



Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

14 July 2023

Inclusion Australia Northern Territory (IANT) is the NT branch of Inclusion Australia, which is the national Disability Representative Organisation representing the rights and interests of Australians with an intellectual disability and their families. Our mission is to work to make sure people with intellectual disability in the Northern Territory have the same opportunities as people without disability.

Our work in the Northern Territory is informed by a Local Steering Group that includes people with an intellectual disability and representatives from advocacy and other territory-based organisations.

IANT has identified transport as a primary issue for people with an intellectual disability in the Northern Territory.

This brief submission has been developed by the IANT team working with Local Steering Group members across the Territory, and we thank them for their time and contributions. This submission supplements Inclusion Australia's earlier submission to the Inquiry.¹

We have identified the following key issues for people with an intellectual disability in the Northern Territory in relation to the transport:

- Information about the transport system is hard to read and understand.
- Transport staff need training about how to assist people with an intellectual disability.
- People don't feel safe to catch public transport.
- Buses are not always accessible.

¹ [Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport – Inclusion Australia](#)

Background

Safe, accessible public transport is vital to communities where people with an intellectual disability are included fully in social and economic life². While rates of intellectual disability are unclear due to a national lack of access to reliable data,³ 1 in 9 people in the Northern Territory are reported to have a disability. The Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2023 recognises the important role of accessible information in increasing inclusion for people with disability. Feeling unsafe is also a barrier to use of existing transport networks and results in further exclusion of people with an intellectual disability from public life.⁴

What we would like the government to do

IANT has four recommendations to make public transport safer and more accessible for people with an intellectual disability.

Recommendation 1: Provide all information in Easy Read and other accessible formats.

Information about the transport system is hard to read and understand. This includes timetables, signage at stops and depots, and information about changes to day-to-day operations.

People with an intellectual disability said:

- “For someone with a disability, if they can’t read, they can’t read the timetable. They don’t know what time the bus is coming. If they put it into Easy Read, they’ll know what time the bus is coming.”
- “I have a timetable and when I look at it it’s all mumble jumble.”
- “It’s hard to tell when the bus will get there, and hard to calculate the time to get to the bus stop.”
- “People with an intellectual disability may not have a high standard of education to read.”

We recommend the development of free, consistent, and readily available Easy Read information for people with an intellectual disability about all areas of the transport

² [NT Disability Strategy](#)

³ [Gathering the Evidence on Intellectual Disability Report – Inclusion Australia](#)

⁴ [CID Submission on the Reform of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport](#)

system. This is consistent with Part 27 of the Transport Standards and requires implementation.

Recommendation 2: Make sure public transport staff are present and trained in how to assist people with an intellectual disability.

Section 27.2 of the Transport Standards states that direct assistance must be provided for people with disability If information cannot be supplied in the person’s preferred format. Despite this, people with an intellectual disability have shared many experiences of being stuck without staff to talk to, or of people not understanding their needs.

Even where Easy Read and other accessible forms of communication exist, many people find it useful to talk to public transport staff, particularly when there are changes to the timetable or system.⁵

People with an intellectual disability said:

- “Staff should have training about how to assist people with an intellectual disability.”
- “I’ve had difficulty, busting to go to the toilet but the toilets are locked. I had to know quite a few times to get the attention of the person in the depot.”

We recommend increased training for the public transport workforce in disability inclusion, and increased staffing of public transport facilities and vehicles.

Recommendation 3: Make public buses, stops and depots safe by having more security.

People with an intellectual disability in the Northern Territory have told us they do not feel safe to catch public transport. This is due to negative community attitudes and discrimination, and to violence on the buses and at depots. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability heard substantial evidence of this taking place across Australia.⁶

⁵ [van Holstein, Wiesel & Legacy. \(2020\). Mobility justice and accessible public transport networks for people with intellectual disability. Applied Mobilities.](#)

⁶ [Public hearing 28: Violence against and abuse of people with disability in public places | Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#)

People with an intellectual disability said:

- “There should be transport people in every bus. If something happens on the road there is no security. The bus driver can’t help because he is driving.”
- “I was ganged up on by a group of kids and kicked and punched. No security officer intervened.”

We recommend that all public transport must be staffed by appropriately trained staff to prevent and respond to instances of discrimination and violence.

Recommendation 4: Make all buses accessible, including for people who do not have a visible disability.

This includes understanding and responding to the needs of people with an intellectual disability where no physical disability is evident.

People with an intellectual disability said:

- “They don’t put the ramp down unless you’re in a wheelchair. One of my friends hurt his leg really badly trying to get on the bus.”
- “There needs to be more places for people with disability to sit.”

The requirement for people to walk to a centralised location to catch a bus also increases the inaccessibility of transport to many people.

People with an intellectual disability said:

- “People aren’t fast walkers.”
- “I had to walk 20 minutes to get to where they would pick me up from. What about people who can’t walk that far? People with disability get tired easily.”

Specialised training for transport staff and accessibility audits by people with an intellectual disability can inform a more accessible public transport system. This should include an understanding of accessibility at each point of the trip. This should be undertaken across the Territory’s public transport system.