

Department of Education Services

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2013-2017

Introduction

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP, 'the plan') aims to ensure people with disabilities can access the services and facilities provided by the Department of Education Services.

The plan will be reviewed and amended as required building on the achievements and obstacles identified.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan includes:

- information on the Department of Education Services' facilities and services
- a policy statement about our commitment to addressing the issue of access for people with disabilities, their families and carers
- a description of the process used to consult with our customer service staff regarding services to people with disabilities and consultation with the Disability Services Commission
- the identification of objectives and strategies to overcome barriers that people with disabilities might experience accessing the services of the department
- expected timelines and persons responsible for the proposed strategies
- a method of review and evaluation for the plan and
- information about how the plan is being communicated to staff and people with disabilities.

The plan is available upon request in the following formats: electronic; hard copy; audio. Please contact des@des.wa.gov.au for further information.

Background

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The Department of Education Services primarily delivers regulatory, funding and policy advisory services to the non-government schools, international education, higher education, and vocational education and training sectors in Western Australia.

The mission of the department is to proactively support the development of Western Australia's education and training systems for the benefit of students and the State through provision of relevant regulation, review, funding and policy advisory services.

Services are currently provided from three buildings – two in Osborne Park and one in Ascot. The premises at Osborne Park are leased. There are plans for the department to move to one site in mid-2014.

Functions, facilities and services

The department's key functions are as follows:

- *Regulatory and review services* to ensure compliance with relevant State legislation and to encourage continuing improvement in the quality of Western Australia's education and training system.

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- *Funding Services* to the non-government school and university sectors (per capita grants and low interest loans for capital infrastructure projects) and for various scholarship schemes.
- *Policy Advisory Services and initiatives* that improve collaboration between the sectors. The department supports the Minister, Government and other bodies through the provision of expert advice on the issues that affect quality in these sectors in Western Australia.
- *Executive Support Services* to the following bodies that are responsible to the Minister for Education and/or the Minister for Training: the West Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Council, the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, the Training Accreditation Council, the Teacher Registration Board, the Western Australian Higher Education Council and the Non-Government Schools Planning Advisory Panel. The department also provides executive support to the Public Education Endowment Trust.

More detail about the department is available on our website at www.des.wa.gov.au.

Principal Stakeholders

Minister for Education	Association of Independent Schools of WA Inc
Minister for Training and Workforce Development	Catholic Education Office of WA
Training Accreditation Council	Seventh Day Adventist Schools (WA) Inc
Teacher Registration Board	Swan Christian Education Association Inc
Chair and Deputy Chair Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC)	The Anglican Schools Commission Inc
Chair of the Western Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Council (WAAETC)	Individual non-government schools
Organisations, agencies and others represented on the WAAETC and the RREAC	Independent Public Schools
State Training Board	Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
National Skills Standards Council	Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
Western Australian universities and non-self-accrediting higher education institutions	Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship
International education providers	Other state and territory registering / course accrediting bodies
Australian Skills Quality Authority	Registered training organisations
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency	Community/consumers of education and training in rural and remote areas of WA
Perth Education City	Funders and providers of education and training in rural and remote areas of WA
Department of Education	Other state government departments
School Curriculum and Standards Authority	Industry bodies and associations

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Planning for better access and inclusion

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2003), 20.6% of Australians or more than one in five people, identify themselves as having some form of disability. Eight per cent of Australians of school age (5-17 years) are identified as having a disability (ABS - Australian Social Trends, 2000).

It is a requirement of the Disability Services Act 1993 that all public authorities develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) that outlines the ways in which the department will ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to its facilities and services.

Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the WA Equal Opportunity Act 1984 and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

Progress since 1995

The Department of Education Services is committed to facilitating the inclusion of people with disabilities through the improvement of access to its functions, facilities and services. Towards this goal the department, in collaboration with the Curriculum Council, adopted its first Disability Service Plan (DSP) in 1995 to address the barriers for people with disabilities wanting to access its functions, facilities and services. The DSP addressed both its statutory requirements under the WA Disability Services Act and its obligations under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act. The DSP has undergone several internal reviews since 1995.

Since the adoption of the initial DSP, the department has implemented many initiatives and made significant progress towards better access and inclusion including developing its own DAIP and committee as separate from the former Curriculum Council, developing standard forms and guidelines for booking meetings, events and seeking feedback from stakeholders related to access and inclusion issues. The department will be moving to new premises in 2014 which allows for better planning for access and inclusion than has been possible in its rented premises.

Access and inclusion policy statement for people with disabilities, their families and carers

The Department of Education Services is committed to:

- ensuring that people with disabilities, their families, carers and associates are able to fully access the range of department functions, facilities and services (both in-house and contracted), providing them with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all other people in the community.
- ensuring that people with disabilities are given the opportunity to make the most of their educational opportunities.
- recognising that people with disabilities are valued members of the community who make a variety of contributions to social, economic and cultural life.
- consulting with people with disabilities, their families, carers and associates, and where required, relevant community groups and organisations to ensure that barriers to access and inclusion are addressed appropriately.
- ensuring that its agents and contractors work towards the desired access and inclusion outcomes in the DAIP.

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The Department of Education Services is committed to achieving the seven desired outcomes of its DAIP.

DAIP committee

The DAIP committee is responsible for planning to achieve the outcomes of the plan and its implementation, in consultation with the Corporate Executive.

A Disability Access and Inclusion Planning Committee was established in May 2010 comprising representatives with job functions related to the outcomes; representatives of key service areas; individuals with particular expertise or interest. Membership of this committee was reviewed and expanded in 2012 to include staff from all key areas of the department.

DAIP outcomes and responsibilities

The DAIP committee is chaired by the Coordinator, Strategic Planning and Governance. The following staff have key roles in coordinating strategies to achieve specific outcomes.

	<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Committee Representative</i>
1	People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, DES.	Managers – ETR, CGSR
2	People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of DES.	Manager – Business Services; Manager – Human Resources
3	People with disability receive information from DES in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.	Coordinator – Strategic Planning and Governance
4	People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from DES staff as other people receive from the staff of DES.	Coordinator – Training; Manager – Administrative Services
5	People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to DES.	Manager – Complaints and FOI
6	People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by DES.	Chief Information Officer
7	People with disability have the same access as other people to employment opportunities in DES.	Manager – Human Resources

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Development of the Disability access and inclusion plan

The DAIP committee met in June 2012 to review the previous Implementation plan and begin the planning of the new DAIP. Steps include:

- Consultation – both internal and external
- review of findings of consultation by the committee
- implementation.

Consultation

In August 2012, planning for consultation began both internally and externally. The plan was posted on the department website together with a feedback form.

The process includes:

- examination of the previous DAIP and subsequent review reports to see what had been achieved and what still needs work
- examination of other relevant department documents and strategies
- investigation of contemporary trends and good practice in access and inclusion
- consultation with staff
- consultation with the community.

The Disability Services Act Regulations set out the minimum consultation requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs. State Government authorities must call for submissions (either general or specific) by notice in a statewide newspaper or on any website maintained by or on behalf of the State Government authority. Other mechanisms may also be used.

Findings of the consultation

One submission was received following the public consultation period, however this related to access and inclusion strategies for schools and the Department of Education rather than the Department of Education Services.

The DAIP was finalised and formally endorsed by the Corporate Executive of the department on 26 November 2012 and advertised in The West Australian on 9 January 2013.

Implementing the DAIP

The Disability Services Act requires public authorities to take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP is implemented by its officers, employees, agents and contractors.

Some actions in the implementation plan may apply to all areas of the department while others may apply to a specific area. The implementation plan will set out who is responsible for each individual action under each broad strategy. The DAIP Committee guides the overall implementation of the plan in consultation with the Corporate Executive.

Communicating the plan

The DAIP is available to all staff and the community through the intranet and internet website: www.des.wa.gov.au and will be included in the induction materials for new staff. The new DAIP will

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also be promoted through the West Australian Newspaper as required by the Disability Services Act. The plan is available upon request in alternative formats:

- (i) In an electronic format
- (ii) In hard copy format in both standard and large print
- (iii) In an audio format on cassette or compact disc
- (iv) On request by email
- (v) On any website maintained by or on behalf of the authority.

The department will continue to inform its 'agents and contractors' of their responsibilities under the DAIP via the induction process and will continue to encourage best practice in the accessible provision of services to people with disabilities.

Review, evaluation and monitoring

The Disability Services Act sets out the minimum review requirements for the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan as (at a minimum) every five years, in accordance with the Act.

As and when the plan is amended, a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission. A review report of what has been achieved through the DES DAIP 2013–17 will be included future plans.

The DAIP Committee will meet every six months in the first year, and as required thereafter, to review progress on the implementation of the plan. Other monitoring mechanisms may include requesting feedback from staff on how well strategies are being implemented and suggestions for improvement. Any reports on the disability access and inclusion implementation process will be endorsed by the department's Corporate Executive. The implementation plan will be updated annually as a part of the review.

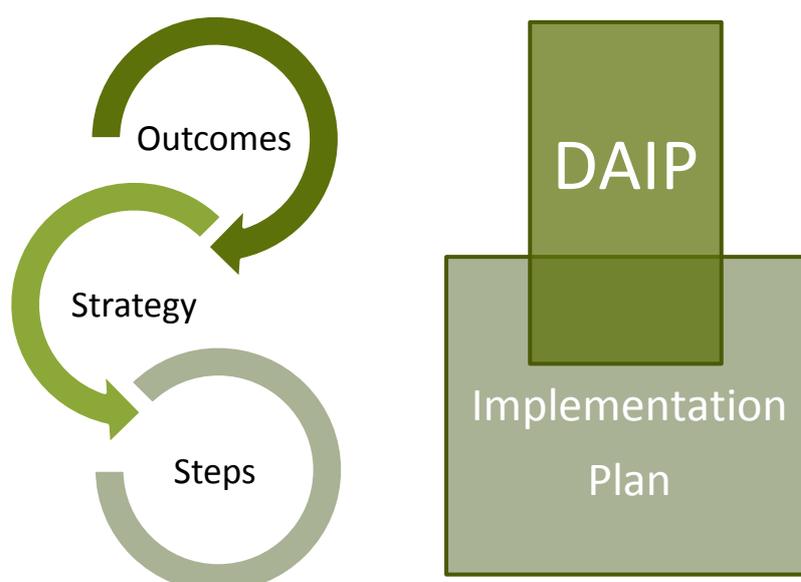
The department will report on the implementation of its DAIP through its annual report and the prescribed progress report template to the Disability Service Commission by 31 July each year outlining:

- progress towards the desired outcomes of its DAIP
- the progress of its agents and contractors toward meeting the six desired outcomes and
- the strategies used to inform agents and contractors of the DAIP.
- strategies to improve access and inclusion

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Outcomes and strategies

The seven desired outcomes detailed below provide a framework for improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities. These outcomes are supported by overarching strategies to guide the development of the annual implementation plans which will outline steps the department will take to improve access to services, buildings and information.



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

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Revise the membership of the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee to include key staff from each directorate to guide and monitor implementation of DAIP activities.	Annually, June
Provide opportunities for people with disabilities to comment on access to services and advice provided by the department.	Ongoing
Plan to ensure events (meetings, workshops, and information sessions) are accessible for people with disabilities.	February 2013
Ensure that agents and contractors are aware of their requirements under the DAIP.	On commencement
Ensure that the 'Disability Standards for Education 2005' are complied with in the policies and procedures developed by the department.	Ongoing

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Outcome 2: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation the department undertakes

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Investigate possibility of updating facilities within the building to improve physical access for people with disabilities.	June 2013
Ensure, as far as is practical, that all future premises leased by the department are accessible.	Ongoing
Ensure adequate ACROD parking to meet the needs of people with disabilities in terms of quantity and location.	Ongoing

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

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Improve awareness that the department's information can be made available in alternative format on request.	May 2013
Ensure the department's website (including the Intranet) meets accessibility requirements and contemporary good practice.	December 2013
Ensure documentation for the general public regarding services, facilities and customer feedback is in an appropriate format and expressed in plain English.	Review 2014 and 2016

Outcome 4: People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the department as other people.

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Raise staff awareness of disability and access issues and improve skills to provide good service to people with disabilities.	May 2013
Improve the awareness of new staff about disability and access issues.	Ongoing
Provide training for direct service staff (including reception staff) to provide a good service to people with disabilities.	Training plan reviewed annually

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Outcome 5: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the department.

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Ensure that the various complaints and grievance processes are clearly stated and easily accessible for people with disabilities.	Review one per year.
Ensure staff are trained to facilitate the receipt of complaints from people with disabilities, including the capacity to accept verbal complaints.	December 2013
Review policies and procedures to ensure that they clearly communicate to people with disabilities, their families and carers.	Review each policy every three years.

Outcome 6: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation the department undertakes.

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Commit to ongoing monitoring of the DAIP to ensure implementation and satisfactory outcomes.	Annual
Improve awareness of ways to facilitate access for people with disabilities to participate in consultative processes of the department.	Symposium topic every 3 years.

Outcome 7: People with disability have the same access as other people to employment opportunities in DES.

<i>Strategy</i>	Timeline
Enhance the employment of people with disabilities and medical conditions through the provision of employment practices and continuing staff disability awareness programs.	Review 2014
Review guidelines for staff interviews and employment to ensure they meet Equal Employment Opportunity principles.	Review 2014
Ensure that all staff are provided with reasonable accommodation to carry out the duties of their job, if required.	Ongoing.