Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

Our mission is to promote, protect and defend, through advocacy, the fundamental needs and rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland.

Systems and Legal Advocacy for vulnerable people with Disability

28 September 2018

Committee Secretary
Transport and Public Works Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee

Please accept this submission to the Inquiry into Transport Technology.

Yours sincerely,

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About QAI

Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI) is a member-driven and non-profit advocacy NGO for people with disability. Our mission is to promote, protect and defend through advocacy, the fundamental needs, rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland.

Our Human Rights and Mental Health services offer legal advice and representation: the first, on guardianship and administration and the latter on mental health matters. Our Justice Support and NDIS Appeals programs provide non-legal advice and support to people with disability in the criminal justice system and to participants in NDIS Appeals. This individual advocacy informs our campaigns at state and federal levels for changes in attitudes, laws and policies, and it assists us to understand the challenges, needs and concerns of people who are the focus of this submission.

QAI's constitution holds that every person is unique and valuable, and that diversity is intrinsic to community. People with disability comprise the majority of our Board; their wisdom and lived experience of disability is our foundation and guide.

Recommendations

- Whenever government intends to regulate transport infrastructure that affects people with disabilities, or intends to build or own new conveyances, it must consult from the beginning with people with disabilities.

- Government must invest in research, development and real-world trials that benefit the entire transport network customer base, including people with disabilities, to provide a sound basis for government decision-making.

- Ride-hailing services must be required to make wheelchair-accessible service a growing part of their operations. Government must set quotas to phase in access, and mandate, for example, that within a year, 5 percent of all ride-share trips dispatched must be in wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and that that portion must rise to 25 percent by 2025. Accessible rides should be required regardless of whether they were requested by a person using a wheelchair; this will keep accessible vehicles in operation and improve service for those who need them.

Introduction: an accessible future requires government investment, involvement, and consultation with people with disabilities

New transport technologies will need to maintain an appropriate regulatory environment. Queensland will need to:

- coordinate its approach with other Australian jurisdictions
- coordinate across different levels of government
- facilitate collaboration between people with disability, government, industry and researchers
- meet community expectations of safety, security, access and privacy when new technology is deployed
- invest in research, development and real-world trials that benefit the entire transport network customer base or provide a sound basis for government decision-making.

When the private provision of necessities like transport are not available to people who cannot afford them, or when they are not accessible, government must step-in. Government's first priority should be to meet the needs of travellers for an accessible, equitable, safe, efficient and convenient transport system.

Private sector entities that bring new technologies to market tend to serve their own interests and resist government intervention. Uber, for example, trialled Uber-WAV, its wheel-chair accessible vehicle platform, for three days coinciding with a National Disability Insurance Scheme conference in October 2015, but it has not provided a platform for accessible vehicles on a permanent basis in Queensland since then. Uber policy directs drivers to accommodate customers using walkers, folding wheelchairs or other assistive devices to the maximum extent possible, but we know that some Uber drivers have denied people a ride because their wheelchair, even when folded, was too big to fit inside the car.

Many people with disabilities, then, are locked out of convenient and cost-effective ride-sharing because vehicles are not accessible. This is particularly inequitable now that many people with disabilities are transferring from the state-funded Taxi Subsidy Scheme to a lump sum transport component on their NDIS plan which, in theory, would allow them to engage with Uber.

When the State Government commissioned $4.3 billion worth of New Generation Rollingstock trains, it did not consult people with disability. Those that have since arrived in Queensland so far (built overseas) are not fully accessible for people who have mobility impairments, who use wheelchairs, or who have vision impairments. Some access paths and the bathroom access are narrower than the minimum widths set out in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) that were established in 2002.

In late 2017, the Queensland lodged an application with the Australian Human Rights Commission ('AHRC') for temporary exemptions from the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport ('DSAPT'). As part of its application, Queensland undertook to fix the conveyances over the next few years. The AHRC refused Queensland's exemption application. The NGR trains are not DSAPT-compliant.

The new trains are designed to last at least 35 years in service, until the early 2050s. Unlike other Queensland suburban trains, the new trains have no guard station in the middle, adjacent to the accessible boarding point on the platform. As a stop-gap measure, Queensland Railways has hired staff to attend people who want boarding assistance. This saga could have been avoided if people with disability had been consulted from the beginning.

Response to "identifying other emerging technological factors which will impact on transport networks into the future, such as driver aid technology and 'driverless car' technologies"

Autonomous Vehicles

Autonomous Vehicles ('AVs') have the potential to provide mobility to groups such as people with a disability, particularly those who do not drive, as well as older people and children who currently have difficulties accessing transport services in our community.[1] They may also provide an opportunity for governments to service public transport needs in regional areas more effectively and efficiently.

In 2015, almost one in five Australians reported living with disability (18.3 per cent or 4.3 million people). Just over half of people with a disability aged 15 to 64 years participated in the labour force (53.4 per cent). This is considerably fewer than those without disability (83.2 per cent).[2] Highly automated vehicles could improve these low rates of labour force participation by providing more convenient access to transport services for people with a disability.[3]

Around half of Australia's older population have a disability.[4] The emergence of automated vehicles also provides immense potential for older Australians to continue to engage and participate in the community. In 2015, there were an estimated 3.5 million Australians aged 65 and over, representing one in seven people (15.1 per cent).

Retirees who move to country and regional areas frequently find themselves at risk of losing access to transport, particularly if they are no longer able to drive, and public transport links are poor. Automated vehicles will enable older people to continue to visit the doctor, do their shopping and participate in the community.[5]

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[1] Insurance Group Australia. (2016). *Submission to NSW Government Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (StaySafe) Inquiry into Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety in NSW.* Sydney, page 7. Retrieved from https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=1972
[2] ABS, 2016 *Survey of Disability and Carers.*
[3] Ibid.
[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016b, October 18). *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015*. Catalogue number: 4430.0 Retrieved from Australian Bureau of Statistics: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0
[5] Siorokos, M. (20 June 2016). *Transcript of evidence to the NSW Government Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (StaySafe) Inquiry into Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety in NSW.* September 2016, (p. 3).

Licencing requirements may need to be adjusted for automated vehicle technology.[6]As with current restricted driving licences, people with a disability or medical conditions may qualify for a licence to operate an automated vehicle subject to passing whatever threshold is necessary for a vehicle with that level of automation.[7]

The National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee is convened by the Department to provide a mechanism for all governments, the public transport industry and the disability sector to discuss accessible public transport issues affecting people with a disability. Members of this committee have expressed enthusiasm about the benefits that automated vehicles may offer people with disability to more fully participate in all areas of Australian life.[8]

Potential challenges

In order to realise the full benefits of automated technologies, governments need to strike the right balance between encouraging the uptake of this technology, and ensuring that accessibility considerations are taken into account.[9] This includes issues such as:

- Ensuring the adequate provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles, including methods for securing wheelchairs when a human driver is not present.
- Local and state government reviewing and amending standing zones and parking spaces to allow sufficient room for the safe and, if possible, automated deployment of a ramp to the rear of the AV, and otherwise safe and efficient boarding for passengers with a disability
- Ensuring the accessibility of smart phone applications, which will be an essential tool for accessing automated transport. The Uber App, for example, is not currently accessible to people with vision impairments.
- Ensure appropriate licencing arrangements, and
- Assess whether existing policy approaches and incentives in the disability sector should be adjusted or retargeted.

Public Transport

The emerging 'Mobility as a Service' business model seeks to reduce barriers between different transport modes by providing consumers with easy and flexible access to the widest possible range of services. If this model matures in Australia, it could provide an incentive for travelers to move away from private vehicle ownership and make increased use of automated vehicles and public transport as part of a new, flexible approach to travel.

It is possible that automated vehicles could compete for trips with existing public transport services, especially because of increased convenience, comfort and privacy. Early modelling (based on data from the Netherlands) suggests that the costs of using shared automated vehicles could be lower than owning a traditional vehicle. These costs may be commensurate

[6] Project BR1982 *Investigation of potential registration & licensing issues due to the introduction of automated vehicles,* for further information, see http://www.austroads.com.au/drivers-vehicles/connected-and-automated-vehicles/projects
[7] Tranter, D. (20 June 2016). *Transcript of evidence to the NSW Government Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (StaySafe) Inquiry into Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety in NSW* September 2016, (p. 17).
[8] National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee – Canberra 7 June 2016
[9] National Accessible Public Transport Advisory Committee – Canberra 7 June 2016

with public transport fares,[10] could affect the economics of public transport networks and future investment, and increase congestion on the road network. However, modelling by the International Transport Forum demonstrates that the best outcomes are achieved when automated vehicles are effectively integrated into existing public transport networks.[11]

Over time, it may be necessary for government policy to encourage and to provide an incentive for the efficient integration of public transport and automated vehicles, including, for example, drop-off zones for automated vehicles at rail stations, but this need will be determined by real world experience.

Although future road transport demand is difficult to predict, the use of 'zero occupancy vehicles' for goods delivery and as couriers may lead to increased demand and traffic congestion. This may necessitate regulation and rationing, that prioritizes personal transportation needs over the needs of commerce.

Many AV will require suitable and accessible charging stations as currently this is insufficient.

Whatever new 'Artificial Intelligence' is created for transport purposes, that it must be guided by Principles that firstly "do no harm" and secondly "enhance humanity".

As use of AVs increases, demand for parking likely will decrease, but demand for curbside standing zones will increase and curbside arrangements will need to be reassigned. Brisbane taxi users are already familiar with the challenges faced by taxi and in particular, ride-share drivers when looking for a place to pick-up or drop-off passengers around the CBD. These challenges are more acute when the passenger is a person with a mobility impairment who may move more slowly, or rely on a third party to assist with getting in or out of the vehicle.

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[10] For further information, see: https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/transportation-travel-tourism-automotive-will-autonomous-vehicles-derail-trains/?chapter=2

[11] International Transport Forum. (2015b). *Urban Mobility System Upgrade - How shared self-driving cars could change city traffic*. Retrieved from http://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/15cpb_self-drivingcars.pdf