

Article rank | 10 Nov 2010 | Melbourne Weekly Port Phillip | BY CHRISTIE PEUCKER

# Libs on a roll with station ramps promise

DISABLED public transport users have praised a Liberal Party pledge to retain the ramps at Balaclava station.

The Liberals moved last week to match the Brumby government's pledge to upgrade the station if elected, plus retain ramp entry to its platforms.

Disabled users have been critical of the ALP's proposed upgrade because it offered no provisions if the planned lifts stopped working.

Liberal candidate for Caulfield, David Southwick committed \$13.3 million to upgrade the station by 2013, which will include lifts, stairs and gradually-sloped ramps.

"The concern we've had is that when lifts break down, people can be stranded on the platform.

"If you are coming off a train, particularly at night, it can be a very dangerous environment," Mr Southwick said.

"Labor's 'solution', if its lifts broke down, would be for a wheelchairbound passenger to get off at Balaclava, discover the lifts were inoperative, wait for the next train for up to 20 minutes, travel to Windsor or to Ripponlea, [and] book a wheelchair-accessible taxi to get back to Balaclava."

Mr Southwick said there had already been an issue at Laverton station where the lift buttons had been glued shut, trapping passengers.

Disability advocate Michael Merrett said it was a positive move, that would ensure safety for all transport users. "I don't think there should be a situation with no ramps there," Mr Merrett said. Melbourne Transport Forum chairwoman Jackie Fristacky said the elderly, mothers with prams and bicycle commuters would also benefit from the ramps.

"Accessibility is vital. Waiting for a lift which may malfunction or may be full doesn't work," she said.

Government spokesperson Stephen Moynihan said the proposal for the Sandringham-line station released in September elevated Balaclava station to premium status, meaning it would be staffed from first to last train, seven days a week. This would alleviate any cause for concern or need for the ramps.

Mr Southwick said under the Liberal's plan, passengers would be safer with Victoria Police Protective Services Officers patrolling stations from 6pm until the last train, seven days. The rebuilt station would also provide closed-circuit television covering both platforms, electronic schedule information, and toilet facilities.

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com, US/Can: 1.877.980.4040, Intern: 800.6364.6364 | Copyright and protected by applicable law.