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Mr John Howell  
Lawyer  
Legal Section  
Australian Human Rights Commission  
GPO Box 5218  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Howell

### **GRANT OF TEMPORARY EXEMPTIONS - REPORTING**

I refer to the Australian Human Rights Commission's Notice of Decision to grant temporary exemptions to members of the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) dated 1 October 2015.

As required by the terms and conditions of the exemptions, please find attached the report of V/Line Pty Ltd (V/Line) for the reporting period 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016.

PTV is pleased to endorse V/Line's report which relates to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (DDA)*, the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Cth) (Transport Standards)* and the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth) (Premises Standards)*.

I commend the achievements and continuous improvements implemented by V/Line. Throughout the five year period of exemption, PTV and V/Line are firmly committed to working collaboratively to achieve continuous improvement each year.

PTV in partnership with V/Line share the vision to create a public transport that is accessible to all members of the community.

PTV is looking forward to working with V/Line to achieve this commitment.

Yours sincerely



Alan Fedda  
Acting Chief Executive Officer  
21/09/2016

**Temporary Exemptions Report**  
**Victorian Regional Railway Service**  
**Reporting Period: 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016**

**V/Line Pty Ltd**  
**Level 9, 750 Collins Street**  
**Docklands, Victoria, 3008**

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## **Introduction**

### **Operational Context**

V/Line is Australia's largest regional public transport operator servicing the most passenger trips annually. In 2015-16 more than 17.6 million trips were taken on our trains and coaches. Every week, there are more than 1700 train services linking Melbourne with:

- Geelong and Warrnambool
- Ballarat, Maryborough and Ararat
- Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca
- Seymour, Shepparton and Albury
- Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale

More than 1250 V/Line-branded coach services also operate every week, connecting with the rail network and connecting regional Victorian communities where trains do not operate. Some V/Line coaches go to South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

V/Line operates three types of passenger trains which include:

- 177 VLocity carriages
- 133 Loco-hauled carriages
- 21 Sprinters (single unit)

All V/Line train services have conductors who provide on board customer service.

V/Line has 88 stations across the regional Victorian passenger network, of these stations, 45 are staffed for varying times during the day.

There are more than 1700 level and pedestrian crossings in the regional rail network. This includes a mix of active, passive and occupational crossings. This figure does not include crossings in the shared rail network that are the responsibility of the Australian Rail Track Corporation (**ARTC**).

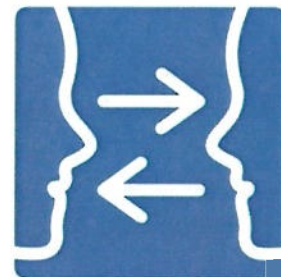
V/Line's Accessibility Action Plan (**AAP**) 2015-18 was developed to lead the organisation in taking meaningful steps to improve accessibility. It supports the objectives outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act (**DDA**) 1992, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (**DSAPT**). The AAP includes improvements based on compliance and consultation to develop customer-focused solutions founded on customer needs. It aligns with the Victorian Government approach, outlined in the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-16, and the shift from compliance to accessibility and allows for more collaborative solutions for customers.

V/Line is committed to:

- Creating a safe and inclusive system
- Having the customer experience front of mind
- Being transparent and open to feedback
- Collaboration and consultation for the best outcome
- Having each staff member recognise their role in creating accessible services.

In February 2016 V/Line was the first public transport operator in the world accredited in the international symbol for Communication Access which means:

- V/Line frontline staff are able to communicate successfully with customers who have communication difficulties
- V/Line frontline staff are welcoming and treat people with dignity and respect
- Communication tools are available to help customers get their message across and understand what people are telling them



These tools include a suite of journey cards for each station detailing the accessible features and facilities. The tools, along with other accessible journey planning information, are available on V/Line's website [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au).

V/Line undertakes a variety of customer consultations through feedback channels, focus groups, workshops, forums and surveys. These are both targeted consultations focussing on specific issues and concerns as well as more broader consultations focussing on improving accessibility for customers using V/Line services. V/Line also has an Accessibility Reference Group with customers with differing disabilities represented.

### Regional Network Development Plan

In May 2016 the State Government of Victoria released the Regional Network Development Plan (**RNDP**). The RNDP is a state wide plan for regional public transport and was developed in consultation with regional Victorian communities and stakeholders. The plan's strategic network wide priorities include making transport accessible, the provision of better passenger information and better facilities and customer experiences. V/Line is committed to working with stakeholders to deliver on these priorities.



## Temporary Exemptions Reporting

The Public Transport Development Authority (trading as 'Public Transport Victoria' and 'PTV') (**PTV**), established under the *Transport Integration Act 2010 (Vic)*, is the statutory authority responsible for managing the regional rail network on behalf of the State of Victoria. V/Line is responsible to the Victorian Minister for Public Transport and the Victorian Treasurer.

Pursuant to a Services Agreement between PTV and V/Line dated 13 November 2013, V/Line is the operator and maintainer of the regional network.

V/Line and PTV are members of the Australasian Railway Association (**ARA**). V/Line participates in the ARA Disability Policy Working Group.

On 1 October 2015, the Australian Human Rights Commission (**AHRC**) granted temporary exemptions to members of the ARA in relation to various provisions of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Cth)* (**Transport Standards**) and the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth)* (**Premises Standards**).

V/Line provides this report in relation to the regional Victorian passenger rail network and the relevant temporary exemptions which contained reporting requirements.

This report is for the period 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016.

If you wish to provide feedback or require further information on this report please contact V/Line:

- call  
1800 800 007 (6am to midnight, 7 days a week).  
TTY (03) 9619 2727
- in writing  
Customer Relations  
Reply Paid 5343  
Melbourne VIC 8060
- online at [www.vline.com.au/Contact-us](http://www.vline.com.au/Contact-us)

## **Part A – Exemptions from the Transport Standards**

### **2.1 Access paths – Unhindered passage**

#### **Temporary Exemption: rail premises and rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, flange gaps of up to 75mm are permitted where a level crossing forms part of an access path on rail premises or rail infrastructure.

#### **Reporting Requirements:**

- a. **Action taken to improve safe use of level crossings where they form part of an access path**

#### **Safety education**

Safety is V/Line's highest priority and educating customers and regional Victorian communities about safe behaviour at level crossings forms a large part of V/Line's safety campaign activity. During the reporting period V/Line worked with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and the Tracksafe Foundation on coordinated activities throughout the year and during Rail Safety Week, 15 – 19 August 2016. Additionally, V/Line has conducted targeted activities at level crossings where:

- Upgrade works have occurred
- There was an extended period of track works
- The timetable changed
- A level or pedestrian crossing was closed



**Don't Push Your X-ing Luck - Timetable change sign**



**Don't Push Your X-ing Luck – level crossing upgrade sign**

### **Technical investigations**

V/Line will investigate the use of VeloSTRAIL, an inner panel system that eliminates the flange grooves and that has been designed for a train speed of maximum 120 km/h so could potentially be utilised in certain parts of the regional rail network. VeloSTRAIL presses the replaceable flangeway element down but accommodates enough resistance for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, baby carriages and inline skaters<sup>1</sup>. This product is not currently suitable for the high speed lines that V/Line operates.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.strail.de](http://www.strail.de)



## Upgrades

To improve safety at level and pedestrian crossings V/Line continues to upgrade crossings located in the regional rail network. Crossings that have been upgraded since 1 October 2015 are shown in Table 1 below.

Location
Surfcoast Hwy, Grovedale
Gazeepore Rd, Waurin Ponds
Mildura Riverfront, Mildura
Nolan Street, Bendigo
Heinz Street, Bendigo
Victoria Street, Bendigo
Jobs Gully Road, Bendigo
Phalps Road, Pirron Yallock
Williamson Street, Bendigo
Mundy Street, Bendigo
Napier Street, Bendigo
Market Street, Bendigo
Weeroona Avenue, Bendigo

Table 1 Upgraded level and pedestrian crossings in regional Victoria

### b. Progress made on the removal of level crossings

Since 1 October 2015 level and pedestrian crossings that have been closed in regional Victoria are listed below in Table 2.

Location
Kenny's Lane, Broadford
Church Street, Eaglehawk
Taylor Street, Maryborough
Wood and Barrell Streets, California Gully
Watson Avenue, Eaglehawk

Table 2 Closed level and pedestrian crossings in regional Victoria

### c. Any developments in research into possible technical solutions for bridging flange gaps

V/Line participates in the rail industry research body, the Australasian Centre for Rail Innovation, who are currently undertaking the following project into solutions for bridging flange gaps:

**'Rail Flange Gap risk reduction – The rail flange gaps at pedestrian crossings have always been an issue for pedestrians, cyclist and wheelchairs / mobility device users to negotiate. This project will conduct an investigation of available treatments for rail flange gaps and trial a variety of solutions to provide advice on the safest and most suitable solution<sup>2</sup>.'**

V/Line will continue to participate in and monitor the progress of this project.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.acri.net.au](http://www.acri.net.au)

## **2.1 Access paths – Unhindered passage**

### **Temporary Exemption: existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, an access path is required to provide entrance and exit only at a single boundary point for existing rail stations where providing access at each entrance would require significant structural building work or not be feasible due to space, topographical or heritage reasons.

### **Reporting Requirement: Rail stations that have inaccessible entrances**

For the purpose of this report, a station with an 'inaccessible entrance' is a station which is 'only accessible by steps'. All V/Line stations have a step free accessible entrance.

## **2.4 Access paths – Minimum unobstructed width**

### **Temporary Exemption: existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, for existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure:

1. where the 1200mm minimum unobstructed width for access paths cannot be met due to structural and technical constraints, an access path with a minimum unobstructed width of 1000mm may be provided;
2. the 850mm minimum unobstructed width (applicable to doorways and gateways) is also permitted on access paths for the purposes of passing an obstruction limited to less than 800mm in length; and
3. platform edge warning TGSIs are permitted to intrude into access paths.

### **Reporting Requirement: Rail stations which have restricted paths of travel within station precincts**

The following regional stations have restricted paths of travel:

Bacchus Marsh
Bairnsdale
Beaufort
Benalla
Birregurra
Castlemaine
Clarkefield
Donnybrook
Drouin

Kyneton
Lara
Marshall
Melton
Morwell
North Geelong
Pyramid Hill
Rockbank
Swan Hill

Terang
Violet Town
Wandong
Wangaratta
Warragul
Warrnambool
Wendouree
Woodend

Source: PTV Railway Stations Audit, December 2014

V/Line has not received feedback regarding the reported matters during the reporting period. Monitoring and consultation will continue.

## **2.6 Access paths – conveyances**

### **Temporary Exemption: existing rail conveyances**

For a period of five years, an access path is only required at a single door rather than all doors of existing rail conveyances, subject to the following conditions:

- equivalent access is provided at an alternative door of the rail conveyance in the following circumstances:
  - if an allocated space is not available; or
  - to ensure access to unique facilities; or
  - to ensure a passenger can both board and alight the rail conveyance;

**Reporting requirement: Measures taken to ensure that staff and passengers are adequately informed of both the access paths available at the doors of existing rail conveyances and the equivalent access measures available.**

Customers can board at any door of V/Line trains.

Doors identified by the international symbol for access lead to on board accessible facilities including toilets and allocated spaces.

All V/Line stations have a Boarding Assistance Zone where customers can choose to wait for V/Line staff if they need assistance to board.

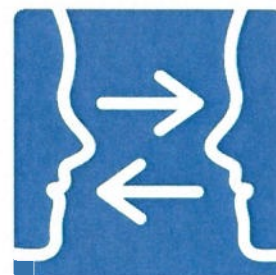
All V/Line frontline staff have completed comprehensive disability awareness training and Conductors are trained on how to deploy the portable boarding ramp for customers who require assistance to board.



V/Line hosts try Before You Ride events at regional stations, where customers of all abilities are invited to try different modes of transport including a V/Line VLocity train, a regional coach, a low floor bus and an accessible taxi. V/Line also participates in similar events held in Melbourne.

In February 2016 V/Line staff on trains and at stations were accredited in the international symbol for Communication Access which means:

- V/Line frontline staff are able to communicate successfully with customers who have communication difficulties
- V/Line frontline staff are welcoming and treat people with dignity and respect
- Communication tools are available to help customers get their message across and understand what people are telling them





## **4.2 Passing areas – Two-way access paths and aerobridges**

### **Temporary Exemption: existing rail platforms**

For a period of five years, for existing rail platforms, a passing area every 9 metres along any two-way access path that is less than 1800mm wide is permitted where it is not possible to provide one every 6 metres due to structural or heritage constraints.

**Reporting Requirement: Rail station platforms which do not provide passing spaces every 6 metres where any two-way access path is less than 1800mm wide**

<b>Station</b>	<b>Platform</b>
Macedon	Platform 2
Rockbank	Platform 2
Seymour	Platform 3
Trafalgar	Platform 2

Source: PTV Railway Stations Audit, December 2014

V/Line has not received feedback regarding the reported matters during the reporting period. Monitoring and consultation will continue.

## **5.1 Resting points – When resting points must be provided**

### **Temporary Exemption: existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, compliance with clause 5.1 is not required for existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure to the extent that site constraints prevent compliance (rather than only added expense or difficulty).

#### **Reporting Requirement:**

##### **a. Outcomes of consultations and locations where a resting point with a seat is not provided every 60m**

Through V/Line's various feedback channels no issues have been raised related to the stations identified below during the reporting period. V/Line will continue to monitor and consult on these locations.

##### **b. Locations where a resting point with a seat is not provided every 60m**

The following station precincts do not have resting points with a seat every 60m:

Ararat	Kilmore East	South Geelong
Ardeer	Lara	Swan Hill
Avenel	Little River	Talbot
Ballarat	Longwarry	Tameit
Bendigo	Marshall	Trafalgar
Clunes	Maryborough	Traralgon
Colac	Melton	Violet Town
Corio	Morwell	Wallan
Creswick	North Geelong	Wangaratta
Deer Park	North Shore	Warragul
Dingee	Riddells Creek	Wendouree
Eaglehawk	Rockbank	Woodend
Elmore	Seymour	Wyndham Vale
Gisborne	Sherwood Park	Yarragon

Source: PTV Railway Stations Audit, December 2014

V/Line has not received feedback regarding the reported matters during the reporting period. Monitoring and consultation will continue.

## **6.4 Slope of external boarding ramps**

### **Temporary Exemption: rail conveyances**

For a period of five years, where the relationship between the platform and rail carriage means that an external boarding ramp can only be provided at a gradient greater than 1 in 8 and less than 1 in 4, ARA members are not required to provide staff assistance in ascending or descending the ramp.

### **Reporting Requirements**

**a. Number of locations where boarding ramp slopes of one in eight or better cannot currently be achieved**

Due to the current platform height standard defined by the Victorian Rail Industry Operator Group Standards (VRIOGS), the height and width of rolling stock that use the regional rail network, including freight trains, and the current design of V/Line boarding ramps, 121 platforms in the regional rail network cannot achieve a boarding ramp slope of one in eight or better.

V/Line is currently working with PTV and Metro Trains Melbourne to review the platform height VRIOGS.

**b. Measures to be taken to increase the number of locations where external boarding ramp slopes of one in eight or better will be achieved**

V/Line will continue to monitor initiatives undertaken by other operators to decrease both height and width gaps. Initiatives undertaken at metropolitan stations in Melbourne cannot be replicated in the high speed regional network due to differences in train fleet.

**c. Results of examination of alternative methods of achieving accessible boarding**

V/Line has identified in its AAP a project to review the design of its portable boarding ramp. V/Line's ARG has and will continue to be engaged in working on improved portable ramps.

V/Line accepts Companion Card issued by the Department of Health and Human Services to people who may require the assistance of a companion. It provides free travel for the carer/companion of the card holder on all public transport services<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual, Effective 1 January 2016, Public Transport Victoria.

## **11.2 Handrails and grabrails – Handrails to be provided on access paths**

### **Temporary exemption: rail platforms**

For a period of five years, rail platforms are exempt from clause 11.2.

**Reporting requirement: where a request is made but the installation of a handrail does not proceed, report on the request and the reasons for not taking action**

V/Line has not received any requests during the reporting period.



## **Part B – Exemptions from the Premises Standards**

### **H2.2 Accessways**

#### **Temporary exemption: rail premises and rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, flange gaps of up to 75mm are permitted where a level crossing forms part of an access path on rail premises or rail infrastructure.

#### **Reporting Requirements:**

- a. action taken to improve safe use of level crossings where they form part of an access path;
- b. progress made in the removal of level crossings; and
- c. any developments in research into possible technical solutions for bridging flange gaps

Please see V/Line's response to Part A: 2.1 Access paths – Unhindered passage.

### **H2.2 Accessways**

#### **Temporary exemption: existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, an access path is required to provide entrance and exit only at a single boundary point for existing rail stations where providing access at each entrance would require significant structural building work or not be feasible due to space, topographical or heritage reasons.

#### **Reporting Requirement: rail stations which have inaccessible entrances**

Please see V/Line's response to Part A: 2.1 Access paths – Unhindered passage.

### **H2.2 Accessways**

#### **Temporary exemption: existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure**

For a period of five years, for existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure:

- where the 1,200mm minimum unobstructed width for access paths cannot be met due to structural and technical constraints, an access path with a minimum unobstructed width of 1,000mm may be provided;
- the 850mm minimum unobstructed width (applicable to doorways and gateways) is also permitted on access paths for the purposes of passing an obstruction limited to less than 800mm in length; and
- platform edge warning TGSIs are permitted to intrude into access paths.

#### **Reporting Requirement: rail stations which have restricted paths of travel**

Please see V/Line's response to Part A: 2.4 Access paths – Minimum unobstructed width.

## **H2.2 Accessways**

### **Temporary exemption: existing rail platforms**

For a period of five years, for existing rail platforms, a passing area every 9 metres along any two-way access path that is less than 1,800mm wide is permitted where it is not possible to provide one every six metres due to structural or heritage constraints.

**Reporting Requirement: Rail station platforms which do not provide passing spaces every six metres where any two-way access path is less than 1800mm wide, and provides an updated version of that report every 12 months, and that these reports include a description of any measures taken by the ARA member to address any impacts this may have on users**

Please see V/Line's response to Part A: 4.2 Passing areas – Two-way access paths and aerobridges.

## **H2.4 Handrails and grabrails**

### **Temporary exemption: rail platforms**

For a period of five years, rail platforms are exempt from clause H2.4(2).

**Reporting requirement: where a request is made but the installation of a handrail does not proceed, report on the request and the reasons for not taking action**

Please see V/Line's response to Part A: 11.2 Handrails and grabrails – Handrails to be provided on access paths.

Dated 21 September 2016



.....  
**Carol-Anne Nelson**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer  
V/Line Pty Ltd