



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Woodford Railway Access Action Group Petition

2 June 2016

We are here today to debate easy access at railway stations, in particular at Woodford in my electorate of Blue Mountains. I have spoken on this issue a number of times in the past 12 months, and I am thrilled to acknowledge the achievement of activists from my electorate—who are in the gallery today—in gathering well over 10,000 signatures for their petition. They have brought another 85 signatures with them today. I pay particular tribute to Erzsi Gimes, Melinda Kelsey, Vangie Moller Elliott, Edris Moller, Ron Bromley, Ian McMillan, and Peter Cork, although many others have also been involved. These are the names of the people behind the Woodford Railway Access Action Group [WRAAG] who have been lobbying the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Andrew Constance, and his department for a long time. They have pursued access upgrades to their railway station, but have been rebuffed by this Government at every turn. A WRAAG petition I tabled last year with more than 1,500 signatures was replied to by the Minister with a form letter boast of all the money and effort he was putting in to upgrading railway stations elsewhere in New South Wales.

The Minister's response offered no hope and no information to these constituents who are facing a daily struggle to use essential, basic public transport. Indeed, the Liberal Government is very good at sending its politicians into this place to boast of upgrades to railway stations in their electorates. The member for Oatley tried to have me shut down when I was last on my feet talking about Woodford station because it was a distraction from his attempt to use the Parliament's processes to congratulate the Baird Government on pork-barrelling in safe Liberal seats. Sadly, that is the political approach the Liberals choose to adopt day in and day out in this place as well as in the community and in the media. They will ignore or downplay the concerns of vulnerable citizens on the one hand and manipulate parliamentary processes to run a public relations job for their own members on the other hand. They are tricky, they are slippery and they are dishonest. They are mean.

Currently on the Blue Mountains line there is no easy access station between Katoomba and Springwood. This is a distance by road of 30 kilometres—the distance between, say, Town Hall and Hornsby. That is the distance through the Blue Mountains that people need to travel by car or taxi to reach a train station that has disability accessible platforms. This is what the WRAAG activists in the gallery today are up against. They need to be able to go shopping, visit friends, family or the doctor, or even get to work, but they are excluded from these essential activities by a public transport system that is not designed for them. The Mid Mountains communities of Woodford, Hazelbrook, Lawson, Linden and Bullaburra are all many, many kilometres from those accessible stations in Katoomba and Springwood. The Mid Mountains needs an accessible station. Woodford residents need access to an accessible station.

Under the Commonwealth Government's Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Guidelines, Sydney and New South Wales trains must provide wheelchair accessibility to at least 245 of the train stations on the network. So far only 40 per cent of the 307 stations on the network have lifts or ramps installed—that is only 123 stations with easy access. There is simply no way that this Government will meet the deadline of 245 stations by 2017. The Government is not even halfway there. The Government needs to stop wasting time, stop backslapping itself and get on with it. Get on with upgrading our stations and start on the job of improving public transport; stop trying to privatise our services and cut back on government spending in these essential areas.

The message to the Minister today—if he is interested—from the 10,000 signatories could not be clearer. The people of the Blue Mountains, the village of Woodford and the members of the Woodford Railway Access Action Group assembled today in the gallery deserve better than the hand wringing and excuse making he has given them so far. Get on with the job, Minister Constance, or get out of the way. Give Woodford an upgrade and give the people of the Blue Mountains a modern, reliable and affordable public transport system.