# Travellers Voice

May 2023 – October 2023

travellersaid.org.au

# Journeys made possible

This magazine is produced with the generous support of: V/Line

Travellers Aid

# CEO Welcome

As another successful summer event season comes to a close, our staff and volunteers have loved receiving feedback from people like you who have used our access and inclusion services over this time.

It's an important reminder for all of us here at Travellers Aid of the reasons we do what we do.

Travellers Aid exists for people, offering assistance and support to keep you participating in your community on your terms.

Our purpose at Travellers Aid is to bridge the access and inclusion gap delivering our long-established services as well as looking for new ways to meet the needs of our service users – where you are and in the ways you need us.

It's ensuring Travellers Aid's website is up-to-date and gives clear information, so you can plan journeys with confidence from the comfort of your home. Annette's story in this newsletter shows what a difference this type of easy access can make, and is why our Winter Appeal is about improving the online experience for every service user by making our website more accessible and user-friendly.

Equal access is the ability to hire a dependable mobility scooter that fits on public transport and gets you to your appointment or special event with ease.

It means knowing that connection services will get you from the tram stop or car park to your event, so you don't miss a moment of the action.

And, if things don't go to plan or start to feel overwhelming, it means you can count on a friendly, calm and quiet place to catch your breath.

Travellers Aid is committed to bringing you all these things and more. We thank you for supporting our valued work and invite you to be part of our continued growth in enabling equal participation for all.

Elias Lebbos
Chief Executive Officer

# Mobility hire gives flight to travel plans

“If I hadn’t discovered Travellers Aid, I would not have been coming to Melbourne or to the Avalon Airshow at all,’ says Queanbeyan plane spotter, Annette.

When her initial idea of coming to Melbourne with a supported travel company did not work out, Annette began researching how she could travel independently.

While looking at public transport options online, Annette discovered Travellers Aid, and her dreams of attending this year’s Airshow, near Geelong, returned to life.

Annette says Travellers Aid’s friendly staff provided prompt and helpful answers to all her queries.

“They walked the journey with me, providing support from their end, so I was confident that the equipment would meet my needs.”

She was happy to learn that Travellers Aid had service hubs at both Flinders St and Southern Cross stations, which meant she could hire a mobility scooter as soon as she arrived in Melbourne. And with Travellers Aid’s equipment meeting public transport specification guidelines, she was confident the scooter would fit on each mode of transport she planned to use.

After traveling from NSW to Melbourne’s Southern Cross Station, Annette arranged for a free Travellers Aid connection assistance buggy to meet her train and take her to the service hub within the station, where she picked up the mobility scooter and began her adventures.

In addition to two days at the Avalon Airshow, Annette spent her first Melbourne ‘trip on wheels’ exploring other city highlights including the Monet & Friends exhibition at The LUME, Eureka Tower’s Skydeck, and the Shrine of Remembrance.

“The weekend was fantastic. It just had a sense of freedom to be able to do normal things again, and to be able to see these excellent attractions that Melbourne has on offer,” Annette says.

“I highly encourage other people to make their inquiries with Travellers Aid and find out what’s possible for you.”

# Events

Our busy and successful summer event season has come to a close.

In February, we supported patrons at the St Kilda Festival with buggy and minibus connection services. Travellers Aid assisted almost 400 people at the festival, including older people, families with young children, people with impairments or invisible disabilities, as well as people recovering from medical procedures.

Our presence at Moomba, together with staff from the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower team, made this iconic event accessible and inclusive for all who attended. A team of 20 Travellers Aid staff and volunteers supported patrons by providing wheelchair assistance and personal guidance. It was also our second year offering a safe, calm and quiet space for those feeling overwhelmed by the event.

A couple of weeks later, we were at Federation Square where more than 1500 people lined up for the 'A Walk in the Park' fundraiser for Parkinson's. We supported more than 50 participants with buggy connections and many others with wheelchair assistance.

In late March, a team of 50 Travellers Aid staff and volunteers assisted almost 1000 people to access another stunning Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. This was 76% more than we assisted in 2022. About 750 people used our buggy service, and more than 200 people used our wheelchair assistance or personal guidance services. Many people also hired wheelchairs and strollers.

That same weekend, Travellers Aid partnered with Yarra Trams to get visitors to the Formula One Rolex Australian Grand Prix. It was the first time our access and inclusion services were available to race fans, with more than 370 people making use of our wheelchair assistance and personal guidance services to get them from the nearest tram stop to the main gate.

Away from Melbourne, Travellers Aid's Seymour service provided wheelchair connection assistance for visitors to the town's annual Show 'n' Shine event.

Our peak event season wound up on the 20 May with free wheelchair assistance and buggy transfers for attendees of The Long Walk at the G.

Some feedback from event service users:

"Wonderful service and so inclusive. We feel very well taken care of and not forgotten."

"Without this my father would have lasted 30 minutes. With the wheelchair and other wonderful personal attention provided by Travellers Aid, we enjoyed four and a half hours at the Flower Show."

"Travellers Aid was the difference between Judy being able to attend the Garden Show. She was extremely grateful and couldn't speak highly enough of all volunteers and the service provided."

# Volunteer Week 15–21 May

We love celebrating our volunteers. And with your generous support, we have recruited and trained more volunteers to provide access and inclusion services at events.

Ensuring our volunteers have the skills and experience needed to best assist you takes time and money. Depending on the role, it costs $400–$1400 to put potential volunteers through our extensive recruitment process, mandatory checks and training. This investment means our volunteer workforce is made up of dedicated and skilled individuals who love what they do, as their feedback shows.

“Volunteering with Travellers Aid gives me a great sense of purpose and pride as I get to do my bit to uplift others, or simply to make someone’s day. It reminds me that there is more to life than just work and play, and that we can all play a part in supporting one another.” **Gary Lee OAM, Australia Day Council ‘New Australian of the Year’ 2016**

“I love how rewarding it feels when you volunteer with Travellers Aid being able to assist different types of individuals, and how thankful they are when you assist them.” **Nadren**

“Travellers Aid volunteer management was outstanding, it not only fully met all the standards, but also was a great example of how a quality volunteer management approach can lead to great outcomes for volunteers, bring excitement, motivation and make volunteering a rewarding experience.” **Katy**

Want to be part of something special? Join our volunteer workforce to help improve access and inclusion in our cities and regions.

Visit travellersaid.org.au/support-us/volunteer

Email volunteers@travellersaid.org.au
Call 03 9654 2600

# Experiential training builds disability awareness

Inclusion comes from awareness. And one of the best ways to build awareness is to give people a taste of the lived experience of those with disability.

Travelers Aid's experiential disability awareness training helps event organisers, tourism and hospitality venues, transport providers, businesses, councils and policy makers understand how people with disability might experience their spaces and services.

Through simulated disability – such as using mobility aids or wearing glasses to simulate vision impairment – training participants gain a sense of what it means to navigate a space with disability.

Travellers Aid's Operations Manager Maria Groner says the training is designed and delivered in collaboration with people with disability.

"This can provide deep insights and understanding; a lightbulb moment for individuals and groups that sparks the passion and compassion required to make a change in their sphere of influence," Maria says.

'It also provides ongoing connections between businesses and people with disability for future engagement when designing and reviewing access and inclusion strategies.'

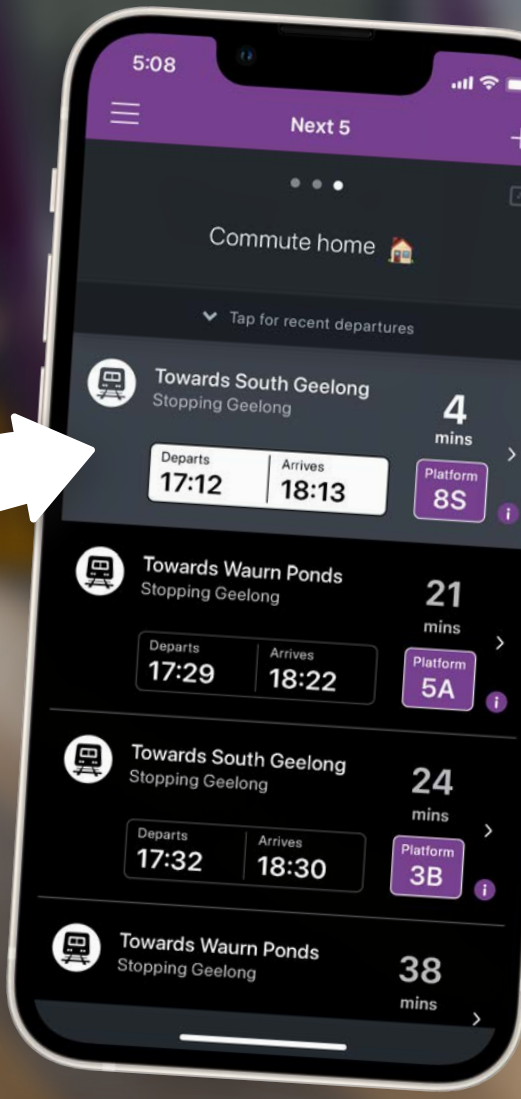
Feedback from training participants:

"City planners, developers, designers and architects out there should consider connecting with this great not-for-profit organisation to learn firsthand about the challenges of the city." – Steven Weir, Social Sustainability Manager, Co-Chair Lendlease Pride Network (Australia)

"There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, but through the training I learnt there are more opportunities to subtly improve how we architecturally design equitable spaces." – Mia Willemsen, Senior Architect, Hassell Studio

To find out more or to book a group training session call 03 9654 2600 email info@travellersaid.org.au.

# HERE TO GET YOU THERE




## Download the V/Line app today

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Apple, the Apple Logo, iPhone 13 mini and iOS are trademarks of Apple Inc. Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google LLC.

Please scan for more information

VICTORIA State Government | Department of Transport and Planning

V/Line

PUBLIC TRANSPORT VICTORIA PT

MSR03838

Authorised by the Department of Transport and Planning, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne