



Paradise Coaches

Disability Action

Plan

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Section 1 - Introduction.

Paradise Coaches

Paradise Coaches is a small privately owned coach company based in Gracemere, Central Queensland. The company currently operates a fleet of seven vehicles providing long distance passenger services, local passenger services, long distance and local charter services, and tours to local and regional attractions.

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 seeks:-

(a) to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of:

(i) work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and

(ii) the provision of goods, facilities, services and land; and

(iii) existing laws; and

(iv) the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and

(b) to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and

(c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

“Discrimination” is:-

*Treating people with a disability less favourably than people without the disability would be treated under the same circumstances; or
A condition or requirement imposed which may be the same for everyone but which unfairly excludes or disadvantages people with a disability (eg in employment, education or access to goods and services).*

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 prohibits discrimination not only against people who have a disability, but also against a person who is an 'associate' of a person with a disability, e.g. a spouse, relative, carer, or a person in a business, sporting or recreational relationship with a person with a disability.

“Disability” is:-

- (a) total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or*
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or*
- (b) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or*
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness;
or*
- (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or*
- (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or*
- (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;*

and includes a disability that:

- (h) presently exists; or*
- (i) previously existed but no longer exists; or*
- (i) may exist in the future; or*
- (k) is imputed to a person.*

As a provider of coach and bus services, Paradise Coaches has a responsibility to eliminate discrimination in the provision of its services.

The Queensland Anti Discrimination Act 1991.

The Anti Discrimination Act 1991 of Queensland also prohibits discrimination on the basis of:-

sex, relationship status, pregnancy, parental status, breast feeding, age, race, impairment, religious belief or religious activity, political belief or activity, trade union activity, lawful sexual activity, gender identity, sexuality, family responsibilities, and

association with, or relation to, a person identified on the basis of any of the above attributes.

Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 set out minimum requirements for public transport operators, with a twenty year timetable for compliance.

Target dates for compliance as set out in Schedule 1 of that act are:-

- 31 December 2007
- 31 December 2012
- 31 December 2017 and
- 31 December 2022.

All public transport coach and bus services are to comply fully with the relevant Standards as of the 31 December 2022.

Services provided by Paradise Coaches.

Paradise Coaches operates daily long distance scheduled passenger services from Emerald to Mackay and return, from Emerald to Rockhampton and return and twice weekly services from Emerald to Longreach and return. An estimated 17 000 people are expected to use these passenger services annually.

The company also provides three scheduled services every weekend from Gracemere and Rockhampton to the Capricornia Correctional Centre north of Rockhampton. An estimated 1000 people are expected to use these services annually.

These passenger services are under contract with Queensland Transport and Queensland Corrective Services.

Paradise Coaches operates two services per week from Yeppoon to Ensham Mine near Emerald. These services are provided only for workers at the mine.

Paradise Coaches also provides local and long distance charter services and operates day, and extended tours to local and regional attractions.

Review Process.

Paradise Coaches does not have the financial resources to engage outside consultants to review the ways in which people with disabilities may be excluded from using its services. However, the managers have conducted their own review of the areas in which the company can increase its service to customers with a disability.

Areas which have been identified as needing changes in the future include:-

- Physical access on coaches and buses.
- Customer service
- Communication.

Customer Profiles.

People with disabilities make up approximately 18% of the population and include:-

- Passengers in wheelchairs
- Passengers unable to climb steps due to mobility impairments
- Passengers with injuries (eg. a broken leg)
- Ambulant passengers with intellectual disabilities
- Elderly or frail passengers
- Vision impaired passengers
- Hearing impaired passengers.
- Other people, such as pregnant women or women with small children in prams also benefit from accessible public transport.

Identified Barriers.

Physical access.

Only 3 of the company's fleet of 7 coaches and mini buses are wheelchair accessible. Fleet vehicles need to be accessible in the timeframe set out in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

Customer service.

The current Employee Induction Programme for training staff of Paradise Coaches needs to include a section specifically on dealing with people with disabilities.

Communication and information.

The details of the services provided by Paradise Coaches which are accessible to people with disabilities need to be more widely advertised to the public.

Section 2 – Objectives of the Action Plan

The long distance scheduled passenger services contract with Queensland Transport specifically calls for the company to prepare an Action Plan for submission to the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission.

By preparing and implementing this Action Plan, Paradise Coaches also aims to:-

- (i) Demonstrate to the public the company's commitment to meeting the requirements set down in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Queensland Anti Discrimination Act 1991 and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
- (ii) Improve access to its services for people with disabilities and thus increase its market share
- (iii) Improve accessibility to information regarding services offered by Paradise Coaches for people with a disability.
- (iv) Identify any discrimination within the company against people with disabilities and rectify it.
- (v) Enhance the image of Paradise Coaches.
- (vi) Reduce the likelihood of complaints about discrimination and increase the likelihood of a successful defence against a claim of discrimination.

Section 3 - Progress to date.

Physical Access.

Paradise Coaches has purchased two(2) new BCI 29 seat luxury coaches with wheelchair access for its daily long distance scheduled passenger services from Emerald to Rockhampton and return, and from Emerald to Mackay and return, and for its twice weekly service to Longreach and return.

These coaches are fitted with symbols for wheelchair access and other relevant signage. The coaches are also fitted with additional handrails in the step well to assist with access into and from the vehicles. Seats are reserved at the front of the coaches for frail and elderly passengers and others requiring assistance. Wheelchairs, other disability aids and prams are carried free of charge regardless of the amount of other luggage carried by the passenger. Guide dogs travel free of charge when accompanying a passenger on the coaches and will be allocated a seat if available. Carers travelling with passengers requiring assistance are seated in adjacent seats and are charged half adult fare. One infant under 3 years travelling with an adult is free; a second infant travels for half the child fare.

Two Nissan Civilian 19 seat mini buses, one of which is wheelchair accessible are used on the Correctional Centre weekend services.

Customer service.

Drivers have been trained in assisting disabled passengers and in the operation of the wheelchair lifts.

All staff, including administration staff and drivers, are required to be polite and helpful to **all** passengers and to provide any assistance that may be required.

The internet booking system for the scheduled long distance passenger services includes spaces for passengers to indicate whether they require the wheelchair lift and any other special requirements they may have. When taking a booking, office staff also enquire whether the passengers have any special requirements.

Drivers advise passengers of the coach's location and provide other direct assistance to all passengers including disabled passengers prior to, during and after all scheduled stops.

Communication and information.

Large print timetables for the scheduled long distance passenger services are available on the company's website and also from the drivers on these coaches. Information is also provided by the administration staff over the telephone.

The company's web site contains details of all Paradise Coaches vehicles which are wheel chair accessible and the number of accessible positions in each vehicle.

Advertising in the media contains details of wheelchair accessible vehicles and, in particular, the current television advertising campaign on the long distance scheduled passenger services shows a wheelchair lift being used to give a person access to a coach.

Timetables for the long distance scheduled passenger services also contain details of wheelchair accessibility.

Section 4 – Actions.

Physical Access.

Paradise Coaches is required by the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 to have all its coaches and buses accessible by 31 December 2022. The company intends to purchase an additional coach with wheelchair access by 31 March 2009. It is not practical to retrofit old vehicles to comply with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 and to do so would severely affect the company's financial position. Direct assistance will continue to be provided by drivers to give an equivalent level of access.

As time and financial constraints permit, old vehicles will be removed from service and replaced with accessible vehicles.

Similarly, all front line vehicles will be retro-fitted with wheelchair lifts in keeping with the time frames set out in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.

Customer Service.

By 31st December 2008, the "Employee Induction Programme" for all staff will include specific training on:-

- (a) understanding the difficulties faced by disabled persons in accessing public transport,
- (b) on ensuring that disabled passenger are not harassed or otherwise embarrassed and that they travel in safety, security and comfort and are treated with dignity.
- (g) on awareness of the needs of disabled persons.

Communication and information.

By 31st December 2008, Paradise Coaches will make a DVD to be played on all coaches having a DVD player. This DVD will advise passengers of the company's policy regarding smoking, food and drink, toilets, etc. The DVD will have captions for those people who are hard of hearing.

Paradise Coaches will extend its advertising of its wheelchair accessible services in the media.

Paradise Coaches will also request a representative from a disability support group to be a member of the Bus Users Group meeting yearly.

Monitoring and evaluation processes.

Paradise Coaches utilises a “Complaints/Compliments Form” which is available from all drivers, the website and the administration office. All complaints are investigated by Paradise Coaches management and a response is given to the passenger within 24 hours.

The Action Plan will be reviewed immediately if a complaint of discrimination is received by Paradise Coaches.

The Action Plan will also be reviewed annually by the management of Paradise Coaches to consider any amendments that need to be made.

The Action Plan will be reviewed by the management of Paradise Coaches before the target dates for compliance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 to ensure compliance with the standard.