

**Submission
No 83**

**ACCESS TO TRANSPORT FOR SENIORS AND
DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE IN RURAL AND
REGIONAL NSW**

Organisation:

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Position:

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FROM STEVE AUSTIN [REDACTED]

ISSUES REGARDING TRANSPORT FOR PEOPLE IN WHEELCHAIRS WHEN TRAVELLING TO SYDNEY USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

For 6 years I have been trying to get a safe means of gaining access from the station platform of Armidale when getting on and off the Countrylink Train for medical & social trips to Sydney & Tamworth.

The current moulded portable ramp on the train is not up to the current standards to provide safe access on or off the trains as the height difference between the station platforms and the floor of Carriage "D" which has an accessible toilet & an area for 2 people in wheelchairs is at least 300 mm.

The current ramp is approximately 1500 mm long and the slats making up the ramp are about 30mm thick which I have nearly pushed off the carriage floor when reversing out to get off the train.

Since this incident that not only concerned me, it also startled the train attendant who was trying to keep the ramp from falling from under my chair, it also had my wife Mary very concerned as she thought that I would easily fall out of the chair if the ramp came off the carriage floor at the time.

This is very dangerous as I'm unable to see behind me and the ramp is only just wide enough for my chair to fit on.

I'm no longer confident enough to travel on the train to anywhere as this incident has given me a fright and I am waiting for the replacement ramp to be available for use on our train. The only alternative way for me to travel to Sydney at the moment is by plane which is both very expensive and requiring me to transfer out of my chair on to a narrow aisle chair to gain access on the aircraft, which puts a strain on my weak shoulders from more than 40 years of being in a wheelchair.

I have tried to have the dangerous non conforming ramp removed and replaced by a longer and easier ramp available for all regional trains to provide a safe access option for passengers in wheelchairs using regional trains when travelling between their towns and Sydney or other towns on the line between the main areas of NSW.

I received a letter from the previous minister for transport on 21 January 2014 stating that a ramp 2metres long would be available for Armidale in mid 2016 but, this hasn't happened.

I sent some questions to our local Member Adam Marshall in June this year asking what is happening with the new ramp only to find out that the following response was "The former CountryLink trialled a longer portable boarding ramp in late 2012 and while the outcome of the trial was positive, the longer ramps cannot be easily stored on the XPLOER fleet because of their length. There are no current plans to modify the XPLOER fleet to accommodate the longer ramps."

With this statement being made, I'm still not able to travel by train or any other town on the regional line between Armidale and Sydney as the new ramp isn't available for people in wheelchairs who need some safe means to get on and off the Countrylink regional trains.