



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2020

Ombudsman Western Australia

Serving Parliament – Serving Western Australians

This *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2020* can be made available in alternative formats if required, including hard copy in standard and large print, electronic format, audio format on cassette or CD, by email and on the Ombudsman's website.

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Office Location	Level 2, Albert Facey House 469 Wellington Street Perth WA 6000

Office hours are 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday

The Office is located in Albert Facey House which has easy access for people with a disability. If you have special access needs, please call reception on (08) 9220 7555.

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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present the *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2020* of the office of the Western Australian Ombudsman. Accessibility and inclusion is absolutely central to the institution of the Ombudsman.

Critically, our office is committed to providing optimum access and service to people with a disability, their families and carers. The *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2020* embodies our strategies to realise this commitment.

We will consider and use this plan in undertaking all of our activities to ensure we continue to provide the access and inclusion that our stakeholders rightly expect of us and that we commit to deliver.



Chris Field
OMBUDSMAN

Ombudsman Western Australia

Role of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial officer of Parliament with responsibility to investigate the actions of public authorities including State Government agencies, local government and universities.

Functions and services provided by the Ombudsman

The office of the Ombudsman (**the Office**) has four principal functions. The Office:

- Receives, investigates and resolves complaints about the administrative decision making and practices of the public sector, local government and universities;
- Improves public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations and education and liaison programs with agencies;
- Reviews certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities; and
- Undertakes a range of additional functions, as set out in legislation, that fit within the broad category of integrity oversight.

The Ombudsman is also the Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia. The Energy and Water Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints concerning the provision of services by electricity, gas and water services providers.

Location of the Ombudsman

The Office is located in Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street, Perth. The central business district location is close to public transport links and the building has easy access for people with a disability.

Our key stakeholders

Our key stakeholders and contacts are:

- Parliament of Western Australia;
- State Government agencies, local governments and universities (public authorities); and
- The public.

Planning for continued access and inclusion

Our *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2020 (DAIP)* continues our commitment to access and inclusion contained in our first DAIP in 2007.

The DAIP meets the requirement of the *Disability Services Act 1993 (the Act)* that public authorities develop and implement a DAIP that outlines the ways in which the public authority will ensure that people with a disability have equal access to its facilities, services and employment opportunities.

Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion can be found in the Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Our commitment to access and inclusion

Our Office is committed to:

- Ensuring that people with a disability, their families and carers, are able to access the full range of the Office's services, facilities and information, providing them with the same opportunities as other community members; and
- Consulting with people with a disability, their families and carers and, where required, disability organisations to ensure that barriers to access and inclusion are addressed appropriately.

Our DAIP provides a framework for the implementation of strategies and initiatives to ensure continued access and inclusion for people with a disability. These strategies work towards the seven access and inclusion outcomes, defined in the Act as the minimum standard for DAIPs. The seven desired outcomes of our DAIP are that people with a disability:

1. Have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, a public authority.
2. Have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of a public authority.
3. Receive information from a public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. Receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of a public authority as other people receive from the staff of that public authority.
5. Have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to a public authority.
6. Have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by a public authority.
7. Have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with a public authority.

Progress and achievements

The Office has utilised a range of measures, consistent with our first DAIP, applicable since 2007, to ensure ongoing progress and achievement of access and inclusion for people with a disability:

- The Office's complaint handling services can be accessed in various ways including by post, email, online and in person, and enquiries can be made by telephone, including using the National Relay Service for people with a voice or hearing impairment. Where necessary, complaint handling processes can be modified to meet the needs of a person with a disability, including using an Auslan interpreter;
- The Office's website has been regularly reviewed and changes made to ensure accessibility, including for people using assistive technologies such as screen readers;
- A notice asking attendees to advise of any "special access or dietary requirements" is included on all invitations for events coordinated by the Office;
- The Office accommodation, building and facilities provide access for people with a disability, including:
 - Wheelchair access to the building and inside the Office, including ramps, lifts and wide doors and access ways;
 - Braille on lift buttons; and
 - Ambulant toilets on all floors used by the Office;
- The Office's website and all the Office's reports include a statement that publications can be made available in alternative formats on request if required;
- The Office collects information from people who access the Office's services, including whether they have a disability. This information is used to identify access needs of individuals, as well as to monitor more broadly the use of the Office's services by people with a disability;
- The Office has internal guidelines on communicating with people with speech, hearing or visual impairments, and the Office's induction program includes information about the Office's DAIP; and
- People with a disability are encouraged to apply for positions in the Office and recruitment processes are modified as required to enable people with a disability to have the same opportunity as other people to compete on merit for advertised positions. Appropriate modifications are made to duties undertaken, hours of work and/or equipment required to enable employees with disabilities, or who acquire a disability, to maintain productive employment with the Office.

Development of the DAIP 2015-2020

In 2014-15 the Office undertook to consult with key stakeholders and draft a new DAIP to guide continued improvements to access and inclusion. The process included:

- Examination of the 2011-15 DAIP and other relevant Ombudsman documents and strategies;
- Investigation of contemporary trends and good practice in access and inclusion; and
- Consultation with key staff and the community.

Consultation process

Development and amendments to the DAIP have been made in consultation with the Office's Management Consultative Committee, comprising senior managers across the Office; the Staff Consultative Committee, comprising staff representatives from each team of the Office; and the Office's occupational safety and health representatives (**Reference Groups**). Staff with personal and/or professional knowledge of disability issues were also consulted.

The community was informed through our website and in *The West Australian* newspaper that we were developing a DAIP for 2015-2020 and that we were calling for comments from members of the community to provide feedback on the draft DAIP. The Disability Services Commission was also invited to provide feedback in relation to the draft DAIP.

Implementation of the DAIP

Responsibility for implementation

It is a requirement of the Act that public authorities must take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP is implemented by its staff, agents and contractors.

Accordingly, the implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all areas of the Office. Some strategies in the DAIP apply to all areas of the Office while others apply to a specific area. An internal DAIP Implementation Plan identifies the specific actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the implementation of our DAIP strategies (**DAIP Implementation Plan**).

We will ensure that agents and contractors who are engaged to provide services to the general public are informed of our DAIP and that these agents and contractors are required to conduct their business in a manner consistent with the DAIP.

Communication of the DAIP

Following consultation, the DAIP was finalised and submitted to the Disability Services Commission. The community was informed of the final DAIP through an advertisement in *The West Australian* newspaper and on the Office's website. The website provides information that copies of the DAIP are available upon request and in alternative formats if required, including hard copy in standard and large print, electronic format, audio format on cassette or CD, or by email. Staff were informed of the final DAIP through an all-staff email and the DAIP has been placed on the Office's intranet.

DAIP review and evaluation

In accordance with the Act, we will review our DAIP every five years.

Our DAIP Implementation Plan will be reviewed annually and monitored through a range of ongoing means, including:

- The Reference Groups will meet at least twice in the first year and annually thereafter to review progress on the implementation of our DAIP strategies and, where appropriate, amend our DAIP Implementation Plan;
- An annual DAIP progress report will be submitted to the Corporate Executive and the Disability Services Commission;
- A summary of DAIP activities will be included each year in our Annual Report; and
- A review report of what has been achieved through the Office's 2015-2020 DAIP will be included in the 2020-2025 DAIP.

New or amended strategies will be included in the DAIP, following appropriate consultation, and submitted to the Disability Services Commission.

DAIP reporting

In accordance with the Act, we will submit an annual progress report, by the required date, to the Disability Services Commission on the implementation of our DAIP. The progress report will be in the prescribed proforma and will provide information about progress towards the desired outcomes of our DAIP and, where applicable, action of agents and contractors towards meeting the desired outcomes.

The Office will also provide information about the progress made through the DAIP in its Annual Report.

Strategies to improve access and inclusion

The seven desired outcomes provide a framework for improving access and inclusion for people with a disability. As a result of the consultation process, within the seven outcome areas, broad strategies have been identified, for 2015-2020, where there is a potential to improve access and inclusion. These strategies will guide the identification of actions to be included in our DAIP Implementation Plan.

Outcome 1: People with a disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure that the Office's complaint handling function takes into consideration accessibility by people with a disability.	Ongoing
Ensure that any public events and forums take into consideration accessibility for people with a disability.	Ongoing
Provide opportunities for people with a disability to comment on access to services and information provided by the Office.	Ongoing
Ensure that all agents and contractors of the Office who provide services to the general public are aware of their requirements under the DAIP.	Ongoing
Incorporate the objectives of the DAIP into the Office's business planning and other relevant strategies.	Ongoing

Outcome 2: People with a disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure all buildings and facilities are physically accessible to people with a disability, where possible, including quantity and location of parking and client contact areas such as reception areas.	Ongoing (Building designed for disability access in 2012)
Ensure all future premises leased by the Ombudsman's Office are accessible, where possible.	June 2019 (when current lease expires)

Outcome 3: People with a disability receive information from the Office in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure that all Ombudsman publications for public access are readily available and able to be provided in alternative formats on request.	Ongoing
Improve staff awareness of accessible information needs and how to obtain information in other formats.	Ongoing
Improve the awareness of staff, particularly reception and complaint-handling staff, about information needs of people that are hearing impaired, hard of hearing, deaf, and people with speech impediments.	Ongoing
Ensure that the Ombudsman's website meets contemporary good practice for accessibility.	Ongoing

Outcome 4: People with a disability receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Office as other people receive from the staff of the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Inform staff of their role in implementing and monitoring the plan to ensure its success.	July 2015 and ongoing
Examine specific disability awareness training needs of relevant staff and include in Performance Development Plans as appropriate.	Ongoing

Outcome 5: People with a disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Review accessibility for people requesting a review of a decision in relation to their complaint to the Ombudsman, or making a complaint about the Ombudsman's other services.	Ongoing
Improve staff knowledge so they can facilitate the receipt of complaints about the Office's services from people with a disability.	Ongoing

Outcome 6: People with a disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure access for people with a disability to the established consultative processes of the Office.	Ongoing

Outcome 7: People with a disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Office.

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure all buildings, facilities and office equipment are physically accessible to employees with a disability, where possible.	Ongoing (Building designed for disability access in 2012)
Promote the Ombudsman’s Office as an Equal Employment Opportunity employer and use inclusive and accessible recruitment practices.	Ongoing
Support employees through job design, flexible working arrangements, appropriate resources and appropriate training and development.	Ongoing
Ensure that internal policies prohibit discrimination and harassment, and that all employees and future employees are not subject to any discrimination.	Ongoing
Provide support and training for management staff on disability awareness and dealing with disability discrimination issues.	Ongoing