

**Determining CityRail's revenue requirement
and how it should be funded**

**Response to
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
Transport Discussion Paper**

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Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) is funded by the NSW Government's Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Views expressed by PDCN Inc. are not necessarily endorsed by the NSW Government.

What is the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN)?

PDCN is the peak body representing people with physical disabilities across New South Wales, representing approximately 900,000 residents. PDCN focuses on issues relevant to people with limited mobility, such as access to the built environment, transport and access to aids and equipment.

Membership of PDCN includes people with a range of mobility issues, from young children and their carers to aged people, who live in NSW from the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area to rural NSW who are from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. PDCN has the background, knowledge and skills to advocate on all levels of Government regarding the needs of people with limited mobility.

An inclusive society is achieved when people with limited mobility are involved in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. Access to all modes of public transport is essential to facilitate community inclusion in all aspects of daily living. PDCN is able to represent the needs and interests of people with limited mobility.

Comment on Issue No 4: *To what extent do passengers benefit from the presence of guards on trains and the staffing of low patronage-stations relative to costs?*

Safety and service standards

The report 'Determining CityRail's revenue requirement and how it should be funded', prepared for IPART considers under 2.2 the safety and service standards required, including benchmarks and legislation impacting on the service requirements of CityRail. The report makes no reference to either the Disability Discrimination Act (1993), disability, access or emergency egress.

Consequently it appears that IPART has failed to understand that people with limited mobility use RailCorp services, and has not appreciated the particular travel needs of people with limited mobility. It is also not possible to determine RailCorp's commitment to relevant legislation as the Rail Performance Agreement, an agreement between the Ministry of Transport and RailCorp is a commercial-in-confident document.¹

Removal of guards from all trains

According to a recent Hansard transcript dated October 2007, The Honorable J. A. Watkins, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, and Minister for Finance stated

"In the event of a breakdown of a train in a tunnel, the first of the options is to push the train to an adjacent station, if we are able to do that. In the event that the train needs to be evacuated in the tunnel, the emergency procedure is that the train crew, who are trained in the procedure, will access one of a number of ladders that are located at periodic intervals along the tunnel wall that are fixed to either end of the train to enable evacuation."²

¹ IPART, *Determining CityRails revenue requirement and how it should be funded*, p12.

² Parliament of New South Wales (15 October 2007), *General Purpose Standing Committee 4*.

This clearly states that train staff, presumably including train guards are expected to assist when an evacuation occurs, an event which occurred in March 2007, when a man with quadriplegia was stranded on a train between Milson Point and Wynyard stations (and was most appreciative when assisted by the train guard).³

Future infrastructure improvements identified in the IPART report such as the inclusion of additional cameras will not assist in providing manual assistance in the case of an emergency.

No staff available on train platforms with minimal patronage

The IPART report fails to recognise the relevance of Section 33.3 of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*, as people with limited mobility require equivalent access to use trains in NSW.⁴ The Act includes the provision of equivalent access where no other means of providing access is available by offering alternative methods, equipment or modes as long as it is:

- Equivalent price and comfort,
- Dignified, and
- Safe.

Due to the infrastructure and train stock used in NSW, there is usually either a gap between the station platform and train carriage, or otherwise a difference in gradient between the two. This means assistance from train staff is required to place a portable ramp for passengers with limited mobility to enter and exit the train.

Plans to install new ticket-fare facilities or additional cameras on train platforms will **not** notify staff at the desired train station of the estimated time of arrival for a passenger with limited mobility, in time to remove the portable ramp from the security cabinet located on the station platform and place this between the station platform and train carriage.

Capital expenditure

PDCN has always advocated for a rail network, such as that which already exists in Western Australia, where assistance from train staff is not required to access trains.

Due to different topographies, newer infrastructure and improved planning, other states in Australia already provide accessible stations with low patronage, without train staff, and still facilitate the use of these accessible stations by passengers with limited mobility. However, these conditions are not comparable to current conditions in NSW.

PDCN supports the view held by the consultants that plans for future funding for station upgrades must continue.

³ Paraquad, (July 2007), *Paraquad News*, p9.

⁴ *Disability Discrimination Act 1993 – Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport*, Section 33.3 - Compliance and Equivalent access.