

MICHAEL BERKMAN MP

Queensland Greens Member for Maiwar



20 February 2019

Hon Mark Bailey
Minister for Transport and Main Roads
GPO Box 2644
BRISBANE QLD 4001
Via email: transportandmainroads@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Train Station Accessibility - Taringa Station

Dear Minister Bailey,

Thank you for your letter of 15 January 2019.

As outlined in my previous correspondence with you, I do not believe that anything less than a commitment to 100% accessibility at QLD train stations by 2022 is adequate.

It is also disappointing to see that your response again relies on the statistics you provided in estimates last year, that "83% of Queensland Rail's passengers will travel to and from accessible stations once [currently scheduled upgrades] are complete". As you would be well aware, that figure has no regard for people who are currently unable to access the public transport network in Queensland, including because of deficient disability access. In my view, and in the view of disability advocates I've spoken to, this is an unacceptable approach to evaluating accessibility. It is important to note that even once the currently scheduled upgrades are completed, less than 60% of Queensland's train stations will be fully accessible.

Nevertheless, I was pleased to hear that Taringa Station will be reviewed as part of the prioritisation process for future funding. Taking into consideration the factors you outline - patronage, current level of access, intermodal interchange facilities, nearby community facilities and the status of adjacent stations - upgrades to the Taringa Station should be made an urgent priority.

Current Access Levels

As you note in your letter, platforms at Taringa Station can only be accessed by stairs. I understand it is one of just 20 remaining stations in Queensland that are classified as "limited access" but currently have no upgrades planned. I also understand that the station currently only has a ticket machine on one platform. This means passengers catching trains on the other platform may need to traverse a number of flights of stairs going back and forth between platforms to buy a ticket and catch the train.

Constituents have also raised with me the fact that the area surrounding Taringa Station is relatively hilly, and this likely inhibits its current patronage levels, as passengers need to travel up or down quite steep hills to get to the station (particularly from the north side of Taringa). Accessibility upgrades incorporating street level access from the shopping strip at Moggill Road or Morrow Street - for example, with a level walkway, lift and stairs - would likely encourage many more people to use the train.

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Patronage and Population Growth

According to Translink data,¹ Taringa Station is used by passengers almost 46,000 times per month. Its patronage exceeds eight of the 11 Queensland train stations currently scheduled for upgrades, including Cannon Hill, Strathpine, Morayfield, Buranda, Fairfield, Dakabin, Boondall and East Ipswich, which is used around 11,705 times per month. Despite this, Taringa remains one of just 20 stations where platforms can only be accessed by stairs and still no upgrades are planned.

While Taringa's projected population growth rate (1.3%) is slightly below the 1.6% state average, it is comparable to many of the stations with scheduled upgrades, and the patronage numbers above demonstrate that people who live in Taringa are more likely to use the train. According to information from the ABS and the Queensland Government Statistician's Office², the population of Taringa was 8,949 in 2016, projected to grow to 10,112 by 2026 and 12,214 by 2041. That projected growth rate of 1.3% is similar to Strathpine (1.3%) and Cannon Hill (1.4%), and significantly higher than the projected growth rates for Auchanflower and Boondall (both 0.6%). All of those stations have upgrades scheduled, and none of them have platforms which are only accessible via stairs (as with Taringa).

Nearby Community Facilities

As previously raised with you, accessibility upgrades to Taringa Station are particularly urgent given its proximity to the new Westside Private Hospital. It is likely that patients and visitors to the hospital will have mobility requirements that are not served by the current access levels of Taringa Station.

Taringa Station is also very close to other important community facilities including a park, a 7 day medical centre, pharmacy, pathology clinic, church, food providers and shops.

Status of Adjacent Stations

While Indooroopilly and Toowong Stations are both classified as independently accessible, I do not believe it is reasonable to expect patrons who cannot use stairs to travel between those stations and a location at Taringa. The distances between Indooroopilly or Toowong and Taringa Station are at least a 20 minute walk for people who do not use a mobility aid, and the route is likely to be longer for those who need to avoid steep, narrow or unevenly surfaced paths.

It's obviously particularly impractical for patients of the new hospital or the surrounding healthcare services to have to navigate to Toowong or Indooroopilly for a fully accessible train station.

Auchenflower Station

I also appreciate you providing me with an update as to planned inclusions for the upgrade to Auchenflower Station. However, I would still appreciate your advice as to when you expect upgrade plans to be finalised, and when they will actually be completed.

As I've mentioned before, the social, environmental and economic benefits of public transport mean full accessibility upgrades are an investment, not a cost. While I am advocating for upgrades to stations in my

¹ Queensland Government Data, *TransLink Origin-Destination Trips*, (accessed on 1 February 2019). Data available from: <https://data.qld.gov.au/dataset/go-card-transaction-data>. These figures are based on a snapshot of data for September 2018 for all time periods where the stations were the origin point of a journey and where they were the destination. .

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)', *Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 1 – Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, July 2016*, cat no 1270.0.55.001, ABS, 2016 and Queensland Government Statistician's Office, *Queensland Government population projections, 2018 edition: LGAs and SA2s, 2018*, (accessed on 29 January 2019). Data available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/> and <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/qld-govt-pop-proj-lga-sa2/qld-govt-pop-proj-lga-sa2-2018.pdf> respectively. Suburb boundaries are based on the 2016 edition of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

electorate as the local member, I believe it is incredibly important we make these changes across the entire State, to ensure each and every citizen can exercise their right to engage with our broader community.

With this in mind, I again urge you to commit to compliance with the 2022 deadline for 100% accessibility outlined in the Federal Disability Discrimination Act. Anything less is out of line with community expectations, and puts Queenslanders at a social and economic disadvantage.

Please feel free to contact my office on 07 3737 4100 to discuss this issue.

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