

MICHAEL BERKMAN MP

Queensland Greens Member for Maiwar



27 July 2018

Submission: Auchenflower Station Upgrade

Dear Station Upgrade Team,

As the local State MP, I welcome the opportunity to provide input on behalf of my constituents into the accessibility upgrades due at Auchenflower Train Station.

Community Feedback

My role as Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly is to represent the people of Maiwar, which encompasses Auchenflower and surrounding suburbs.

Over the past six months, hundreds of my constituents have contacted me about accessibility problems at train stations in my electorate. They have raised concerns about all stations, but have especially noted the problems at Auchenflower and Taringa stations, where navigation is practically impossible for people who use a wheelchair for mobility, our ageing population who may use a walking frame, or parents with prams.

In particular, many residents have relayed to me the dangers and difficulties associated with using the ramps to access platforms at Auchenflower Station, given they are extremely steep, narrow and poorly maintained. I understand this means the only option available to those unable to use the stairs at the station is unsafe for most, and practically useless for those travelling independently.

As you finalise the design for these upgrades I would urge you to engage in meaningful consultation with people with accessibility requirements who use the station regularly. My sense from speaking with constituents is that they feel their views have been largely disregarded and excluded in your creation of artist's impressions of the station's design. It is essential that the design process proceeds only with the valuable insights of the community most impacted by the station's current lack of accessibility.

Location

One of my major concerns with regard to Auchenflower Station particularly is its location; as you would be aware, the station is directly adjacent to The Wesley Hospital. This facility is used by a large number of people with mobility impairments, including the elderly, the sick, and people with long term disabilities, but in its current form, many of them cannot safely access Auchenflower Station platforms.

Necessary Inclusions in Upgrades

I understand from consultations with disability advocacy groups and individuals that there are real concerns about accessibility from the Southern end of the platforms. These do not appear to be addressed in the publicly available plans and artist's impressions. Currently there is pedestrian access to 3 out of 4 of the platforms via stairs from the underpass running off Auchenflower Terrace, to the west of the station. Those with reduced mobility must either go through or around the Wesley Hospital to the East, or up the impossibly steep Auchenflower Terrace. The Auchenflower station upgrade design should include a mechanism to allow

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disability access to one of the platforms via the underpass or directly from the street, by way of a lift or other design solution. It should be noted that a large proportion of station users access the station via the Southern end at the bottom of the steep hill.

Accessibility for Bicycle Users

I would also like to echo the concerns of bike users and urge you to ensure that adequate bike parking is included in the upgrades, to encourage people to travel independently to and from the station (without the need for a motor vehicle). I understand the Brisbane West Bike User Group has made a submission outlining specific suggestions in that regard, and I ask you to consider incorporating those recommendations into the upgrade.

I also concur with their recommendation that the station upgrade consider the surrounding areas in addition to the station itself, with the aim being increased accessibility and usability for people using a variety of transport methods (including on foot, on bike or in wheelchair or other mobility device). This would likely involve coordination with local council to include:

- Wider paths
- Wider kerb ramps
- Safe crossings
- Slower vehicle movements
- Lifts and ramps
- Connections to local green space, shops and services

Taringa Station

While the primary focus of this submission is the timeline and accessibility requirements for upgrades to Auchenflower Station, I would also like to request that the Station Upgrade Team consider urgent upgrades to Taringa Station. Despite the fact that Queensland Rail has classified the station under its lowest accessibility rating - "limited access" - I understand there are currently no upgrades planned. Taringa Station platforms are only accessible by stairs. Like Auchenflower Station, Taringa also has a particular need for full accessibility, given its close proximity to a number of medical centres and the new Westside Private Hospital.

A number of my constituents have expressed their surprise and disappointment that there are no existing plans to upgrade Taringa Station. Accordingly, in addition to the upgrade at Auchenflower Station, I request that Queensland Rail and the Station Upgrade Team commit to completing accessibility upgrades at Taringa Station by 2020.

Timeframe for Upgrades to Comply with Federal Standards

As you are aware, all stations in Queensland must be made fully compliant with the federal Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 by 2022. We are currently facilitating a community petition which requests that Auchenflower Station be fully upgraded by 2020. The petition also asks that the timeline for completion by this date be made publicly accessible. Given the number of train stations that will require upgrades to comply (as I understand from Queensland Rail's Accessibility Action Plan, approximately 74 stations were not fully accessible in 2014), it is crucial that Auchenflower Station is upgraded by 2020 and that this fits within a timeline for upgrades to all inaccessible and non-compliant stations.

Conclusion

Ultimately, my firm belief with regard to accessibility upgrades generally is that they represent an investment, rather than a cost. It is abundantly clear that train station accessibility is quickly gaining mainstream attention.

For example, the ABC recently launched a series of investigations into the problem. It is worthwhile noting that accessibility issues at train stations can exclude users from the broader QR network entirely. CRC's 2013 report on rail innovation found that "station access is an important component in the overall whole of journey experience in rail travel and is critical to customer experience and patronage growth".

Full accessibility at Auchenflower Station, and all other stations on the QR network, is incredibly important to ensure each and every citizen can exercise their right to engage with our broader community. I applaud the progress Queensland Rail has made towards improving station accessibility, and I look forward to further seeing your commitment to full accessibility enacted in practice, with the completion of the Auchenflower Station upgrade by 2020, and clear timelines for other upgrades necessary to achieve compliance with federal disability guidelines by 2022.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Berkman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Berkman MP