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V/Line Accessibility Update

May 2024

Autumn is here

Hi all,

Welcome to our May Accessibility Update.

Our team continues to work hard to make improvements to the network, helping to ensure we're delivering inclusive and accessible journeys for all passengers.

As always, if you would like to contribute to a future accessibility update or have any questions about anything included in this one, please send me an email to accessibility@vline.com.au ¹

Happy reading,

An Chang

Accessibility Officer

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Social scripts now available on V/Line website

V/Line recently collaborated with Amaze and the Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) to create a series of social scripts, designed to help passengers with disabilities build their confidence and independence when using our services.

These scripts are [now available on our website](#) and use storytelling techniques to explain new experiences and environments for people who are neurodiverse, through simple language and images.

This helps passengers know what to expect and adequately prepare before travelling on our network.

By offering insights into what to expect before travelling, these social scripts aim to alleviate anxiety and uncertainty, and ultimately empowering passengers to plan and execute their trips with greater confidence.

Social scripts include:

[Who is V/Line](#)

[Your V/Line journey](#)

[Disruptions and changes to V/Line](#)

Try Before You Ride Southern Cross Station Event

On 9 May 2024, V/Line joined other transport operators including Yarra Trams, Metro Trains, Kinetic and Travellers Aid Australia to partner with the Department of Transport and Planning to deliver a Try Before You Ride event at Southern Cross Station.

The event aims to assist customers with accessibility requirements, parents with children and seniors to build confidence in using public transport in a relaxed environment.

Across the day, we welcomed 111 participants, who were assisted by our staff to learn how to board and depart trains, as well as coaches and accessible taxis.

Participants learned about the accessibility features on VLocity trains and took site familiarisation tours of Southern Cross Station.

V/Line Customer Experience Manager James Upfill said the event was an overwhelming success.

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"It was terrific to see passengers' confidence grow once they learned how travelling on our services worked" James said.

"We even had one passenger say that he felt able to take his wife on their first holiday in years using our services after he tried them out".

V/Line Accessibility Advisor Jessika Ayling said the team was proud to support this important Try Before You Ride event at V/Line's largest station.

"This event was a huge success, allowing people to gain hands-on experience and feel more confident in using our network," Jessika said.

"By holding this event, we're not only growing the confidence for new passengers but are also taking a significant step towards building a more accessible public transport network for V/Line and all Victorians.

"We're proud to be part of this journey and look forward to better understanding the needs of our passengers and making a positive impact".

Travellers Aid Ballarat one-year anniversary

We recently celebrated the first anniversary of the Travellers Aid service hub at Ballarat Station and the significant contribution it has made to the community.

Since beginning at Ballarat Station in April 2023, Travellers Aid has helped more than 2000 passengers, from providing wheelchair assistance to guiding them from platforms to waiting buses, taxis and Ubers. The impact of Travellers Aid Ballarat can be seen in the testimonials of grateful customers who have benefited from its services:

"A quick note to say how delightful it was dealing with Chloe when we visited Ballarat last Wednesday. She was particularly helpful; had a pleasant manner and a real people person, eager to assist in every way. Chloe is a wonderful representation of the excellent care and attention to detail in helping make a visit to your town (Ballarat) a very pleasurable experience. "– Travellers Aid Ballarat service user.

"I just wanted to say thanks to the lovely Travellers Aid woman at Ballarat Station, who helped me and my daughter find the buses on Monday. She made us feel really welcome!" - Travellers Aid Ballarat service user.

"While I was waiting to catch my interstate bus, I met the Travellers Aid lady and found her to be very friendly and knowledgeable. I was most grateful when she helped me with my luggage on the bus. When she returned to her table, she noticed that I had forgotten my handbag. She quickly picked it up, ran to the bus and handed it to me. What a wonderful service she is providing for those that are vulnerable and in need. "- Travellers Aid Ballarat service user.

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Travellers Aid Latrobe Valley pilot seeking volunteers

Travellers Aid is seeking enthusiastic locally based companion volunteers for their exciting new initiative, the Latrobe Valley Companion Service Pilot.

What is Travellers Aid Companion Service?

Travellers Aid's Companion Service program has been dedicated to support individuals with permanent, temporary or age-related disability to connect, engage and participate in their communities since 2011. Trained volunteer companions meet service users at a public transport hub in Melbourne or at regional stations in Seymour and Ballarat and accompany them to and from medical appointments, work and social activities.

Latrobe Valley Companion Service

Travellers Aid is launching a localised pilot of its companion service program in the Latrobe Valley, focusing on assisting people travelling to medical appointments by public transport within the region or to Melbourne.

What can you do?

As a companion volunteer you could:

- Assist with journey planning.
- Navigate different modes of transport.
- Provide emotional support.
- Empower and upskill users to access health service independently or with support.
- Help change perceptions about public transport accessibility.

If you are based in Latrobe Valley and are interested in becoming a Travellers Aid companion volunteer, or know someone who would, please contact Sara McDonald at sara.mcdonald@travellersaid.org.au for more information.

Meet our Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) members

As part of our ongoing efforts to foster a stronger sense of community and collaboration with the ARG, we are pleased to introduce into our newsletter a 'Meet our ARG members' profile.

This month, we highlight Daniel Giles. Read his story below.

"I'm Daniel Giles OAM and am proudly Autistic. I live in Bendigo and regularly commute between Bendigo and Melbourne. I also occasionally travel on other V/Line train and coach services, including on day trips to Swan Hill and Echuca, trips to visit other parts of the state and have more recently gone on a ride on the H-Set carriages before they were retired from service.

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I have a strong interest in trains and am often taking photos of trains, as well as finding out the history of each train carriage. My interest in trains comes from my grandfather who used to work for the Victorian railways.

“Train interest aside, I’m a passionate advocate for disability inclusion. I regularly present seminars about my Autism journey with my father and sister through our business, Speaking Insights (speakinginsights.com.au). I work part-time as a graphic designer, am a Communication Access Assessor for Scope and have sat on various committees, including the Victorian Disability Advisory Council (2013-2019) and the Department of Transport and Plannings Accessible Transport Advisory Council. I received an Order of Australia Medal for ‘Service to Disability and the Community’ in 2017.

“I have been an ARG member since 2016 and have enjoyed advocating for more accessible services, including from a neurodivergent perspective. One initiative I personally advocated for is additional handrails near the buffet carriages in the locomotive hauled fleet and I’ve been pleased to see these implemented (and these additional handrails also installed on the standard gauge VLocities used on Albury services). As a group, I’ve also been pleased to contribute to new station and train designs, a greater understanding of the needs of people with hidden disability and advise on the creation of social stories to support Autistic people in using V/Line services.

“I am particularly proud to have starred in the video of the launch of the hidden disability lanyard last year.” “I leave with one thing both V/Line staff and fellow passengers can do to support people with hidden disability. Remember that not all disability is visible or obvious. We may need for example, access to priority seating.”

ARG update

The V/Line Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) conducted its bi-monthly meetings in February and April.

Over the past few months, the ARG has provided feedback on:

- Joint ARG
- Tactile layout
- Melton Level Crossing Removal
- Ballarat overpass

Live service updates

You can get live V/Line service updates on your computer, tablet or smartphone.

- Visit [the V/Line website](#)² for live line status updates and planned service changes.
- Download the V/Line App on your smart device for:

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- live service updates
 - timetables
 - planning your journey.
- Follow us on Twitter for:
 - live service updates
 - alerts and advice about disruptions
 - V/Line's Twitter handles are:
 - @vline
 - @vline_ballarat
 - @vline_bendigo
 - @vline_geelong
 - @vline_gippsland
 - @vline_seymour

Passengers can also call 1800 800 007 or speak with a staff member at a station for travel information.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback is important to us. Please get in touch if you would like to have your say about V/Line services.

You can contact us:

- in writing to V/Line Customer Relations, Reply Paid 5343, Melbourne VIC 3001
- [online](#) ²
- over the phone on 1800 800 007 (TTY 9619 2727).

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty communicating, you can contact us through the [National Relay Service](#) ³ and request to call 1800 800 007.

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Footnotes

1. accessibility@vline.com.au
2. <https://www.vline.com.au/>
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4. <https://www.vline.com.au/Privacy-policy>
5. <http://email.theorchardagency.com.au/t/r-u-vildttt-l-y/>