

V/Line Accessibility Action Plan 2019-2022

Message from James Pinder

V/Line is committed to providing an accessible public transport service for all.

Since implementing our first Accessibility Action Plan in 2012, we have made significant changes to our infrastructure and the way we operate to improve the V/Line experience for passengers with accessibility requirements.

We acknowledge there is still lots of work to be done for our service to successfully meet the needs of all our customers. That's why the *Accessibility Action Plan 2019-2022* is so important with the four key priorities outlined within this plan driving our efforts for the next three years.

Priority 1: Customer service and communication - continuous improvement and innovation to deliver positive travel experiences for our customers both via our frontline staff and V/Line's communication channels.

Priority 2: Consultation and collaboration – consultation with customers and key stakeholders to identify improvement initiatives and seek guidance on improvement projects.

Priority 3: Building inclusive environments – identification of priority areas for access improvements on the network to provide inclusive and accessible public transport spaces.

Priority 4: Building an inclusive culture – development of a workplace and workforce that is inclusive for all customers and staff.

The V/Line *Accessibility Action Plan 2019-2022* is the result of consultation with our customers, staff, the V/Line Accessibility Reference Group, disability service providers and advocacy organisations, and highlights our commitment to bringing meaningful and collaborative improvements for our customers.

We will continue consultation with the community to ensure we understand what our customers want and better understand what actions and support are required to meet this. Providing accessible services and facilities for all our customers is an essential part of delivering a high performing and modern railway.

I look forward to doing my part in driving improvements over the next three years and continuing our commitment toward an accessible regional train service for all.

James Pinder

Chief Executive Officer

Context

V/Line's Role

V/Line is an operating agency as part of the Department of Transport, delivering services under a Partnership Agreement with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) (and other key contracts).

V/Line is:

- An operator of passenger rail and coach services
- A freight access provider
- A maintainer of railway infrastructure and rolling stock
- A project deliverer when engaged to do so

About V/Line – Service Provided

V/Line, as a brand, has provided public transport services to regional Victoria for over 30 years. Each week, V/Line schedules more than 1,997 train services between Melbourne and:

- Geelong and Warrnambool
- Ballarat, Maryborough and Ararat
- Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca
- Seymour, Shepparton and Albury
- Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale

In addition, more than 1,360 V/Line-branded coach services connect with the rail network and serve regional Victorian communities. Some of our coach services also link Victoria with South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Private sector operators provide all V/Line-branded coach services under the management of V/Line.

As well as being a public transport operator, V/Line also leases, provides access to and maintains over 3,520 kilometres of rail track used by passengers and freight rail operators. V/Line is a major employer with a workforce of over 2175 including many who live and work in regional Victoria.

Background

V/Line's Accessibility Action Plan 2019-2022 (AAP) has been developed to build on the achievements of the V/Line 2015-2018 AAP and continue to improve access for regional public transport services. The AAP aims to support the objectives of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT).

The AAP focuses on delivering inclusive and accessible services whilst promoting compliance to DSAPT as well as improvements in functional access.

To develop the 2019-2022 AAP V/Line has consulted with customers, the V/Line Accessibility Reference Group, disability service providers and advocacy organisations as well as staff and key internal stakeholders.

V/Line works closely with the Department of Transport and other public transport operators to promote a consistent and accessible public transport service for all Victorians.

Key Achievements for AAP 2015-2018

V/Line's 2019-2021 AAP marks the third AAP for the organisation. Since the first AAP in 2012 there have been significant improvements in how customers access V/Line services, the provision of information and the skills of customer service staff.

In 2016, V/Line became the first transport operator in the world to be accredited with the Communication Access Symbol (CAS). Accreditation of the CAS included the launch of training, tools and interventions across the regional network. V/Line participates in annual re-accreditation each year, a testament to the commitment and desire of V/Line and our customer service staff to deliver inclusive public transport services. V/Line's success in implementing communication access has paved the way for other Victorian public transport operators to commence the accreditation process.

Other key achievements over the 2015-2018 AAP include:

Priority One: Customer Service

- Significant improvements have been made in the ticketing reservation process for customers with accessibility requirements. Customers can now use their travel pass to complete bookings online and there have been process improvements for bookings made through PTV's call centre and V/Line's Customer Relations team, both when making bookings and on the day of travel.
- V/Line has maintained its certification under the International Customer Service Standard (ICSS: 2015-2020).
- V/Line has implemented a specific disability awareness training strategy for customer service staff. Working with Scope Australia training is delivered by people with lived experience of disability. eLearning is also utilised to ensure retention of knowledge and skills.

Priority Two: Consultation and community engagement

- V/Line's Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) has become a cornerstone of consultation and a key driver of improvements within the organisation. There has been strong engagement with the group across a number of station and fleet projects and their insights have been sought regularly during quarterly meetings.
- V/Line has actively consulted and engaged with the accessibility community through annual Community Accessibility Forums and the delivery of six community Try Before You Ride events around the state.

Priority Three: Access to public transport

- V/Line has implemented several modifications to existing fleet to improve accessibility. These include:
 - Redesign of allocated spaces on Sprinter cars
 - Addition of handrail alongside the buffet to increase support and safety for customers
 - Modification to handrails within existing VLocity fleet to improve access at doorways and support within the train
- V/Line has worked closely with PTV on new train orders to ensure and support compliance to DSAPT and advocate for functional accessibility outcomes.
- V/Line has proudly supported Travellers Aid Australia to deliver buggy services at Seymour Station and Southern Cross Station, as well as the volunteer program and Crisis Travel program.

Priority Four: Access to facilities

- There have been upgrades to V/Line stations and car parks through the state upgrade programs including:
 - Car park upgrades
 - Road and Rail Minor Works
 - Gippsland Rail Corridor Station Upgrade

V/Line has worked closely with VicTrack in the delivery of these projects to achieve accessibility improvements throughout. Key outcomes include; increased and improved accessible car parking at over 10 stations and improved access to ticket counters at Traralgon, Moe and Morwell.

- V/Line has worked closely with Rail Projects Victoria's (RPV) Regional Rail Revival (RRR) program which has involved extensive consultation with V/Line's ARG on station designs, particularly with the Ballarat Line Upgrade (BLU). This will continue as the program moves through construction and opening of new facilities and stations across the V/Line network.

Priorities and actions 2019-2022

V/Line's 2019-2021 Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) aims to support the Victorian State Governments' *Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2018 – 2022* and *Absolutely everyone: state disability plan for 2017-2020*.

To achieve this, V/Line's 4 key priority areas are:

- **Priority 1:** Customer service and communication
- **Priority 2:** Consultation and collaboration
- **Priority 3:** Building inclusive environments
- **Priority 4:** Building an inclusive culture

Priority One	Customer service and communication		
Description	V/Line strives to provide the highest level of customer service across the network. V/Line recognises the important role our staff play in supporting customers travelling on the network, including providing accurate and timely information. V/Line will focus on continual improvement and innovation to deliver positive travel experiences for our customers both via our frontline staff and V/Line’s communication channels.		
What success looks like?	Customers have confidence in the services provided and know that V/Line staff and systems will be consistent and effective. Customers will have access to timely information in appropriate channels and formats.		
Action	Description	Outcome	Timeline
1. Customer Service focus and certification	V/Line will maintain certification as a Customer Service Organisation against the International Customer Service Standard (ICSS: 2015-2020) V/Line's Customer Experience and Customer Operations Plan will outline how V/Line will improve customer experience. V/Line's Customer Charter will focus staff on providing what is most important.	Maintaining ICSS certification	Year 1 & 2
		Maintain ICSS score	Year 3
		Customer Experience and Customer Operations plan developed and communicated.	Year 1
		Customer Charter staff campaign	Year 1
2. Communication Access Symbol (CAS)	V/Line will maintain accreditation with Scope Australia with the Communication Access Symbol. V/Line will support contracted coach operators to become CAS accredited. V/Line will collaborate with PTV and other CAS accredited transport operators to deliver a consistent approach to communication access.	Maintaining CAS accreditation	Annually
		Engagement with Coach operators to support the expansion of CAS	Year 2
		Collaboration with PTV and operators	Ongoing

3. Appropriate knowledge and tools	V/Line will provide induction and refresher training and education to frontline staff to support their understanding of disability and supporting customers with access requirements. People with lived experience of disability will be a core component of training delivery.	Accessibility training plan developed, and implementation tracked	Annually
		Front-line staff participate in training.	Ongoing
4. Community engagement activities	V/Line will provide customers with familiarisation opportunities to increase their understanding and confidence of the network and travel on V/Line train and coach services.	Delivery of three community access activities per calendar year.	Annually
5. Disruption and emergency response management	In times of disruption customers will be confident that V/Line has a flexible workforce able to respond to emergencies and staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to support their travel needs.	Development of a guideline to support customers with disability during times of planned and unplanned disruptions.	Year 1
		Review of emergency response policies and work instructions for people with disability and opportunities for improvement realised.	Year 2
6. Effective communication channels	Customers are communicated to in a variety of ways before, during and after travel, and during times of disruption. V/Line will develop a greater understanding of the ways in which customers with accessibility needs wish to receive information.	Review of communication preferences for customers with accessibility needs.	Year 1
		Development of a communications channel plan for sharing accessibility achievements	Year 2

7. Digital innovation	V/Line will identify opportunities to improve access to information and support through digital initiatives.	Implementation of key improvement initiatives.	Annually
8. Accessible information formats	V/Line will ensure that digital information is delivered in a format that is accessible to all.	Achieve compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA	Year 1
		Accessibility information available on V/Lines website is updated and maintained to reflect changes to the network and information as they occur.	Year 2

Priority Two		Consultation and collaboration	
Description	V/Line is committed to building strong working partnerships with customers. V/Line will consult with customers and key stakeholders to identify improvement initiatives and seek guidance on projects. V/Line will continue to collaborate with partner organisations, advocacy groups and service providers. V/Line will work closely with the Victorian Government to deliver improvements to the network that have positive accessibility outcomes.		
What success looks like	V/Line has strong working relationships with customers and communities that are two-way, respectful and productive to support the implementation of improvement initiatives and projects.		
Action	Description	Outcome	Timeline
1. V/Line's Accessibility Reference Group	V/Line will continue to foster and engage the V/Line Accessibility Reference Group to gather feedback and guidance as well as allow for issues to be heard and addressed.	Confirmation of group members for new term	Year 1
		Quarterly meetings	Annually
2. Community consultation	V/Line will actively seek community feedback through a variety of avenues to drive improvement initiatives. V/Line will use formal feedback channels to assist in decision making.	Annual community Accessibility Forum and survey	Annually
		Community consultation for specific projects	As required
3. Collaborative partnerships	V/Line will continue to collaborate with key partners including Travellers Aid Australia to support customers to access V/Line services. V/Line will collaborate with individuals, advocacy groups and disability service providers to gather feedback and gain insight into customer's experience.	Partnership with Travellers Aid Australia	Annually
		Engagement with advocacy groups and disability service providers	Ongoing

Priority Two	Consultation and collaboration		
4. Industry advocacy and engagement	V/Line will actively engage with the Victorian Government and the broader transport industry for positive accessibility outcomes for customers and promote a connected transport network.	Key contributor to state projects throughout the design and delivery phases to ensure positive access outcomes are achieved.	Annually
		Participation in key industry committees	Annually
5. Identify opportunities to better meet the needs of customers with sensory and hidden disabilities	V/Line to consult with customers, representative groups and service providers to understand opportunities to increase the customer service provided to those with sensory and hidden disabilities.	Formation of working party	Year 3
		Improved customer support for customers with sensory and hidden disabilities.	Year 3

Priority Three	Building inclusive environments		
Description	V/Line will support the implementation of State funded projects and champion universal design principals as well as compliance to the Disability Standards of Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT). V/Line will continue to identify priority areas for access improvements on the network to provide public transport spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all.		
What success looks like	People with disability will have improved access to V/Line stations, train and coach services. Customers are confident that they will have consistent access to services and are able to travel safely and comfortably.		
Action	Description	Outcome	Timeline
1. Improved access in line with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport across transport infrastructure and rolling stock.	V/Line will collaborate with the Victorian Government throughout project design and implementation to ensure that functional access is considered and compliance to DSAPT is met.	Increased compliance with DSAPT across regional transport infrastructure and rolling stock.	Year 3
		Station accessibility data is captured appropriately and maintained in a timely manner to provide accurate information to customers and support informed investment decision making.	Annually
2. Infrastructure improvements	V/Line to identify items deemed out of scope for improvement projects and develop business cases to address any gaps.	Business case for funding for V/Line projects to improve access submitted to DoT.	Annually

3. Fleet improvements	V/Line to understand what is required to improve access on the V/Line classic fleet and increase their compliance to DSAPT. V/Line to support modification projects to deliver improved access on existing VLocity fleet. V/Line to identify opportunities to improve how customers board our trains.	Business case for funding for classic fleet modification to improve access submitted to PTV and DoT.	Year 1
		Review of boarding ramps.	Year 2
4. Coach and coach stop improvements	V/Line will work with PTV and coach operators to ensure new coach orders meet DSAPT requirements. V/Line will collaborate with PTV to understand the current accessibility of coach stops and advocate for improvements where needed. V/Line will work with coach operators to identify opportunities to improve access for customers with mobility restrictions who do not use a mobility aid.	All new coach orders are fully DSAPT compliant.	Annually
		Strategies for assisted boarding developed.	Year 3
5. Pedestrian connectivity between modes of transport	V/Line to identify opportunities to create greater connectivity between modes of transport within regional stations for customers with disability moving between V/Line operated modes of transport.	Review of access paths between transport modes at stations to identify improvements for people with disability.	Year 3
		Opportunities for improvement identified with DoT if required.	Year 3
		Customer service improvements realised.	Year 3

Priority Four		Building an inclusive culture	
Description	V/Line will continue to develop a workplace and workforce that is inclusive for all customers and staff.		
What success looks like?	Staff are provided the training and tools to collaborate with customers to support their travel needs. In line with V/Line's Equality, Inclusion and Respect strategy and the associated Action Plans, V/Line will continue to create a workplace that is diverse, inclusive and respectful and reflects the communities it serves.		
Action	Description	Outcome	Timeline
1. Organisational education	V/Line will provide learning opportunities to all staff to improve understanding of disability. V/Line will focus on continual education to support ongoing knowledge and skills.	All V/Line staff participate in training.	Year 3
2. Organisational engagement	V/Line will develop an internal engagement and communication strategy to promote inclusion and the delivery of positive accessible outcomes and increase the understanding and awareness at all levels of the organisation.	Strategy developed	Year 1
		Engagement activity hosted annually to celebrate International Day of People with Disability	Annually
3. Inclusive workplace and workforce	V/Line has an Equality, Inclusion and Respect strategy, focussed on achieving workplace equality through the development of inclusive recruitment, induction and job role support.	V/Line to implement inclusive initiatives as per the Equality, Inclusion and Respect strategy.	Year 3

Accessibility

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