

## ACCESSIBLE BUSES? Saumya Kaushik, Architect

Melbourne buses, not the most loved public transport link, but definitely an essential within the public transport system. Bus usage for someone living in inner suburbs, which are well served by trams and trains, may seem like a foreign concept. However, the same is not true for someone living in outer and/or newer suburbs that appear to be mainly designed for cars users. Hence, for a person with disability living in the outer suburbs, bus does become a primary mode of transport to commute to the train station or medical appointments, meet friends and family, or go shopping. Taxis, including Uber and the like, are not necessarily accessible, affordable, or reliable for all people with disability.

With Melbourne growing, the bus service is recognised as an essential connection service within the public transport system. However, the internal design of buses remains unsafe for many people with disability, eg, tight internal turning radii; no restraints to hold wheelchairs in place; insufficient hand straps and grabrails, particularly at the back (higher section) of the bus, to grip during sudden breaking, and lack of audio-visual information systems for vision- and hearing-impaired passengers.

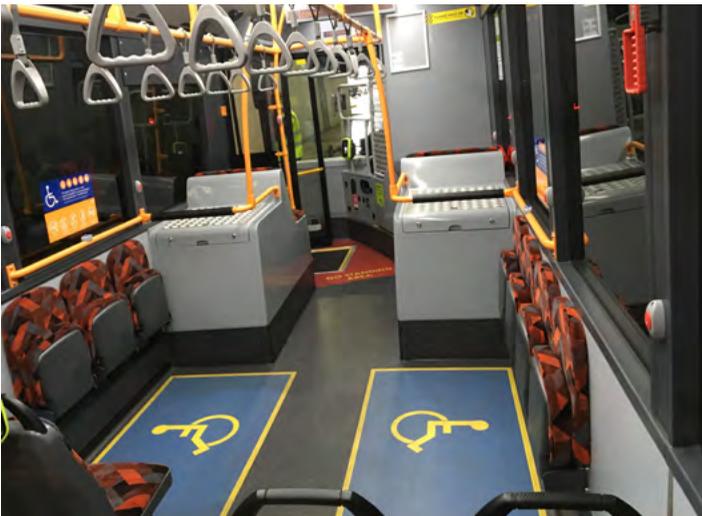


Image- Internal layout of the bus with tight turning radius to get into the bus, no restraints provided for the wheelchairs to stay in place.

The Andrews Government announced, on 15 December 2018, the purchase of 100 new buses to replace older stock on routes operated by Transdev. Transdev organised a viewing of trial buses on 12 February 2019, inviting various disability organisations. Visionary Design Development attended as a supporter of All Aboard Network, an advocacy group comprising people with disability working tirelessly to ensure accessibility considerations are at the forefront of all modes of Public Transport in Victoria. However, the Transdev trial event was regrettably tokenistic compared to last year's mock-up of new High Capacity Metro Trains (HCMT) designed and built after consultation with a large number of accessibility groups, other passenger groups, and technical experts and which showcased accessible carriage design resulting from the consultation process. In contrast, Transdev's trial appeared half-hearted in its attempts to engage with people with disability.

Nonetheless, the new fleet will remain in existence for a substantial number of years. Hence, the design stage is indeed the time to consult people with disability about the design of new buses! Design considerations are not limited to: longer ramps, automatic ramps with upstands, avoiding tight turning radii inside buses, providing tie down points/ methods for holding wheelchairs in place, and upgrading audio-visual information systems along with other safety features to make people with disabilities' journeys functional, safe, and pleasing.

Disability Resource Centre (DRC) released a 'Transport for All' report in late 2018, in response to the ongoing accessibility barriers faced by people with disability using public transport in Victoria. One of the conclusions was that there is a lack of genuine consultation with people with disabilities by service operators. DRC's recommendations included key disability advisory groups having the opportunity to regularly make representation to the Ministry of Public Transport on accessibility matters and that Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) establish an ongoing consultation program with key disability advisory organisations to plan, implement, and review the development of accessible public transport in Victoria.

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Victorian Government's Disability Action Plan 'Absolutely Everyone' 2017-2020, states public transport is critical for people with disability to access places of work, education and social activities. To achieve this, organisations like Transdev must take consultation with people with disabilities more seriously.

Transdev has recently sent out invitations to attend another round of testing. We look forward to reviewing progress on Transdev bus accessibility improvement on 30 July.



Image- Narrow ramp without an upstand to prevent wheelchair sliding (especially when wet)

*If you would like to discuss collaboration possibilities across accessibility, research or architecture for any of your projects, within Australia or internationally, please contact our office.*

## PUBLICATIONS

Recent short articles by Mary Ann Jackson.

[Improving Accessibility in the Built Environment](#) posits that ‘generating meaningful collaboration between built environment practitioners and people with disability’ is essential. (Published by Parlour: women, equity, architecture. <https://archiparlour.org/improving-accessibility-in-the-built-environment/>)

[Interpreting Exemptions: A Rights-Based Perspective](#) explores the history and implications of, and guidance on, the Building Code of Australia’s (BCA) Deemed-to-Satisfy Clause D3.4 Exemptions. (Published by ACAA Association of Consultants in Access Australia in Access Insight April / May 2019.)

## BUILDING CAPACITY

Congratulations to Saumya Kaushik on her enrolment in Masters of International Development Practice at Monash University. Saumya intends to specialise in disability inclusion in her studies.

Mary Ann Jackson has transferred her PhD studies to the Faculty of Business and Law’s Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University of Technology. Ethics approval has been granted and fieldwork will commence early 2020. Fieldwork is designed to be highly participatory and funding is being sought to provide the ‘citizen-researchers’ with honorariums. Any suggestions, leads, or contributions gratefully accepted – please feel free to contact Mary Ann.

## NDIS

Visionary Design Development continues to work with Occupational Therapists, NDIS participants, and Support Co-ordinators on a range of NDIS-funded home modifications. Please get in touch to discuss how we can assist.

## Accessibility in the Built Environment

We collaborate with many different practices across planning, architecture, and design, on projects of varying scales, achieving better accessibility outcomes for everyone and satisfying regulatory requirements.

We engage with all levels of government, government agencies, and the NGO/NfP sector, internationally, nationally, and locally, to deliver comprehensive insight into built environment accessibility.

We work with Universities, Professional Associations, Disability and Disabled Peoples Organisations, and LGAs and Advocacy groups building capacity to improve built environment accessibility outcomes.

We co-create with individuals, business, NGO/NfPs, and government to achieve people-centric, accessible built environments, whether existing or new, across all stages of procurement, design, and delivery.

Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd is an award-winning, transdisciplinary consultancy operating at the intersection of human needs and the built environment. We strive to deliver an equitable, accessible, built environment and believe that the best, people-centred, outcomes result when accessibility is continuously considered from project outset to completion and beyond.

## PROJECTS

### NDIS SDA ‘Robust’ and Platinum Level LHA

Purposed Housing Australia’s new SDA Shared Housing in Cranbourne.

SDA House at Cranbourne, designed by CKA Architects with Visionary Design Development as Access and LHA Consultant, achieved NDIS SDA ‘Robust’ Design Category and Liveable Housing Design (LHA) ‘Platinum’ Certification.



Image- Cr Amanda Stapledon, Mayor of City of Casey inaugurating the SDA Shared House in Cranbourne.

### Accessing the Home- Research

In collaboration with Melbourne School of Design and funded by Melbourne Disability Institute, Visionary Design Development is undertaking research on ‘Accessing the Home: Collecting and analysing the reports from 17 years of Victoria’s Home Renovation Scheme’.

Saumya Kaushik and Mary Ann Jackson are attending the ACAA (Association of Consultants in Access Australia in Access) conference in Sydney in August where Mary Ann will present Accessing the Home: Government-supported home modification schemes.

### Moreland - A Bluestone City

Visionary Design Development recently contributed to a policy document prepared by Context GML (Heritage Consultants) encouraging best practice heritage outcomes for bluestone kerb, channel and laneway infrastructure, along with maintaining equal access for people with disability.

### Consultancy

- Design review for Planners, Architects, and Designers
- Reporting and Certification for Planning and Building Permits
- Performance Solutions
- LHA Assessment

### Research

- Comprehensive built environment reporting
- Literature reviews, case studies, stakeholder analysis
- Facilitate co-operation and develop cultural/ commercial exchange

### Training

- Workshops for LGAs, Advocacy groups
- Course writing, Lecturing, Tutoring
- Professional Development

### Design

- Accessibility focused architectural projects
- Inclusive Project Management
- Home mods (NDIS, OT, and individual projects)