

Parramatta Light Rail – Stage 2

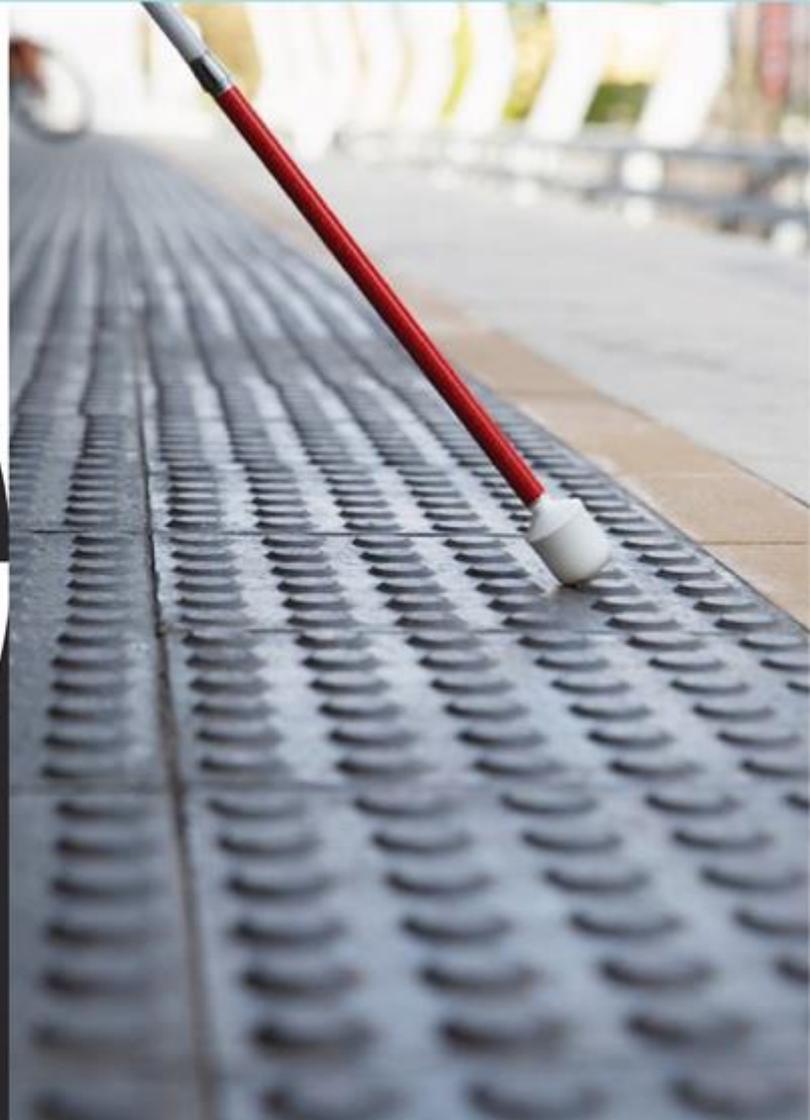
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**Guide
Dogs.**



Who is Guide Dogs?

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is the leading provider of specialist orientation and mobility services, supports and training across NSW & ACT. In addition to providing individual supports, equipment and training, we have significant access advisory and advocacy experience.

Our expert assessment and advice are provided to individuals, businesses and government through participation on panels such as Australian Standards, the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee (ATAC) with Transport for NSW, and numerous other private and public forums.

We have a particular interest in accessible and inclusive design for people who are blind or have low vision, and the implementation of these practices in public services and facilities.

Parramatta Light Rail – Stage 2

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has strongly advocated for the access concerns for people who are blind or have low vision related to Parramatta Light Rail, Stage 1.

This advocacy has included liaising and providing a report to the City of Parramatta Council, with the report being sent to NSW State Ministers, Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport, the Minister for Transport, and the Shadow Minister for Disability Inclusion.

As with the Sydney CBD Light Rail extension and Parramatta Light Rail, Stage 1, the removal of kerb ramps and the reliance on warning Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) at an at-grade/flush finish crossing is not an **effective or SAFE** means to prevent people who are blind or have low vision walking straight out into an intersection or into the path of a light rail vehicle. This issue is compounded by the rapid uptake of (silent) E vehicles and micro mobility.

People who are blind or have low vision rely on many factors to navigate a streetscape and road crossing independently and safely. Regardless of a person using a long cane, Guide Dog or utilising their remaining vision, it takes an enormous amount of concentration and cognitive load to remain safe and orientated to an area.

People who are blind or have low vision must be able to distinguish when the safety of the footpath ends the danger zone of road and light rail commences. It is incredibly important that a person who is blind or has low vision can determine when the safe zone of the footpath ends, and the road or danger zone commences.

Generally, a compliant kerb ramp is the best indication of the transition from the safe footpath to the danger zone. A 'compliant' kerb ramp provides a gradient change which is detectable to the person. At this kerb ramp, a person who is blind or has low vision can pause, assess the crossing situation, and then make their judgement for a safe crossing. The correctly aligned kerb ramp itself also helps with straight line navigation, allowing a person to walk straight across the road and not veer into the intersection.

For a Guide Dog handler, the kerb ramp allows the person to reinforce the positive behaviour of the Guide Dog who has taken them to the ramp and stopped prior to the road. A Guide Dog **CANNOT** reliably stop at warning TGSIs at an at-grade/flush finish crossing.

Unfortunately, we have had both documented and anecdotal reports of people who are blind or have low vision stepping out into the road and light rail corridor at both Parramatta and Sydney CBD. With near misses (and an under-reporting of incidents) we are aware that people are now actively avoiding these dangerous areas or having to travel accompanied.

New infrastructure should be built to ensure inclusion and independence, not exclusion and danger.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is especially concerned with the proliferation of this unsafe flush finish design, especially at intersections, and we do not want to see it implemented in Stage 2 of PLR. We would welcome the opportunity to work with TfNSW and Parramatta Light Rail (PLR) to improve this unsafe design to ensure that people who are blind or have low vision can access their communities and public transport with safety, confidence, and independence.

Kind regards,



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