

WE WILL RIDE AT LAST!

PHYSICALDISABILITY COUNCIL AND THE WE WILL RIDE CAMPAIGN

are please to present the following announcement from the Commonwealth Attorney General Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP.

ON TRACK FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

It is important for people with disabilities, their families and carers to have the capacity to fully participate in and enjoy community life. The Howard Government recognises that accessible public transport plays a big part in helping this to happen.

In August this year, I tabled in the Federal Parliament the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport and accompanying Guidelines, under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

The Transport Standards will come into effect on 15 October 2002 - exactly ten years after the Disability Discrimination Act passed through Parliament.

For the first time, these standards set out formal requirements for accessibility to public transport in Australia. They will help to promote greater independence and a correspondingly better quality of life for people with a disability, the elderly and parents with young children.

The standards take into account the range of disabilities covered by the Act and apply to a range of public transport conveyances, premises and infrastructure, with some limited exceptions. They provide greater certainty about rights and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The standards set out specific requirements for the accessibility of public transport and provide transport operators with detailed information about disability access issues, including such things as access paths, manoeuvring areas, ramps and boarding devices. This information will help transport operators to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination on the grounds of a person's disability.

All new items will have to comply with the standards from the time they come into effect so that non-conforming items are gradually retired or upgraded in accordance with an incremental compliance timetable.

In appropriate cases, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is also able to grant temporary exemptions from the requirements of the standards, taking into account advice from the National Transport Secretariat, to ensure that the system operates in a fair and balanced way.

The Transport Standards are an excellent example of disability, government and industry groups working together to find practical ways to eliminate discrimination. The disability sector, transport industry and all levels of Government are to be congratulated for their sustained commitment to the goal of public transport accessibility.

A copy of the Transport Standards and accompanying Guidelines is available at <http://www.law.gov.au/DSFAPT/Welcome.html>.

The Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP
Commonwealth Attorney-General