

Accessible Public Transport Watch Project



A statewide consultative report of experiences in
accessing Victoria's public transport system by people
with a disability

July – October – 2007

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Design and layout: Anna Tito

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Level 8, 128 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
T 03 9654 5050
F 03 9654 5749
E vcoss@vcoss.org.au

Acknowledgements:

- The project partners;
- The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
 - The Disability Resources Centre (DRC)
 - The Disability Advocacy & Information Service (DAIS)

Would like to acknowledge and thank the participants of this project who gave up significant hours of their time attending information sessions, travelling on various modes of public transport and documenting their experiences. For many, this included venturing ‘outside their comfort zone’ to report on the accessibility of public transport not common to their experience.

Further, we would like to thank the volunteers, carers and support workers involved in this project who provided direct care and support to participants - not only throughout their travel but also in documenting and photographing their experiences.

The project partners gratefully acknowledge the support of:



Report prepared by: Maree Kelly

With assistance from: Kate Colvin
Tanya Nikolovski
Jess Fritze

Management Committee:

Kate Colvin	VCOSS
Graham Smith	DRC
Martin Lecky	DRC
Frank Hall- Bentick	DRC
Anthony Giles-Peters	DRC
Justine Summers	DAIS

Staff:

Phase 1:	
Project Worker	Glenn Cardwell
Phase 2:	
Project Worker	Margaret Stevens
Project Coordinator	Maree Kelly
Phase 3:	
Project Coordinator	Maree Kelly

Executive Summary:

The Accessible Public Transport Watch Project was commissioned by a number of disability organisations and was proudly sponsored by the Reichstein Foundation and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. The project attempted to critically examine whether the implementation of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) in Victoria is meeting the varied needs of people with a range of disabilities. The project aimed to investigate, monitor and report on the useability of the public transport system and new transport infrastructure from a passenger perspective. Ultimately the project aims to use this information to improve accessibility outcomes for people with a disability as well as increasing awareness of transport accessibility issues for transport operators, government and the general public.

This report provides a first hand account of over 130 peoples' experiences of accessing public transport across Victoria over a three month period. This information was gathered using a series of six surveys about Melbourne's trains, tram and buses as well regional local buses and V/Line trains and coaches. The project received 115 surveys and 17 additional written submissions. Survey participants had a range of disabilities and were grouped into five categories for the purpose of analysis. These categories were: wheel chair bound, mobility impairment, vision impairment, hearing impairment and cognitive impairment.

The project was widely promoted throughout the disability sector, local government and public transport networks. Information sessions were held across the state to enable people to identify areas of concern and receive training in completing the surveys. This process helped to bring people together, encourage participation and improve data collection.

This report found that the useability of the public transport system including accessible infrastructure installed under the DSAPT varies considerably for people with different types of disability. Key findings included:

- many participants reported difficulty accessing accurate travel information;
- in the outer metropolitan areas of Melbourne and regional Victoria in particular, there is an over reliance on buses as a viable form of public transport that is currently inaccessible for people with disabilities in most instances;
- the implementation of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) has supported accessibility for people with vision impairment however it has raised some difficulties for others with differing types of disability and issues remain with the logic and location of its installation;
- getting to the stop or station was identified as a difficulty by a number of people with mobility impairments – this needs to be addressed through broader changes to the accessibility of the built environment;
- participants identified difficulties boarding trains due to the varying size of the gap between the train and the platform, the inaccessibility of ramps for mobility impaired people who are ambulant and difficulties opening doors;
- participants using the tram system were particularly concerned with the lack of accessible trams, feeling unsafe due to the rocking of the vehicle and lack of boarding information;
- level crossing safety remains a pressing concern, with the very serious consequences of inadequately safe crossings highlighted by recent deaths of people using wheelchairs; and
- participants were concerned about their physical safety and the general standard of cleanliness provided on the public transport system.

The report has identified a number of recommendations which will inform the discussion and debate around the accessibility of Victoria's public transport.

These recommendations will be of interest to a variety of stakeholders including the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, public transport operators, local government, disability service organisations and the wider community.

The common and critical issue of public transport accessibility brought together many people who previously had no direct links to the community or disability sector. It is hoped that the networks established through the Accessible Public Transport Watch Project will continue to come together to support ongoing systemic advocacy and consumer engagement across the state on public transport accessibility issues.

Accessible Public Transport Watch Project Final Report

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2. Background

In 2006, the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), Disability Resources Centre (DRC) and Disability Advocacy and Information Service (DAIS) formed the Accessible Public Transport Watch Project to respond to the ongoing difficulties confronted by people with disabilities in accessing public transport. The project was generously funded by the Reichstein Foundation and Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and commenced in November 2006.

The Project aimed to improve public transport services for people with disabilities and respond to three pressing issues in public transport provision.

1. Despite the introduction of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) in 1992 and the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport* (DSAPT) in 2002, by 2006 much public transport had not been upgraded to be accessible.
2. There were numerous anecdotal reports that some new upgraded public transport was delivering mixed results for people with disabilities – some found it made public transport easier to use, and others were finding the new services presented new accessibility challenges.
3. While some public transport met DSAPT criteria, it was not necessarily usable to all people with disabilities.

3. Scope

The Accessible Public Transport Watch Project focussed on the accessibility of the public transport system across Victoria including metropolitan trains, trams and buses as well as regional buses and V/Line train and coach services by people with a disability. The decision not to include taxis was based on a desire not to duplicate the work of a major review into the accessibility of taxis undertaken in 2006 by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). This report, titled *Time to Respond: Realising equality for people with a disability utilising taxi services*, was published in November 2007 and is available from the VEOHRC website (www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au). As airports and airlines fall outside the state public transport system these were not included in the scope of this survey.

4. Research methodology

The most critical outcome for accessible public transport is that people with disabilities can use it – safely, easily and with confidence on every occasion. Yet outcome based evaluation of public transport accessibility and the DSAPT has been limited.

For this reason, the Accessible Public Transport Watch Project aimed to involve people with disabilities in identifying whether or not they found Victoria's public transport system usable and information regarding the transport system was easily communicated, accessible and accurate.

Participants involved in the surveys had a range of disability types which have been grouped into five common categories: mobility impairment, wheel chair bound, vision impairment, hearing impairment and cognitive impairment. For the purposes of this report, cognitive impairment includes intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and mental health disability types. Thirty five percent of participants identified that they had multiple or more than one type of disability. These combinations of disability are defined throughout the report where appropriate.

A reference group was established to provide advice and support to the project around recruitment of participants and project design. Membership included representatives of major disability groups based both Melbourne and rural and regional Victoria.

The project reference group included:

Robert Pask:	Multiple Sclerosis Society (MS)
Justine Summers;	Disability Advocacy & Information Service (DAIS)
Alba Gatto:	Western Region Disability Network (WRDN)
Kate Colvin:	Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
Kaye Gooch:	Better Hearing Victoria
Maree Ireland:	Action for Community Living (ACL)
Martin Leckey:	Disability Resources Centre (DRC)
Collette O'Neil:	Australian Federation Disability Organisations (AFDO)
Margo Hodge:	Australian Federation Disability Organisations (AFDO)
Maurice Gleeson:	Vision Australia
Isabell Collins:	Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC)
Ray Jordan:	Northern Region Disability Network (NRDN)
George Taleporos:	Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)
Rhonda Joseph:	Scope Vic
Christian Astourian:	Scope Vic
Janice Florence:	Paraquad
Effie Meehan:	Migrant Resource Centre North West (MRCNW)
Jessica Zammit:	Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)

Survey participants were recruited by:

- email invitations sent through disability networks, including rural and metro access workers;
- a letter sent to over 150 community and disability groups in Victoria;
- information on the VCOSS website; and
- phone contact with organisations and individuals with good links to people with disabilities.

Between the months of July – October 2007 ten information sessions were held in the following locations:

Melbourne- City	Albury/Wodonga
Seymour	Bendigo
Stawell	South Morang
Carlton	Sale
Collingwood	Footscray

These sessions provided further rich input to the picture of people's experiences, much of which has been included in the report.

Information about people's experiences accessing public transport was gathered using a series of six mode-specific surveys focussing on Melbourne trains, trams and buses, V/Line trains and coaches, and regional local buses (see Appendix A).

The surveys were conducted over single public transport trips, and consisted of both pre-set questions enabling yes/no responses along with space for people to make comments. Participants used this comment space to record detail about their trip as well as providing qualitative insights into their experiences on public transport. In reporting back on the surveys the quantitative data (yes/no responses) enabled the variables of data collection to be constant and measurable in its findings. The qualitative data (comments) have provided a more personable insight into the individual participant's experience of public transport.

In addition to the surveys, the project received 17 individual written submissions, mostly providing focused additional information about specific transport issues or locations.

5. Context

According to the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA), passed by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1992, it is unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities in the provision of public transport.

In order to give public transport providers a clear understanding of how to not discriminate, the Commonwealth Government developed the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport* (DSAPT) in 2002. The DSAPT outlines mandatory minimum technical requirements for the provision of accessible transport services and facilities, and provides a timeframe over which progress towards full compliance must be achieved.

The DSAPT was developed using a process of negotiation between people with disabilities and transport providers, with the Commonwealth Government making final decisions.

In general, people with disabilities argued that transport should be accessible within a short time and should meet high standards, while transport providers tended to argue this would be too expensive. The final DSAPT is a compromise between these positions.

According to DSAPT, public transport providers must have made:

- 25 per cent of all transport accessible by 2007;
- 55 per cent accessible by 2012;
- 90 per cent accessible by 2017; and
- 100 per cent (all transport) accessible by 2020.

This means that by the end of 2007, 25 per cent of trams, 25 per cent of trains, of stations, of bus stops and so on must be accessible.

A faster timeframe was put in place for waiting areas, signs and symbols, lighting, alarms, ticketing and information systems, most of which needed to be fully accessible by the end of 2007.

In addition, any vehicles or infrastructure purchased for public transport since 2002 must be fully accessible.

Five years after the introduction of DSAPT (by October 2007), the Federal Minister of Transport and Regional Services and the Federal Attorney General were due to review its effectiveness in removing discrimination. This review was undertaken by Allen Consulting Group in 2007/08.

The Victorian Department of Infrastructure (DOI) has set up a State Disability Action Plan for the years 2006-2012 including a current progress report which has been provided to the Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC). This committee has a role in monitoring the progress of the DSAPT standards and how they are being implemented throughout Victoria within the timelines as set out by the DSAPT. PTAC is made up of representatives from DOI, public transport operators and disability organisations. The action plan outlines the areas of work to be undertaken, who is responsible for this action and over what timeframe.

6. Report findings

People with disabilities throughout Victoria were able to convey their experiences of accessing the public transport system through the return of 115 completed surveys. However the scope of this report is somewhat limited as, of the people initially consulted, a significant number were not able to complete the surveys having found public transport options in their area totally inaccessible. Information supporting this was able to be conveyed with 17 individual submissions received and ongoing dialog with participants. The report findings indicated an over representation in some modes of public transport such as trains, whilst very little in others such as buses. This was due to the relative accessibility of the transport modes with many participants reported being unable to access buses.

The analysis or discussion of, the quantitative data throughout the findings has been based on the 115 surveys, unless otherwise specified with the reference to the submissions. The survey participants involved identified their 'primary' disability types of which were then divided into five categories: wheelchair bound, mobility impairment, vision impairment, hearing impairment and cognitive impairment.

Figure 1 shows the majority of the participants completing the surveys: (45 per cent) were vision impaired, followed by those with mobility impairment (28 per cent) and participants in wheelchairs (25 per cent). There was only one participant (less than 1 per cent) with a hearing impairment. This person was from the Inner South of Melbourne as shown in Figure 2. As such, this report does not adequately represent the experiences of people with hearing impairments in using public transport.

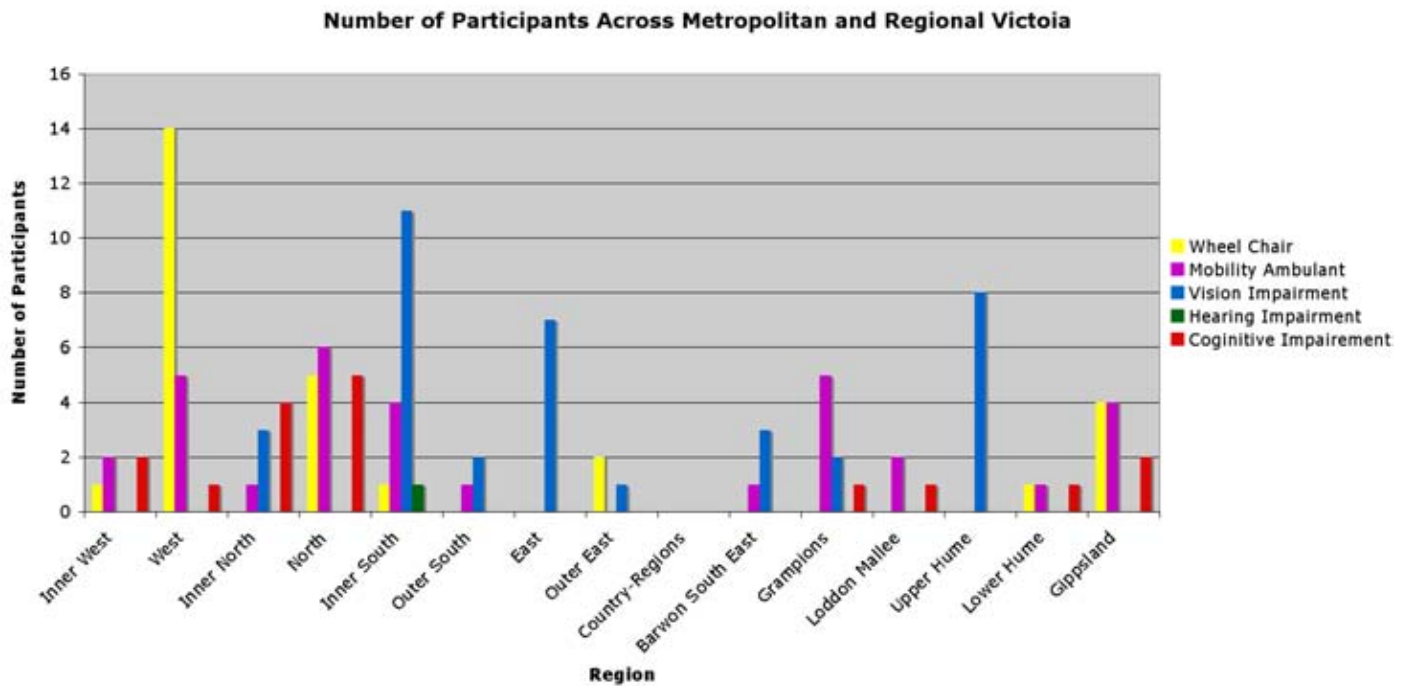


Figure 1: Range of disabilities across participants

The participants in metropolitan areas accounted for 69 per cent of surveys and rural and regional participants for 31 per cent. Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants across regions by disability type.

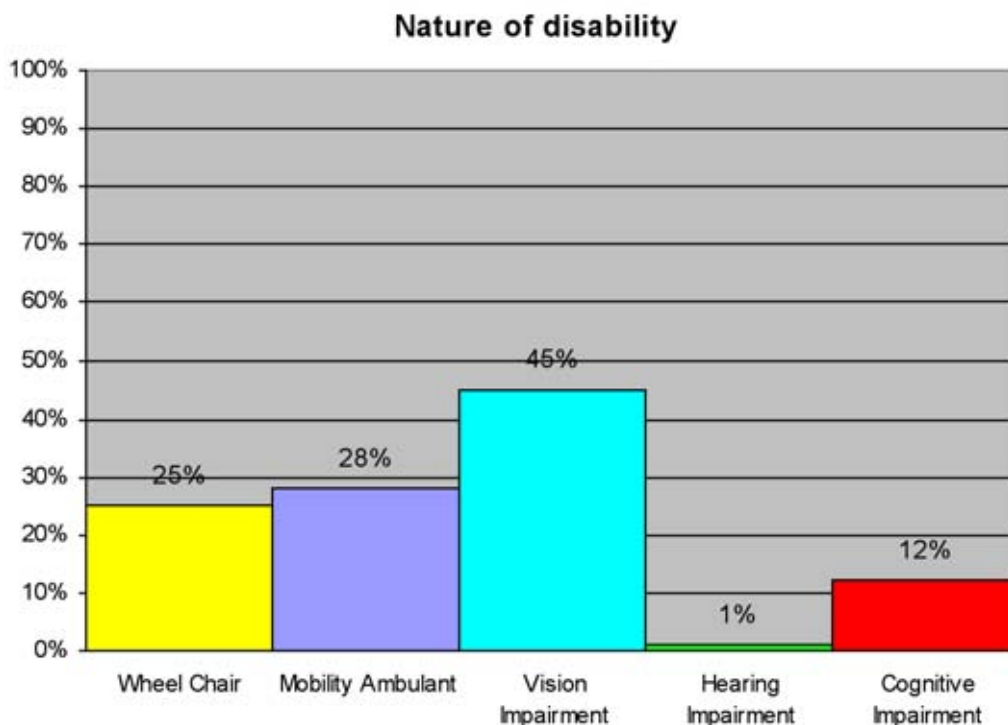


Figure 2: Number of participants with different disabilities across Victoria

As can be seen in Figure 2, while the majority of participants were based in Melbourne, there was a relatively even distribution of disability types, with the exception of hearing impairment, between Melbourne and rural and regional Victoria. Most participants in wheelchairs were based in Melbourne’s west and Gippsland while most participants with vision impairments were based in the southern and eastern suburbs. Participants with mobility impairments were more evenly distributed across the state.

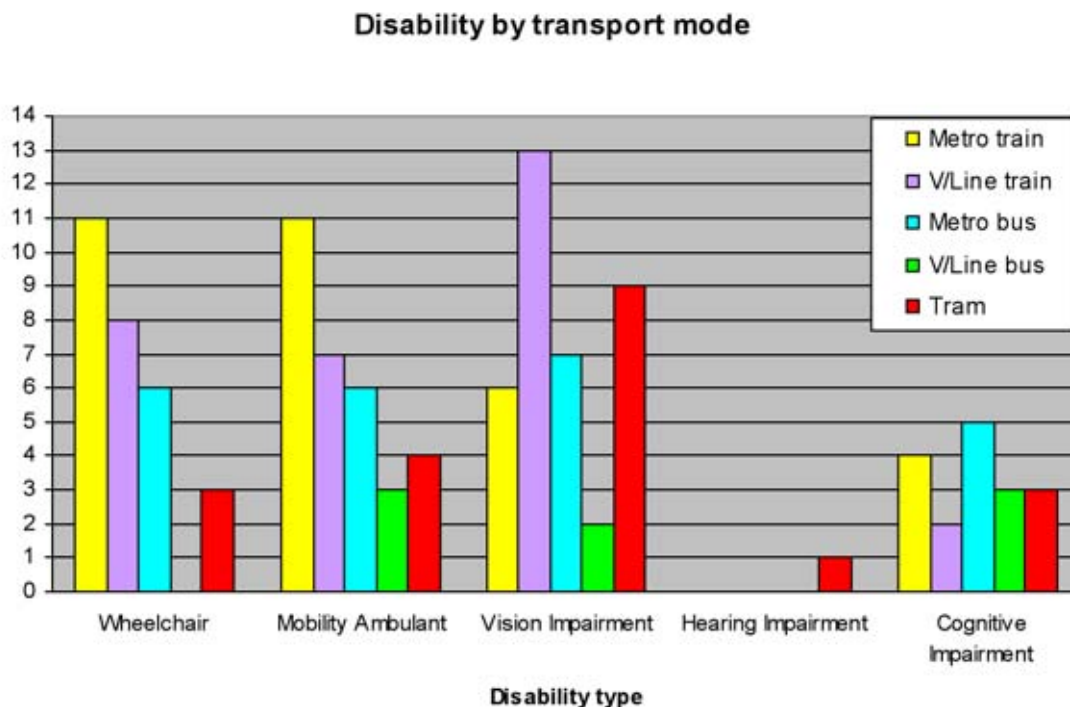


Figure 3: Survey responses by disability type

As is shown in Figure 3, the spread of disability types across the survey responses for different transport modes was relatively even. However, different transport modes received varying total numbers of responses. Notably, no surveys by people using wheelchairs were completed for V/Line bus services. This was most likely due to difficulties with boarding which are discussed below. The majority of participants surveyed travelled on metropolitan (34 per cent) or V/Line (27 per cent) trains which were reported as being relatively accessible. As such, these uneven numbers of survey responses reflect the overall accessibility of the different transport modes.

This reflects a difficulty in the survey methodology. Initially participants were encouraged to travel on differing modes of transport and /or on varying trip locations outside of their usual travel destinations. However participants avoided transport modes they did not feel safe using or could not use at all when completing surveys. In addition, of the additional 17 submissions received, 53 per cent of people could not gain access to public transport due to the lack of/ or limited disabled car parking facilities being available within close (accessible) proximity to the stations or stops.

‘On four separate occasions I tried to fill out the train surveys, each time I had to drive past 3 train stops before I got to Watergardens, as that is the only station around with a lift, but each time I went all the disabled car parks were full and given other car parks these days are so narrow, I can’t open the car door wide enough to get out’ (s.67)

‘I had to get driven from Warrandyte to Research just to be able to find a bus stop that was on reasonably level ground, but when the bus came instead of it being a low floor like it should have, it had too many stairs and I couldn’t get on. I gave up and came home’(s.27)

Participants also did not use transport services which are scheduled at times that are inconvenient for them. This is particularly a problem in rural and regional Victoria and was frequently raised in information sessions as a major concern. For example many of the transport timetables do not reflect the localised need for services, but rather are targeted towards larger regional centres with express services

'If I want to go from Maffra to Traralgon the train leaves at 6.30am and does not return until 6.30pm. If I have to go for a local doctor's appointment, I need to spend all day there. Physically I can't do that.' (s. 96)

'I used to be able to go from Kilmore East to Craigieburn, now I have to all the way to Broadmeadows, get off the train and go all the way back to Craigieburn – just to see my doctor.' (s.106)

As a result of people not documenting completely inaccessible transport experiences in the surveys our quantitative findings show a more positive picture of access to transport than is actually the case. As a result, this report includes comments raised in information sessions and in written submissions which reflect transport services which remain completely inaccessible to people with various disability types. These comments, along with the qualitative comments in the surveys provide a fuller and more realistic picture of peoples' experiences in accessing public transport

Information before travel

Much information about public transport, including timetables, ticketing, service amenities and journey planning is available on the internet or can be accessed by phoning MetLink or picking up brochures or printed timetables from public transport providers or MetLink outlets.

Accessible Transport Watch surveys specifically asked people about their use of the internet as this is becoming the dominant way in which travel information is provided to the public.

Of the 115 survey respondents, only 35 per cent indicated that they had access to the internet. Of these, only 40 per cent were able to identify whether the service they wished to use was accessible.

'It took me a long time before finding what I was looking for... further, the website was not up to date as it has 'N' for disabled parking at Sandown Park when there are two disabled parking spots.' (s. 11)

Many participants who used the internet found it difficult to navigate around the MetLink website. Some reported that a certain level of knowledge about route numbers or names, or stop numbers or names was required to extract the correct information.

'It was far from quick and easy to look up about accessible tram stops. It assumes you know specifically the stop number, and if you don't you have to read through the list of all stops. It is in quite small writing and hard to read...' (s.47)

'There should just be a separate general listing of the accessible tram stops, regardless of the route number. Not everyone is familiar with the route numbers and the particular numbers allocated to the stops.' (s.47)

Overall, people with disabilities found the MetLink and transport provider websites difficult to use, either because they had no internet access or because they were not user friendly.

However, people also indicated that having access to information about a proposed trip significantly decreased their stress levels and made it more possible to travel safely and reach their travel destination without missing their stop. This highlights the importance of providing information that is accessible to people before they travel.

Seven participants also noted that they found information about their travel via the phone. This produced mixed results, with some dissatisfaction at the complexity of having to navigate the recorded choices. Five people reported that the information provided was outdated or incorrect, and three reported that staff was supportive, polite and helpful once you were able to have a direct conversation with them.

'The one they had on the pre recorded message wasn't the right one. Once at the station the conductor told us that we should catch the morning train and not the afternoon one as it transfers to a coach which isn't currently wheelchair accessible. He was most helpful and apologised. We had to defer our trip a day because of it.' (s.83)

Participants also reported that public transport staff at stations or stops sometimes gave incorrect information or were unable to answer questions.

'I was actually standing there and I was told by the driver, that the accessible bus would be the next one due to arrive, even though I was told only an hour prior over the phone it was due at 1.15pm. It was over an hour before it came. This is not good if I have appointments to get to, and I can't use this as an excuse for being late for work all the time. They dock my pay.' (s.63)

Lack of public phones at stations and stops was another issue raised as a problem.

'I can't believe that they took the public phones away from the stations at Ararat and Bendigo... we need to be able to ring to say that we have arrived... not everyone has access to mobile phones...' (s.21)

Both the information sessions held in Grampians' region and subsequent Grampians' submissions included reports of discussions with V/Line about reinstating a public telephone at major train stations. Participants noted being told that the removal of phones was:

'A fete accompli - we will not get a telephone back in the foreseeable future. A red phone will cost \$6,000 per annum to rent at the station' (s.142)

Getting to your stop or station

Of the 30 participants who travelled on a V/Line train, 73 per cent said it was easy to get to the station. However 14 per cent of the participants experienced difficulty getting there, (of these, 8 percent had a combined mobility and vision impairment, 3 percent were in wheelchairs and another 3 per cent were wheelchair bound with combined cognitive impairments). A further 13 per cent of participants did not answer this question. However, through the qualitative data provided in their comments it was stated that there was difficulties in getting to the station.

By contrast, less than half (40 per cent) of participants who travelled on a metropolitan bus said it was easy to get to the bus stop. 18 per cent of the participants were clearly able to identify the difficulties in getting to the bus stop. (Of these participants with difficulties 28 per cent were in a wheelchair with 12 per cent having combined mobility and vision impairments. A further four per cent of the participants have combined wheelchair use and cognitive impairments).

Participants that travelled on a metropolitan train service painted a similar picture to those that travelled on V/Line trains, with 66 per cent stating that it was easy to get into the train station. Thirteen per cent reported difficulty entering (6 per cent had mobility impairments, 4 per cent had a combined mobility/cognitive impairment, and 3 per cent were wheelchair bound). While a further 21 per cent of people did not answer this question, of this group 19 per cent discussed difficulties in their comments.

A little over half (55 per cent) of participants that travelled on a tram had no difficulty getting to the stop, but 25 per cent did experience difficulty. (Of these, sixty per cent had combined mobility/vision impairments, while forty per cent were in wheelchairs). A further 20 per cent of people did not answer this question.

Of the nine participants who travelled on a V/Line bus, the majority (78 per cent) found it easy to get to the bus stop. The remaining participants did not answer the question.

Discussion held throughout the information sessions, along with the comments in the surveys, identified that whilst the quantitative data indicated that access to the stop or station was easily accessible, for many it was not, due to the lack of any or very few disabled car parking facilities nearby. This was particularly difficult for both the mobility impaired where long distances had to be walked, before, during and after public transport, and for the wheelchair bound where there were no adequate or safe parking zones. Nine of

the additional submissions received from participants were people who would have liked to complete the surveys but were unable to for this reason.

The DSAPT criteria in relation to the upgrading of accessible routes along and into train platforms do not specify that all platform entry and exit points need to be accessible. As a consequence only some entry and exits have been upgraded and people must often travel long distances to and from an accessible entry. The fact that this is arduous for people with mobility impairments is reflected in the fact that all participants who experienced difficulty getting to the train station or tram/bus stop were either in wheelchairs users or with mobility impairment.

'Getting out at Parliament [station] the lift is too far from the Bourke Street super tram stop for people like myself who have difficulty walking there.' (s.93)

The long platforms at Southern Cross train station also attracted comment.

'Often when we arrive there (at Melbourne) we are at the far end of the platform – North end and at platform 13. This is right down the back in an area that is not frequented. It is too far away and quite scary at night when it is dark.' (s. 96)

One country passenger from the Wallan/Kilmore area commented that several train stations in the region were located at least four kilometres out of town with no footpath access from the town – making them very difficult to get to.

'The Kilmore East train station is a long way from town- about 4 kilometres. I have to use my wheelchair to get to the station as it is down a very steep road with no footpath. It is even worse returning as I have to try and get up the hill. It is very dangerous.' (s.106)

Level crossings

Over the last 10 years there have been a number of deaths at level crossings involving people in wheelchairs becoming stuck in the train tracks. Whilst the scope of the survey did not target this as a question specifically, barriers to and from stations were discussed, and level crossing safety was identified as an issue.

'I know that they have done a lot of work, and I don't know how else they would do it, but I continue to be scared about the wheels of my chair getting stuck on the tracks. Also some of the tracks are not all that wide, and all I need to do is lose a bit of my balance and I think I could go over the yellow line where the asphalt is not that great.' (Person with cerebral palsy in a motorized wheelchair).



Location of photographs (left to right): Lilydale Train Station & Bayswater Pedestrian Train Crossing

Railway crossings are commonly flanked by two yellow lines to indicate where people should travel. However, often the distance between the yellow lines is not wide enough for two wheelchairs – or a wheelchair and ambulant passengers - to pass, causing wheelchair users to move over the yellow line – and risking falling off the asphalt.

Following the deaths of wheelchair users at level crossing, an upgrade program was initiated to improve the flange gap (where the wheels of the train run) at many crossings to reduce the risk of wheelchair wheels getting caught. However, in most cases these upgrades only improved the flange gap and not the width of the crossing within the yellow lines, leaving the designated crossing area both dangerous and narrow.

Waiting for the train, tram or bus

Across the public transport network, 51 per cent of participants indicated that there was a timetable at the stop or station that they could read. Figure 4 demonstrates that inability to read a timetable was much higher for people with vision impairments, 82 per cent of whom said they either couldn't read a timetable or that this was not applicable.

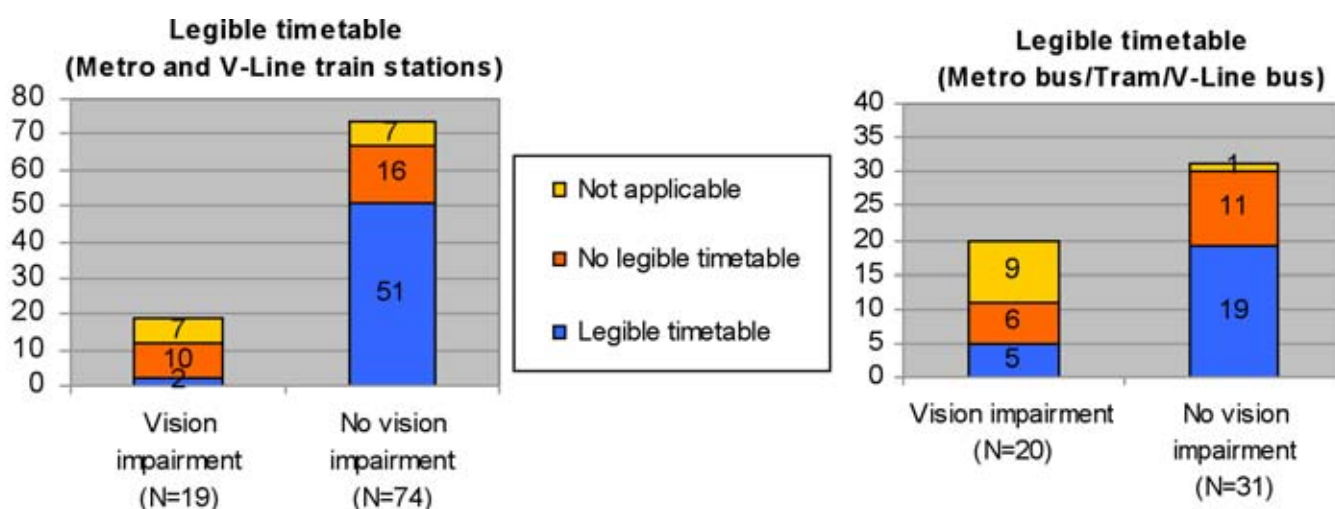


Figure 4: Number of people with vision impairment affected by unreadable timetables

Problems were identified with timetables having tiny font, such as in the timetable as shown. People also raised concerns about getting near timetables located close to barriers such as rubbish bins.

'Timetable is difficult to find and very difficult to read- all signage too small and out of sight'. (s.97)

'It would be great to have the timetable in a larger print, on A4 paper and printed using a twelve hour time clock'. This would make it much easier for the vision impaired and others who have difficulty.' (s. 144)

People also noted that timetables were sometimes out of date, covered in dirty perspex, or located in areas that are not accessible for people in wheelchairs.

'Totem timetable holders and bus stop indicators have two panel timetables - unable to read from wheel chair.'

'The printed timetables are mounted too high at all stations, particularly for people sitting in chairs.' (s.9)



Location of photograph: Lilydale Train and Bus Timetables- Lilydale Train Station

A number of participants raised the problem that time tables do not provide information about the accessibility of vehicles.

'Only times published no indicators whether buses are accessible' (s.21)

'Service needs adequate bus signs for visual improvements. The time tables are difficult to read and don't provide the information needed, such as a low floor' (s.56)

Four participants noted that station staff has provided them with time tables tailored for their personal use, and they had found this very helpful.

Newer timetables, such as the one shown for the Croydon Bus Service met with a more favourable response.

One participant also spoke of the positive response she had received after discussing her concerns about the height and location of her local bus stop timetables with the Department of Infrastructure (DOI).

'DOI have changed the timetables at stops I use (approx 8) but not at others. Great for me, but all stops need to be changed.' (s.22)

People with vision impairments are able to request electronic versions of timetables from providers on request. However, commonly these are provided in PDF format, which cannot be read by many screen readers.



Location of Photograph: Croydon Bus Service- Lilydale Lake Bus

On many train station platforms, and increasingly at tram stops and premium bus stops, arrival times of the next vehicles are shown on electronic screens. Participants noted that the electronic screen format is very difficult for people with low vision to read, and creates confusion for people with cognitive impairments and/or minimal literacy skills.

'They have a machine overhead that shows the time trains come in, sometimes it is in red print and it moves across the screen. I find this difficult to read.' (s.47)

'At Ararat Bus station they have the electronic display of when the bus is due in but it is in small print so I can't see it- have to ask others.' (s.65)

Audible announcements

Of the 82 respondents who travelled on metropolitan trams, trains and V/Line trains, 62 per cent indicated that audible announcements were available at their station or stop to provide timetable information or notice of vehicle arrivals and departures.

These announcements have improved accessibility by reducing reliance on printed timetables that many people find difficult to read or understand.

'I get on [the train] at Westgarth. An electronic destination display and recorded voice announcement would be a great help, as well as reducing anxiety for some people - like they have at other stations.' (s.58)

However there were some comments about the degree to which these could be consistently understood or were accurate.

One passenger standing on a station platform noted:

'[Announcements] are often muffled on the platform but I took a chance and checked with the other traveller [when I was] on board [and the] announcement confirmed the correct train.' (s.6)

'Too many announcements make it difficult to understand, especially when they come quickly after one another.' (s.31)

Others noted that while professional voice overs are usually clear and easy to understand, often the announcements made by station staff are not clearly articulated.

Tickets

Only half of the respondents travelling on metropolitan trains or trams said it was easy to purchase a ticket, while 23 per cent had difficulty. Of those who experienced difficulty six were mobility impaired, with one having a combined cognitive impairment, five were in a wheelchair and one had a cognitive impairment.

Of the people who said it was easy to purchase a ticket on metropolitan trains and trams, 85 per cent said it was also easy to validate their ticket. Of the four respondents that experienced difficulty validating their ticket two were in wheelchairs, one was mobility impaired and one had a cognitive impairment.

Of the 63 respondents who travelled on either a V/Line train or bus or on a metropolitan bus, 73 per cent said it was easy to purchase a ticket. In the quantitative data gathered throughout the survey only five passengers indicated difficulty in purchasing a ticket. Of these five respondents, one was in a wheelchair, three were mobility impaired, and one had a cognitive impairment.

This indicates that passengers with mobility impairments are highly represented among passengers experiencing difficulty purchasing tickets.

This was particularly reflected in people's comments throughout the qualitative data gathered. A number of participants commented on the ticketing machine as shown.

'I can't reach. I always have someone do it for me.' (s.26)

The lack of familiarity with the ticketing system - for country passengers, navigating the Metcard system -and for city passengers navigating the V/Line system - created confusion.

'Not coming from the city and with a disability I found it very frightening not knowing what to do.' (s.115)

'There's not enough information on what tram to catch, being from the country... [I] had to keep asking passengers if we were on the right tram, where to get off and if we needed a ticket. The driver had [the] door in [the] cabin closed ... didn't talk to passengers. It would be very difficult to travel in Melbourne on trams with a serious disability.' (s.114)

Validating tickets when entering or exiting train stations was also problematic for some.

'At some stations (minor) ticket validating machines are too close - would prefer one with wider gaps for wheelchairs, suggest international wheelchair (blue sign) on wide gate at major stations so as to easily identify which one and also others, 'able bodied', may be encouraged to use 'normal width' rather than choose wide one.' (s.9)

Participants using V/Line buses noted the inconvenience of having to book 24 hours in advance (on the Bairnsdale service). As only one seating area is allocated to people with disabilities, often these accessible seats are unavailable. It was noted that this can become particularly problematic on days or times in the month when there is high demand, for example when there is a travelling medical specialist visiting the area. Participants at both Stawell and Gippsland information sessions reported missing appointments because of the constraints of the V/Line bus service.

Toilets

The majority of respondents travelling on V/Line buses (67 per cent) indicated that there was a toilet at the bus stop; they were not asked whether the toilet was usable.

Of the 32 respondents who travelled on a metropolitan train, 43 per cent indicated that the toilets were inaccessible to them at the train station. Of these participants, two were in a wheelchair, two were mobility



Location of Photograph: Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne.

impaired, one had combined mobility/vision impairment, and one had a cognitive impairment. A further 34 per cent said there wasn't a toilet at the station.

Fewer respondents (53 per cent) travelling on V/Line trains indicated that there was an accessible toilet. Of these 16 people, 69 per cent said the toilet was usable, while 13 per cent said it was not; one of these participants was in a wheelchair, another had a combined mobility/vision impairment. The remaining three participants did not indicate whether the toilet was usable.

While the data above suggests that for the majority of participants, accessible toilets were available at V/Line bus/train and metropolitan train stations, a key problem identified in the comments was that toilets were always locked unless the station or stop was staffed, and on most occasions one had to seek out a key to gain access. This caused significant problems for some.

'It should be the most perfectly natural thing in the world to do, but when I have to ask, I feel really embarrassed and depending on who it is, as to whether I had to wait or not.' (S .93)

'I can't use key or open most doors; too much resistance. Staff are too busy at peak times.'

In addition many of the facilities were considered to be dirty and often cluttered with drug and alcohol bottles.

'I wouldn't send my worst enemy into some of those places given the conditions they are usually in. I am so scared I will pick up some horrible disease, but I have no choice. If I have to go I have to go and usually it is now...!' (s.131)

Problems were also identified with opening heavy doors and using poorly designed handles.

'I find it quite difficult to open the toilet doors at some stations, as they can be quite heavy with a closure that either closes too fast or too slow. Also the locks on the doors are often broken or too complicated that I don't know how to use. It is not easy if you have limited use of your hands' (s.100).

'I know why they have to use those blue lights in the toilets, but they are not practical as I can't see what I'm doing, walking. It is not safe for people with poor vision or for people who suffer from epilepsy, as they can trigger an attack.' (s.7)

'I find mostly that they are always locked but when I need to access, it will depend on the size of the room as it is often difficult to move around in, and the height of the seat not being high enough. If there are any grab rails they are often located too far away and there never is any paper.' (s.7),

The discussions held in relation to accessible toilets were complex. Toilets at train stations and bus stops were only available when there were staff members on duty, and often a key had to be sought for it to be opened. Further, many of the participants discussed the lack of accessibility to toilets due to many issues such as room size, weight of the door, height of the seat and grab rails. Access to facilities when locked via the use of a universal keyed system, as in use overseas, was identified as a viable option, however is not accessible for the severely disabled. Electronic systems that operate the opening and closing of doors were recommended as the preferred option, such as the system in use at Melbourne Central train station. Clearly the onus of providing this essential service needs to remain the responsibility of the public transport operator.

Lighting

Although the survey was conducted over the winter months, very few participants travelled after dark. However for those that did, dim lighting was often identified as a problem - on platforms and when entering or leaving stations and using the car park or connecting public transport.

'The platforms and car park at Stawell station have got very poor lighting. That along with gravel platform and mud car park it can be very dangerous underfoot. (s.72)

'I often don't get off at North Melbourne after dark, even though it would be easier, but I don't feel safe, as it is quite dark walking along. I think they will up grade the lights soon as many people do complain.' (s.45)

'Walking through those under passes at Ruthern or Moonee Ponds stations can be very scary, often the lights throw out little light if they are working, but they are often vandalised or spray painted over. I try to get home before dark, but it is very hard in winter.' (s.34)

Participants travelling on V/Line bus services were more likely to say the lighting from nearby street lights was more adequate than lighting at the bus stop itself. This also held for respondents travelling on metropolitan bus routes.

The data on lighting along metropolitan and V/Line train station platforms returned similar results, with 50 and 53 per cent of respondents respectively stating that the lighting was adequate. There were a high number of 'N/A' responses to this question for these transport modes, most likely because the majority of participant travelled during daylight hours.

Shelters and seating

All participants travelling on V/Line buses said there was a usable shelter at their bus stop.

The majority of respondents travelling on metropolitan trams, trains and V/Line trains also said there was a usable or accessible shelter at their stop.

In addition, some passengers commented that shelters are often located away from the front end of the platform, where people using wheelchairs are required to board the train.

'On account of having to wait at the top of the platform there is no adequate shelter and I have been rained on, in cold blustery conditions, while waiting for the train. For this not to have happened I would have needed to use the shelter, which meant I would have missed the train because of the distance required to reach the top of the platform.' (s.33)

Almost half (45 per cent) of the participants who travelled on metropolitan buses said there was no usable shelter at their departure bus stop. Of these, 42 per cent were in a wheelchair and 25 per cent had combined mobility/vision impairment.

Even where bus shelters have been constructed, they often provide poor protection and accessibility.



Location of Photograph: Bus Stop at Lilydale Train Station

As can be seen above, this shelter doesn't provide much protection from the wind and rain, nor does it allow for access by most electric or larger wheelchairs due to the narrowness of the gap between the kerb and the shelter.

One of the common themes among the participants was the impact of vandalism and damage to shelters, and how this has subsequently led to the removal of services such as public telephones.

'There has been extensive vandalism - affects the wind blowing through with broken glass where it has been shattered. It affects visibility. Missed bus several times as I can't see them and by the time I get up they can't see me and they go past.' (s.9)

Seating on train platforms was also raised as a problem by some participants.

'They have removed a lot of seats on the main platforms and I don't feel comfortable asking the young ones to stand up.' (s.100)

'At some stations the seats are quite low and they are quite wide and slant towards the back of the seat. This style of seating makes it very difficult to raise yourself out of once seated. At times I have had to ask for assistance as I can't stand for great lengths of time either.' (s.131)

Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs)

Only respondents who travelled on metropolitan tram, train and V/Line trains were asked about TGSIs¹ or tactile paving.

Just over half (55 per cent) of the people who travelled on a tram said there was tactile paving on the tram stop platform. Similarly, 56 per cent of V/Line train travellers said there was tactile paving on the platform.

Tactile paving was more commonly reported on metropolitan train platforms, with 62 per cent of respondents noting its presence.

'Tactile paving is everywhere at Southern Cross. It was great - I was able to move around independently feeling far safer than I ever have before.' (s.81)

One mother discussed how tactile paving has been a good marker for her children to encourage them to wait safely behind the yellow markers away from the platform edge.

However comments were also made about the difficulties created for people with vision impairments by other passengers standing on tactile paving.

1. Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs): Areas of raised ground surface texture treatment, designed to provide vision impaired pedestrians with warning and/or directional orientation information.

'People they just stand on it, they have no idea why it is there. I hit them with my cane. I don't mean too. I just can't see them and if I don't follow the tactile paving – well it is just not safe. People get really mad and angry at me but what else can I do.'

In some cases the tactile indicators themselves created difficulties for people with other types of disabilities.

'I certainly see the need for it. It's just that I struggle to walk long distances, especially along the platforms, and when it is everywhere it becomes very difficult and painful to walk on. Not only that, it can become very dangerous when it is wet. My walking stick slips on it. I don't feel safe at all. What's more it is even worse when you get out along the road and footpaths. It's almost like the councils use a different mix of paving as it can get very slippery.' (s.137)

'Tactile indicators are a nuisance at tram stops for people with balance problems (cerebral palsy etc). Raised dots make the pavement uneven, throwing people off balance.' (s.15)

'If it's busy you get pushed to the yellow line, but it's not really suitable for me. Perhaps it could be done differently.' (s.26) [Participant with cerebral palsy]

Comments were also made about the logic and care taken in the installation of tactile indicators.

It was noted that there is little variance in indicator texture to show whether the paving is leading to a danger such as a platform edge, exit point, road way or the top of a staircase. One participant highlighted that the DSAPT standard refers to a 'change in direction', but it is unclear how that translates in practice into indications in the paving. For example, the paving does not indicate a distinction between leading to a toilet entrance, a bus stop or an exit. A vision impaired person relying on tactile paving without any knowledge or familiarity of the location could therefore become quite confused.

In some cases the indicators created a dangerous situation for participants, such as at Geelong West station where a participant reporting the paving led under an open staircase and straight into a hazard at head height.

Other hazards or barriers along pathways that were identified by vision impaired participants included:

- uneven and gravelled surfaces;
- pathways that are not straight and are winding in nature;
- the need for a clear edge in strong contrast along the paving for people with vision impairments to use as a guide;
- rubbish bins, advertising boards and seating in pathways; and
- commuters obstructing pathways.

Getting to your platform



Location of Photograph: Geelong Train Station

The above photograph shows some of the barriers and difficulties people have had in accessing public transport around train stations in the past. Many of these stairs are now being replaced with escalators, lifts and ramps on major stations due to the DSAPT standards.

Respondents who travelled on metropolitan and V/Line trains were asked whether they had any difficulty working out how to get to the correct platform.

The majority (79 per cent) of the people who travelled on these transport modes had no problem finding the correct platform. Of the 15 per cent of people that did experience difficulty finding the correct platform, three had combined mobility/vision impairments, two were in wheelchairs with cognitive impairments, three were mobility impaired, and another was in a wheelchair. Four people did not answer the question.

'I could not find any signage informing me when and where the Bairnsdale service would depart.'

'When departing from Southern Cross I found an attendant and asked twice if he was sure that the train would leave from platform 13, because I had heard from others that often the platform changed. When I entered the barrier I was informed that the train was departing on platform 8 South, which was down the escalator'. There was no signage as to where this was or where I would find platform 8 south. Eventually I did find it, but still no indication or sign was displayed to inform passengers that this was the right platform for the Bairnsdale train.' (s.96)

'As I arrived at platform 1 to catch the Seymour train, I heard an announcement that the train was leaving from platform 3 east, I had not heard of this station before so had to walk to the end of platform and spoke to two staff. One said try platform 3 the other, platform six, as I had walking aids, they could see that it would be difficult to just walk until I found the right platform. When asking how I could confirm this, as I knew the train would be leaving in 10 minutes, I then had to walk to the information centre. It was confirmed that the train was leaving from platform 3 B. Having walked all this way and then requiring to do the same the next day, from the Bourke St entrance, I asked a fellow passenger who told me that if I walked up the escalator and down the lift on the platform, I would not need to walk so far. There were no signs anywhere to tell me or others of this option. The only way you find out how to use public transport is to catch it all the time' (s.131)

Ramps

The upgrade and redesign of many train stations has greatly improved accessibility, in particular by reducing ramp gradients on pathways to platforms.

This is reinforced by the survey data, where 82 per cent of respondents who travelled on metropolitan and V/Line trains said it was physically easy to get to their platform. Of the eight who experienced physical difficulty, three were in a wheelchair, two were mobility impaired, one was combined wheelchair/cognitive impaired one with combined mobility/vision impairment, and one with a cognitive impairment. Three people did not answer the question.

It seems that the respondents who experienced the most physical difficulty in getting to their platform were those with a disability that restricts movement (i.e. wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments).

Where ramps at train stations have not been upgraded they can create serious difficulties.

'It is very difficult to get to the right platform at some stations because of the gradient of some of the under passes or the over passes. If there is no station officer to help I just have to wait.' (s.37)

'I have to change trains to get from work to my home as the Williamstown train doesn't go around the loop. Footscray or North Melbourne stations have ramps that cannot be used without assistance because of the gradient.' [wheelchair participant] (s.37)

'The ramp from the street to the Moonee Ponds station is so extreme. That's all I can say, it's terrible. But having underground access to the other side of the station is much safer than the road. However, having two down ramps and one up ramp takes its toll on the disabled. They are tiring, hurt my leg.' (s.7)

Ramps such as the one shown at Ringwood train station are very difficult to use for people with mobility impairments, and present a safety hazard for people in wheelchairs (and others they might run over) to come down. This difficulty is exacerbated by barriers placed in the pathway, such as the location of the ticket machines at Ringwood which block easy turning at the bottom of the ramp, as shown.



Location of photograph: Ringwood railway station

Lifts

Generally, people noted that the installation of lift access to train platforms had improved the accessibility of train travel for people with disabilities. However, often there is only one lift, even in large stations.

'Getting out at Parliament Station the lift is too far from Bourke St super tram stop and for people who have difficulty in walking there. We caught train back to Epping from Southern Cross station and we had to ask people what platform to go to catch train as we could not see signs anywhere. There are no signs even as to where to go to Travellers Aid for help.' (s.93)

Participants also identified that some lifts are too small to fit both a wheelchair and a carer. Issues were also raised about lift controls that were difficult to operate and hard to find.

'Dandenong Station stairs are very steep and narrow. The lift at the island platform is too small and the doors and buttons are hard to find. Lift doors open one end of lift car only making [the] lift hard to use by wheelchair using friends. They can't turn around to get out or reach [the] lift buttons.' (s.6)

Boarding the vehicle

Buses (including V/Line coaches and Metropolitan buses)

Consultations carried out throughout the outer metropolitan areas of Melbourne and regional Victoria in particular, clearly indicate that there is an over reliance on buses. However due to the limited responses of surveys returned, and subsequent feedback, it has shown that buses are currently inaccessible for people with disabilities in most instances. Key issues included, accessibility to the bus stop and the bus, very few low floor buses being available, and little accurate information on time tables showing when the low floor buses are en route.

Of the 25 people who were able to travel on a metropolitan bus route, 88 per cent were able to board the bus without assistance. The three participants that could not indicated that they received assistance from the bus driver.

All nine respondents who travelled on V/Line bus routes could board without assistance.

People commented on both bus stops and on bus design in response to questions about boarding the bus.

Getting the bus to stop was one issue raised.

No bus sign at stop. There were three of us waiting to get on the Maffra bus on the corner of Guthridge and Stead Streets. The bus went straight past us. When driver was asked why he didn't stop, his reply was that he had nowhere to stop/ park. It was a designated location for the stop and the right time for the bus to arrive as displayed on local timetable. We had to follow the bus to the next stop to get on.' (s.56)

'The height of the seats is a problem at the stops, they are so low. If I sit I often can't get up quick enough for the driver to see me, but if I have to wait a long while I do have to sit.' (s.141)

One participant recommended that bus stops could be fitted with a push button operated stop light or display, not only to inform the driver to stop but to advise local traffic of the buses intent to stop. He identified this as being most important, particularly at night time or at times of poor visibility such as fog or rain. (s.58)

The difficulty of boarding and dismounting from the bus when the driver has been unable to park close to the kerb was also raised.

'When the ramp is folded down from the bus it is very steep, the wheel chair has to be held back or it tips forward. If the driver was able to park closer to the kerb or if the footpaths are raised a bit higher at the stops it would not be so steep and dangerous.' (s.9)

'The steps on the buses are high but I pull on the handrail and if the bus is parked two or three steps away from the kerb it is really difficult.' (s.19)

Similar to issues raised with trains, use of the entry ramp on buses has created some issues.

Since the DSAPT were introduced many buses have been upgraded, making boarding vehicles easier for many people with disabilities. However, as many vehicles are still not accessible, often people need to travel a long distance to get to an accessible service, or cannot use the bus at all.

'Have to ride wheelchair 1.5 kilometres. Nearest bus route does not accessible buses.' (s.22)

'Carpenters Bus service have exemption from the DDA to have an accessible bus, yet in the last twelve months they have just purchased a new one that is not accessible. Why are they still manufacturing buses that are not accessible, and if they have the funds to purchase new infrastructure why do they still have their exemption. Should it not disappear when they can afford to replace new stock?' (s.134)

'My trip required a changeover of buses and although the second bus had a low floor it was not DDA compliant' (s.21)

Trains

Of the 32 respondents who travelled on a metropolitan train, half could board unassisted and 47 per cent indicated that they couldn't board unassisted; 73 per cent of these passengers were in a wheelchair, two were combined wheelchair/cognitive impairment, one was mobility impaired, and one was combined mobility/vision impaired.

Of the respondents who could not board the train without assistance, 93 per cent said the gap between the train and the platform made boarding difficult but only 80 per cent had a ramp put down for them by the train driver to bridge the gap. One respondent (a wheelchair user) said a ramp was not deployed for them and indicated that they received no assistance from the train driver. The others participants had a mobility impairment.

Slightly more respondents (60 per cent) who travelled on a V/Line train were able to board unassisted. As with the data for travellers on metropolitan trains, the majority of the 11 V/Line train travellers who could not board the train without assistance, five were in a wheelchair, with a further three having a combined wheelchair/cognitive impairment, another had combined mobility/vision impairment, one vision impaired and one had a cognitive impairment. Eighty-two per cent were assisted by the train driver to board.

This data suggests that the gap between the platform and the train is a source of great anxiety and difficulty for many train users with a disability, which is reflected in the some of the comments below.

'The gap between the platform and the train varies widely at some of the stations as does the height. One of these days I'll fall alighting from the train.' (s.32)

'The gap between the train and the platform was 30-40cm. I was required to open the door, steer the front of the 'trike' over the gap, then lift the rear of the bike (heavy) over the same gap.' (s.36)

'Despite there being only four kinds of train there appears to be 40 different levels of railway platform, even five or six different levels on the one platform.' (s.36)

'At times the driver pulls up where the platform is narrowed, making it harder to alight.' (s.11)

Lack of access to ramps for people with mobility impairments, but who don't use a wheelchair, created particular problems. The photograph below shows the ramp that currently is available for people in wheelchairs only to use. Due to the fold in the middle, as can be seen clearly in the picture, this style of ramp is not suitable for people who are mobility impaired but do not use a wheelchair.

'The problem is they only have one type of ramp, it folds in the middle and is lightweight, which it needs to be for the conductor to lift. I have no problem with that, but it has been designed to fold in the middle if you put weight on it. I can put my legs where the weight of the wheelchair goes [on the ramp]. I don't have to stand in the middle [of the ramp] but they won't let me use it. I have to sit on my bottom and turn around and crawl - often on a filthy floor and platform - to my great embarrassment. Just to get on and off [the train]. Surely someone can design one simple ramp that can be used by all.' (s.134)



Location of Photograph: Ramp being laid out at Footscray Train Station

'I think that the drivers figure that if you have two legs, you can get on the train.' (s.7)

'Just because I don't sit in a wheelchair doesn't mean that I don't have a problem getting on and off - clearly people can see that I use walking aids.' (s.134)

The lack of information telling people in wheelchairs or scooters that they must board trains at the front carriage was also identified as a difficulty.

'I had no idea before I became in this Access Watch project that if you were in a wheelchair you had to meet the train at the beginning of the platform, so the driver can put the ramp out. Now I know what the painted lines on the platform are for. I had to work it out for myself. I now have also guessed the same goes for the low floor trams and where to wait so I don't have to walk to the doors. You have to be near the yellow tiles. How does one find out about this information, unless you are linked into a group or some thing I don't have access to the computer and I wouldn't even try to work my way through those phone things. I just hate not being able to talk to a person.' (s.131)

People using wheelchairs also found the lack of information on platforms to indicate which direction the train will arrive from, or the length of the train in relation to where it will stop on the platform, made boarding at the front very difficult. This was also identified as a difficulty for the mobility impaired who were unaware of where the doors would be located along the platform.

'At peak hour people crowd the platform and it is difficult to get from the far end to the front of the train without having to go dangerously close to the edge. Ideally it would be good to have lifts at both ends of the loop platforms but also a designated path for pedestrians along the platform would be good.' (s.37)

Some participants using wheelchairs noted that because only three wheelchairs can travel on a train at any one time, they are sometimes left behind on the platform. It was noted that at times, drivers may allow more people to board, but that this is inconsistent.

Issues with peak hour travel were also raised most commonly in relation to trains. People with mobility impairments, whether wheelchair users or not, noted avoiding travel during this period, and feeling very stressed and unsafe if travel during the peak was necessary. Not knowing where the doors will arrive on the platform was a particular problem for people moving slowly due to mobility impairments, as they often need to rush to get to a door before the train departs (and don't always make it).

The difficulty of fitting into carriages and risk of being jostled or knocked over were raised frequently in information sessions.

At Southern Cross station, a number of participants noted that the very long walks involved to access trains was because more than one train used each platform. This practice also created confusion about which train was the correct one.

*'I almost got onto the wrong train that was parked ahead of the Marshall train. It was potentially misleading as there was no guard to warn us not to get into the wrong train. Someone had to tell me that I was getting on the wrong train.'*²(s.73)

Participants found platforms with painted lines telling you where a six carriage train or a three carriage train would stop very helpful.

'It would be good to know just where the train is likely to stop, it all depends on which direction it comes from, whether it has three or six carriages as to where the front door carriage is likely to stop. I get very stressed if I have to rush down the platform, I am scared that I will miss the train.' (S131)

Boarding trains in peak rushes was identified as being particularly difficult for people with disabilities.

'I have a walking stick to help me plus my wife. When we go to the football we leave early to get to the train, but by the time my train arrives there are a lot of people and it is difficult to see where the marking is on the station as to where the train stops. People stand on it. They have no idea, as we line up to get on the train does not stop where we are and we have a problem getting on. Often we have to wait to get on the next train.' (s.12)

Getting the attention of train drivers, and their assistance was another difficulty.

'I have to make sure I catch the driver's eye - some don't see you. Hence when the driver does not see the person sitting in the wheelchair to board the train then the ramp is not deployed, as it is the driver's role to do this. Sometimes I think they don't see us deliberately, however another commented that when the allocated area for wheelchairs is full then they don't bother to inform us. Some will but others will just ignore you, and you have to wait for the next train.'

'I never travel alone for the reason that things are unsafe, because if the driver does not see you, they take off.' (s26)

Other issues raised with boarding trains included the need for improved safety measures to indicate when doors are opening and closing, such as audio warnings; colour/luminance contrast for hand rails and grab rails; and the removal of stanchions that create obstacles in the door area.

'More lack of design in the Siemens trains when it comes to people with disabilities and the provision for their mobility aids. The partitions allowing entry into the allocated space behind driver's cabin is unnecessarily narrow and could easily be widened. This narrow partitioned space can cause bottlenecks, and so, many do not like entering through this tight partitioned space, so filling up the entrance for others. Some four-wheeled scooters would find it difficult to turn into the allocated space. The four wheelchair buttons provided are inaccessible to many wheelchair/scooter users, especially when the compartment is congested with commuters, bikes and prams. However there is one plus to the Siemens, the doors are wider and there is more room in carriage entry area.' (s.11)

Participants also made a number of comments relating to train doors.

2. During the time when the surveys were being completed, a pilot project of painting the platforms indicating as to where trains would stop and the location of doors as to its effectiveness for passengers was being undertaken in the Western metropolitan region of Melbourne.

Only 34 per cent of the 32 metropolitan train travellers said it was easy to open the train door and 50 per cent said it was difficult. Of the passengers who found the door difficult 44 per cent were in wheelchairs, 25 per cent were mobility impaired, 13 per cent cognitive impaired, 13 per cent had combined wheelchair/cognitive impairment, and 6 per cent were cognitively impaired. Five people did not answer this question.

Almost half (44 per cent) of the 16 people who found it difficult to open the train door found it hardest to open doors with a handle.

Similarly to those travelling on metropolitan trains, only 28 per cent of the passengers on V/Line trains found it easy to open the train door, while half experienced difficulty opening the door. The majority 23 per cent of respondents who found it hard to open the door had combined mobility/vision impairments, followed by 13 per cent who were in wheelchairs, 3 per cent was cognitively impaired and 6 per cent were both wheelchair/cognitive impaired. 20 per cent of people did not answer this question. The majority 27 per cent of V/Line travellers who experienced difficulty opening the train door had the most difficulty with the push button type doors.

'Its difficult for me and other unsighted people to locate the handle or button to open the train doors - the button system needs to be improved. I wish we had the Sydney system of automatic opening doors, all the doors on one side of the train opening at every stop.' (s.8)

'Doors are too heavy and I can lose my balance too easily.' (s.7)

'Often people stand in the doorways making it difficult to get in and the doors close too quickly.' (s.7)

'[It is] easy to open when I found the door (V1) on the old style train with a handle. Others [handles] are located away from the door [button]. This is more difficult especially if others are not getting off at the same stop as me, and the conductor is not around. I always have to check what type of handle it is when I get on so I can ask for assistance when getting off. Sometimes they [the conductor] are down the other end of the train and I have to ask for help at the stop so I do not miss getting off. The next stop is 45 kilometres away - I can become very stressed.' (s.82)

Another issue raised by several transport users with vision impairments was the difficulty of locating the button to open the door on the newer X'Trapolis model trains.

'It's difficult for me to find the button or handle to open the door, but the button system is more difficult for an unsighted person. Suggestion – improve the accessibility of the button by making it easier to locate.'

These different responses indicate that the current designs of train doors are only partially accessible and that useability varies for people with different types of disability.

Trams

Of the 20 respondents who travelled on a metropolitan tram, 80 per cent could board unassisted. Three of the four people who couldn't board without assistance were in wheelchairs, while one was mobility/vision impaired. As there are no ramps provided on trams it is assumed the wheelchair users were unable to board the vehicle. The gap between the tram and the platform presented a problem for 35 per cent of respondents, four of whom were in wheelchairs; the other three had both a mobility and vision impairment. The photograph below shows an example of a wheelchair becoming lodged in the gap between the tram and the raised platform. It was not until the wheelchair became lodged that the participant involved was informed that a bridging plate was required when boarding/disembarking from the tram, even though there was a sign on the door indicating disabled access.



Location of photo: Box Hill Tram Route: Collins St raised platform stop – Melbourne.

Less than half (40 per cent) of respondents who travelled on a metropolitan tram stated it was easy to validate their ticket. An equal number of respondents (40 per cent) did not answer the question, or ticked 'N/A'; the majority (88 per cent) had combined mobility and vision impairments. This may mean that validating tickets does not apply to people who are vision impaired as they do not need to purchase tickets.

Of the four respondents who said it was difficult to validate their ticket, one had combined mobility/vision impairment, two were in wheelchair, and one had cognitive impairment.

Approximately 180 of 1800 tram stops have now been upgraded to that of a platform or raised stop. Whilst this has improved access, most locations do not have platform stops.

'We find it hard to find a low floor tram and stop where we want or need to go. Sometimes if we have to use them we catch a taxi to the tram stop...' (s.46)

Similar to people's experience with trains, people using wheelchairs found the lack of information telling you where to board trams off the platforms problematic.

'It was very hard to board the front wheels got stuck in gap. I needed two carers to help to get into [the] tram. Later we were told that the front doors only are to be used by wheelchairs as it has a bridging plate. Inadequate signage or general information is provided to let us know this' (s.87)

Boarding W-class trams was identified as a particular problem.

'The city circle is a tourist attraction as well as a commuter tram. I find it hard to believe they only use W-class trams on it. Given the disabled people in the city as well as the state, I feel they should be at least able to get access in one form or another to the tram.' (s.14)

'It was disappointing to get on the tourist tram with a multiple disability person who I had to help due to the steps involved I feel they should be low floor or even have wheelchair lifters put in them people with disabilities miss out on attractions because of this.' (s.14)

During information sessions, participants with physical disabilities often noted that access to trams has improved following the introduction of more 'low floor' trams. However, people also noted that related infrastructure, such as the lack of kerb side gutters made getting to the tram stop difficult. As can be seen in the photograph below, many of these tram stops have access at one end of the platform only, but especially for the mobility impaired, having to walk an extra 30-40 metres can often be very difficult.



Location of Photograph: Bourke Street- Melbourne- Tram Stop.

Motor scooters

A significant number of participants highlighted their concern and confusion around the accessibility of motor scooters on public transport. While some people were aware of the information on the V/Line website and in brochures detailing the types of motor scooters that are permitted on public transport, most were not aware of it.

One participant had tried to catch the train from Ararat to Ballarat only to find that the model of scooter he was using was not permitted on the train, or in taxis and so he was stranded.

'[I had to wait for my] brother in law to finish work and to put the scooter in the back of the ute, which doesn't do it any good, not only for the one who is lifting it but for the condition of the b.... thing. Why couldn't they tell me when I bought the b..... thing that I could not use it on public transport. How else am I going to get around. They know I live in the country. Don't they talk to each other and plan things. It would certainly make our life easier.' (s.137)

While a number of public transport vehicles have been upgraded to provide access for wheelchairs, motorised scooters tend to be larger and require a bigger turning circle than wheelchairs, making it difficult for people using these aids to access services.

'V/Line is aware of this issue but they believe that it will be many years before the transport is redesigned to cater for this. Also there is often no where to store scooters and luggage at stations' (s.142)

Three participants indicated that being able to store scooters at the train or bus station would make it easier for them to access public transport. This was particularly the case where people had to travel several kilometres to get to the station and preferred to use their scooter, rather than bare the often unaffordable extra costs of a taxi.

On the vehicle

Metro bus and local buses in rural and regional areas

During information sessions in rural, regional and outer Melbourne areas, participants noted that bus services were their major form of transport. However the numbers of surveys returned do not necessarily reflect this demand as boarding the vehicle was prohibitive. Of the 115 completed surveys, twenty four participants travelled on buses. Two of the participants were in regional Victoria (Sale and Geelong) and the remaining 22 were in inner parts of Melbourne. Participants travelled on 25 different bus lines. These participants included people with a range of disabilities – shown in Figure 5 below.

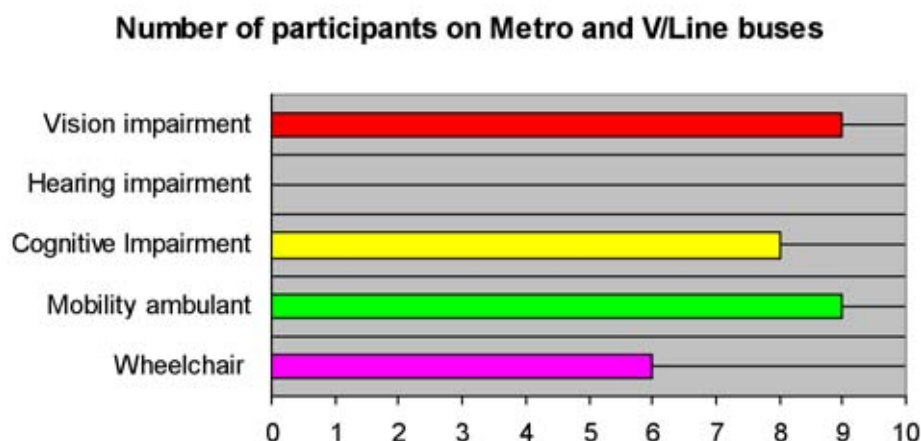


Figure 5 Number of participants who travelled on V/Line and Metro buses by disability

Participants in wheelchairs noted the difficulties caused by the jerking and sudden stop - start movement of buses, which even with wheelchair brakes applied, made it very difficult for people to remain stable while the bus was in transit. Several of the participants have recommended the availability of grab rails to assist in stability and security.

Of the trips involved, there was only one occasion where there was assistance by the driver with the securing of the wheelchair, via the use of a wheelchair restraint.

I find that the wheelchair continually slips as the buses take off, even if the brakes are on. It would be helpful to be able to hold onto a grab rail to be able to feel more secure'. (s.87)

'I have been tipped over sideways on two occasions as the bus has rounded a corner. It is not safe, I have to hang on, but often there is nothing much to hang onto'. (s.22)

Additional issues included the necessity to fold up seats to make space for a wheelchair. One passenger reported having to wait until other passengers boarded the bus prior to herself and then having to ask for the passengers to be relocated so that the seating could be raised. She also noted difficulty lifting the seats.

'I'm having increasing difficulties folding up seats myself - especially now the new buses have stronger springs. Other travellers just watch me struggle. I have to ask for help. One or two drivers do this but it is rare. I would appreciate the drivers help.' (s.22)

Difficulty in keeping safe on a moving bus was also raised as an issue by people with mobility impairments.

'The bus drivers do not wait for elderly people or others with walking aids to sit before they move off. Many times I have been thrown forward and nearly fallen. This is very dangerous and distressing.' (s.52)

V/Line buses

Nine participants travelled on V/Line buses in Gippsland, and the Grampians and Loddon Mallee areas.

The majority (67 per cent) of the V/Line bus users said they felt comfortable and safe on the journey; of the two who did not feel safe, one had a cognitive impairment whilst one was mobility impaired. One person did not answer the question.

None of the V/Line bus travellers were wheelchair users. During information sessions in rural and regional areas, people using wheelchairs reported that travel on V/Line buses is not seen as an option.

Further, the trip itself is of an unpleasant nature with the disabled seating located in the V/Line bus with no grab rails to hang onto, or safety clips to secure a wheelchair. This seating has no panic button or seating for a carer to be located next to the person in a wheelchair, or access to other services, such as the toilet or the food services at the bus stop.

All participants travelling on V/Line buses said they had time to sit before the vehicle took off. Most (63 per cent) indicated they 'felt comfortable and safe' on the journey but 25 per cent (two passengers) did not feel comfortable or safe.

Metropolitan trains

Three-quarters (75 per cent) of the 32 respondents who travelled on a metropolitan train said they felt comfortable and safe on their journey. Of the 6 who didn't feel safe, 5 had mobility impairment including one person having combined vision impairment and another with a combined cognitive impairment; there was also one person in the cognitive impairment. Two people did not answer the question.

V/Line trains

Similarly, a majority (83 per cent) of the 30 respondents who travelled on a V/Line train stated they felt comfortable and safe on the journey. The majority (four) of the five that did not feel comfortable or safe were in a wheelchair, three had combined cognitive impairment and another with cognitive impairment. This seems to reflect the lack of V/Line trains with disability access, as expanded upon below.

The lack of availability of accessible trains on the V/Line network means passengers in wheel chairs must still travel in the luggage compartment. Information gathered from VTAC states that there are approximately four remaining trains in the Victorian system that are inaccessible with participants travelling on both the Gippsland and the Shepparton/Seymour to Melbourne lines highlighting this as a major concern.

'I can't believe it. We hear about all of these improvements to the system and yet my partner had to sit in the cargo hold whilst the rest of the family had to be seated two carriages away for at least a three hour trip, and I am only talking three weeks ago – not three years!' (s.134).
Upper Hume Region.

Accessing even such a compromised form of travel requires passengers with disabilities to book at least 24 hours ahead of time for either the V/Line bus or train in country regions. Participants noted that this is a problem for spontaneous travel or if medical appointments are changed at the last minute.

Travelling on the train is also often very unsatisfactory. Passengers have noted that accessible seating on V/Line trains is located unpleasantly close to the toilets, resulting in a journey that includes all the accompanying sounds and smells of people using the bathroom.

The locating of people in wheelchairs within the carriages was also reported as a problem.

'We were led into the train and placed just inside the doors and when we asked were we to travel there, we were told, yes. I stood next to Wendy. Wendy was in her wheelchair. We travelled in that part of the train for the whole journey.'

'We felt like aliens and were in view of everyone, making it very obvious that we didn't fit into the transport using community. Very rocky as we were right on the join of the carriages.' (s.134)

Trams

Feeling unsafe was identified as the main problem with travelling on trams due to the rocking of the vehicle and the risk of collision with cars. Over the last year in particular, there have been an increased number of accidents with other vehicles on the road and with pedestrians, thus further reducing people's sense of safety.

This is reflected in the responses with 25 per cent of the 20 respondents who travelled on trams stated that they didn't feel comfortable and safe on the journey. Of the five passengers who didn't feel safe, two were in a wheelchair, one was mobility impaired, one was mobility/vision impaired and one had combined mobility, vision and cognitive impairment.

'I don't feel safe standing balance and the tram rocks all over the place, travels quickly between stops and jerks to a halt especially during peak hour when it is really crowded. It is really dangerous.' (s.114)

'[The] rough swaying motion can make me feel nauseous.' (s.86). *on the tram – it is hard for me to hang on at the best of times. I don't have good balance'.*

Seating

Of the 9 respondents who travelled on a V/Line bus, 22 per cent said there was disabled seating available, and 67 per cent said there was not. One of the two people who said there was disabled seating available said that it was suitable for their needs. By contrast, of the 25 respondents that travelled on a metropolitan bus, 72 per cent said there was disabled seating available, but 25 per cent of these respondents said the seating wasn't suitable for their needs (passengers with combined mobility/vision impairments and passengers using wheelchairs).

Similarly, 75 per cent of the 32 respondents that travelled on a metropolitan train said there was disabled seating available; 63 per cent said it was suitable for their needs, most of whom were in wheelchairs; with 25 per cent saying it wasn't suitable, including passengers with mobility impairments and with combined mobility/ vision impairments.

Of the 30 respondents who travelled on a V/Line train, 57 per cent said there was disabled seating and 30 per cent indicated there wasn't. Where seating was available, 80 per cent said this was suitable to their needs.

'The colour of the seats on the new trains are very good, they are well designed good colour contrast and stand out well for vision impaired people.' (s.26)

'I usually have little trouble finding a seat, but then I only travel during off peak and never at night.' (s.35)

'It is a relief to sit on your seat, which for me, is the first I see, because by then the train is moving and I can lose my balance.' (s.7)

Gaining access to one of the seats reserved for people with disabilities or other special needs is often difficult as these seats are commonly occupied by the general transport community or already full of people with disabilities or other special needs.

'Five able bodied people also sat in same area as us disabled when the train got crowded. When someone else tried to get on in a wheelchair there was no room for them.' (s.5)

Participants indicated that while people sometimes stand up, this is not always the case, and many people don't feel confident to ask passengers themselves.

'Often the seat allocated for disabled are filled by able bodied people. If the seats are full someone stands when they see my walking stick'

'We got on at Epping and off at Reservoir, then on again at Reservoir. We had trouble finding a seat there on the train because people would not move. (s.93)

'I have seen notes on seat on those sprinter trains that the seats are only for people in wheelchairs. When I sat there, I have been told to move, in case someone in a wheelchair may come along.' (person with walking aids. s.131)

Participants proposed that the reserved seating be better marked.

'Due to previous experiences also need have larger signs indicating where the disabled seating is and that there be signage informing able bodied passengers that they should offer seating. If this was located nearer to the doorways it should be more prominent for people to read.' (s.48)

Some participants raised specific issues relating to accessible seating.

'The seats often allocated for the disabled in particular the fold up ones are always too low. I cannot pull myself up from those.'

'Not only are the fold up seats too low but they are most uncomfortable. You should try sitting on those for a three hour trip, compared to the arm chair comfort of the others seats in the carriage, its just not enough room there as I can't bend my legs.' (s.103)

Getting off the vehicle

Signage and audible Announcements

The majority (80 per cent) of the people who travelled on a V/Line train said it was easy to identify when their destination was approaching, with 75 per cent of these passengers attributing this to the train driver announcing upcoming stops. Only 20 per cent of passengers said there were onboard displays.

Similarly, 84 per cent of people who travelled on a metropolitan train said they were easily able to identify when their destination was approaching. While less than half also said the train driver announced upcoming stops, 22 said there were onboard displays indicating upcoming stops.

Of the 20 respondents who travelled on a tram, 65 per cent said it was easy to identify when their destination was approaching, 85 per cent attributed this to the driver announcing upcoming stops. Only 25 per cent of tram users said there were displays onboard indicating the upcoming tram stops.

Of the 25 people who travelled on a metropolitan bus, 68 per cent said it was easy to know when their destination was approaching. However only 12 per cent said the bus driver announced upcoming stops and 12 per cent that there were onboard displays. This would indicate that the bus users surveyed were able to rely on past knowledge of having travelled on that route before.

Most (67 per cent) of the people who travelled on a V/Line bus said it was easy to know when their destination was approaching. Of these, 83 per cent attributed this to the bus driver announcing upcoming stops. The only passenger who said there were onboard displays indicating upcoming stops was using the Sky bus to the airport from Southern Cross station. So it can be concluded that most V/Line buses do not have onboard displays.³

Despite new signage being introduced across the public transport system that technically meets the DSAPT criteria they are often difficult for many people to read creating serious problems.

3. Information or data gathered in relation to the Sky bus to and from the airport sits outside the scope of this report.

'I am an able bodied person who has an acquired brain injury with short term memory loss. If I am going to an unknown destination I count the number of stops at the stations I have travelled through and note the previous station to mine, so therefore I always know what I'm doing - as I can't read the station names, especially if the train is express.' (s.28)

'I do not feel safe on the journey as, the station signage is too small. My main concern which stresses me on the train is that the new signs on the station are far too small and the colours are white on blue are not discernable. This should be black on white and large print.' (s.29)

'I am vision impaired and frequently travel, the change in the size of the signage from the old large sign of black on a white background to a small sign of white on a blue background is impossible to see. Also the voice announcement is not reliable and I often have to ask someone.' (s.135)



Location of Photograph: Southern Cross Train Station-Spencer Street- Melbourne

Participants proposed that signage needs to go beyond the minimum requirement of the DSAPT *Australian Standard 1428* to incorporate larger font sizes, and have significant colour contrast enabling signage to be 'bigger, bolder and brighter' for all to see. As can be seen by the above photograph, the signage above, whilst it meets the current DSAPT standards, it is difficult to read, not just for the vision impaired. Further, this is also one of larger signs available.

People also proposed that signage be made available in raised tactile letters and Braille, particularly in locations such as toilet doors, entry and exit points, and for help buttons.

The type and location of bus stops certainly generated much discussion at the information sessions along with comments written in the survey responses. Many of the participants spoke of their local bus stop being no more than a power pole with a sign on it as can be seen by the photograph below.



Location of Photograph: Street Unknown-Area of Bus Route-Geelong

'The bus stop is simply a flag attached to a power pole. The stop has no paved surface, seats or shelter, timetable etc. (s.21).

'While waiting at the bus stop- bus drove straight past. There was no bus sign, but we were waiting at the designated corner at the right time as displayed on the website and local timetables. We had to follow the bus to the next stop to get on' (s.56)

Assistance by the driver

Participants reported that the system of having the driver assist people using wheelchairs to board and get off the train often falls through.

'Often on the metro trains we have to bang on the doors to remind the drivers to stop and deploy the ramp for us. Sometimes they remember other times they forget.' (s.9)

'Drivers at times tend to forget about wheelchair passengers, even when they are given reminder slips. My partner and I still use them. The refills are getting harder and harder to procure and I am afraid they will soon be forgotten. Those who have speech problems find reminder slips can ease difficult situations.' (s.11)

Figure 6: Example of a reminder slip⁴

4. The reminder slips (see Figure 6) used to be distributed by transport operators for passengers to provide the driver with information as to where they wish to disembark.

Another passenger noted that:

'on this trip the driver remembered to help me, but sometimes I bang on the door, but he's forgotten[my stop].'

Clearly getting off at the wrong station would present significant problems for many passengers with disabilities.

Other issues

General safety

Participants raised a number of issues in relation to general safety and comfort. Mostly this was in relation to their physical safety on vehicles and at stops and shelters. A number of people commented that additional safety features such as electronic surveillance and panic buttons were inappropriate and useless in crisis situations.

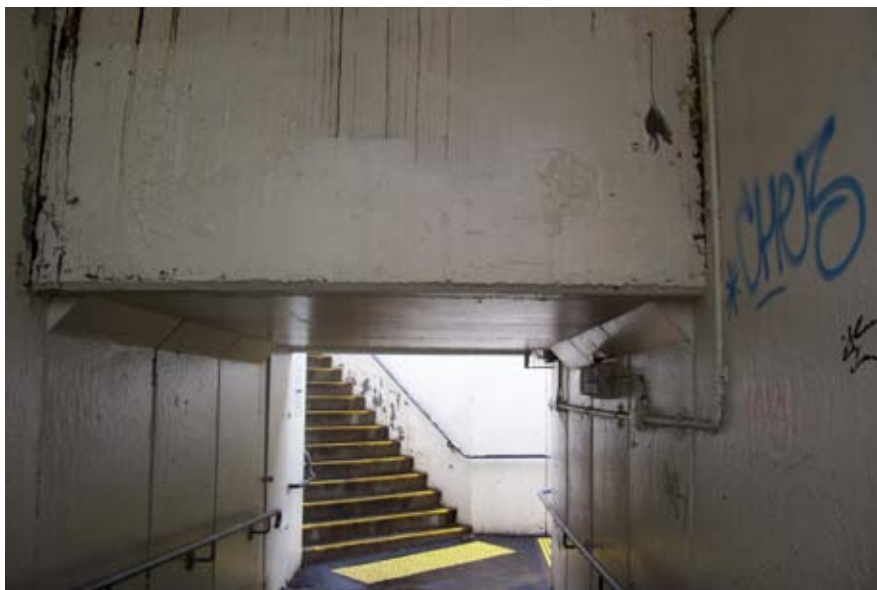
'Apart from dirty shelters, unmanned stations, doors on trains hard to open, too heavy and closing too quickly, no toilets on most stations, little help from driver, this may seem a lot but I have got used to it. I find train travel easier than buses in that they, trains, are more modern, more room, comfortable seats, station information on board. I do not feel safe in a train because of the distance from the driver and unmanned stations, even with emergency buttons help would be a while away. Maybe too late! Little thought has been given to disabled people on platforms and surrounds. But, as other disabled we accept cause that is all we have.' (s.7)

'Sometimes I feel afraid of the general public, some people can be very scary. There needs to be more security.' (s.26)

Pathways and walkways in and around stations and bus stops were often in need of resurfacing and cleaning. Some participants noted that graffiti on public transport infrastructure contributes to them feeling unsafe.

'It scares me all this graffiti and groups of young people- I don't feel safe. Some stations are worse than others' (s.100)

'A group of young people were fighting and throwing things, some had spray cans- I found this to be very frightening- I had to walk through the exit and along the pathway with them running around me'. (s.112)



Location of Photograph: Unknown-South Eastern Suburbs-Melbourne

Complaint mechanisms

A number of participants had attempted to make a complaint about public transport, and raised concerns about the process in information sessions.

Many reported being unable to jump the hurdles necessary to make complaints, such as finding out and recording the required information – such as the bus number or the bus driver’s number, the tram route, location and timing of the event. Other participants reported not knowing where to lodge a complaint.

Public transport staff

Lack of availability of staff on stations and at tram and bus stops to assist passengers was frequently raised as a problem.

‘What has happened to the ‘good old days’. There was always a friendly conductor to help you. I for one miss those days.’ (s.56)

‘I would like more face to face staff.’ (s.26)

‘No guard or attendant to guide blind/handicapped commuters.’ (s.8)

In the surveys, questions about available staff members were only asked of respondents who travelled on metropolitan and V/Line trains.

Only half of the 32 respondents travelling on metropolitan trains said there was a staff member available to ask for timetable information. While the question asked of V/Line train travellers differed slightly (they were asked whether a staff member was available to assist them in boarding the train) the data reinforces the lack of staff highlighted by the comments above, as only a third of V/Line train travellers said there was a staff member available.

While many participants reported that services provided by available staff were good, comments were also made that staff needed specialised training about how to meet the needs of people with a disability.

‘They need more training in disability awareness.’ (s.26)

‘Generally I find the staff at the stations and the drivers very helpful. The problem is lack of staff on the platforms and on the trains at night. It doesn’t always feel safe to travel at night and conductors would help this. I don’t always feel comfortable being dependant on the driver so it is important that drivers get good training on assisting people with disabilities.’ (s.37)

‘Most of the drivers are extremely helpful but occasionally there is one that is surly and then it is a worry as to whether the driver will ‘forget’ to get the ramp out at the required stop.’ (s.37)

Travellers Aid at Southern Cross train station

The support related services for public transport users such as Travellers Aid⁵ received a mixed response from participants, even though no specific question was asked relating to the service.

‘I would recommend Travellers Aid to any person not familiar with Southern Cross. But you have to book early. They did a wonderful job and took us to our other connecting train.’ (s.81)

‘Yeah, that is if you can find them. We wandered around one day having no idea where they were. That place (Southern Cross) is very poor on signage. You just can’t find things and you can’t say just ask because unless it is peak hour. You just can’t find anyone and when you do they are always running off here and there not just enough of them to tell you where to go’ (s.114)

5. Traveller’s Aid is a non-profit agency providing a range of services for people travelling to, in, and around the city of Melbourne.

Five participants reported difficulty using the buggies provided to aid people unable to walk long distances.

'Those buggy things - they are hard to get up onto, and not only that, I have to stick my legs out of the thing as there is not enough space for leg room. Thank God we don't have to travel too far Now I just try and walk but the wife she can't' (s.72)

'The people transport buggies are a good idea, however one can never get access to one unless you book. How do you know what time you are likely to return to the station. By the time you walk all the way down to the travellers aid you may as just try and walk to the train. Traveller's aid is located too far away from the trains and hub of the place. If you need one to meet the train you have to book days ahead.' (s.113)

Luggage storage

One participant with a vision impairment and diabetes found he was unable to use the luggage facilities at Southern Cross – and was unable to secure other means of storing his luggage.

Although the passenger sought assistance with the luggage lockers from staff at Southern Cross, he was informed that:

'All passengers including those with a disability are treated equally in relation to assistance with luggage [i.e. no-one is provided with assistance]. If we were to provide preferential treatment, it would be seen as discrimination by the general population.'

These comments clearly ignore the discrimination the passenger faced due to provision of lockers are inaccessible. This one participant, like many with a disability, often have to travel with luggage specific to their needs such as heavy equipment and aids. Subsequently the need to store luggage short term between waiting for connecting transport is necessary. The current luggage lockers are not large enough, are too costly and the locking systems are inaccessible for many. Participants proposed that an accessible cloakroom be located, either within the Southern Cross train station, or to be located at Travellers Aid.

Participants also noted that bag trolleys at Southern Cross are not located within easy reach of the platform for arrivals or departures and proposed that more bag trolleys be located closer to the entrances and exits of stations, as well as along major platforms.

'I have a difficulty carrying my bag, sometimes it is very heavy. It would be good to have the bag trolleys located along the platform so when I get off the train I don't have to carry it that far, especially if you are down north of the platform. Also when I get one as I go to the train, there is nowhere to leave it so I lose my dollar. This may not sound a lot but it adds up each week when I can't get my money back.' (s.103)

7. Recommendations

Introduction

This report has identified that the DSAPT and the implementation timetable are leading to inconsistent improvements in the accessibility of public transport in Victoria for different transport modes and for people with different types of disability. Further monitoring, outcome based evaluation of the DSAPT and its implantation are needed to ensure that the public transport system is useable.

It is recommended that:

- 1. The Victorian Government should continue to actively collaborate with disability organisations to move beyond technical compliance with the DSAPT in order to ensure that the DSAPT standards are appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of people with a disability.**

Information before travel

Participants identified having access to accurate information about their trip before travelling as very important to reducing their travelling stress, but many reported difficulty accessing accurate information.

It is recommended that:

- 2. MetLink and VicLink:**
 - improve the navigation simplicity of their websites and ensure the accessibility information provided is accurate; and**
 - Increase knowledge of the phone information service by publicising it more broadly.**

Getting to your stop or station

Getting to the stop or station was identified as a difficulty by 17 per cent of respondents, mostly people with mobility impairments. Some of these problems related to street design features that need to be addressed through broader accessibility reform of the built environment. This included the lack of disabled parking facilities at many of the train stations and bus stops both across metropolitan and rural areas. The lack of accessibility of all platform and station entrances and exits was identified as a problem that often creates additional distances for passengers to travel.

It is recommended that:

- 3. Accessible entries are constructed at either end of major train stations and regional bus stops.**
- 4. Victorian Government collaborates with Vic Roads and local governments to audit and improve the accessibility of pathways and kerbsides leading to public transport, including the allocation of adequate disabled parking.**

Level crossings

Level crossing safety remains a pressing concern, with the very serious consequences of inadequately safe crossings highlighted by the recent deaths of people using wheelchairs.

It is recommended that:

5. The Victorian Government

- **continues to upgrade all pedestrian level crossings throughout the state for wheel chair accessibility; and**
- **Ensures level crossing pathways are wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to pass safely within the yellow lines.**

Waiting for the train, tram or bus

Timetables

It is essential that timetables are located so people in wheelchairs can get near them, use adequately sized fonts and including information about scheduling of accessible vehicles.

It is recommended that:

- ### **7. The Victorian Government collaborate with VicLink and MetLink to ensure that all public transport stops or stations display well located timetables, in accessible font sizes, that indicate when accessible services are scheduled.**

Audible announcements

Audible announcements provide essential information for people who are vision impaired as well as passengers unfamiliar with public transport.

It is recommended that:

- ### **8. Transport operators ensure all train station staff as well as tram, train and bus drivers are adequately trained to make clear and comprehensible announcements.**

Tickets

Being unable to purchase or validate a ticket due to inaccessible ticket machines or lack of available staff is a source of stress to some passengers with disabilities who may fear risking a fine.

It is recommended that:

9. The Victorian Government ensures that:

- **Accessible ticket machines are located at all train stations and at accessible tram stops, or that staff are present to sell tickets; along with**
- **Clear and concise information on how to use the validating and ticketing machines is adequately provided.**

Toilets

The discussions held in relation to accessible toilets were complex as multiple factors, including the availability of station staff, affected their accessibility for people with different disability types. The onus of providing this essential service needs to remain the responsibility of public transport operators with facilities being open for use and accessible to all.

It is recommended that:

- 10. The Victorian Government and transport operators ensure accessible toilets at train stations and bus stops are open for people's use and fitted with the newer electronic systems of access.**

Lighting and shelters

The safety and amenity of stations and bus stops is important to people with disabilities and affects their ability to travel, especially at night or in bad weather.

It is recommended that:

- 11. The Victorian Government works with local government and transport operators to ensure that:**
- **the lighting at train stations, and from stations to nearby public transport and car parks is adequate to create a sense of safety;**
 - **accessible shelters are available near to wheelchair boarding points on train stations;**
 - **bus stops and shelters are adequately lit;**
 - **train station seating conform to DDA Standards; and**
 - **shelters at bus stops provide adequate protection from the weather, are accessible, and swiftly repaired when vandalised.**

Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs)

The implementation of TGSIs has been a welcome aid in supporting accessibility of people with vision impairment however it has raised some difficulties for others with differing types of disability along with the logic and location of its installation.

It is recommended that:

- 14. The Victorian Government:**
- **ensures contractors lay tactile paving with adequate care for safety, which includes indications of arrival at hazards such as staircases, or roadway; and**
 - **works with people with disabilities and transport operators to develop appropriate directional marking systems.**

Getting to your platform

The reliance on signage was of great importance especially for participants with limited mobility. It was generally reported that there was inadequate signage on major platforms and stations.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- 15. Transport operators, VicLink and MetLink ensure train stations are marked with clear signage about where trains are departing and where platforms are located, including accessibility routes to platforms and the location of lifts and escalators.**

Ramps

The gradient underpass, overpass and platform access ramps was identified as a barrier to accessing public transport.

It is recommended that:

- 16. The Victorian Government accelerate train station upgrades to make all underpass, overpass and platform gradients accessible.**

Lifts

The installation of lifts at stations was welcomed. Of concern were the size of and the location of the lifts along with the controls available to operate the lifts.

It is recommended that:

- 17. The Victorian Government ensures lifts built in train stations are large enough to accommodate two electric wheelchairs, have accessible controls, are easy to locate and are within accessible range for people with mobility impairment.**

Boarding the vehicle

Bus

Boarding public transport vehicles is a key point in an accessible journey, and numerous difficulties were reported with boarding different vehicle types.

It is recommended that:

- 18. The Victorian Government:**
 - accelerate the upgrades of bus stops and ensure road markings enable buses to pull up next to the kerb.**
- 19. Require that any new purchases of buses and school buses are fully DSAPT compliant.**

Trains

Participants identified accessing trains to be difficult due to the varying size of the gap between the train and the platform, the lack of access and appropriateness of ramps for mobility ambulant people and the difficulty of opening doors.

It is recommended that:

- 20. That the Victorian Government ensure that transport operators:**
 - provide an appropriate lightweight ramp accessible for both wheelchair and mobility ambulant people to access when embarking/disembarking from trains;**
 - adopt common standards across the state of all platforms to minimise the numerous variations of height and width gaps between the platform and trains;**
 - extend the pilot in the western metropolitan region where the platform area is painted showing clearly where the train doors will stop to all stations across Victoria;**
 - require all trains to be fitted with automatic opening/closing doors;**
 - ensure platform widening at the narrow ends of stations; and**
 - Provide designated areas at train and bus stations for the adequate storage of scooters.**

Trams

Melbourne's tram system is still largely inaccessible for people with mobility impairments and for people in wheelchairs. Participants using wheel chairs also found the lack of information telling you where and how to board a tram on the new accessible platform stops problematic.

It is recommended that:

- 21. The Victorian Government comply with the DSAPT timelines with regards to the purchase of the low floor tram fleet and installations of accessible tram stops.**
- 22. Transport operators and MetLink provide greater information and assistance on how and where to access low floor trams.**

On the Vehicle

Metropolitan bus and local buses in rural and regional areas

In the outer metropolitan areas of Melbourne and regional areas of Victoria in particular, there is an over reliance on buses which are currently inaccessible for people with disabilities, in many instances due to a lack of accessible buses, poor information provision and inaccessible bus stops.

It is recommended that:

- 23. The Victorian Government:**
 - **increase the fleet of accessible buses particularly in high growth areas of outer metropolitan Melbourne and in regional and rural Victoria;**
 - **ensure that the interior design of the buses provides additional allocation of space for wheel chairs, grab rails and additional seating for carers; and**
 - **works with transport operators to ensure adequate staff training in supporting the needs of passengers with a disability.**

V/Line and metropolitan trains

The provisions for passengers with disabilities onboard V/Line trains remain inappropriate and discriminatory along with the timetables for transport services in rural and regional areas do not accommodate the needs of some passengers with disability.

It is recommended that:

- 24. The Victorian Government ensures that;**
 - **the interior design of V/Line trains locate disabled seating away from toilets and doorways;**
 - **the transport operators for V/Line train and bus services no longer require a minimum of 24 hours notice of travel for people with disabilities; and**
 - **V/Line timetables make allowances for localised travel throughout regional centres especially during off peak times, to enable adequate access to services such as medical appointments.**

Trams

Participants using the tram system were particularly concerned with feeling unsafe whilst travelling due to the rocking of the vehicle and the risk of collision with cars.

It is recommended that:

25. The Victorian Government ensures that;

- **staff receive adequate training with a particular focus on driver training, to the impact of trams suddenly stopping and jerking motions, along with the potential this may cause to be involved in accidents; and**
- **The interior design of trams be retro fitted to allow for grab rails to be allocated at appropriate height levels for people travelling in wheel chairs.**

Seating on trains, trams and buses

Many of the participants not in wheel chairs discussed disabled seats, whilst being convenient in folding up, were concerned with the height and comfort level of disabled seats.

It is recommended that:

26. The Victorian Government ensures the design of disabled seating needs to be of an appropriate height and of the same comfort levels as of the other seating on the vehicle, particularly on V/Line transport.

Getting off the Vehicle

Signage and audible announcements

Adequate signage which is visible from both the vehicle and the stop or platform is essential to ensure the accessibility of the transport system. It is concerning that whilst the current signage meets the minimal standards outlined in the DSAPT there is a need for the font to be of a larger size for it to be useable for people, particularly those with vision impairments and the ageing.

It is recommended that:

27. The Victorian Government, transport operators, VicLink and MetLink ensures that;

- **the relevant standard regarding signage be changed ensure the maximum size of signage becomes the minimum size including onboard displays;**
- **more appropriate signage be located at all train, tram and bus stops;**
- **signage at entry and exit points at toilet doors and help buttons to be in Braille and/or raised tactile lettering; and**
- **signage to be increased at busy interchange stations and stops such as Southern Cross.**

Issues

General safety

Participants were concerned about their physical safety and the general standard of cleanliness provided on the public transport system.

It is recommended that:

28. The Victorian Government and transport operators ensure that;

- **assistance is available to passengers requiring support embarking/disembarking from vehicles and the deployment of ramps by staff;**
- **there is an increase in electronic surveillance systems on vehicles, stations and at bus stops and access to panic buttons in stations and at bus stops; and**
- **staffing on trains and at platforms is increased to provide adequate services for all, including people with a disability, especially at night to ensure the safety of passengers.**

Traveller's Aid at Southern Cross Station

The participants who have accessed Traveller's Aid generally found this service to be most useful, however concerns were expressed around the limitations and lack of resources it has being a small funded agency. Further, many of the participants commented at the information sessions that they were not aware of such a service.

It is recommended that:

29. The Victorian Government adequately resource Travellers' Aid to;

- **promote its services more widely within the community and across disability organisations;**
- **provide increased services in order to adequately meets the needs of people with a disability;**
- **there be improved systems to access assistance on arrival at Southern Cross via a phone or button system located along the platforms;**
- **redesigning of the buggy's to be more user friendly to meet the needs of the mobility impaired, similar to those used at Geelong train station; and**
- **increase signage as to its location at Southern Cross Station.**

Luggage storage

Luggage storage at Southern Cross station was viewed by a number of participants as being inaccessible for people with vision impairment and the cost was considered to be out of reach of people on low incomes.

It is recommended that:

30. That the Victorian Government ensure:

- **luggage lockers to be more accessible for all, both in size and the current difficulties with locking systems be reviewed and adequately addressed, and that the cost of accessing such a service be affordable to people on lower incomes;**
- **consideration be given to the reinstating of cloak rooms for easy storage and support of luggage for people with a need, especially those with a disability; and**
- **luggage trolley bays be located at access and entry points to all major train stations and along all platform areas where trains are likely to arrive and depart from.**



• Level 8, 128 Exhibition St, MELBOURNE, VIC, 3000 •
• T 03 9654 5050 • F 03 6545749 •
• vcoss@vcoss.org.au • www.vcoss.org.au •