

# Advocacy Position Statement

## Transport

### What we believe:

- It is recognised that to enable people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure there is access, on an equal basis with others, to reliable, safe and affordable transportation.<sup>1</sup>
- Accessibility is critical to all aspects of life, and for many, transport provides that accessibility. Without accessible transport there can be no access health care, education and employment.
- Transport networks, including public transport, courtesy transport and ride-booking services should all be accessible for people with disability.
- It is the responsibility of governments to subsidise wheelchair accessible taxis and personalised transport for people who cannot use public transport.
- Removing social and physical barriers to access and mobility can help improve the lives of people with disability by enabling all to use passenger transport services and allow genuine participation in the community.

### The current situation:


- The Australian National Disability Strategy considers inclusive and accessible physical environments, including public transport, as a priority area.
- Of the estimated 3.8 million of people aged over 5 years or more with disabilities, 1.2 million indicated they had difficulty using public transport.<sup>2</sup>
- People with profound core activity limitations such as people with spinal cord damage reported the most common difficulties using public transport being getting to stops or stations, and getting in and out of vehicles or carriages, because of steps or other barriers.<sup>3</sup>
- The inaccessibility of the public transport system leaves many people with disability reliant on family or friends, compromising their ability to live independently.
- Of the 20% of Australians who have a disability, 88% take a holiday annually, injecting \$8 billion into the travel industry. The ageing population, and the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), will increase this.<sup>4</sup>
- Many clubs, service organisations and others provide courtesy transport for their members and a proportion of these are inaccessible for people with spinal cord injury. The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld) currently allows non-profit organisations to discriminate when providing goods and services, making it difficult to rectify this problem.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4446.0main+features122009>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Have disability, will travel. Choice magazine Australia 2014. <https://www.choice.com.au/travel/on-holidays/advice/articles/travelling-with-a-disability>

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- The Australian Government recognised some parts of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards) are not meeting the current and future needs of people with disability or provide sufficient flexibility or guidance to providers and operators in their efforts to fulfil their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and is working with the National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee to modernise the Transport Standards.<sup>5</sup>
  - The Queensland Government has committed to continuing the Taxi Subsidy Scheme until the full rollout of the NDIS is complete in 2019.
  - Ride-booking services do not offer wheelchair accessible personalised transport. The government currently subsidises wheelchair accessible taxis through the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and the provision of a lift fee to prioritise jobs involving people with disability. No such subsidies are available to ride-booking operators.

## Spinal Life Australia will:

- Work to improve the understanding and skill of members in local communities to advocate for more reliable, integrated and accessible transport options.
- Advocate for new and innovative approaches to connecting existing transport networks to increase the availability and ease of use of transport by people with spinal cord damage.
- Encourage clubs, service organisations and others providing courtesy transport to ensure they provide an equitable service for people with spinal cord damage, while lobbying for an amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) to remove the exemption that allows non-profit organisations in Queensland to discriminate in the goods and services they provide.
- Advocate for a nationally consistent Taxi Subsidy Scheme equivalent to the benefit provided under the Victorian scheme, up to \$60 per trip, to continue indefinitely and in conjunction with the NDIS.
- Advocate for the introduction of restraint devices for wheelchairs on all public transport.
- Advocate for more inclusive and comprehensive airline travel policies for people with spinal cord damage and other physical disabilities.
- Collaborate with the taxi industry and ride-booking services to maintain or influence an increase in the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Participate in government planning and reference groups to ensure all future transport infrastructure projects are accessible and comply with relevant legislation.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://infrastructure.gov.au/transport/disabilities/>