

State Transit Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2020



Our Commitment

At State Transit we aim to put ourselves in the shoes of all our customers and ask: What experience are they getting? And is it the best that we can deliver?

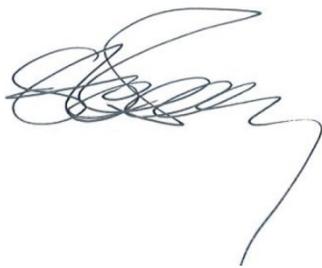
For those with a disability that consideration is of equal importance and not an afterthought.

Our organisation, transporting hundreds of thousands of people around Sydney every day, prides itself on providing a safe, reliable service that caters to everyone.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2020 lays down in detail that commitment and puts it at the forefront of our considerations when making any changes or improvements to the way State Transit operates.

In this harbourside city - the envy of many in the world – public buses are still the most cost effective form of transport and for many people the only option.

By providing a level playing field for all passengers we convey the care and accountability that is at the heart of who we are as an organisation.



Steffen Faurby,
Chief Executive,
State Transit



Introduction

State Transit recognises public transport is an essential service that everybody has the right to access, and every consideration must be made for people with disability. Full accessibility can only be achieved by the progressive removal of barriers so that the entire community can share in the benefits of the public transport system.

State Transit is the only government bus operator in NSW and one of the largest and most modern public bus transport providers in Australia. The organisation implements both State and Commonwealth accessibility legislation and policy and, in doing so, recognises the need for an increasingly inclusive approach to accessible and integrated transport service delivery. In this regard, State Transit has developed the *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2020*.

This 2019-2020 plan aligns with, and complements, the programs identified in the new [Transport for NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2022](#)

The *Transport for NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2022* outlines practical measures to be taken across the Transport cluster to meet the objectives and principles of the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* and its obligations under the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (Transport Standards).

State Transit's focus is on delivering safe, reliable and accessible transport services within our network which covers Sydney's North-West, lower North Shore, Northern Beaches and Eastern Suburbs.

State Transit puts customers, including those with disability, at the centre of everything we do, and aims to provide high quality accessible services for all customers on the thousands of services operated from our eight Sydney depots.



Core Requirements

The organisation has a responsibility for the provision of accessible bus services under the following Commonwealth and NSW legislation and associated standards:

- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) (DDA)*
- *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards Under DDA)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- *Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (NSW)*

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* requires all public authorities, including State Transit, to have a 'Disability Inclusion Action Plan' in place, setting out the measures it intends to take so that people with a disability can access general supports and services and participate fully in the community. The objectives of this Act are:

- To acknowledge that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the State and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights.
- To promote the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability.
- To enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports and services.
- To provide safeguards in relation to the delivery of supports and services for people with disability.
- To support, to the extent reasonably practicable, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- To provide for responsibilities of the State during and following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).



The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)* requires that the delivery of services should provide equitable access for people with disability.

The practical applications of the requirements of the DDA are outlined in the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (Transport Standards)*. The Transport Standards establish the specific requirements for access to bus services within compliance timeframes.

The Transport Standards prescribe an incremental timetable for implementation. Public transport bus services are required to be 100 per cent fully accessible by 31 December 2022.

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) outlaws discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, marital status, homosexuality, age, disability, transgender and carers' responsibilities.

The *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* provides for Regulations which form the legislative framework for the employment and administration of the NSW Government sector workforce, including people with disability.

Contractual Requirements

Under the Transport for NSW Sydney Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts, State Transit is required to develop and publish an accessible transport plan to document plans and progress towards reduction in transport disadvantage, as well as improvements – to the journey experience, staff training, access to information, customer services and in engaging with people with disability.

Key Objectives

In line with the NSW Government's strategic objectives and its contractual obligations, the key objectives of State Transit's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2020* are to:

- Deliver barrier-free end to end journeys for all its customers and reduce transport disadvantage
- Improve the journey experience of people with disability
- Build accessibility into its business processes and systems, including its safety and training programs
- Provide inclusive customer service and feedback
- Provide accessible customer information
- Enhance customer insight and engagement of people with disability



The Guiding Principles

Disability

Commonwealth disability legislation stipulates that 'disability' may be temporary or permanent, and may include a physical, intellectual, sensory, neurological, learning or psychosocial disability; a disease or illness; physical disfigurement; medical condition or work related injury.

A 'customer first' culture

State Transit recognises the rights of people with disability to participate in communities to the fullest extent possible and recognises the importance of accessible and inclusive transport services to people with disability.

The customer is at the centre of everything we do in State Transit. Our 'customer first' culture delivers a high level of service for all customers. In addition, we are open to innovation and strive towards best practice.

Access for the entire community

Improvements to the accessibility and inclusiveness of transport services benefit all users. Accessibility can be achieved through the adoption of universal design principles that remove physical barriers to access and create buildings, products and environments that are usable by people of all abilities.

Broad accessibility principles include more than just physical access to premises and conveyances. State Transit is aware that universal design requires that transport services must cater effectively for barrier-free access for people who have vision, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairments.

Intelligent compliance

'Intelligent compliance' means compliance which prioritises customer-focused outcomes over and above a narrow focus on legal compliance with accessibility standards.

Encouraging State Transit staff to think critically about the application of disability standards and finding common-sense solutions to compliance matters will result in better outcomes for people with disability.



Whole of journey accessibility

An accessible transport system can be thought of as a series of linked transport systems and services. It involves barrier-free access to the pedestrian environment, the different modes of transport and the road network. Many people with disability and older

people will use all three parts of the system: either as public transport users, drivers or passengers in cars, or as pedestrians.

Accessible transport needs to provide for whole of journey accessibility, including seamless transfers between the modes that form a continuous journey. For example, a typical journey might involve looking up timetable information, travelling to a bus stop, waiting, getting on and off the bus, walking to the final destination or taking another transport service. Such a journey is only fully accessible if planning information and the connection and integration of modes are easy and safe.

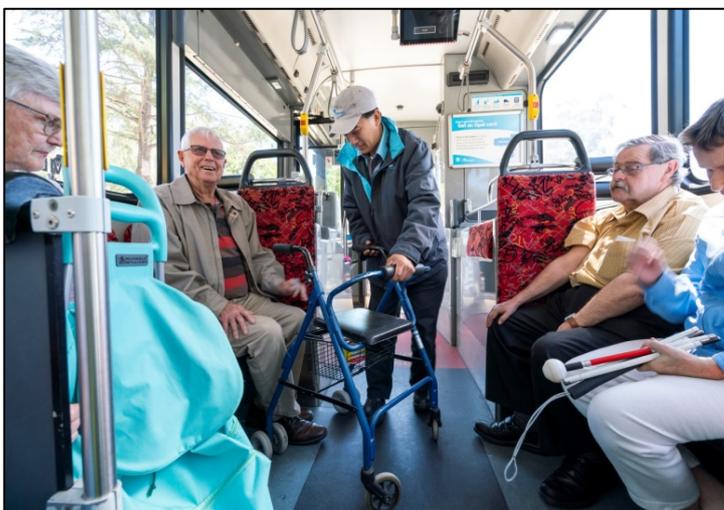
In the past, each mode of transport worked towards achieving targets for accessible transport independently. Under Transport for NSW and its operating agencies, including State Transit, the focus has shifted to ensuring customers are able to easily plan and undertake a fully accessible journey.

Equivalent access

Independent access to public transport is the ultimate goal, however, the use of 'direct assistance' or 'equivalent access' may at times be needed. State Transit will provide additional methods, equipment or facilities that enable further means of access with equivalent amenity, availability, comfort, convenience, dignity and safety, including offering direct access assistance to passengers. A high level of commitment to customer service is a key priority for our staff. Training is provided to ensure that the dignity and rights of people with disability are always respected.

Reduction in transport disadvantage

State Transit recognises the significant transport disadvantage faced by people with disability. Transport disadvantage may arise from several factors including poor access to services, low income, geographical isolation, high cost of alternative transport services such as taxis and modified private vehicles, lack of confidence and poor community attitudes towards people with disability.



Reducing transport disadvantage requires a multi-faceted approach, making services affordable and providing support services for people with disability who are unable to use mass transit public transport services.

Engagement of people with disability

Customer satisfaction is a key performance indicator and State Transit continues to work in partnership with Transport for NSW to ensure that people with disability are able to participate in customer feedback processes.

In addition, we recognise the vital importance of informing customers, through the customer feedback process, about accessible transport improvements in service operations across its network.

Innovative solutions to accessibility

State Transit, working with Transport for NSW, is committed to developing innovative and practical solutions aimed at reducing or minimising transport disadvantage for people with disability.

Assistive technology devices and services have always been crucial to overcoming barriers for people with disability. As technology advances, we will continue to identify opportunities to harness the power of technology to improve accessibility for all customers.

State Transit Actions: Progress and Future Strategies

Since its last report, *Accessible Action Plan 2017*, State Transit has continued to plan and deliver on reducing transport disadvantage, and to further improve the journey experience for people with disability. We have provided more accessible buses and more accessible route services. There has been an increased focus on providing accessible trips that are reliable, safe, and comfortable and on improving our customer service – with particular attention to customers with special needs. Our drivers and other staff are expected to always be respectful and helpful and to effectively communicate when engaging with people with disability.

Over the last year, some of the highlights are outlined below.

Reduction in transport disadvantage

Our commitment is to meet the targets set by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)* and its *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*. The current target is full accessibility by 31 December, 2022.

As at 1 July 2018, 91 per cent of the State Transit Fleet was wheelchair accessible. This means we are well placed to achieve a fully accessible fleet by the final target date of 31 December 2022. We continue to purchase only wheelchair-accessible buses, which as at 1 July 2018 totalled 1,330 of the fleet of 1,463 buses.

Wheelchair-accessible buses are advertised to operate on around 93 per cent of State Transit trips (excluding school trips) across the Sydney network (Regions 7, 8 and 9). In addition, wheelchair accessible buses are scheduled to operate on all trips catering for



major Sydney events.

Timetabled wheelchair-accessible bus services now operate on all main corridors and cross-regional routes. Many of these services provide links to accessible train stations to increase opportunities for multi-modal travel.

Journey experience

All new buses acquired by State Transit feature:

- Kneeling suspension for level entry and a flat no-step floor to make it easier for the less mobile and elderly
- An extended wheelchair ramp and accommodation for two wheelchairs
- Additional priority seating for less mobile passengers
- Increased interior lighting
- Improved destination signs
- Air-conditioning

With the delivery of new buses and subsequent retirement of older buses, State Transit's Sydney fleet is now 100 per cent air conditioned, improving the level of comfort for customers.

Our key objective is to continually improve the overall customer experience through a strong focus on reliability, safety and customer service, to deliver a positive experience in all its interactions with people with disability as well as other customers.

Safety, training and customer service

We provide an extensive, competency-based driver training program (under the auspices of a formal traineeship program) at the commencement of a driver's employment to ensure our drivers provide a safe, reliable and accessible service. Ongoing training is provided to drivers on an as-needs basis throughout the term of employment, including training and education on providing services for customers with a disability.

A new and innovative driver development day was introduced by State Transit in 2017 involving a one-day, face-to-face professional development session. This session focussed on the key themes of customer service, safety and positive psychology. Using realistic on-the-job scenarios and informed by actual customer data, the training and development day was designed to empower drivers to choose positive attitudes and behaviours, as well as equipping them with techniques to improve customer interactions. The next phases of this training are currently being designed to ensure ongoing training is embedded within our driver development activities.



Our reference guides assist drivers in carrying out their duties and complying with the organisation's written policies and procedures. The guides set out required performance standards, including when assisting customers with mobility issues and disabilities. Appropriate action will be taken by State Transit if any bus driver contravenes work instructions or provides below standard customer service.

The organisation's Safety team has hosted various all-day safety leadership workshops to encourage a 'Work Safe, Home Safe' culture and embed safety messages and activities across all levels of management. In addition, multiple safety days have been held at all bus depots with the purpose of directly engaging with drivers and other staff.

Customer feedback

The complaint and feedback process for State Transit is located under *Feedback, Questions and Complaints* within the transportnsw.info website. This website complies with online accessibility requirements.

Customers and the general public are able to easily and quickly provide feedback on the organisation's services and operations via this website. We are committed to promptly responding to any feedback. All cases received are immediately recorded and investigated without delay, with the customer receiving a response (when requested) from State Transit's Customer Relations team.

Statistics from feedback are analysed to generate customer insights and to identify trends. These customer insights are used to enhance the overall performance of services for the benefit of all customers, in line with the organisation's highest objective of ensuring that the customer is always at the centre of everything it does.

Customer information

The organisation continues to work closely with the Transport Management Centre to provide information to the public via radio announcements and social media platforms. The announcements, which are aired on major radio stations, provide updates on peak-hour conditions.

The website transportnsw.info provides information for customers to plan their trip using buses, trains and ferries.

Services include trip planning, timetables, news and special events. Information is also available from the Transport Infoline 131 500, as well as a range of apps customers can download onto their smart device to provide real-time transport information.

On 1 July 2017, State Transit's customer-facing website *sydneybuses.info* was consolidated into the transportnsw.info website to provide a one-stop-shop for customers to plan their journeys on public transport. Individual timetables for every bus route are available online from this website.



Stop-specific timetable information for the organisation's services is also displayed at bus stops along main routes and corridors in operating areas.

Real-time arrival information for all our bus routes is available through third-party apps. Transport Customer Service Centres at Central and Circular Quay train stations can assist with trip planning for all public transport in NSW.

The new B-Line buses operating between the Northern Beaches and the Sydney CBD feature visual and audio information systems that provide details of approaching bus stops, transport connections and local attractions.

State Transit website publications are compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), which makes content accessible for people with disability.

Engagement

Following consultation with Vision Australia, all new buses now feature LED destination signs, chosen for their strong contrast between the large white writing on black background, making for easier readability for customers with vision impairment.

Since 2000, the induction training for new drivers includes a two-hour session presented by Guide Dogs NSW. This valuable insight into the practical needs and obstacles faced by customers with vision impairment. This is an excellent opportunity to reinforce how staff can better serve these passengers to ensure their travel is a problem-free experience.

A dedicated communications program to provide safety tips for seniors was initiated in 2019.

Seniors, some with mobility issues, are over-represented in passenger falls and, as a result, our safety professionals are engaging with the community, as well as training our drivers in assisting seniors on our buses.

In 2018, Sydney hosted the Invictus Games, a sporting event where wounded, injured or sick armed services personnel and their associated veterans take part in a variety of sports. State Transit wheelchair accessible buses were further adapted, with seats being removed, to assist competitors getting to and from venues at Olympic Park.



Reporting

State Transit has a monthly reporting regime under its contractual obligations with Transport for NSW. The reporting principally takes the form of strict key performance indicator (KPI) benchmark comparisons. The benchmarks cover customer satisfaction, customer complaints and resolution, safety, accessible services and other performance aspects of the business.

All accessibility reporting required under State Transit's Sydney Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts will be provided within the prescribed timeframes.