

25 October 2024

MACA's response to the publication of the AS/NZS 1754:2004 Child Restraint Systems for Use in Motor Vehicles

Children with disability included in Australia's child restraint standard for the first time

Today, Australia and New Zealand's longstanding child restraint standard has been updated to allow for some variations to car seats for children with disability.

This is the first time in the standard's history that a section has been included to cater for the motor vehicle transport needs of children with disability.

The updated standard includes requirements for minimum design, construction, testing, performance and packaging requirements for variations such as footrests, postural supports and features to reduce the risk for children with disability who habitually get out of their car seat.

The Australian/New Zealand standard for child restraints was published half a century ago and has benefitted from decades of research, giving parents peace of mind when buying a car seat for their child. The exclusion of children with disability from this standard has led to them being overlooked in child restraint research, public information campaigns, road laws and product development. It has also led to the practice of people modifying Australian standard car seats, without an understanding of the potential safety impacts for children in a crash.

It is only with the establishment of Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd (MACA) five years ago, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, that there have been advancements in research, knowledge and professional practice in this area. Importantly, MACA's participation in the Standards Australia child restraint committee raised awareness of the rights of children with disability to be included in this important standard.

We see this inclusion as a significant first step for children with disability and their families, following decades of systemic neglect. However, more research and investment is urgently needed to continue to advance our knowledge of the transport needs of children with disability to improve their safety as passengers on our roads.

MACA's broader work program has resulted in an increased range of the safest specialised vehicle restraints from around the world, catering for people with disability from birth to adulthood. We expect any products developed to this standard will complement this product range, giving parents greater choice when it comes to their children's transport.