

ARA20CW/87

30 September 2020

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,

ARA TEMPORARY EXEMPTIONS ANNUAL MEMBER REPORTS

I am pleased to provide the 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020 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**).

As public transport service providers, ARA members are committed to continuing to improve the accessibility of rail services so that all individuals can safely travel by rail and thereby be engaged members of the community.

Recognising that providing accessible rail is much more than complying with the DSAPT, ARA members approach accessibility in a holistic manner by implementing 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.

The ARA and our members acknowledge the accessibility improvements that have been driven through the DSAPT and are actively engaged in the revised DSAPT modernisation process currently underway. In addition, ARA members welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) development of an Equivalent Access Guideline.

During the last twelve months, ARA members have continued their journeys to enhance the accessibility of train and tram networks around Australia. As a highlight, and in addition to the full reports provided, I would like to draw your attention to the following key achievements by our members during this reporting period:

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport, South Australia (formerly Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure), engaged contractors in April 2020 to undertake a compliance audit of the Adelaide Metropolitan Passenger Rail Network. This process is nearing completion and has given the department an improved understanding of the status of the network.

Works continue to be funded and prioritised across the network including station assessments as part of the Gawler Rail Electrification Project and construction of two new stations as part of the ongoing Flinders Link Project.

The department continues to promote the strategic direction of “zero harm”. Reducing the number of railway crossings via closure or grade separation continues to be a focus across the network.

Metro Trains Melbourne: Metro continues to focus on achieving accessibility through a combination of station and train upgrades, customer service initiatives and innovative solutions. Throughout the previous reporting period, significant investment has achieved the removal of level crossings, station rebuilds, platform and access path upgrades, and safety and accessibility upgrades to rolling stock.

Metro was accredited with the Communication Access Symbol, signifying that all frontline staff are trained and equipped to assist passengers with communication difficulty. This is a significant step and commitment to ensuring staff have the tools and capability to assist passenger journeys.

Wheelchair Movers have been introduced at seven stations with steep ramps around the network, allowing staff to assist passengers with manual wheelchairs up and down ramps without the risk of injury. Five Assistance Animal Toileting Areas have also been installed, providing passengers travelling with assistance dogs the facilities for a seamless journey.

Public Transport Authority (PTA) of Western Australia: The WA Railcar Program will deliver 246 new six-car C-series trains which will carry about 1,200 passengers, about 80 more passengers than two B-series trains. The design takes into consideration the feedback received from passengers over the last three years. As a result, the design of the new trains will have a combination of seating styles, improved manoeuvrability and three passenger doors on each side of the railcar to facilitate wheelchair access.

The PTA has continued its works program and upgraded thirteen non-compliant pedestrian crossings across the network in 2019/2020 including the reconfiguration of mazes, manoeuvring and passing areas, lighting upgrades and tactile paving to comply with the DSAPT.

Work was completed at 22 station during the 2019-20 financial year, with modifications at a further 20 stations to be undertaken in 2020-21. The works included the signage, stairs, handrails, tactile paving, accessible car parking bays, lifts sensors, luminance contrast, announcements and alarm.

Queensland Rail has continued the delivery of its \$300m rolling program of station accessibility upgrades, with three station upgrades delivered in the reporting period, and construction has commenced at four additional locations. Following the success of station improvements for the Commonwealth Games, Queensland Rail has continued to progress partial raised platform structures to improve safety at assisted boarding locations across the Citytrain network, with eight stations having these installed during the period. Design work has advanced for Queensland Government’s \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project to fully upgrade eight existing stations and deliver four new underground stations and three new aboveground stations.

Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) has continued to deliver improvements to rail infrastructure and fleet in alignment with its Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2022.

- In April 2020, Transport for NSW opened the second stage of the CBD and South East Light Rail following the launch of the first stage in December 2019. The new light rail line features 19 fully accessible stops across a 12km route.
- The Transport Access Program continues to provide upgrades and improvements to infrastructure across the existing transport network to make services more accessible. The NSW Government has invested more than \$2 billion in the Transport Access Program since 2011,

more than 470 projects are either completed or underway. In the reporting period eight railway stations have completed accessibility upgrades.

- Accessibility improvements to train fleet continues with the delivery of projects such as the New Intercity Fleet and Regional Rail fleet. The new fleets will offer the highest level of comfort and amenity for all customers. As part of the design process, the TfNSW Accessible Transport Advisory Committee was engaged to inform the train design.

Transport for NSW also continued to make improvements to the provision in customer information. In the past 12 months the transportnsw.info, Opal Travel App and the Transport bot have all been independently recognised for their accessible content.

Engagement with the disability and ageing sector has continued through regular forums with the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee. During the reporting period there have been five meetings, 38 meeting presentations and twenty project consultations.

V/Line: In 2019-20, V/Line's key achievements included:

- launching V/Line's next [Accessibility Action Plan](#) for 2019-2022
- improving accessibility at a number of stations, with significant works at stations across the V/Line network as part of Regional Rail Revival and other key infrastructure projects. This has seen the opening of Cobblebank Station, on the Ballarat line and significant accessibility improvements at Rockbank, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan, Wendouree, Donnybrook, Wallan and Shepparton stations.
- completing upgrade works to all Sprinter units to improve amenity and the travelling experience for those who use a mobility aid. Improvements include new accessible spaces, handrails and priority seating.
- establishing an Accessibility Champions network consisting of frontline staff from all regions and the release of Auslan (Australian Sign Language) training to frontline staff.
- DSAPT audits of all V/Line stations were completed in 2020 to support ongoing strategies to work with the Department of Transport to meet compliance targets.

Yarra Trams continues to work with the Victorian Government to improve passenger experience and accessibility for all passengers, through a broad range of initiatives, including the below:

- During the reporting period, ten tram stops were upgraded to provide level access to services.
- 85 of the 100 low-floor trams on order were delivered.
- Yarra Trams was accredited with the Communication Access Symbol following the implementation of a vigorous training program for frontline staff and the development of a bespoke set of communication tools.
- The Accessibility Reference Group continued meeting quarterly and participated in out of session consultation on matters including new audio passenger information bollard and level access stop designs.
- Bluetooth beacon technology was installed at the Tram Hub to provide more accessible wayfinding for visitors and employees, particularly people who are blind or have low vision.
- Get Back on Board sessions continued to be held at depots, to assist people to return to or commence tram travel at a local level, with a focus on safe, accessible travel.
- The implementation of the revised priority seating continued, with 46 Z-Class and 63 B-Class trams being completed at the time of reporting. The program aims to increase the number of priority seats and ensure they are in the best locations, near doors.

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 has been created on the ARA website and is available at <https://ara.net.au/policy-media/disability-temporary-exemptions-reports>.

I commend these reports and the continued rail accessibility improvements to the AHRC.

The current temporary exemptions were granted on 1 October 2015 and will expire on 30 September 2020. When these temporary exemptions were sought, the first attempt at the DSAPT modernisation was forecast to have been completed. Noting that a second approach to modernise the DSAPT is now underway, after considerable review, a new application for a greatly reduced number of temporary exemptions was lodged with the AHRC on 31 July 2020. Whilst the rail industry acknowledges that it is still on its accessibility journey, the ARA is of the view that the limited number of temporary exemptions sought in this request is a demonstration of the progress that has been achieved in creating accessible rail networks around Australia.

Should you wish to discuss these reports further, please contact Emma Woods, Director – Corporate Services at ARA via ewoods@ara.net.au or 0438 209 588.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Wilkie', is positioned above a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

Caroline Wilkie
Chief Executive Officer
Australasian Railway Association