

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Group 2

Program 1.1

Question No. 22

Senator Fifield asked the following question at the hearing on 12 February 2013:

Senator FIFIELD: The two-wheelchair policy does sound like something from the 1970s. I might just ask the minister at the table if the government has a response to the decision that Mr Innes has taken to resign from the working group.

Senator Ludwig: I have only just read the letter today. I will certainly seek advice from the Attorney-General as to what information he may be able to provide. In fact, it has gone to Minister Anthony Albanese. I do not represent him in these sittings, but I am sure I can seek a response from him as well.

...

Senator FIFIELD: Sure, and I will certainly ask the commissioner about that later today. Minister, I thank you for taking on notice and noting that you will seek to provide a response to Mr Innes's resignation from the Accessible Airlines Working Group. I think you probably agree that it is quite a significant and dramatic thing for the nation's Disability Discrimination Commissioner to resign from a government advisory body out of—I don't want to put words in Mr Innes' mouth—frustration at progress on a number of issues.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Department of Infrastructure and Transport has provided the Attorney-General's Department with the following response:

The Australian Government has adopted a collaborative approach to improving access to air travel by people with a disability. The establishment of the Aviation Access Working Group (AAWG) in 2008 provided for the first time a forum for disability groups, airline and airport operators, and relevant government agencies to get together to examine and develop practical ways to improve accessible air travel.

Since its inception the AAWG, consistent with its Terms of Reference, has delivered a number of key initiatives including the establishment of Disability Access Facilitation Plans (DAFP) which were announced in the December 2009 Aviation White Paper. 41 DAFP's are now in place (10 airlines and 31 airports), covering all of the four major Australian airlines and all capital city airports.

The AAWG has developed guidance material for the aviation industry on training for staff working with passengers with a disability and for passengers and operators for the carriage of mobility aids on aircraft, the main recommendation arising out of the Transport Disability Standards Review. The AAWG also actively contributed to the revision of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 9 *Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS) Pertaining to Persons with Disabilities* and the associated *ICAO Manual of Accessible Air Transportation*.

The President of the Australian Human Rights Commission has written to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, on 19 March 2013 seeking advice in relation to two specific

access issues i.e. the two wheelchair policy of some airlines and the carriage of assistance animals on board aircraft.

The Government is considering its response to the Commission noting the two wheelchair policy has been discussed at the AAWG and was the subject of a court finding in 2012, while the carriage of assistance animals forms part of an aviation safety regulatory reform proposal expected to be released by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) for comment before the end of June 2013.