

ARA19DB/48

30 September 2019

Dr Ben Gauntlett
Disability Discrimination Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission
via email: ben.gauntlett@humanrights.gov.au
copy to: julie.obrien@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Dr Gauntlett,

RE: ARA temporary exemptions annual member reports

I am pleased to provide the 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019 Australasian Railway Association (**ARA**) member reports for the temporary exemptions granted on 1 October 2015. These temporary exemptions reports relate to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (**DDA**), the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Cth) (**DSAPT**) and the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth) (**Premises Standards**).

Australian rail operators recognise that accessible trains and trams provide independence for people with disability and can therefore be instrumental for people with disability to be included and engaged in our communities.

In their efforts to continue improving accessibility, ARA members take a holistic approach, supporting infrastructure investments with an array of programs. Each operator employs staff that are dedicated to continuous improvement, advise their organisations and colleagues on accessibility, roll-out a variety of accessibility-focused programs and consulting with the disability sector to ensure improvement programs are developed in collaboration with those with a disability and their representative organisations.

Now in its seventh year, the ARA continues to coordinate our Accessibility Working Group (**AWG**). The AWG regularly unites Rail Accessibility Advisors to address accessibility matters, develop submissions on relevant issues, share accessibility initiatives and lessons learned for shared improvements across the Australian Rail Industry.

To contribute technical research to the DSAPT modernisation, with the AWG acting as a reference group, the ARA was pleased to engage Monash University's Institute of Railway Technology to provide an independent desk-top engineering review of the DSAPT. Monash has made a number of overarching recommendations to modernise the DSAPT as well as section-specific recommendations. Most notable, the recommendation to adopt an outcomes-based approach (with benchmarking, and/or a range where prescription is required) and that where prescription is required, measures should be clear and structured to improve outcomes for people with disability. The ARA has circulated copies of the Monash Summary report to relevant stakeholders and trusts that this work is a constructive contribution to the review of the DSAPT.

The ARA is fully supportive of the confirmed changes to the DSAPT modernisation process that will see the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland co-lead the modernisation with the Commonwealth Government. The ARA is pleased to be represented on the recently established National Accessible Transport

Taskforce (NATT) through the Chair and Deputy Chair of the AWG; Rohan Barton of Metro Trains Melbourne and Paul Mann of Queensland Rail respectively.

As you are aware, in August 2019, the ARA and our AWG, hosted an inaugural Rail Accessibility Forum. We thank you again for your support and contribution to this event which brought together more than eighty individuals, including those with lived experience, representatives of disability organisations; the Rail Industry; Commonwealth, State and Territory Government and other key stakeholders to discuss the journey Australian train and tram networks are on to improve the accessibility of their networks. The feedback from attendees was extremely positive and the ARA plans to hold another forum in 2020.

During the last twelve months, ARA members have continued their journeys to achieve accessible train and tram networks. As a highlight, I would like to draw your attention to the following key achievements by our members during this reporting period:

Department of Planning and Transport Infrastructure (DPTI), South Australia: DPTI have employed a number of measures to improve the accessibility of the Adelaide Metropolitan Passenger Rail Network (AMPRN) over the past twelve months. The previously only inaccessible tram stop, City South, has been rebuilt, providing accessibility for all throughout the tram network.

Additionally, during this time through various major projects, four at-grade pedestrian crossings have been closed, three have been grade separated and a further three have been made fully accessible through activation. Work has also begun on the Gawler Rail Electrification Project which will see the activation of a further nine at-grade pedestrian crossings.

Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM): In partnership with the Victorian Government, there will be ongoing improvement to the accessibility of stations and passenger safety on the MTM network with the announcement of a further 25 level crossing removals by 2025. MTM has also made considerable progress in the accreditation of the Scope Communication Access Symbol, which involves training all frontline staff as well as the development of tools and strategies to assist passengers with communication difficulties.

Public Transport Authority (PTA) of Western Australia: METRONET is a long-term project for an unprecedented increase in Perth's metropolitan passenger rail network. METRONET Stage One will include completing the Forrestfield-Airport Link; extending selected existing railway lines; building new stations; and removing nominated level crossings on the heritage lines. During the year, the new Metronet Access and Inclusion Reference Group was established to provide advice on universal design features and impacts during the construction of new infrastructure.

During the year, Transwa:

- Commenced the North Dandalup and Cookernup high level platform projects; and
- Constructed high level platforms with a sheltered seating area, a raised platform at both Carrabin and Yarloop stations which are now fully accessible.

The PTA also has a program of works underway across the network to upgrade non-compliant pedestrian crossings including the reconfiguration of mazes; lighting upgrades; and gradient repair to comply with the DSAPT.

Queensland Rail (QR): Queensland Rail's \$300m commitment to a rolling program of station accessibility upgrades has resulted in upgrades being delivered at five stations across SEQ, with the next three stations now well advanced into construction phase. The program was given a further boost in May 2019 with an additional \$57 million committed for accessibility upgrades at another six stations as part of the Cross River Rail project.

Full-length high-level platforms have been installed as part of asset renewal works at two stations, with a third under construction.

Early works for the next stage of the Central station upgrade will begin in late-2019 and continue throughout 2020. Staged platform upgrade works will follow to minimise disruption to our customers.

Following the success of station improvements for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, Queensland Rail has established a project to design and construct partial raised platform structures that can be installed over weekend track closures. This interim initiative will greatly improve safety and accessibility at assisted boarding locations across the Citytrain network.

Contracts have been awarded for the Queensland Government's \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project which will deliver four new underground stations, three new aboveground stations, and improvements to eight existing stations.

Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW): Transport for NSW continues to focus on delivery of strong customer outcomes and accessibility improvements in alignment with the Future Transport Strategy 2056. A key achievement in addition to delivery of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2022 was the launch of the Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018-2022. The Plan outlines our commitment to achieve accessible and affordable transport to support people as they age.

In May 2019 the Sydney Metro officially opened to deliver the first fully automated driverless metro passenger rail system in Australia. A key achievement is the high level of accessibility that has been delivered with lifts at all stations and level access between platform and train.

V/Line Corporation: Significant investment is occurring on the regional rail network in Victoria. The Ballarat Line Upgrade is delivering significant improvements to 4 stations and an additional station along the Ballarat line. The first station was completed in August 2019 with Rockbank Station reopening with two new longer platforms, an accessible pedestrian overpass linking the two platforms, a new sealed car park, with accessible parking, bus and taxi bays, hearing loops and improved passenger information displays.

In December 2018 V/Line released online Virtual Tours of all fleet types to customers. These tours enable customers to view the trains prior to travel to identify the accessible areas within the different types of trains and plan how they will access V/Line services. Virtual Tours can be accessed via the V/Line website.

V/Line has developed the next Accessibility Action Plan (**AAP**) for 2019-2022 to build on the achievements of the past three years and continue to improve access for regional public transport services. The AAP focuses on delivering inclusive and accessible services whilst promoting compliance to DSAPT and improvements in functional access. To develop the 2019-2022 AAP, V/Line has consulted with customers,

the V/Line Accessibility Reference Group, disability service providers and advocacy organisations as well as staff and key internal stakeholders.

Yarra Trams: Yarra Trams is constantly striving to provide a network that is inclusive and accessible for all. Yarra Trams works with the Victorian Government and other stakeholders to make traveling on Melbourne trams easier, safer and more accessible. To show commitment to improving the accessibility of Melbourne's tram network, Yarra Trams has released an updated Accessibility Action Plan. The updated action plan is also available in Easy English.

Yarra Trams has been going through the process of gaining accreditation with the Communication Access Symbol, with accreditation expected in late 2019. The project includes the development of tools and training to ensure that all their frontline staff can communicate with people in a nonverbal way, benefiting people with a communication disability and non-English speakers.

The following will be delivered by Yarra Trams by the end of 2019:

- Face to face training for all frontline staff
- eLearning tool developed for non-frontline staff
- Suite of communication boards for use on the tram network
- Communication boards for use at reception
- Accessibility video showcasing the accessible features for journey planning, travelling and providing feedback
- Virtual 360° tram tour for passengers to take a virtual trip through a tram, highlighting accessible features including priority seats and accessible stop buttons
- Social stories that provide detailed travel advice in easy English
- Community request cards downloadable from our website, to request assistance from our staff, including 'please announce my stop'.

In addition to the above highlights, each organisation has completed its 12-month report against the temporary exemptions with reporting requirements. As required, these reports have been loaded to the ARA website to provide public access. A dedicated page on the ARA website is available at <https://ara.net.au/policy-media/disability-temporary-exemptions-reports> .

I commend these reports and the continued improvements in the accessibility of Australian rail networks to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Should you wish to discuss these reports further, please contact Emma Woods, General Manager Passenger and Corporate Services via ewoods@ara.net.au or 02 6270 4507.

Yours sincerely,



Danny Broad
Chief Executive Officer
Australasian Railway Association