



Next Steps Towards Achieving a Fully Inclusive Public Transport System In Victoria: A Critical Message as the Morrison Government Pledges \$3.8b on Road and Rail

Living an integrated life requires full access to a public transport system. The introduction of NDIS aspires to enable people with disabilities to participate in community life. Yet in 2019 this remains a privilege that the majority take for granted.

Almost 20% of Victorians have a disability, many of those struggle with transport. 71% of people with disabilities say that they don't take public transport because of barriers to physical access.

Whilst there has been some movement towards inclusivity, providers both in Melbourne and the regions will fail to meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport in 2022.

Waiting 8 years is unacceptable and the current system is deeply inadequate.

An Equitable V/Line Service Across the South West Regions of Victoria

The V/Line classic fleet still services the routes to Warrnambool, Echuca and Shepparton. This stock is old but V/Line acknowledges it cannot be replaced until 2026 at the earliest.

It is extremely common for the wheelchair accessible carriage not to be present on the service. Four trains run daily from Warrnambool and at least once and often twice a day there is no accessible carriage.

When the accessible carriage is present, the wheelchair space is frequently packed with luggage, and travellers may find themselves facing a long journey without a working toilet.

Level access boarding platforms are largely unavailable, passengers instead are required to use manual boarding via ramps. For some wheelchair users this makes access simply impossible.

Whenever a passenger cannot access the train, V/Line are obliged to offer alternative transport, which currently involves calling a local taxi. There are very few accessible taxi services in regional areas which makes long delays inevitable. It also means taking an accessible cab out of service to the local community. This does not represent 'equivalent access' as required by DSAPT.

Solutions:

- *Immediate refurbishment of the BZN carriages; * Repair of toilets
- *Upgrade of regional platforms; * Plan and deliver an increased supply of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis.

An Equitable Service on Melbourne's Trams

In Melbourne, home to the biggest tram network in the world, 700 tram stops need to be remodelled in order for the service to be fully inclusive. 34% of the trams themselves are accessible. Accessible trams do not necessarily run on accessible routes, so travellers face unpredictable services. People with disabilities consider the network 'inaccessible'.

Solutions:

- *Priority remodelling of tram stops
- *Work on new generation trams to refocus on safety, access and quality of service
- *A commitment to broad and transparent consultations with people with disabilities

DRC Advocacy conducts systemic and individual advocacy for people with disability in Victoria. We are currently funded by the Disability Advocacy Futures Grant Fund to conduct an Accessible Public Transport campaign.

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