



Central West Cycle Trail Committee Inc

## Briefing Note – Bicycles on NSW Regional Trains 13 March 2023 v1

This paper outlines the issues with taking bicycles on NSW regional trains and some simple low-cost methods for improving the accessibility bike riders without compromising capacity for other passengers.

### 1. Cycle tourism is growing in NSW.

Two important strategy papers released recently by the NSW Government, Active Transport and Adventure Cycling, are both designed to promote increased cycling in the state and more specifically regional NSW.

Up to 3,000 cyclists a year use the Central West Cycling Trail (CWCT), yielding spending of approximately \$3M of spend in the main cornerstone towns of Mudgee, Gulgong, Wellington, Dubbo, Ballimore, Mendooran and Dunedoo.

Money spent in the smaller towns of Gulgong, Ballimore, Mendooran and Dunedoo has made a significant difference to those communities already, with extra people being employed and new businesses springing up to support riders.

As the great story of the CWC and other trails, such as the Orange Villages Bike Trail (OVBT) and the Lachlan Valley Trail, become more widespread many more people wish to come and experience the hospitality of the locals and spend quality time on these quiet county back roads or rail trails.





## 2. Boxing requirement discourages cyclists to the bush

There are many cyclists who would prefer to travel by train but are hindered by the need to dismantle their bike, pack it in a box and reassemble it before the ride even starts, then repeat the whole exercise for the return journey.

If you are one of the fast growing users with an e-bike forget it, as the 20kg limit usually rules even this tedious exercise out. These people can't use the train at all and just go somewhere else to spend their money.

The exclusion of the rapidly growing e-bike sector from public transport is a serious issue. For "the period 2016 to 2019, e-bike sales tripled, with sales growing faster than any other part of the domestic bike market," ( Peter Bourke, General Manager of Bicycle Industries Australia). E-bikes are becoming especially popular with the demographic who use trails such as the CWC and rail trails.



Most e-bikes exceed the 20kg limit set by NSW TrainLink , so even in a box it is still a No Go !

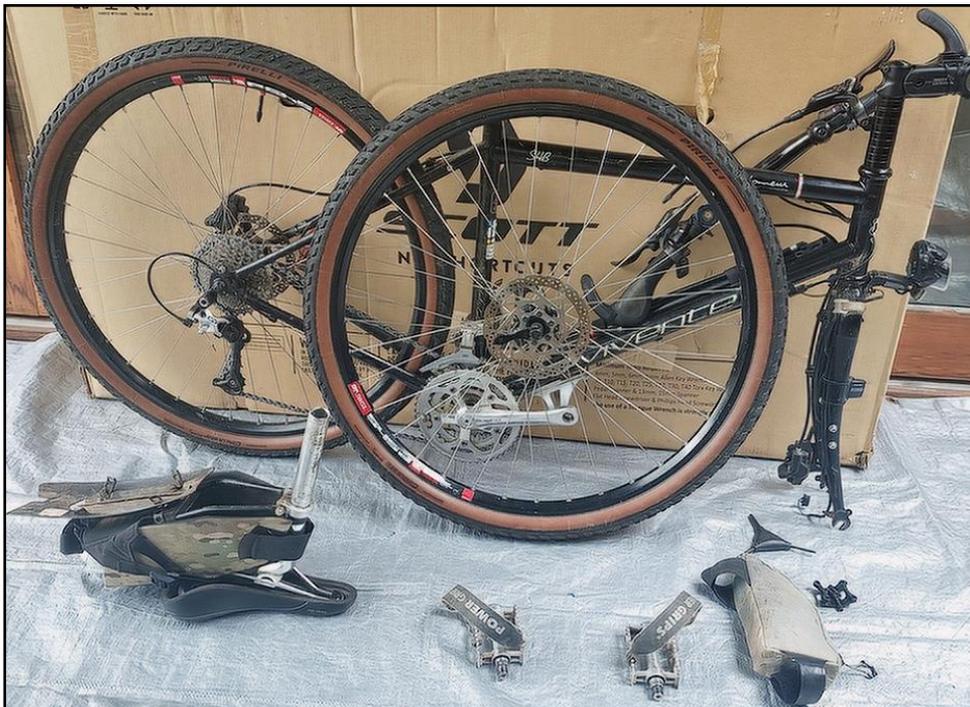
Box size limits are 135cm x 80cm height x 24cm and a bicycle is usually 160cm x 60cm x 1m height. To fit, at least one wheel must come off as well as the seat, both pedals and usually the handlebar. The bike and all the loose items need to be secured then placed into the box. To disassemble and reassemble it requires both mechanical knowledge and tools, for instance, the threads on pedals are reverse on the left side only, gears and brakes may also need readjustment and testing.

Obtaining a box is also difficult, particularly in smaller towns. Even Wellington (5,000 people) has no bike shop nor station staff to purchase a box from.

The handling of a box is considerably more difficult, needing two people compared to wheeling a bike on and off the train. The innovation of wheels on luggage has been adopted universally, yet here we are going in the reverse direction taking the wheels off bikes!



Bike alongside a box, still assembled but with no major bags attached.



Bike partly disassembled ready to load into the box. Once the box is loaded, at around 20 kg, becomes very awkward to handle and normally needs 2 people to move.

### 3. Low cost changes on regional XPT trains to encourage cyclist patronage - “Thinking outside the box”

There are practical low cost solutions which would allow bicycles to be wheeled on and off the train (i.e. no disassembly or boxing).

There are at least three methods of achieving this roll-on capacity.

#### a. Utilise Unused space in the checked luggage area of an XFH car.

Given the advent of roller-based luggage most people now take their bags onto the car in which they are travelling, there is normally unused space in the luggage car. Instead of insisting on bikes being boxed, allow the cyclist passenger to wheel the bike into this area under the supervision of the train attendant.

Bikes can be hung vertically in a modified area, similar to the way boxed bikes and surfboards are stowed now, OR they can be stowed on their wheels in the 4 shelved sections of the car by removing or hinging the lower shelf out of the way. Again simple retaining straps would be used to keep them in place.



Existing vertical partitions require some modification to allow bikes with handlebars to hang.



The lower luggage shelf could be removed or hinged to allow bikes to be stowed on their wheels and retaining straps added. There are 4 areas with a lower shelf thus up to 12 bicycles could be stowed in this manner. If hinged when there are no bikes the shelf is still available.

b. Utilise unused space due to no wheelchair or passengers with a disability booked on the journey.

Very often the space allocated to wheelchairs and passengers with a disability is not used, so the space could be used for bicycle storage. Up to 4 bicycles could be stowed in this area on an overflow or standby basis, as booking priority would be given to those using a wheelchair or other assistive device.



Wheelchairs are often not on board. 3 – 4 bicycles could be stowed here. Suggest improving safety by adding securing straps for equipment including wheelchairs, disability scooters and bicycles.



Single seat for a person with a disability is often empty. 1 bicycle could be stowed here. The photo above shows how window protection can be applied in other locations. Suggest improving safety by adding securing straps for equipment including wheelchairs and bicycles.

c. Replace a small number of seats in an economy car.

The XPT train from Sydney to Dubbo normally has adequate capacity for bikes on board without the need for a box. A study of the passenger numbers on the Dubbo trains over the last 12 months show that at least 20 seats are not used, even during busy periods.

Remove 4 to 8 seats (i.e. Up to 4 'double' seats) at one end of an economy car (either an XF or XBH). There are 4 bolts per double seat assembly. Simple retaining loops could be installed using the 'floor rail' to secure the bikes to the floor. Also add protection for the windows using the same method as for the wheelchair space in the XBR car.

Between 4 and 8 bikes could be stowed in this area, subject to the overall size of the bikes and the number of seats removed.

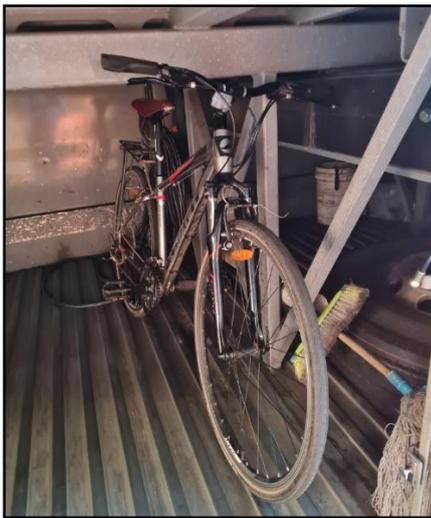


Photo of the bolts currently using the 'floor rail' holding the aisle end of a seat assembly in place on the XPT, there are 2 more fasteners at the wall interface.

The above methods are utilised on various other rail systems and would support the increase in cycle tourism in regional NSW together with the associated financial benefits.

d. Fitting a bicycle under a Coach

Its far easier to fit a bike under a coach if it is NOT in a box. It can be wheeled to the coach and into position, then easily secured in the luggage compartment. There are many connections from the train by coach to cycling trails so this last leg can be simplified in this manner. Once the passenger has arrived at the final location the bike can be simply wheeled or ridden immediately. Having the bike in a box would be much the process more difficult for everyone concerned.



A bike can be simply stowed in the coach luggage compartment which is very common in other jurisdictions.

#### **4. Tale of Two Trains aka discriminating against country passengers**

A passenger can travel from Sydney to Lithgow on the metropolitan system without having to box or book their bike – total cost between \$6.50 to \$9.30 adult full fare.

A passenger who travels by the XPT from Sydney to Lithgow faces:

Costs: Adult fare (economy saver) \$15.59 PLUS Bike fare - \$12.10 PLUS Box, up to \$30.00 PLUS Disassemble the bike into the box and reassemble at the end of trip.

A total of \$57, an hour of extra time plus the often daunting task of disassembly/ re-assembly of their bike.

Note that the luggage check closes 30 mins before scheduled departure.

Why are bicycles so much better accommodated on metropolitan trains than regional trains?

## **5. Lithgow the “Box Barrier to Bicycling in the Bush”**

A person can travel to from Sydney Central station to Lithgow, Scone, Dungog or Goulburn without having to box or book as luggage their bike, and without charge. However, to travel further the full array of ‘rules and costs’ are brought out by NSW TrainLink (see above)

## **6. Refitting the current fleet is a priority – new trains years off**

Although there are no confirmed changed rules for the new regional trains, they are still years away from delivery. The people of regional NSW can't wait. They deserve to be part of the cycle tourism wave and take advantage of the associated financial benefits. In the meantime the proposed changes to the current XPT trains will assist NSW TrainLink to adjust to the improved access for cyclists and boost passenger numbers.

## **7. NSW TrainLink needs to be promoting and accommodating the cyclist market.**

Mention that trains need patronage and that if the Adventure Cycling Strategy and Active Transport Strategy are to come to fruition a customer friendly approach is needed.

Currently, NSW TrainLink is an impediment to bicycle patronage, and bicycles reaching the bush.

Excellent on-board staff need to be accompanied by customer friendly policies.

## Current NSW TrainLink Luggage Rules and Allowances

**Bicycles**

Push bicycles are accepted on NSW TrainLink services.

With limited space available on each service, reservations are essential. A bicycle reservation is counted in addition to the customer luggage allowance.

Bicycle must be contained in a bicycle box to protect the bicycle. A bicycle box can be provided from bicycle retailers or provided on request. When packed no part of the bicycle is to protrude from the box. Boxes must not be torn or damaged. Ensure the item can be clearly identified with your name, address, origin, and destination.

**Book your bike**

Cost	Size	Check in
\$12.10 per item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bicycle box must be no larger than <b>135cm long x 80cm high x 24cm wide</b>.</li> <li>The container needs to be <b>less than 20 kg</b> in weight to be accepted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please arrive at least one hour before departure to allow time to pack and check in your item.</li> <li>Luggage check-in closes 30 minutes before scheduled departure.</li> </ul>

**Folding bicycles**

Folding bicycles can travel for free, however reservations are essential.

Folding bicycles must be packed in a protective cover and be no larger than **79cm long x 59cm high x 36cm wide**.

**Luggage allowance**

Travel on any NSW TrainLink service includes a set luggage allowance, which varies depending on the type of ticket you brought.



**Economy on Train:**

- One piece of hand luggage (maximum 10kg)
- One piece of large luggage (maximum 20kg)

**First class on Train and Coach:**

- One piece of hand luggage (maximum 10kg)
- Up to two pieces of large luggage (maximum 20kg)

When travelling on a connected train and coach journey, the greater luggage allowance provisions the whole journey.

Coach: All luggage will be stored in the vehicle's luggage hold.

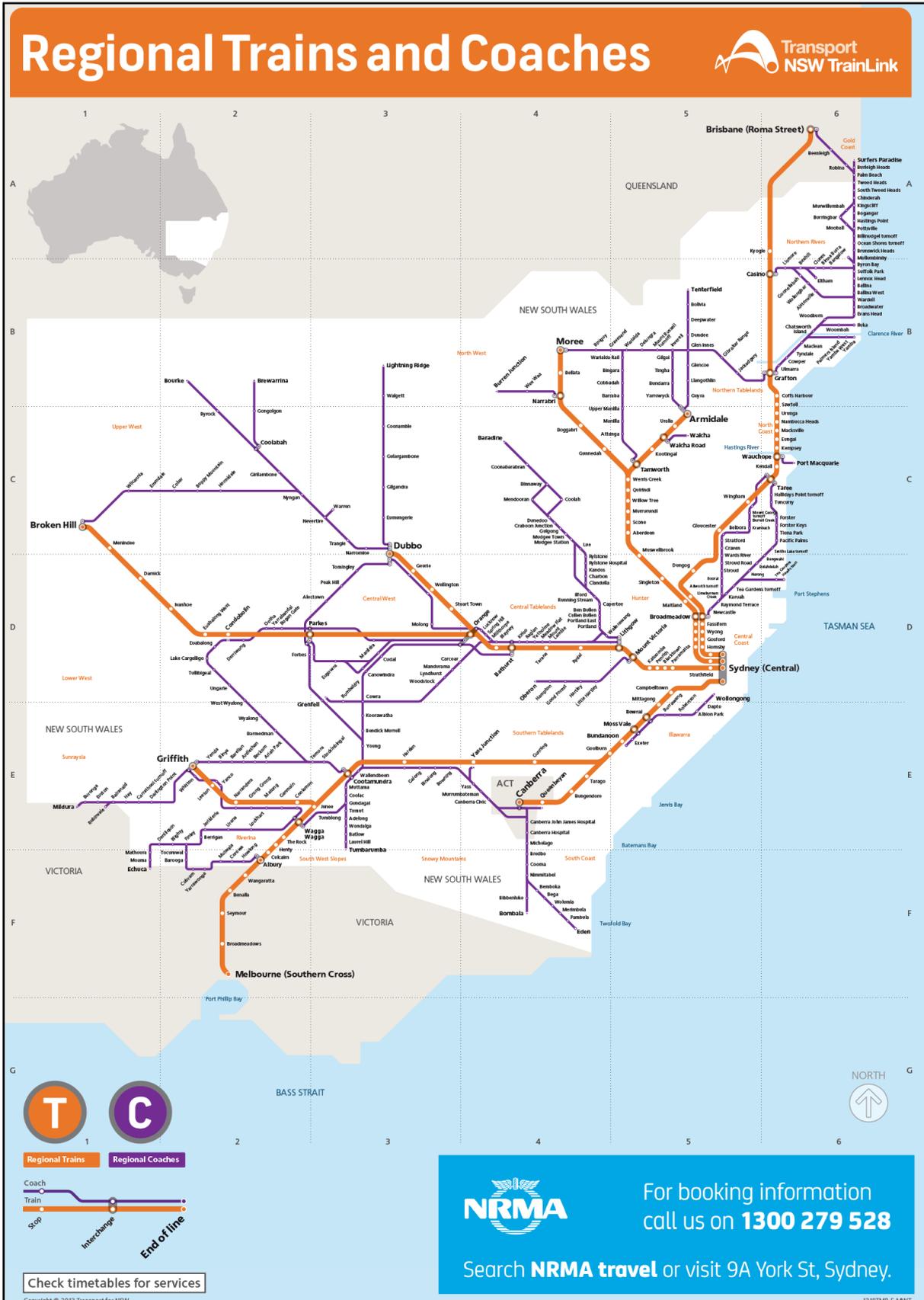
Train: Checked luggage must be lodged at least 30 minutes prior to departure and is not available at all stations. Space is limited. Carry-on luggage may be stored on the luggage racks provided or at the end of the carriage.

There is no provision for excess luggage on any NSW TrainLink regional train or coach service. If your luggage exceeds the maximum allowance, it will be refused.

You may be required to present and open luggage items for inspection prior to travel. NSW TrainLink reserves the right to refuse travel.

To ensure the safety of all staff and customers please follow the [luggage allowances and restrictions](#).

# NSW Regional Routes



## Which Trains on Which Route

**INFO** XPLOERER trains ▲

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**Services**

- Sydney to [Armidale](#), [Moree](#), [Griffith](#), [Broken Hill](#) and [Canberra](#).

**Seating**

- Economy: 28 degree recline
- First Class: Extra leg room and a 40 degree recline

**Accessibility**

- 4 accessible seats for customers with a disability
- A further 2 spaces for wheelchairs.

**Toilets**

- Toilets are provided at the end of all carriages.
- Accessible toilets with baby change facilities are located in the Buffet and saloon - first class car.

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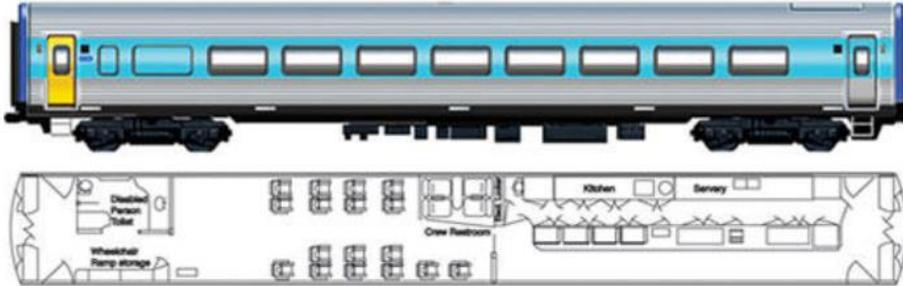
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## XPT Trailer Selected Existing Car Layouts – XBR, XF, XFH(luggage) Car types.

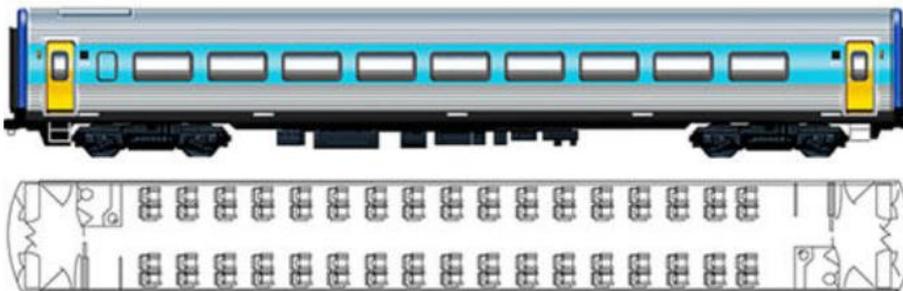
### Buffet and saloon - first class car (XBR)

Seating capacity: 16 plus two wheelchair spaces. The accessible toilet is in this carriage.



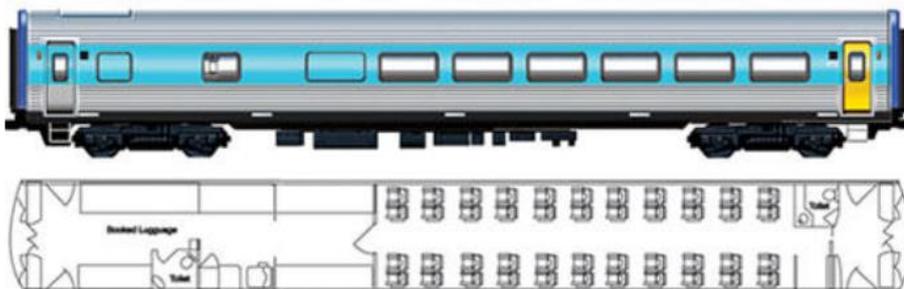
### Saloon - economy class car (XF)

Seating capacity: 68



### Saloon - economy class car (XFH)

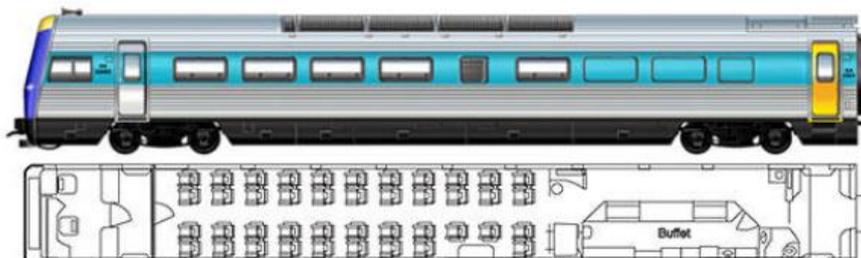
Seating capacity: 44



## XPLORER Existing Car Layouts

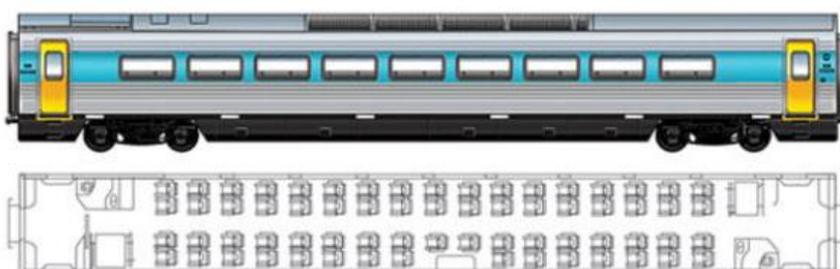
### Buffet and saloon - first class motor carriage (EA)

Seating capacity: 42



### Saloon - economy class motor carriage (EB)

Seating capacity: 66



### Saloon - economy class motor carriage (EC)

Seating capacity: 38 plus two wheelchair spaces. The accessible toilet is in this carriage.

