

Unwell and injured passengers on public transport

For the purposes of this position paper, public transport means all train services operated or franchised under the auspices of Public Transport Victoria (PTV). The principles could reasonably apply to any transport service that carries large volumes of passengers (e.g. commercial aircraft) or where a delay of a service has large scale flow on effects (e.g. traffic on a freeway).

Passengers using public transport may become unwell or injured for a range of reasons. These can include:

- an existing or unknown medical condition (physical or mental)
- effects of the weather (e.g. excessive heat, or wearing heavy clothing during cold weather)
- lack of food/hydration
- use of alcohol or other substances
- slips, trips and falls
- sudden deceleration or acceleration
- standing for long periods of time in a crowded space.

Currently, a significant number of unwell or injured passengers are left on board public transport while waiting for attendance by a first aider and/or Ambulance Victoria. For passengers who have minor medical illness or injury, the time waiting for a low acuity ambulance response can be considerable. During this time the service remains stationary, and any following services are delayed, held, obstructed, or need to make bypass arrangements (if possible).

Any incident that affects the movement of public transport risks secondary incidents caused by delay to subsequent services. The longer a service is delayed or held, the greater the likelihood of other passengers becoming unwell on other services.

PRINCIPLE

Safety of the unwell or injured passenger, other passengers and staff is paramount and should be front of mind, at all times.

In most cases when a passenger becomes unwell or injured on public transport, they can and should be removed to an appropriate (staffed and accessible) platform or station.

It should be the normal and expected action of public transport operator staff, Protective Service Officers, Authorised Officers, Victoria Police and the public to escort or assist an unwell or injured passenger from public transport.

Emergency services staff will be similarly encouraged to prioritise the transfer of passengers to the platform for assessment and clinical management, this includes patients in cardiac arrest.

HOW DOES MOVING THE UNWELL OR INJURED PASSENGER FROM THE SERVICE ASSIST THEM?

Moving the unwell or injured passenger from public transport will take only moments in most cases and will enable them to receive first aid in a safer environment. The short delay while the passenger is removed is not likely to harm the individual, even if initial first aid was commenced on public transport.

Other benefits to the unwell or injured passenger include:

- the potential to access and receive first aid and treatment on the platform/station where more room, support and equipment is available
- access to an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). If an AED is used there needs to be a suitable area of clearance around the person being treated, this distance can be more readily attained when the passenger is on the platform/station
- access to trained staff located on platforms/stations
- better maintenance of privacy on a platform/station
- quicker and easier access for emergency services at a platform/station
- increased access to crowd sourced responders and aide from other first aid trained passengers.

HOW DO OTHER PASSENGERS BENEFIT FROM MOVING THE UNWELL OR INJURED PASSENGER?

Public transport operators have an obligation to all of their passengers, not just those who become unwell or injured.

Delays on track-based public transport due to an unwell or injured passenger remaining on board will result in subsequent delays, and the potential for other passengers to also become unwell. With the exception of V/Line services, there is no access to water or toilet facilities on track based services.

By moving the unwell or injured passenger to the platform/station, public transport is resumed in a shorter timeframe and therefore:

- the risks to passengers on subsequent services is reduced, particularly in hot or crowded conditions
- customers have less delay or inconvenience
- the impact of any delayed services on the network or surrounding traffic flow is reduced.

WHEN NOT TO MOVE AN UNWELL OR INJURED PASSENGER

Clinically, the only reason not to move an unwell or injured passenger is if they have potential for a spinal injury. In this case, they will usually have back, neck, or an obvious head injury (trauma). These passengers should be supported where they are found and the emergency services contacted.

There may be non-clinical reasons why it is not possible to move the unwell or injured passenger from public transport. For example, if the passenger is very heavy, moving them without the appropriate equipment could present a risk to the persons trying to move them. Another example may be trying to move a passenger with challenging behaviours, who may pose a risk to those around them.

SELECTING APPROPRIATE PLATFORMS/STATIONS

When selecting an appropriate platform/station for an unwell or injured passenger to disembark, the following should be considered:

- **Supervision** – unwell or injured passengers should not be left unattended or unsupported if removed from public transport. Passengers may be supported by public transport operator staff, Protective Service Officers, Authorised Officers, Victoria Police, security staff, a family member or a member of the public.
- **Accessible** – when removing an unwell or injured passenger from public transport, an accessible platform is desirable for ease of removal, and also for ease of access by the emergency services.
- **Available first aid services/AED** – when a passenger becomes unwell or is injured, if first aid staff, equipment or an AED are available at the platform/station then this should be made available for the care of the passenger until the emergency services arrive.

CONSULTATION

Parties participating in these discussions include:

- Public Transport Victoria
- Safer Care Victoria
- Metro Trains Melbourne
- V/Line
- Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria Police.

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