



Whitsunday Transit

Accessibility Action Plan: Improving Access to 2019

Statement

Whitsunday Transit is committed to providing a world class transport system for use by Whitsunday Coast residents. This commitment includes providing a transport system that enables people with disability to actively participate in community life and recognises that approximately 20 per cent of people in Queensland live with a disability.

Whitsunday Transit is pleased to introduce the Accessibility Action Plan – Improving Access to 2019 to demonstrate its commitment. The Accessibility Action Plan seeks to assist people with disability to participate in our community by facilitating the accessibility of the local bus transport network. The actions contained in the Accessibility Action Plan contribute to four key priorities. To achieve these priorities, Whitsunday Transit will work collaboratively with all bus transport stakeholders.

Whitsunday Transit endeavours to play its part in the elimination of social and physical barriers faced by people with disability. The Accessibility Action Plan identifies key initiatives that Whitsunday Transit is committed to.

I encourage anyone interested in the accessibility of passenger transport in the Whitsundays to read the Accessibility Action Plan.

To connect and enable genuine participation in the community, people with disability need accessible and inclusive transport. The development and release of the Accessibility Action Plan is a reflection on Whitsunday Transit's dedication and determination to achieving this aim and eliminating discrimination from bus transport in the Whitsundays.

Chris Harvey

Operations Manager

Whitsunday Transit

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Our vision for bus transport in the Whitsundays

Bus transport plays an essential role in the Whitsunday community. It connects isolated towns to major tourist hubs, children to their schools and commuters to their place of work.

Whitsunday Transit's intention is to offer a high quality, high frequency passenger transport through the services it operates under contract to the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR).

Whitsunday Transit is committed to reducing barriers for people with disability, which includes the progressive implementation of accessible passenger transport services. One in five Queenslanders, approximately 830,000 people, identify as having a disability and Whitsunday Transit recognises many people depend on the services it provides.

Key achievements since 2006

1. Invested over \$20 million since 2006 to upgrade the passenger transport fleet, including the replacement of two accessible buses and the purchase of a further three.
2. Provided accessible and affordable transport options for approximately 60,000 passengers monthly.
3. Assisted TMR and the local council in identifying key infrastructure in need of accessibility upgrades.
4. Undertook annual driver training on DDA compliance since 2008.
5. Contributes to delivering a positive experience through providing relevant, timely and accessible passenger transport information. Such as monitoring phone calls during peak travelling times to provide information about bus accessibility on demand.

Overview

People with disability should expect right of access to services, such as transport, health and education, as well as public places and spaces. Improving the lives of people with disability is fostered by removing social and physical barriers to access and mobility, enabling all to use passenger transport services. This in turn nurtures genuine participation in the community.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) requires that people with disability be given equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the full range of life activities, including access to the goods, services and facilities provided by government departments and their contracted operators. The DDA encourages organisations to develop disability action plans to assist an organisation to plan the elimination of disability discrimination as far as possible. Developing and implementing this Accessibility Action Plan exemplifies Whitsunday Transit's commitment to DDA compliance.

The Whitsunday Transit Accessibility Action Plan – Improving Access to 2019, sets out how this company will contribute to making the Whitsundays passenger transport network more accessible for people living with disabilities.

The Accessibility Action Plan introduces new actions and highlights on going activities that are aimed at improving the experience of those travelling on the passenger transport network for people with disability. It seeks to promote genuine participation in the community by supporting and promoting strategies which make it easier to access local bus transport.

Actions included in the Accessibility Action Plan will assist in achieving 2017 compliance milestones within the Transport Standards and the Premises Standards. The Transport Standards and the Premises Standards aim to enable public transport operators and providers to remove discrimination from public transport services.

The Accessibility Action Plan also helps to deliver on The Queensland Plan: a 30-year vision for Queensland (Queensland Plan) by contributing to key foundation areas such as infrastructure, community and regions such as ours.

Strategic Framework

Accessibility of the transport system, in particular the passenger transport system, is critical to moving people and connecting communities. Whitsunday Transit is committed to embedding universal accessibility thinking into strategic planning for the transport network to improve the end-to-end journey for all customers, including people with disability.

Purpose

The purpose of the Accessibility Action Plan is to assist people with disability to participate in community life by improving the accessibility of the bus passenger transport network in the Whitsundays.

Priorities

The Accessibility Action Plan identifies four priorities for action. Together, these will deliver a more accessible bus passenger transport network throughout the Whitsundays. These priorities and their supporting actions are listed below.

Actions

Actions have been developed to support the achievement of these objectives and align to the relevant priority.

The implementation of projects relating to the accessibility of the bus passenger transport network contracted to Whitsunday Transit is not confined to the actions contained within the Disability Action Plan. Subject to further funding and resources becoming available, Whitsunday Transit will consider additional investments which aim to reduce social and physical barriers for people with disability while using the passenger transport network. Whitsunday Transit will also co-operate with other stakeholders in relation to upgrades and refurbishments of the local transport network.

Priority 1 - maintaining an accessible transport network

Maintaining an accessible transport network to deliver an accessible end-to-end journey for all our customers using the passenger transport network in the Whitsundays.

Whitsunday Transit aims to deliver accessible infrastructure and to also contribute to developing knowledge and understanding of accessibility requirements by monitoring customer feedback. The delivery of accessible infrastructure by the Department of Transport and the Whitsunday Regional Council also supports community participation.

Whitsunday Transit undertakes a number of activities to meet this commitment including:

1. Working with TMR in all efforts to meet Transport Standards compliance milestones.
2. Ensuring driver's and staff are informed about public transport concessions for people with disability in accordance with the department's concessions framework, including free public transport travel for eligible Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Veterans and Extreme Disablement Adjustment Veterans, visually impaired persons, attendants of people with disability and working companion animals.

Actions – maintaining an accessible transport network

1. Be ready to take advantage of funding through the Passenger Transport Facilities Program to upgrade existing, and provide new, accessible passenger transport vehicles.
2. Co-operate with local government through the Passenger Transport Accessible Infrastructure Program as required, to assist with upgrading passenger transport infrastructure to meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 compliance milestones for 2017 to help improve customer accessibility in areas outside of Whitsunday Transit's authority.
3. Promote in house training on DDA compliance in order to convey the message of our commitment to driver's and staff, who are responsible for assisting those traveling on our services with a disability.
4. Procure and disseminate guidelines and other reference documents to support the ongoing support of DDA compliance by drivers and staff.
5. Be part of the solution to assist Vision Impairment Travel Pass holders to enjoy independent access to the bus transport network.
6. Co-operate with TMR and local government to implement initiatives which support the delivery of an integrated accessible passenger transport network.

Priority 2 – enhancing the customer experience

Enhancing the customer experience to deliver an improved customer experience for people with disability when travelling on bus passenger transport.

It is important that locals and visitors to our region, including people with disability, can use the bus passenger transport network with ease and confidence, allowing them to travel on equal terms.

One way in which Whitsunday Transit contributes to delivering this positive experience is through providing relevant, timely and accessible passenger transport information. Such as monitoring phone calls during peak travelling times to provide information about bus accessibility on demand.

Public transport customers can use our seven day phone service to contact the company for information or assistance to plan their journey if desired. If a public transport customer contacts Whitsunday Transit and identifies themselves as having an impairment or disability, customer service staff are able to provide assistance to help to pre-plan a journey if necessary.

Whitsunday Transit considers customer centred service approaches to be a fundamental part of everyday business. The belief is held that positive customer experience is delivered to all of our customers using the passenger transport network. This includes the use of flash passes such as the Vision Impairment Travel Pass, and the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated/Extreme Disablement Adjustment Veteran Travel Pass.

Actions – enhancing the customer experience

1. Provide orientation and mobility training for drivers to become familiar with the Whitsundays passenger transport infrastructure.
2. Work with TMR and other industry authorities such as the Queensland Bus Industry Council to pass on the benefits and importance of drivers undertaking disability awareness training.
3. Drivers receive training on the use of ramps, the importance of stopping in suitable areas (to facilitate boarding and exiting of wheelchairs in difficult terrain) and the legislation relating to guide dogs and other working animals.
4. In so far as it's physically possible, accessible buses are allocated to Q-Connect service runs.

Priority 3 – helping to improve the accessibility of information

Whitsunday Transit will play its part in improving the accessibility of information to support people with disability by enhancing the availability and accessibility of information relating to the passenger transport network.

The provision of accurate and timely information is crucial to all customers. Whitsunday Transit aims to ensure that customer information is accessible and readable for people with disability and is displayed in accordance with relevant standards. This includes information provided in printed form and others which are available on the Whitsunday Transit website (whitsundaytransit.com.au).

Whitsunday Transit's marketing team dedicate many hours each week to ensuring local tour agents and accommodation houses have up to date information and are available to answer questions and address concerns face to face when required.

A supporting role is played by the Whitsunday Transit website. This website is a portal for people seeking information on the public transport network in the Whitsunday's, such as travel options and timetables. Some of the key information on the Whitsunday Transit website includes information about disability access to the bus transport network, including travelling with mobility devices, concessions and other assistance for people with disability, and disability parking permits.

Information and feedback about our services is highly valued. Feedback from users of the bus transport network provide an opportunity to identify areas of the network that require improvement. Customers are able to lodge complaints through a number of platforms including web, phone and traditional written options.

Actions - improving the accessibility of information

1. Ensure updated educational material for people travelling with mobility devices on the passenger transport network is displayed on vehicles, at bus stops and other prominent areas as required.
2. Improve the prominence of the Whitsunday Transit website through marketing strategies.
3. Include information about accessible bus transport infrastructure in passenger information packs available at arrival points like the Whitsunday Coast Airport.
4. Communicate and raise awareness of new infrastructure or conveyances that meet or exceed Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

5. Work with the TMR towards their intention of expanding the use of technology so that people with disability travelling on the passenger transport network are informed through a variety of information formats.
6. Maintain a complaints system which currently capture and reports on complaints about disability access to bus transport services and infrastructure.
7. Support drivers with a medical condition, that may include a disability, to continue to drive safely and where appropriate, increase the availability of information to transition drivers to safe alternatives such as administrative roles.

Priority 4 - working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

Whitsunday Transit works in collaboration with stakeholders to achieve improved outcomes for people with disability accessing the bus passenger transport network.

In order to improve and promote the accessibility of the passenger transport network, Whitsunday Transit works collaboratively with TMR, local governments, and state and national counterparts.

Whitsunday Transit supports the national direction for accessible transport policy and participates in the Queensland Bus Industry Council.

Actions - working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

1. Collaborate with TMR, other state government departments and local governments to explore options to improve community access to community transport.
2. Work the local government and encourage them to promote community transport services provided by Whitsunday Transit.

Implementation

The implementation time period for the Accessibility Action Plan is until the year 2019. This time period aligns with a formal revision of this plan.