Significant Incident Summary No. 16

Fatal incident during operation of vehicle wheelchair lift

Date: 2 November 2026

Background

A person using a wheelchair was fatally injured while exiting a wheelchair accessible vehicle that had been provided for on-demand passenger transport services.

After arriving at the passenger's destination, the vehicle operator manually moved the passenger's wheelchair backwards to the rear of the vehicle to exit onto the lift platform. Instead of being level with the floor of the vehicle, the platform was positioned at ground level. The wheelchair tipped backwards and the passenger fell to the ground sustaining fatal head injuries.

The vehicle was fitted with a rear-access hydraulic wheelchair lift. Wheelchair lifts use a platform to raise or lower a passenger between ground level and vehicle-floor level while seated in their wheelchair. The lift was operated by the driver of the vehicle using a control pendant with separate functions for moving the platform up and down, and to and from the locked transit position.

Contributory factors

- Lack of operator training on how to operate the wheelchair lift. The worker was provided training 14 years before the incident. Refresher training had not been provided.
- Inconsistent method of moving the passenger out of the vehicle that was not aligned with previous training and the manufacturer's operator manual.
- The person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) did not require workers to complete the relevant national training unit of competency.

Recommendations

A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of workers and other people is not put at risk from work carried out by the PCBU.

To reduce the likelihood of future incidents of this nature, PCBUs should:

- provide information, training, instruction and supervision that:
  - is aligned to the accredited unit of competency, TLIC0026 *Provide wheelchair accessible taxi services to passengers with disabilities*
  - covers the operation of each type of wheelchair accessible vehicle, any modifications and controls for the lift the worker will be required to use, including safe use of dual-function controls (e.g. activate only one function at a time)

- develop, implement and regularly review policies and procedures for the safe operation of wheelchair accessible vehicle modifications, and communicate these to workers
- review control measures and revise those that do not control risks effectively
- provide periodic supervision and observation of wheelchair lift or hoist operations to verify safe work practices.

References and further information

Work Health and Safety Commission

- *How to manage work health and safety risks*: *Code of practice*

Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure

- Transporting people with disability

National Training Register

- TLIC0026 Provide wheelchair accessible taxi services to passengers with disabilities

Safe Transport Victoria

- Guide to transporting passengers safely in a WAV