



PDCN News

Volume 4 Number 5 November 1998

TIME TO GET ANGRY !

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A quick glance through this edition of PDCN News will clarify any doubts you might have about "getting angry".

PDCN is probably one of the most reasonable and conciliatory of organisations. But even we have our limits.

Frankly I'm sick of writing to Ministers to ask for an appointment only to be told "I'm sorry, the Minister is too busy. Please make an appointment to see the advisor."

I'm sick of people saying that to make buses or buildings accessible will "cost too much money" because that tells me that they consider other people's needs to be more important.

You see, there always seems to be enough money to provide people with chairs in offices, meeting rooms, restaurants, etc.

There's always enough money to build a set of stairs.

There's always enough money to put a hob in a shower recess.

There's always enough money to buy inaccessible buses with seats for the passengers.

There's always enough money to build schools that are inaccessible, and to buy books that a blind person cannot read and to buy CDs and tapes that a deaf person cannot hear.

What we need is a change in attitude.

Remember in 1981, IYDP, we had a sticker "Your attitude is our biggest handicap"?

Well, nothing has changed. Attitude is the key – always was, always will be.

What we have to do is start changing attitudes. We need to take every opportunity to point out the absurdity of saying there's no money.

There is always money. And what we ask is that when it is spent, it is spent so that we are included.

If that means that some able bodied people get a little less – then so be it.

At the moment people with disabilities carry the whole cost of inaccessibility and I'm angry about that.

The other night there was an item on the television about Victoria introducing a fishing license fee of \$20 per year and how that was outrageous.

Imagine how outrageous they would think it was if they were faced with the \$5,000 to \$10,000 we all pay each year because of our disability.

So read this edition – get angry – and do something about it!!!

Regards

John Moxon



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Insert: PADP Rally flyer

Insert: Social Justice Research Project

WE WILL RIDE !!

On December 4 the Australian Transport Council (ATC) will meet to decide whether people with physical disabilities have the right to travel on public transport.

Ministers for Transport from each State and Territory in Australia will decide whether or not the DDA Accessible Public Transport Standards should be recommended to the Commonwealth Attorney-General to become legislation.

The Standards were drafted in 1996 and have been continually hijacked by private sector interests.

The Accessible Public Transport lobby group is organising the **We Will Ride** campaign on behalf of all people with disabilities, the ageing population and other people who will benefit from accessible public transport.

Every Australian has the right to access public transport and to travel in a way that affords dignity and respect.

This is not a special request but a **BASIC HUMAN RIGHT!**

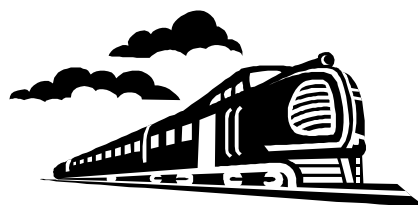
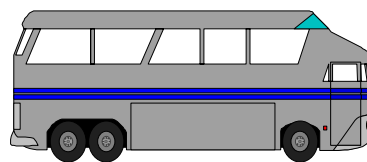
Show your support

You must support this campaign by one or more of the following:

- ▶ the transport petition available from PDCN;
- ▶ fax, phone, e-mail members of the ATC with a message that people with disabilities are sick of being treated like second class citizens and demand action now;
- ▶ fax, phone, e-mail Ministers for Transport urging them to support the adoption of the Standards;
- ▶ protest outside the Sheraton Hotel in Melbourne on December 4 where the meeting will be held;
- ▶ fax the Sheraton Hotel urging attendees to support the Transport Standards on 03 9690 5889.

PDCN calls on **ALL** members to get involved with this crucial issue.

To find out what you can do contact the PDCN office immediately or check out the Website.



PADP - THE PROGRAM FORCING US TO BEG!

The current PADP equipment system in NSW is a complete failure, unable to provide equipment efficiently and equitably (if at all) and forcing many people with disabilities and their families to go **BEGGING** for essential aids and equipment!

Fed up and disgusted, PDCN in conjunction with AQA, Paraquad, MS Society, Northcott Society and the Spastic Centre are organising a protest rally outside the Premier's Office at 11.00am on Wednesday 20 January.

This date coincides with school holidays to encourage families and children to attend. With the State election in March, the major parties will have begun electioneering and we want to ensure that disability is at the forefront of debate.

You can support this campaign in a number of ways:

- ▶ attend the rally;
- ▶ make yourself available to the media;
- ▶ lobby your local MP to take up this important issue.

What Do We Want?

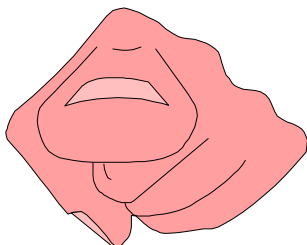
- ▶ An immediate doubling of the PADP budget with further increases in each of the next three years.
- ▶ Restructuring of the entire scheme - eligibility, management, criteria, accountability, complaints process.
- ▶ Elimination of means testing over the next four years.
- ▶ Immediate release of the Carla Cranny Report by the Department of Health.

When Do We Want It?

Now!

Get Involved!

For more details about what you can do to support this campaign or to obtain copies of the issues paper contact Lou-Anne on 1800 688 831 or check out the PDCN Website.



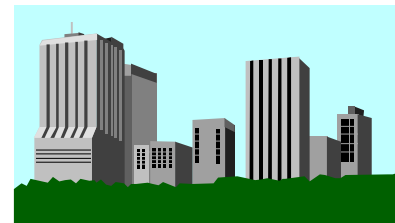
PAPD NEEDS ANALYSIS

We are looking for someone with a statistical research background to help us estimate the dollar value of the "aids and appliances" need in NSW.

The research involves pushing service providers, health professionals, and self-help disability organisations for hard and soft data on equipment, disability, and costs; statistical/actuarial "forensic" work, and an assertive phone manner.

The research will be part-time, under the supervision of Treasurer, Jack Frisch. The project will need to be completed by the end of February.

SYDNEY CITY COUNCIL OUTRAGE PDCN HREOC COMPLAINT



PDCN and PwD have lodged an Interim Determination application with HREOC seeking to stop Sydney City Council continuing with the current design of pavements and kerbs in the City.

We claim that Sydney City Council has blatantly ignored disability issues, and is making continuous travel through the City for people in wheelchairs and people with ambulant disabilities **worse and more dangerous than before the re-development.**

In their redevelopment, the Sydney City Council is:

- ▶ installing 125 mm kerbs instead of the 150 mm required to allow 1:8 ramps from the footpath into the wheelchair accessible buses provided for in the Draft Accessible Transport Standard;
- ▶ designing and installing bull-nose lips at the bottom of kerb ramps which are at times as steep as 1:4, causing difficulty to wheelchair users and a trip hazard for people with ambulant disabilities;
- ▶ failing to improve, and in some cases worsening the access to shops from the footpath.

Sydney City Council has stalled all year in its negotiations with PwD, and is now stalling in its responses to HREOC and attempts to set up a conciliation meeting. It has hired lawyers to help them through the semantics of legal deception, and has made solemn general promises of discontinuing with the current design.

Meanwhile, in a walk along George Street last week, the PDCN Executive took photos of workmen installing 125 mm kerbs and 1:4 kerb ramps with 25mm lips - contrary to Sydney City Council's assurances to HREOC.

The Interim Determination failed because HREOC chose to believe Sydney Council's assurances that all future kerbs and kerb ramps would comply with draft Standards, and would not accept our complaints without concrete evidence. The Commissioner acknowledged our skepticism about Sydney Council's good faith but felt our evidence was inadequate in the face of Sydney Council's assurances.

PDCN has sought legal advice, fighting for:

- ▶ all kerbs ramps being flush to the street;
- ▶ no kerbs being steeper than 1:8;
- ▶ ripping up of footpaths and kerbs where a 150mm kerb would have provided improved access from footpaths into shops;
- ▶ changing the level at bus stops to allow 1:8 ramps into accessible buses.

We have been led to expect that with the Olympics, our streetscape would be improved - that Sydney City was going to be a showcase for accessibility for the rest of NSW. Instead we are being given worse, albeit prettier, access.

Council's attitude has been an outrage, and we are determined to make everyone party to this outrage pay for it financially and politically. We risk losing and setting a negative precedent, but sometimes the risks have to be taken.

For copies of all correspondence on this issue, see the Stop Press page on our Web site.

TAXIS



PDCN has made a submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's enquiry into the Taxi Cab and Hire Car Industries. (The Issues Paper is available on www.ipart.nsw.gov.au and the PDCN submission available on the "Documents" page of our Web site).

The thrust of our submission called for:

- ▶ a universal accessible taxi across the whole taxi fleet;
- ▶ meaningful incentives to drivers who pick up wheelchair users and penalties where drivers fail continually to fulfil assigned calls; and
- ▶ a more equitable system of taxi transport subsidies.

Our submission noted the poor design features of the Maxi Taxis and the other taxis on the fleet and expressed the need to complement the release of new taxi license plates with adequate compliance and monitoring protocols, and meaningful incentives and disincentives to drivers.

The review of the industry by the Disability Council of NSW and a detailed 40-page complaint by one of our members detailed:

- ▶ the not uncommon 2-3 hour wait for taxis;
- ▶ the \$200-300 cost per week for people who work;
- ▶ the higher metered cost due to the meter's operation through loading and unloading, and the booking fee;
- ▶ the \$25 cap being in place since 1984, during which time prices have increased by 70%;
- ▶ the poor service at the Central Booking Service;
- ▶ inadequately trained drivers and telephonists and the CBS.

There will be a chance to comment on the Interim Report next year.

PRIVATE BUSES

The Department of Transport has recently issued a discussion paper *Performance Assessment Regime for commercial bus contracts in NSW*. The assessment regime aims to establish benchmark standards to improve the scope and service for private bus operators.

The intended benefits from this regime will include:

- ▶ more frequent bus services;
- ▶ new services;
- ▶ better access to timetable and route information;
- ▶ improved safety with the introduction of video surveillance;
- ▶ increase passenger comfort with air-conditioning;
- ▶ introduce 'environmentally friendly' buses; and
- ▶ **better accessibility for people with disabilities.**

It would appear that the introduction of a performance regime may improve accessibility for people with disabilities but accessibility for people with disabilities is the **ONLY IMPROVEMENT CONDITIONAL ON COMMONWEALTH FUNDING**. All other improvements must be incorporated regardless of government assistance.

Private sector operators have always put up an extraordinary amount of resistance when it comes to ensuring equity of access.

For people living in Western Sydney or outside the Sydney metropolitan area private buses are the only bus option available.

It seems that once again private bus operators have managed to squirm their way out of responsibility with the help of the Government.

The Department has organised information sessions and community consultations in Sydney and in regional and rural areas.

PDCN will be making a submission highlighting the gross inequity associated with this regime.

The closing date for submissions is 11 December. For copies of the discussion paper contact Paul Hayes on 9268 2800.

LO PO TURNS BACK THE CLOCK

At the NCOSS *Shifting Grounds* Conference in October the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Faye Lo Po announced her commitment to relocate all people with disabilities now living in large residential institutions within a period of 12 years.

The Minister feels the current accommodation policy is “*too rigid*” in restricting new accommodation services to a maximum of 6 residents, and is flagging the notion of increased cluster housing.

There is considerable community concern and alarm about these announcements. The PDCN Committee debated the issue of cluster housing vigorously. Some members felt the option was being driven by narrow economic criteria rather than choice and that it would become “*the*” dominant quasi-institutional model - they wanted the model condemned outright. Other Committee members felt it was a legitimate model in some situations, while agreeing that it should not become the dominant model.

A Supported Accommodation Coalition, of which PDCN is a part, has been formed. A whole-of-sector statement has been developed and sent to the Minister along with a request that the heads of major disability organisations meet with her to discuss the issue.

The Coalition’s position statement included the call for all supported accommodation options to:

- ▶ conform to the Objects, Principles and Application of Principles of the DSA;
- ▶ be developed in response to the specific needs of the individual with a disability;
- ▶ provide security of support for the individual with disability;
- ▶ provide individualised participation and inclusion in local communities for people with disability;
- ▶ ensure that people with disability live in households in neighborhoods which are reflective of the natural distribution of people with disability occurring in the general community;

and for:

- ▶ independent and transparent accountability;
- ▶ responsive and supportive funding arrangements;
- ▶ community structures promoting innovation and local initiative.

The Supported Accommodation Coalition expressed its concern “*that the Minister’s decision...re-opens the opportunity for models of care that will reflect approaches and values of a past era which diminish the participation, integration, individuality, autonomy and dignity of people with a disability*”.

SAFEGUARDING OUR LEGISLATION

There is increasing concern that the NSW Government will attempt to undermine the effectiveness of the *Disability Service Act (DSA)* 1993 and the *Complaints, Appeals and Monitoring Act (CAMA)* 1993. The Government is unwilling to allocate sufficient resources to ensure that services comply with the requirements spelled out in the legislation. This may result in people with disabilities receiving sub-standard services.

The Commonwealth Government has exacerbated the situation by renegotiating the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreements (CSDA) without requiring maintenance of the minimum standards of the DSA.

The Law Reform Commission is currently conducting a review of both pieces of legislation to determine whether the policy objectives of the DSA and CAMA are still valid and whether terms are appropriate for securing these objectives.

The DSA is an Act relating to the provision of specialist services to people with disabilities and the CAMA is an Act which established the

framework to monitor the community service system.

The DSA and CAMA have been instrumental in promoting the quality of services for people with disabilities. The current NSW law is powerful, and the task is to safeguard the strengths while identifying and advancing solutions for existing gaps and weaknesses.

PDCN will make a submission to this important review calling for:

- ▶ the Objects, Principles and Applications of Principles of the DSA and CAMA to be protected and strengthened;
- ▶ the focus of the legislation to remain with the person with a disability;
- ▶ better provisions to ensure **ALL** funded services comply with the principles and applications of principles and for sanctions to be imposed on those services which do not comply;
- ▶ DSA Section 9 plans be made **MANDATORY** for all government agencies including a requirement that an annual audit be conducted by the Auditor General's Department together with the Community Services Commission to ensure their appropriateness and implementation;
- ▶ the link between the DSA and CAMA to be maintained;
- ▶ the independence of CAMA bodies such as the Community Services Commission and the Community Services Appeals Tribunal be strengthened.

The deadline for submissions to this review is 14 December.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PDCN held its Annual General Meeting on Sunday 1 November at the Dougherty Centre in Chatswood. Thank you to everyone who attended. It was especially interesting to hear guest speaker Acting Disability Discrimination Commissioner Chris Sidoti.

For those of you who could not attend and would like a copy of the minutes or the Commissioner's speech notes please contact Shann at the PDCN office.

COST OF DISABILITY RESEARCH

The PDCN has been negotiating with the Centre for Social Policy Research at the University of New South Wales to try to collaborate on a comprehensive cost of physical disability study.

The Centre earlier this year published work on Budget Standards for various groups of people to determine how much each group would need to spend to achieve a minimum standard of living. They tried to measure a Budget Standard for people with a disability, but abandoned the attempt because they were not given enough money by the Government to come up with meaningful measures.

Cost of disability studies have been undertaken in the past on a time to time basis (including surveys by AQA and PDCA) and while useful, they have had critical shortcomings.

A cost of disability study should involve not only out of pocket expenses due to a disability (eg. aids and equipment, attendant care service, transport, etc) but should also account for:

- ▶ lost opportunities due to the disability - the lower employment opportunities and lower income due to discrimination, the value of the time costs due to poor service etc;
- ▶ the lost time due to the disability - waiting for assistance, less time available for employment;
- ▶ the cost of being dependent on family, friends, and neighbours for transport, shopping, personal care, and cooking assistance;
- ▶ needs rather than amounts actually spent within constrained budgets;
- ▶ the higher prices paid by people with disabilities for goods and service because they have fewer opportunities to shop for the lowest price goods;
- ▶ the useless items that are bought in hope and on advice following good marketing but turn out to be more promise than reality, and cannot be returned;
- ▶ whether the person with a disability is a child or an adult - with depreciation of equipment being more rapid for children, and time costs for other family members possibly being greater where the child has a disability.

SPRC will be looking for some contribution from PDCN in terms of either volunteers for focus groups or funding.

PDCN IN CYBERSPACE

As mentioned in our last newsletter we have re-launched our Web site by placing submissions, important letters, and information sheets as well as all past newsletters onto our Web site - www.pdcnsw.org.au.

All PDCN files are in *Acrobat* *.PDF format. To read these files, you must have *Acrobat Reader*, which can be down-loaded from links on our Web site. It is easy and legal to down-load *Acrobat Reader* at NO COST. *Acrobat Reader* is also available from most computer magazines which supply CD-Rom shareware software. In due course, we plan to make files in accessible *.HTM format using cascading style sheets.

Also, feel free to raise questions, make suggestions and pass on any relevant information publicly on the FORUM. And again, thank you Brian Newton.

COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

TYPE	DATE	SUBJECT	SENDER/RECIPIENT
Submission	Coming	Review of DSA and CAMA	Law Reform Commission
Submission	Coming	Performance Assessment for Commercial Bus Contracts	Department of Transport
Submission	Coming	Effect of GST on People with Physical Disabilities	Senate Select Committee on GST
Information	Coming	Questions and Answers on the GST	Public
Information	Nov '98	Benefits of an Accessible Community	Public
Submission	Nov '98	Taxi Industry	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
Submission	Nov '98	Impact of the GST	Voss Tax Consultative Committee
Submission	Oct '98	Transport Regulations Impact Statement	Commonwealth Attorney-General
Submission	Sept' 98	Building Code	PDCNSW
Submission	Sept '98	Building Outcome and Regulations Impact Statement	Commonwealth Building Codes Board
Government	Sept '98	Election Responses	Liberal Party of Australia
Information	Aug '98	A Model Disability Referrals Kit	Public
Letter	Sept '98	Bus Timetables	Minister Scully
Letter/Sub'n	July '98	Human Rights Amendment Bill	Senate Subcommittee
Letter	July '98	Effect of GST	Prime Minister
Letter	July '98	Taxi Letter	Minister Scully
Information	June '98	HREOC Complaints Kit	Public
Submission	April '98	Employment Standards	Attorney-General
Letter	Feb '98	Education Policy	NSW Dept of Education and Training
Submission	Oct '97	Education Standards	Standards Taskforce
Submission	Sept '97	NSW Disability Framework	Ageing and Disability Department

STOP PRESS

In addition, we will be putting documents relating to "campaigns" and "hot" issues on the Stop Press Page. This currently will mean documents relating to:

- ▶ PDCN/PwD complaint to HREOC on Sydney City Council redevelopments
- ▶ PADP equipment campaign (20 Jan '99) for increased funding/restructuring
- ▶ Transport Standards campaign for 4 December

At the end of campaigns, relevant documents will be put onto the Documents page.

PDCN UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

PDCN has a new Executive and Committee of Management for 1999. Welcome back to those members who served on the last committee and congratulations to new members who have come aboard. The new year should prove to be exciting and challenging for the PDCN.

A big thank you to the 1998 Committee who worked tirelessly to support PDCN in its aim to be a representative voice for all people with physical disabilities.

Person With A Physical Disability

(* denotes new member)

Kevin Byrne

Janet Cameron-Smith *

Carolyn Campbell-McLean * **Assistant Secretary**

Simon Darcy *

Tom Ferguson

Fred Kaad

John Mawson *

John Moxon **President**

Wayne Nevinson

Allan Quirk

Mark Relf **Vice-President**

Kim Rowles

Parent Of A Child Under 16 Years Of Age

With A Physical Disability

Fiona Anderson *

Jack Frisch **Treasurer**

Mark Pentacost

Organisations

MS Society - Bill Northcote * **Assistant Treasurer**

Northcott Society - Diane Campbell

Paraquad - Bob Duncan

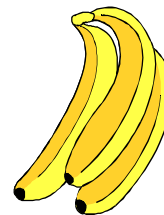
Other Interested Party

Robyn Chapman **Secretary**

Alix Rainnie (person with a physical disability)

Valerie Shevels *

Less Primate Committee Thinking Experiment



Start with a cage containing five apes.

In the cage hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water.

After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result - all the apes are sprayed with cold water. Turn off the cold water.

If, later, another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them.

Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes which have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs.

Why not? 'Because that's the way it's always been around here.' Sound familiar?

Physical Disability Council of NSW provides a statewide representative voice by being the communication link between people with a physical disability and service providers, decision makers in government, the community and the business world.

For information on membership telephone 1800 688 831

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Articles can be reproduced with acknowledgment. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of PDCN.

Contributions Welcome. NEXT EDITION DEADLINE: January 31st

THE BENEFITS OF ACCESSIBLE BUILDINGS AND TRANSPORT

AN ECONOMIST'S APPROACH

by Jack Frisch

Background - Transport and Building Regulatory Impact Statements

The cost of implementing the revisions to the Building Code of Australia and the net cost of implementing the draft Transport Standards were estimated in recent Regulatory Impact Statements at \$3.4 and \$3.7 Billion over 20 years respectively. i.e. total \$7.1 Billion or \$355 Million per year. These sums may appear to be large, but they cannot be interpreted as such without reference to aggregate benefits.

While the Transport RIS attempted a narrow definition of benefits focussed on the extra patronage and consequent fares raised and on savings to some Government programs due to improved transport, the Building RIS made no attempt to measure the benefits of changes to the Building Code except through a vague qualitative survey of people with disabilities, the results of which defied logical interpretation.

An Economist's Approach to Measuring Benefits

It is impossible to estimate the benefits of any particular DDA Standard because the standards are inter-related i.e. one part cannot work without the other. There is little point in having accessible transport if buildings are not accessible; and there is little point in having accessible education if transport is inaccessible or if discrimination is allowed to continue in employment etc.

It is however possible to estimate the benefits of accessibility in the community as a whole by attempting to estimate:

- ▶ how much people would be willing to pay for an accessible environment; and
- ▶ the production lost to the economy as a result of an inaccessible environment.

Economists make these sorts of measurements all the time. The final estimates involve reasoned guesswork which can be refined ad infinitum, but which reasonable people may argue over if the basis of the measures is made explicit and if the measures are verifiable (even if they are hard to actually find). The estimates below are initial "back-of-the-envelope" calculations.

Community Willingness to Pay for Accessibility

How much would people in the community be willing to pay to avoid inaccessible buildings and transport if they knew the probability of their requiring an accessible environment, and if they were aware of the costs of an inaccessible environment?

Better economists would look for the answer to this in an "insurance" model, for the issue really boils down to people insuring against the "hardship" of an inaccessible environment in the event of a person's needing such an environment.

The actuarial method is the same whether one insures against the loss due to fire, theft or disability. There is of course a market for insuring against the short-term income loss due to disability, but there is no market for insuring against long-term income loss, or losses due to an inaccessible environment (and for various reasons the necessary conditions for the existence of such a market are unlikely to ever occur).

The formula for estimating what a risk-neutral rational informed individual would be willing to pay for such insurance is simple - namely, multiply the probability of loss by the value of the loss. Of course not every individual is risk-neutral, few are informed, and possibly fewer are rational - but economists carry on regardless because it is not clear what the implications of alternative assumptions would be.

Given that almost 0.5% of the population use wheelchairs, it would not be unreasonable to assume that 0.5% of the population will need an accessible environment at some time in their lives. Nor would it be an exaggeration to suggest that the average value of loss due to an inaccessible environment when an average person acquires or develops a disability is 20% of income - because of income loss, higher cost of living, loss in lifestyle options etc (i.e. \$6,000 loss for a person on \$30,000)[#].

Multiplying 0.005 by 0.2 gives what is known as an *actuarially fair shadow price* of 0.1% of income i.e. \$30 per year for a person with an income of \$30,000. Multiplying by the 17,000,000 population, this amounts to **\$510 million per year or \$10.2 Billion over 20 years.**

This is a conservative estimate in that:

- ▶ it adopts a low probability of needing access (only 0.5% of the population) even though 4% of the population cannot access transport because of their disability; and 14% of the population has a handicap (i.e. limitation to perform certain tasks in relation to self-care, mobility, verbal communication, schooling and/or employment);
- ▶ it ignores the amount that people would be willing to pay so that friends, family, and other citizens are not handicapped by an inaccessible environment - surely people have some altruistic and citizenship feelings and are not wholly individualistic[‡].

[#] This assumes that:

- i) the total "loss" is about 40% of the income where the "loss" includes both out-of-pocket expenses and lost opportunities and
- ii) half of the total loss is due to an inaccessible environment

[‡] I am willing to entertain arguments for both upward and downward bias at frisch@chilli.net.au.

ii. Lost Production

A second benefit of an accessible environment is the lost productivity in the community due to people with disabilities being unemployed because of inadequate access.

Thus, people with disabilities have a lower participation rate in the workforce because of direct and indirect discrimination, with a major element of the indirect discrimination being due to inadequate access to buildings and expensive transport costs.

The participation rate in the workforce of the estimated 80,000 wheelchair users in the community aged 15-64 has been reported to be 38% as compared to a 76.9% rate for people without disabilities. If just 12,000 currently unemployed wheelchair users were made employable as a result of an accessible built environment and transport, the participation rate would increase to 53% which is still 23% below the national average. If these newly unemployed workers had an average productivity of \$25,000 per annum (almost \$10,000 below national worker productivity) then National Income would increase by **\$300 million per year, or \$6 billion over 20 years.**

This figures is an underestimate of an accessible environment not only in that it is conservative in assuming that the participation rate only increases by 15%, but also insofar as it:

- ▶ excludes people with vision and hearing impairments and people with ambulant disabilities who also have a lower participation rate and whose productive potential is also lost because of inadequate access;
- ▶ excludes the lost productivity due to the lower workforce participation of family members and voluntary carers who are needed to assist in transport, transfer and mobility because the environment is inaccessible.

The \$10,000 discount for productivity is problematical. On the one hand people with disabilities take more time in getting some things done, and in our system, the value of time is one of the keys to monetary reward. On the other hand, the greater workforce loyalty and problem-solving skills, the thicker “hide” and wider vision are factors which enhance productivity.

Distribution Effects

What is the cost of an inaccessible environment to a person with a disability? What would be the cost per person of an accessible environment if the cost of access was shared across the population?

These are what economists call distribution issues as opposed to a real resource or efficiency issues. It is a question which modern Economics has tended to ignore, but which used to be a principal focus of Economics. It is a critical question for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities have a higher cost of living due to an inaccessible environment because:

- ▶ they have to catch expensive taxis instead of using less expensive public transport;
- ▶ they have less choice in shopping and entertainment and therefore pay more for lower quality goods and services;
- ▶ they spend significantly more on non-discretionary equipment, goods and services which have little intrinsic “utility” apart from the ability to assist in accommodating an inaccessible environment (portable ramps, mobile phones, attendants for access);
- ▶ they face undesired cultural marginalisation and discrimination because so much ordinary activity requires “special” treatment in the face of an inaccessible environment.

\$4,000 per year would be a conservative estimate of the average out-of-pocket costs of an inaccessible environment to wheelchair users. Given the 120,000 wheelchair users of all ages, this implies an total cost of amounts to **\$480 million per annum, or \$9.6 billion over 20 years.**

This does not account for the large number of people with ambulant disabilities, people with hearing and vision impairments, and people with other disabilities affected by an inaccessible environment. If we were to apportion \$1,000 per year as the cost of an inaccessible environment to 250,000 of the almost 1 million people who use sticks, frames and crutches as mobility aids, then an additional **\$250 million per year or \$5.0 Billion over 20 years** could be added to the value of an accessible environment.

This still excludes 300,000 people who use mobility devices other than sticks, frames, pushers, wheelchairs and scooters as well as 620,000 other people that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has counted as having handicaps. In this, the estimate makes the **patently incorrect conservative assumption** that people with these handicaps (including people with vision and hearing impairment) are handicapped by factors other than the built environment or transport.

The estimate also excludes the cost to family and friends who also bear some cost of an inaccessible environment.

Thus we have 370,000 people bearing a \$730 million annual bill for an inaccessible community i.e. \$1,973 per person with a disability. This compares with 17,000,000 citizens paying \$355 million per year for creating accessible buildings and transport i.e. \$20.88 per citizen.

Conclusion

The approach taken has been on Economics grounds, and many people would argue that the issue should really be judged on the basis of Social Justice.

But Social Justice is a vague concept which means different things to different people for different reasons, and is implemented quite differently even by people who mean the same thing. Models include:

- ▶ the social-equity model of “from each according to ability, to each according to need”;
- ▶ the charity model of “from those who can afford, to those who deserve help”;
- ▶ the Darwinian model of “let it rip and see who wins”; and
- ▶ the Homer Simpson model of “from them, to me”.

Economists have trouble with the concept because there is so much disagreement on what it means and because the concept is not obviously measurable, but it is hard to see how, one can justify not creating access when:

- ▶ the annual benefit is \$810 million and the annual cost is \$355 million;
- ▶ people with disabilities will stop losing \$1,973 each and people without disabilities will lose \$20.88 each;
- ▶ the benefits of an accessible environment and the costs of an inaccessible environment to people with a disability have been underestimated^x.

^x Research into the cost of disability in Australia has been limited, and has had critical shortcomings in not accounting for the lost opportunities due to having a disability, the low “utility” value of many non-discretionary goods and services, time costs and other non-monetary costs, higher prices of ordinary goods, and the differences across age groups.

Why Won't Accessibility Happen

Without a change in attitudes, some sensible talking and some decent political leadership, the chances of getting access is slim even though it makes economic sense on both efficiency and equity grounds because:

- ▶ Governments do not know how, or do not have the courage, to finance the \$355 Million annual cost ie. how to raise the taxes, what expenditures to cut, how to share the cost among industry sectors and taxpayers etc;
- ▶ 10,000 or so property developers, transport operators etc. through their industry associations believe that the \$355 million cost of access will be born by them at something like \$35,500 per developer, operator etc. rather than by 14,000,000 citizens at \$20.88 per citizen;
- ▶ people with disabilities are unaware of how short-changed they are, and how they have internalised their oppression through the charity model, the Darwinian model and the Homer Simpson model;
- ▶ individuals lose sight of social justice issues on taking power because of their overwhelming desire to gain and retain power so that they can pursue social justice issues “in the future”.

We will however get access when:

- ▶ people with disabilities increase the political cost to politicians of not providing access;
- ▶ people in the media, universities, interest groups and political parties start thinking of how their lives would change if they or family member or friend acquired a disability;
- ▶ people in the community at large begin to see people with disabilities as citizens with rights and abilities and the same wants, aspirations and hopes as other citizens.