We support greater fines for those that misuse the MPS or the dedicated parking spaces.

Page 42

Consultation with disability groups needs to occur prior to and during work being undertaken.

Page 48

We would welcome not only call centre training for people with a disability but a dedicated management training course to be run to start integrating people with disabilities into the management within the transport agencies. I think this would create a model of integration and place the ministry of transport at the front.

Page 49

Staff training material should not be limited to a video but opened out to include real training situations with people with disabilities. We believe that a video can only go so far. This was backed up with a recent bus viewing in Wollongong where the bus operator had seen the training video but when faced with real wheelchair users was amazed at how manoeuvrable they were and seeing how he could assist when needed. It is this degree of training that provides the best service.

Page 55

It is our thought that an emphasis on the accessibility of major events should only be done in league with an emphasis on the accessibility of day to day travel. It is great to encourage wheelchair users and other disabilities to go to these events but when most journeys undertaken are of a standard nature we would welcome information encouraging people to just use the network.

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