

Addendum to: Queensland Rail Accessibility Reference Group Submission in Response to: An Application for Temporary Exemptions under the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* for the New Generation Rollingstock Project

January 23, 2018

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Introduction

In its initial submission on the New Generation Rollingstock application for temporary exemption from the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* the Queensland Rail Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) expressed concern that Queensland Rail (QR) customers with disabilities would be overlooked as they waited for assistance at the assisted boarding point. This was due to the guard’s cab being 70 m distant from the assisted boarding point and the absence of platform staff at many stations for long periods each day.

The misgivings of the ARG are now being confirmed by incidences of boarding assistance failures. The particulars of these failures have been

reported to QR or conveyed to the ARG. The experiences of a vision impaired customer, Mr Brendon Donohue, are detailed below.

Failure of QR Boarding Procedures

A vision impaired QR customer, Mr Brendon Donohue, has experienced three instances where neither platform staff or guard offered any boarding assistance. Rather, members of the public assisted in two instances and an off duty QR staff member assisted on another.

To the best of his ability, Mr Donohue believed he was at or near the assisted boarding point on these occasions, but admits he may not have been directly on the assisted boarding point. Mr Donohue further concedes that he is known to platform staff at South Brisbane and has informed them not to bother helping him. Rather, he relies on assistance from guards.

These failures to offer assistance occurred on December 28, 2017, January 9, 2018 and January 20, 2018. Failure did not occur on suburban platforms but on the CBD stations of Central and South Brisbane. On two occasions the train was an NGR unit. On the other occasion the train was an older unit of unknown type.

An undertaking to provide boarding assistance to all customers waiting at the assisted boarding point by either platform staff or guards is given by QR in its application to AHRC for temporary exemption from the DSAPT (See Appendix 1 for excerpts).

QR seem to be quite concerned that they either do not have the resources to offer platform assistance, or that staff neglect this duty. A media report on QR staff assigned to NGR trains to 'spy' on platform staff and report when they fail to offer assistance is detailed in Appendix 2. Anecdotally, the ARG is led to believe that this observational program has terminated now that the submission period for the application for temporary exemption has closed. The AHRC may wish to request that QR provide these reports in order to assist AHRC in its consideration of the exemption application.

Mr Donohue has communicated his unfortunate experiences to both QR and the ARG. The emails concerned are in Appendix 3. A rather curious response from QR regarding lack of assistance offered reads:

In relation to staff not approaching you at the station, please be aware that due to discrimination our staff will not approach customers to see if they require assistance. We recommend approaching station staff as we are always happy to provide assistance where and when possible.

What precisely this means has yet to be fully explained. Mr Donohue has had a telephone conversation with QR that suggested that staff have been abused when offering assistance and would therefore only offer assistance to people who could independently find their way to the assisted boarding point.

Appendix 1

QR undertaking to AHRC regarding reliable boarding assistance

6.5 The results of any consultations undertaken with people who may be affected by the proposed activity and their representative organisations

(e) The Applicants have taken this feedback into consideration, but for a variety of reasons have concluded that adding a guard cab to the middle of NGR trains would not be appropriate. A middle guard cab with doors would impede customer access through the NGR cars, reducing the benefits of the new design. Direct assistance would still be provided to all passengers requiring it, with the QR business operating model providing for timely and reliable assistance from platform staff.

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Application%20for%20temporary%20exemptions%20from%20the%20DSAPT%20and%20DDA%20-%20NGR%20Project%20.pdf>

QR material on boarding procedure for NGR

Travelling on a new train

Queensland Rail will continue to provide access for customers on any Citytrain through the use of the portable boarding ramp and the assisted boarding point.

There is no need for customers requiring boarding assistance to change where they wait or know what type of train they will be boarding.

If the next service is a new train, customer service staff on the platform may provide boarding assistance in the middle of the platform.

Alternatively, the guard at the end of the new train may assist you to board, in the middle of the platform.

If you need to contact us, please use the station help phone, the onboard emergency help button or text 0428 774 636.

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Enclosure%201%20-%20Item%207%20-%20Customer%20Education%20Material%201.pdf>

QR material on assisted boarding point

Assisted boarding point

If you require boarding assistance, please wait at the assisted boarding point prior to the arrival of the train.

Please then advise the guard or customer service staff what type of assistance is necessary. For example, some people may require the portable boarding ramp.

The assisted boarding point can be utilised by any customer and is not just for those using mobility aids.

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Enclosure%201%20-%20Item%207%20-%20Customer%20Education%20Material_1.pdf

Appendix 2

Media report of QR'spying' on its platform staff

Queensland Rail: Staff 'observe' passengers to find train design flaws

Kelmeny Fraser, The Courier-Mail
January 12, 2018 12:00am

QUEENSLAND Rail staff are being paid to watch their colleagues and passengers under a strategy to overcome the botched design of the state's new \$4.4 billion train fleet.

QR has allocated staff to the job of riding the troubled new trains all day to check-up on whether station platform staff are following its new passenger boarding policy.

The observers' core task is to ride the New Generation Rollingstock (NGR) trains to "record observations of assisted boarding at each stop," according to QR internal correspondence.

They have been given a checklist to fill out that must be handed in to their QR bosses.

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-government/queensland-rail-staff-observe-passengers-to-find-train-design-flaws/news-story/ec699098c37359bf750a71c962a08092>

Appendix 3

Unreported instance of boarding assistance failure

Brendon Charles Donohue
28/12/2017

to me, [REDACTED]

Hi all,

I hope you had a great Christmas!

I thought you would like to know the following information about the NGR Model Trains that I found out today:

I caught a train into the city. It was an old train. I had a sighted friend with me.

I went and did some business in the city, then I returned to Central train station and caught home a gold coast train. It was an NGR Model Train. All trains were running on 5 and 6 platforms. **No sign of the guard at all!** That could have been because I was with a sighted friend though.

When I was in the NGR Model train, I heard the following audio announcement from the speaker system: with very much surprised me!

“Queensland Rail would like to remind all customers, that the door buttons are now located in the centre of the doors”.

This was not an audio announcement that was trialled at the trial-run?

Also, there are now three NGR Model Trains on the railway tracks. With two more on the railway tracks by the end of the month. That now makes 5 NGR Model trains on the railway tracks!

Interesting, if Queensland Rail/TMR had kept the door buttons in place on the sides of the doors. Queensland Rail would not be needing to put in more audio announcements in and costing more and more dollars for the tax payers!

Thank you.

Report to QRail of first instance of boarding assistance failure

Brendon Charles Donohue

10/01/2018

to Customer, Accessibility, me, [REDACTED]

Good morning,

Happy new year and welcome to 2018!

My name is Brendon Donohue and I am a very frequent blind train traveller on the Queensland Rail network.

Yesterday 9/1/2018 I attended my local train station - South Brisbane station on Grey Street in South Brisbane. I arrived just after 2:00 P.M. To catch a train into the city to Central Station to conduct some business of mine in the city.

When I arrived at South Brisbane station, I could hear that the audio announcement system was working without issue and was advising customers that the Cleveland train would be arriving on platform 1 in approximately two minutes.

I caught the lift up to platform two, to wait for my train service. The announcement for the arrival of the Cleveland Train occurred without issue and the train arrived and left the station without incident.

It is after that the issue occurred! Two trains, one train on platform 1 and one train on platform two arrived about a minute apart from each other without any audio announcements from the audio announcement system?

There was no sound from the audio announcement system at all on both platforms? It sounded like to me, the audio announcement system had been switched off from the main switch board. **No member of South Brisbane Station staff approached me to advise me of this situation?**

I do not have to tell you how frustrating this issue is for me! I would please ask that Queensland Rail conduct a full investigation in why the audio announcement system was switched off on 9/1/2018 just after 2:00 P.M at South Brisbane Station and why South Brisbane Station Staff did not know that this issue was going to occur and did not approach me to advise me of this situation.

I await your response and the outcome of this investigation.

Thank you.

QRail response to the first instance of boarding assistance failure

From: Customer Feedback - QLD Rail [mailto:CustomerFeedback@qr.com.au]

Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2018 2:24 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Queensland Rail reference CFT-18-157

Our reference CFT-18-157

Hi Brendon

Thank you for your contact regarding announcements and staff behaviour at South Brisbane station on 9 January 2018. Please accept my apology for any frustration you have experienced on this occasion.

Please be assured that we have taken your concerns seriously and have forwarded them onto our Station Staff Management for investigation and action and can confirm that log recordings show all announcements were performed correctly and on time. The only possibility Station Management can think of is a temporary fault or maybe a technical maintenance of the audio equipment occurred (e.g speakers, local amplifier, cabling, etc), these conditions would not be detected by our software and so would not be reflected in our logs. Please be assured this will be checked.

In relation to staff not approaching you at the station, please be aware that due to discrimination our staff will not approach customers to see if they require assistance. We recommend approaching station staff as we are always happy to provide assistance where and when possible.

We are committed to providing excellent customer service and will work hard to meet the expectations and needs of our customers. All Queensland Rail office bearers, executive and staff are expected to abide by our Code of Conduct and uphold the commitments we make to you as outlined in our Customer Charter.

Again, I apologise for any inconvenience or frustration you have experienced and thank them for taking the time to bring these matters to our attention.

Kind regards



[REDACTED]
FEEDBACK OFFICER

GPO Box1429

Brisbane, QLD, 4001

T: 07 3072 0600

E: customerfeedback@qr.com.au

Report of second instance of boarding assistance failure

From: Brendon Charles Donohue [mailto:[REDACTED]]

Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2018 2:45 PM

To: 'Customer Feedback - QLD Rail' <CustomerFeedback@qr.com.au>; 'Accessibility'

<Accessibility@qr.com.au>

Subject: FW: My unfortunate NGR experience today 20/1/2018

Good afternoon all,

I am providing you with my comments relating to my unfortunate NGR experience today 20/1/2018.

I arrived at South Brisbane station at 11:30 A.M to hear the audio announcement that the airport Train was going to arrive on platform 2 in 2 minutes.

So I waited at the disability access point for the airport train to pull into the station. It did pull into the station and I was told by a member of the public that it was an NGR Model Train. The member of the public assisted myself to board the Train.

There was no sign of the guard and there was no station staff on the South Brisbane platform to assist me so it was up to the public to look after people with disability.

When I disembarked at central station there was no assistants provided by the guard on arrival to Central Station. The " Guard" didn't see me because she was 70 meters away from car 3/4. A Queensland Rail staff member that was starting work and had disembarked off the same train as me saw me struggling where to go and ran to my aide.

When returning home and I was waiting on the central station platform for the gold coast Train - another NGR Model Train. I was advised that people with a disability now bored in car 4 not car 3 on the NGR Model Train? According to Queensland Rail Staff they have been told this? Once I arrived at South Brisbane station, there was no station personnel to assist me off the station platform.

To say I am disappointed is an understatement! I would like Queensland Rail to investigate this and provide me with response in the coming days.

Thank you.

QRail email response to second instance of boarding assistance failure

From: Customer Feedback - QLD Rail [mailto:CustomerFeedback@qr.com.au]

Sent: Monday, January 22, 2018 12:14 PM

To: [REDACTED] >

Subject: Queensland Rail reference CFT-18-414

Our reference CFT-18-414

Hi Brendon

Thank you for your feedback in relation to your experience when boarding a New Generation Rollingstock service from South Brisbane and Central station on 20 January 2018. Your feedback is important to us and assists in improving the services we deliver.

We are currently looking into your specific concerns and will respond to you as soon as possible.

Please don't hesitate to get back in touch if you require anything in the meantime

Kind regards



[REDACTED]
FEEDBACK OFFICER

GPO Box1429

Brisbane, QLD, 4001

T: 07 3072 0600

E: customerfeedback@qr.com.au

Account of QR telephone response to second instance of boarding assistance failure

Brendon Charles Donohue

22/01/2018

to [REDACTED] me

All,

When I spoke to [REDACTED] from QR last week over the phone she stated the following:

1. That QR has been receiving complaints from people who are blind/low vision before stating that staff have been asking station staff where to go too much and because of harassment station staff will not approach people with disability on a station platform. In less the person with a disability is waiting within the disability boarding point location on a station platform.
2. It is my guess that station staff are not asking people where they want to go because they are frightened of getting abused by members of the public.
3. As I have said before, I have not noticed an increase level of staff on any station platforms. That just could be my travel movements though.
4. The anty discrimination Commission Queensland has referred me to Caxton Legal Centre. I will see if I can see them about my discrimination complaint today.

I hope that helps?

Brendon Donohue.