

ARA16DB/58

29 September 2017

Mr John Howell
Lawyer
Legal Section
Australian Human Rights Commission
Level 3, 175 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
John.Howell@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Mr Howell,

RE: TEMPORARY EXEMPTIONS REPORTS

I write to provide the Australian Human Rights Commission with the temporary exemptions reports prepared by ARA members for the period 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017.

As referenced in the temporary exemptions granted to ARA members on 1 October 2015, the exemptions reports relate 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**).

The reports cover the following jurisdictions and ARA members:

- Queensland: Queensland Rail
- New South Wales: Transport for New South Wales, NSW TrainLink and Sydney Trains
- Victoria: Public Transport Victoria, Metro Trains Melbourne Pty Ltd, V/Line and Yarra Trams
- South Australia: Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
- Western Australia: Public Transport Authority of WA, Transperth Train Operations and TransWA

The passenger rail industry is integral to the efficient movement of people within cities and between regions, and provides extensive access opportunities for people with all levels of ability and inability. Given rail's importance as a transport service to all members of the community, passenger rail operators are committed to continuously enhance services for all passengers, particularly in the area of accessibility.

Due to the historic nature of some rail assets and the considerable investment required, complete access cannot be achieved immediately. Australia's rail industry continues to be committed to achieving continuous incremental improvements. This ensures rail is actively enhancing the access provided for all individuals in our communities throughout the year as operators and state entities implement their respective Disability Action Plans.

During the past 12 months, ARA members have continued to implement upgrades to increase the accessibility of rolling stock and infrastructure, as well as the customer experience as a whole for those with disability. As part of this commitment to continuous improvement, a number of members organisation have created specialist roles within their organisation to advise on access issues and broadened the focus beyond a compliance issue sot a hole of network accessible issue.

Passenger rail operators continue to consult regularly with the disability sector individually and collectively regarding accessibility plans and investment decisions to ensure that all accessibility improvements are developed in collaboration with those with disability and their representative organisations. ARA members value engagement and input from the disability sector to assist the industry in better meeting the needs of these stakeholders when delivering upgrades or program improvements. Feedback from ongoing consultation is actively fed into jurisdictional Disability Action Plans to facilitate the industry's focus on continuous improvement and ensure the voice of the disability sector is both being heard, and acted upon by the passenger rail industry.

With this letter, the ARA formally submits the industry's reports against the temporary exemptions that have reporting requirements. It is the industry's belief that these annual reports to the Australian Human Rights Commission will highlight the rail industry's commitment to continual improvements.

While the detail against each temporary exemption is provided in the reports, the ARA would like to highlight to the Australian Human Rights Commission some achievements of ARA members during the past 12 months:

Department of Planning and Transport Infrastructure (DPTI), South Australia: DPTI continues to make public transport more accessible and easier to use for people with disabilities. Over the past 12 months DPTI has employed a number of measures to improve level crossing safety, such as, maintaining existing pedestrian crossings to a high degree, installing electromagnetic latches and gates that automatically close as the train approaches and grade separating access paths to rebuilt stations. An audit of all at grade pedestrian crossings on the Adelaide Metropolitan Rail Network was undertaken, resulting in new signage as needed. A number of pedestrian crossings have been either closed or have been grade separated.

Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM): Over the past year, Metro has made ongoing improvement to the accessibility of stations and trains. Seven Metro stations were completely rebuilt, offering passengers a contemporary design with new accessible facilities. Rolling stock reconfigurations were completed across all three Metro fleets, increasing the number of allocated spaces as well as access to grab rails and handholds.

Queensland Rail (QR): Queensland Rail is committed to providing accessible rail services that allow all customers to travel easily and safely on Queensland's rail network. The Queensland Government has invested \$212 million over five years to deliver accessibility upgrades at priority stations across the Citytrain network, to provide better access for all of customers, including, customers with disabilities; seniors; parents with prams and young children; and, people with luggage. Three

stations have undergone complete accessibility upgrades as part of the five year program, with two more stations anticipated to be completed towards the end of 2017 and three more stations currently in the design phase with construction expected to begin in early 2018 and upgrades at two more stations have recently been announced as part of the program.

Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW): TfNSW continues to focus on delivering strong customer outcomes and improved accessibility through continued engagement and consultation with the disability sector, constructing new and improved infrastructure and fleet and continued innovation in emerging technologies. Accessibility updates have been completed at ten train stations and two ferry wharves, with continued construction at ten train stations and one ferry wharf. In addition, interchange updates have been completed at eight locations. Four new smartphone applications have been developed to assist customers with a disability utilising public transport. There will be improved fleet accessibility through the announcement of new Sydney Growth Trains and a new regional fleet to replace XPT, XPLOER and Endeavour Trains.

Public Transport Authority of Western Australia: The Western Australia Government has approved funding for the at Grade Crossing Improvement Program to address the immediate risks associated with “at Grade” crossings to improve accessibility for people, improve safety and reduce road traffic congestion around crossings. The works are underpinned by the PTA’s Railway Level Crossing Asset Management Program which aims to completely eliminate railway level crossings from the Perth Metropolitan network over the next 80 years. These works have commenced and include the closure/removal of level crossings; upgrades of pedestrian and level crossings.

V/Line: V/Lines Accessibility Reference Group provides direct input into accessibility issues and regional rail projects. 15 pedestrian and level crossings have been upgraded in the past 12 months, 2 level crossings closed, developing access maps for each station on the V/Line network, commissioned research on rail flange gap risk reduction and is planning a trial of VeloSTRAIL (an inner panel system that eliminates flange grooves) in 2018. Also in 2018, it is planned to install a lift at Bendigo station to improve access.

Yarra Trams: Updated and revitalized the accessibility training provided to frontline staff (both induction and annual refresher sessions), to tackle main passenger pain points related to accessibility. Building on the success of the roll out of Vehicle Passenger Information Displays on all B Class trams, Yarra Trams is now trialling a new solution on C Class trams on the network. The new dual screen LCD system delivers more information to passengers and improves ease of travel especially for customers with hearing and vision impairments. Passenger feedback captured during the trial will be added to the initial customer consultation and help inform design, content and experience improvements as required. The implementation of this system will bring the percentage of vehicles with automated audio and visual information from 62% to 75%.

I commend these achievements, the detailed reports and continued improvements implemented by the jurisdictions to the Australian Human Rights Commission in continuing to improve the accessibility of Australia's passenger rail systems.

The rail industry is committed to achieving the best practical outcomes for customers with disabilities and will continue to work closely with the Federal Government as it modernises the Transport Standards.

As required, the reports have been uploaded to the ARA website to provide public access. A dedicated page on the ARA website, under publications has been established. This is available at <http://www.ara.net.au/disability-temporary-exemptions-reports>.

To discuss the reports further, please contact Natalie Currey, General Manager Passenger and Industry Programs via ncurrey@ara.net.au or 02 6270 4512.

Yours sincerely,



Danny Broad
Chief Executive Officer
Australasian Railway Association