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Melbourne Airport Launches Airport Assist – An Australian first in accessible travel

Melbourne Airport has launched a new service, Airport Assist, a series of “Mobility Hubs” designed to improve the airport experience for passengers with disability and access requirements.

Starting today, four Mobility Hubs will open at Melbourne Airport to help travellers navigate between the airport’s car parks, check-in areas, baggage halls, and passenger pick-up and drop-off zones. The Hubs will be staffed by Travellers Aid and provide support to travellers with visible and non-visible disabilities.

The Airport Assist pilot service, the first of its kind in Australia, is designed to address the barriers faced by some travellers as they navigate the airport precinct, and will complement existing airline services.

The four-month trial will initially run from Monday to Friday between 10am and 6pm, and will offer the following services:

Accessible information to assist with navigation and understanding

Buggy transfers between the T4 ground transport hub (including car park, PTV bus service, taxi rank, and Uber) and the Jetstar, Rex, Virgin Australia, and international arrivals and departures areas, with wheelchair connections to Qantas departures*

Wheelchair transfers from a hub located at Virgin Australia baggage claim/International arrivals

Wheelchair transfers from a hub located at Virgin Australia departures

Wheelchair transfers from a hub located at Qantas baggage claim to Skybus, taxi or Uber

Sensory Packs

Communication Boards for non-verbal travellers

Hidden Disability Sunflower Program lanyards and information.

Melbourne Airport CEO Lorie Argus said the service offering is the result of insights from research commissioned to better understand the barriers experienced by travellers with disability and access requirements.

> “We know that our growing precinct, coupled with increasing passenger numbers, means there are more people who need help moving around the terminals and car parks,” she said.
>
> “One in ten travellers are now telling us that they need some form of extra help at Melbourne Airport, and with an ageing population, the number of passengers needing mobility assistance is only going to increase.
>
> “We’ve spent the past 18 months working to understand where we need to improve accessibility and our research has taken into consideration people with both visible and non-visible disability, as well as those who don’t identify with having disability but may require additional assistance. We hope this trial will help address the problems some of our passengers encounter getting where they need to go.
>
> “We are committed to creating a more inclusive travel experience, and the Airport Assist pilot is a significant step toward ensuring all travellers can navigate the airport with ease and confidence.
>
> “This service will be offered to passengers free of charge and we welcome feedback on opportunities for improvement.”
>
> Travellers Aid CEO Elias Lebbos said: “We look forward to collaborating with Melbourne Airport and Get Skilled Access to meet the needs of the growing number of passengers who require mobility assistance.
>
> “From Melbourne's major train stations, events throughout Victoria and now at Melbourne Airport, Travellers Aid is committed to providing services that enable people of all abilities

to travel safely, confidently and independently."

Get Skilled Access Co-CEO Zack Alcott said: "The Hubs will change the airport experience for people with disability. Hopefully, the Hubs can ease the fear of what has traditionally been quite a stressful experience for people with access needs.

"The input of people with disability and access needs was key to designing the Hubs and offering specific services that meet the community needs."

Nick Morris, Technical Principal – Accessibility and Universal Design at Jensen Hughes, said: "The creation of Mobility Hubs ensures that all people – from those with disability, to families, ageing adults or people with medical equipment – are able to move through the airport with ease and predictability. Staff can assist and guide them to make sure that they're movement through the airport is seamless. A fantastic innovation from Melbourne Airport."

Outside of the service's trial hours of operation, support for people with limited mobility is available via Melbourne Airport's Ground Transport team and the Chaplaincy service.

Further information about Melbourne Airport Assist is available: https://www.melbourneairport.com.au/onsite-mobility-hubs