

25 March 2003

Productivity Commission  
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To whom it may concern

We are a group who are interested in working around the issues for people with disabilities regarding Public Transport and the Disability Discrimination Act.

We think it is important to have a Disability Discrimination Act because people with disability are important and don't want to be discriminated against. WE think the DDA gives us a voice whether we speak clearly or not, whether we use a wheelchair or not and whether we hear and/or see properly or not.

However things have not really changed a lot for us in the last ten years,, particularly in regard to public transport.

*A tram runs past the centre I attend daily and yet I cant get on it, I have to catch a taxi, which costs a lot more than the price of a tram ticket. Jack Tyers*

We believe there are two parts to this problem:

1. Some trams. trains, taxis, buses and buildings are still physically inaccessible. This makes catching public transport hard and very expensive for us.

*Because I can't use my hands I have to use a head pointer to drive my wheelchair and use my communication aid. This makes my neck really sore. It also means that using the safety buttons, ticket machines and lift buttons are impossible for me. This is not my fault. They should be designed for everyone to use.*

*Melbourne Central station is the most accessible station for me, and it's the only station in the city I have been taught how to use, but I still have to use two lifts. I can't reach the buttons on either of the lifts so I have to wait for a member of the public who is willing to help me. This can take more than half an hour some days.*

*I can't use the timetables because the writing is too small. They are located too high, and the timetable buttons are out of my reach. I just have to sit and wait. Barb Edis*

Most people in our group are unable to use trams, trains and buses in Melbourne's public transport system, and yet we are members of the public. Because we can't use public transport we are forced to use the multi purpose taxi system which is very expensive and unreliable. This is discrimination, because everyone else can buy a daily Metcard that covers the whole public transport

system for \$2.70 which is much less than we have to pay.

*I use taxis because I don't have any other choices when it comes to catching public transport. It is the only way for me to travel. It is very expensive for me and I am only on a pension.*

*Sometimes on a Saturday night I will be waiting three hours for a taxi to take me and my mates to the pub. When it doesn't turn up it puts us all in a bad mood, and means we can't go out. This doesn't happen to other members of the public, only people with disabilities. Glenn Hill*

**2. Another problem is caused by the attitude of people. It is seen to be a 'disability problem'. This is not an issue about disability or ability,, it is a fundamental human right.**

*I use taxis, low floor buses, and trains. Sometimes people stare at me, because of*

*my disability. It makes me feel unwanted and unwelcome on public transport. I want to be treated like everybody else. Barb Hamon*

We feel the DDA needs to focus on 'Universal Access' and stop referring to DisAbility Access. By Universal Access we mean everyone should have the same opportunity and access to public transport.

While current attitudes remain, we will never fully achieve independence for everyone in our community. Some groups will always be marginalised.

*What has changed in 10 years since the introduction of the DDA ?*

A lot has changed, some for the better, some not so. This is a list of some of the changes we have noted: 10 years ago we had staff on all stations and conductors on trams. Now we have:

- Locked toilets
- Inaccessible ticket machines
- Inaccessible validating machines
- Some outlets selling tickets are inaccessible
- Some outlets selling tickets are a long way from the station and from people's homes;
- Safety on stations is a problem as there are no staff on stations and the 'help' button is inaccessible for a lot of people
- Timetables are inaccessible, writing is very small and buttons for audio are too high and often inaccessible for some people
  - • level crossings are still unsafe;
  - • many stations are still inaccessible; and
  - • the new model trains means that only 2 or 3 wheelchair users can travel in a train at one time. This means we can't go out with our friends.

We now have some accessible tram and buses. This is great and will be fantastic in the future, but we believe that 30 years is much too long to wait for a tram or bus. People who don't have a disability don't have to wait this long.

- It is very hard to get accessible timetabling information regarding the location of Superstops and Kerb Extensions for Trams
- We can't get timetabling information on Low Floor Buses, We have to ring the night before and check the bus will be running on this route at that time and even then it can't be guaranteed. Do other members of the public have to do this?
- The superstops are not being built quickly enough

- 30 years is too long to wait for public transport to be made accessible
- Taxis and trains are legs for us, we have no other options
- Level Crossings need to be safe

Unjustifiable hardships focuses only on the needs of Public Transport companies. Whilst Public Transport remains inaccessible., it is people with disabilities who are experiencing ‘unjustifiable hardship’

We would like to be told about what happens now with the DDA and what will happen in the future. WE hope part of this process is for us to be notified about any future changes

Yours Sincerely

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Barbara Edis  
Andrea Milner  
Bernadette McCann

Barbara Hamon  
Glenn Hill  
Bill Grey

(supported by Tom Moore and Rhonda Joseph)