

# Footscray station lifts going down, mostly

BY GRANT REYNOLDS

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THE lifts at Footscray railway station are breaking down at the rate of more than once every three days, leaving elderly and disabled commuters stranded.

In response to questions on notice from Greens MLC Colleen Hartland, Transport Minister Terry Mulder told State Parliament that lifts at the station were "inoperative" 117 times between July last year and April.

Precise times and the duration of the breakdowns was not provided.

The lifts, installed as part of the \$14.7million William Cooper footbridge project, are heavily used by commuters and residents who walk to the nearby Footscray market.

A recent survey by the Metropolitan Transport Forum asked commuters to rate their station. It found Footscray was No.8 among Melbourne's 10 worst stations, and what annoyed commuters was the lack of an escalator and "stairs [being] too steep for elderly and disabled".

Train stations built without ramps which had frequent lift failures were also singled out as a concern by the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) report *Creating Accessible Journeys*. "The failure of a lift risks people being unable to access the platform, or worse, being stuck on it," it said. "This could mean being trapped on a platform with no means of escape during an emergency, such as during a power outage or fire."

VCOSS transport policy analyst Llewellyn Reynders said Footscray and Laverton stations were often singled out by commuters with special needs as particularly bad examples of poor access.

He said the government focus had been on meeting minimum access standards rather than looking at what would work best.

"In places like Footscray we need to have the capacity for access to continue even if something happens, like when a lift breaks down."

He said a number of issues such as station layout, the size of lifts and unstaffed ticket booths made commuting "uncomfortable" for a proportion of the population, an unacceptable situation given the amount of money spent on Footscray station as part of its upgrade.

Ms Hartland said it was appalling that for some commuters an out-of-order lift meant the end of their journey.

"The whole issue is that this is how they make the station disability-compliant. If the lifts aren't working the station isn't compliant.

"They just don't understand what it means to not be able to use the train and not be able to get to work and school."

Metro Trains Melbourne is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the lifts.

VicTrack monitors lifts at five stations, including Laverton and Footscray, and reports faults to station staff and Metro.

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Upward move: Leo Ledwich waits for the station lift with Margaret Rice and Colleen Hartland. Picture: Darren Howe

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