

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SERVICES

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN (DAIP) 2007 - 2011

This plan is available upon request in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disk or emailed), audio or Braille

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INTRODUCTION

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) is being developed 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 and will build 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.

BACKGROUND

Department of Education Services

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, funding and policy advisory services.

Services are provided from a leased building in Osborne Park.

Functions, facilities and services provided by the Department of Education Services

- **Regulatory Services** to ensure compliance with relevant State legislation and to encourage continuing improvement in the quality of Western Australia's education and training system.
- **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 five Councils that are responsible to the Minister for Education and Training: Aboriginal Education and Training Council; the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council; the Training Accreditation Council; the Western Australian Higher Education Council; and the Non-Government Schools Planning Advisory Committee.

More detail about the Department is available on our Website at www.des.wa.gov.au.

Principal Stakeholders:

- Minister for Education and Training
- Training Accreditation Council
- Catholic Education Office of WA
- Association of Independent Schools of WA Inc
- The Anglican Schools Commission
- Seventh Day Adventist Schools (WA)
- Swan Christian Education Association
- Individual Non-Government Schools
- WA Universities
- Australian University Quality Agency
- Registered Training Organisations
- State Training Board
- Other State Government Departments
- Curriculum Council
- Department of Education, Science and Training
- Other State/Territory course registering/accrediting bodies
- Health and Industry Resources
- Industry bodies

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 1 in 5 people, identify themselves as having some form of disability. Eight percent 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). While Action Plans are not compulsory under the DDA, they can assist organisations to become more accessible and inclusive, and can provide some clarity during disability discrimination proceedings.

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.

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.

The Department of Education Services is committed to achieving the six desired outcomes of its DAIP. These are:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Department.
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the office and facilities of the Department.
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.
4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Department as other people.
5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Department.
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation the Department undertakes.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN

Responsibility for the planning process

A joint Disability Access and Inclusion Planning Committee of the Curriculum Council (CC) and Department of Education Services (DES) was established in September 2006 comprising one representative from each section of the Council and the Department. This joint Committee was responsible for overseeing the initial development of a combined CC/DES plan for the period 2006-11. Subsequently, as a result of a number of changes within the Council and the Department, the joint DAIP Committee separated and individual Committees will now finalise each DAIP and be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the plans.

Community consultation process

In October 2006 planning for the consultation process began both internally, in both organisations, and through public consultation.

In accordance with the *Disability Services Act* all State Government agencies must call for submissions (either general or specific) by notice in a state-wide newspaper or on any website maintained by or on behalf of the State Government agency. In adherence to this, in April 2007 the joint CC/DES Committee informed all interested stakeholders and the public of the opportunity to provide submissions. Public notices were placed in *The West Australian* newspaper, the Consult WA website and on the CC and DES websites.

Findings of the consultation

Two submissions were received following the public consultation period. They were provided by:

- The Foundation for Social Inclusion Inc
- Dr Robert Jackson of Include Pty Ltd.

Both submissions provided recommendations to be considered by the DAIP committee in specific tasks to be undertaken in the Implementation Plan for the Curriculum Council. In particular the submissions requested a review of access and inclusion for students with disabilities and how this is represented in curriculum policies and materials.

Responsibility for implementing the DAIP

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

Accordingly, some actions in the Implementation Plan will apply to all areas of the Department while others may apply to a specific area. The Implementation Plan sets out who is responsible for each individual action under each broad strategy. The DAIP Committee will guide the overall implementation of the plan in consultation with the Corporate Executive.

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

Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities

When the DAIP is finalised it will be formally endorsed by the Corporate Executive of the Department. It will be made available to all staff and the community through the intranet and internet website: www.des.wa.gov.au. It will also be promoted through the *West Australian* Newspaper as required by the *Disability Services Act*.

As plans are amended, both the staff and the community will be advised of the availability of updated plans through the same process. The plan will be available upon request in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disc or email) and audio.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

The *Disability Services Act* sets out the minimum review requirements for the Department in relation to DAIPs. The DAIP will be reviewed at least every five years, in accordance with the Act. The DAIP Implementation Plan will be updated annually to reflect progress and address remaining access and inclusion issues. As and when the DAIP is amended, a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission.

Review and Monitoring:

- The DAIP Committee will meet every six months in the first year, and as required thereafter, to review progress on the implementation of DAIP strategies.
- A review report of what has been achieved through the DES DAIP 2007–11 will be included in the DAIP 2012–16, to be submitted in 2012.
- A description of DAIP activities undertaken will be included each year in the Department's Annual Report.
- The DAIP Committee will prepare the DAIP progress report that is required to be submitted to the Commission each year. This report will be aggregated with the progress reports of other public authorities to provide a state-wide DAIP progress report for the Minister for Disability Services.

Evaluation:

- Any reports on the disability access and inclusion implementation process will be endorsed by the Department's Corporate Executive.
- Once a year, prior to 31 July, the Department will provide advice to the Disability Services Commission regarding the progress of the DAIP.
- A notice about consultation processes will be placed in *The West Australian* and posted on the DES website seeking feedback to the DAIP Committee to identify any additional barriers that were not identified in the initial consultation.
- Departmental staff will be requested to provide feedback on how well they believe the strategies are working and to make suggestions for improvement.

REPORTING ON THE DAIP

The *Disability Services Act 1993* sets out the minimum reporting requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs.

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

As a result of the consultation process the following overarching strategies will guide tasks, reflected in the Implementation Plan, that the Department of Education Services will undertake from 2007-2011 to improve access to their services, buildings and information. The six desired outcomes provide a framework for improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

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

Strategy	Timeline
Establish a Disability Access and Inclusion Committee to guide and monitor implementation of DAIP activities.	From October 2006 as required
Provide opportunities for people with disabilities to comment on access to services and advice provided by the Department.	April each year
Planning to ensure events (meetings, workshops, and information sessions) are accessible for people with disabilities.	March 2008
Ensure that agents and contractors are aware of their requirements under the DAIP.	As appropriate
Ensure that the 'Disability Standards for Education 2005' are complied with in the policies and procedures developed by the Department.	As appropriate

Outcome 2: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the office and facilities of the Department.

Strategy	Timeline
Investigate possibility of updating facilities within the building to improve physical access for people with disabilities.	June 2010
Ensure, as far as is practical, that all future premises leased by the Department are accessible.	As appropriate
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.

Strategy	Timeline
Improve community awareness that the Department's information can be made available in alternative format on request.	June 2008
Ensure the Department's website (including the Intranet) meets contemporary good practice.	June 2008
Ensure documentation for the general public regarding services, facilities and customer feedback is in an appropriate format and expressed in plain English.	March 2008

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

Strategy	Timeline
Raise staff awareness of disability and access issues and improve skills to provide good service to people with disabilities.	June 2008
Improve the awareness of new staff of the Department about disability and access issues.	June 2008
Provide training for direct service staff (including reception staff) to provide a good service to people with disabilities.	June 2008

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

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure that the various complaints and grievance processes are clearly stated and easily accessible for people with disabilities.	March 2008
Ensure staff are trained to facilitate the receipt of complaints from people with disabilities, including the capacity to accept verbal complaints.	March 2008

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

Strategy	Timeline
Commit to ongoing monitoring of the DAIP to ensure implementation and satisfactory outcomes.	October 2007
Improve awareness and access for people with disabilities to the established consultative processes of the Department.	Ongoing



Department of Education Services

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)

FEEDBACK FORM

The Department of Education Services is interested in your feedback and comments regarding its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP). Your feedback will be welcome at any time and will be treated with the strictest confidence.

1. Have you experienced any barriers to access that we have not identified in the DAIP?

Situation

.....
.....

Difficulty

.....
.....

2. Is there an initiative that you would like to compliment us on?

Initiative

.....
.....

Why do you think it is a good initiative?

.....
.....

3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on how we can improve access to our services, information or facilities?

.....
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.....

4. To help us analyse your comments, please tick which category best describes your interest in our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2007-2011

- Customer with a disability
- Carer
- Disability service provider
- Other (please specify)
- DES staff member
- DES contractor
- DES service provider

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Please return your completed response to:
Department of Education Services
 22 Hasler Road
 OSBORNE PARK WA 6017
 (PO Box 1766, Osborne Park WA 6916)
 Fax: (08) 9441 1950