

State Library of Western Australia

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2007 - 2011

June 2007

Other formats

This plan is available upon request in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disk or e-mailed) or audio.

To obtain the plan in an another format please contact Julie Ham on 08 9427 3191 or email julie.ham@slwa.wa.gov.au

Feedback

The State Library welcomes feedback on the plan or any other aspect of our services to people with disabilities or their carers. Feedback can be directed to Julie Ham as above or in writing to:

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Alternatively you can send feedback via our website:

<http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/feedback.html>

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BACKGROUND

The State Library of Western Australia

The State Library of Western Australia has a strong commitment to ensuring that all Western Australians have access to library and information services. This commitment has been addressed through its Strategic Plans to ensure that those people with special needs can access the State Library, its collections and services, as well as appropriate library resources through the State-wide public library network.

The State Library of Western Australia's mission is:

“To enrich the Lives of Western Australians by:

- ***Enabling access to resources for information, learning, enterprise and recreation***
- ***Collecting and preserving our social and documentary heritage for current and future generations.***

This is achieved by providing an extensive range of services to clients from the State Library, as well as externally through the website. These include support for researchers, business people, students, musicians, those seeking Western Australian information and those seeking information on a wide range of topics.

Services to support the public library system in Western Australia are also provided. The State Government, through the State Library, provides catalogued and processed stock for all public libraries in Western Australia, and strengthens the information and reference services available through those libraries with the expertise and more extensive collections based in the State Library. A wide range of consultancy and advisory services are provided to public libraries throughout Western Australia, including the area of disability.

In addition to the library services, the building that the State Library occupies is a large public building with a number of facilities used by a wide range of external groups including a theatre, meeting and seminar rooms, an exhibition space and café.

The State Records Office is located with the State Library, and some of the strategies and actions outlined in this Plan (particularly in relation to access within the building) also apply to those services.

Functions, facilities and services provided by the State Library of Western Australia

The State Library provides:

- Information and reference services to the people of Western Australia to meet client needs. These services are provided in person when clients visit the Library, by telephone, or electronically through e-mail or from our website.
- Specialist services for those clients interested in business, music, family history and Western Australia, as well as services to children and Aboriginal people.
- Promotional and outreach services to inform and educate people about our collections and services. These services include tours, exhibitions, seminars, holiday and reading programs, film screenings, and a wide range of consultancy services to public libraries in Western Australia.
- Library materials to public libraries throughout the State, including large print and audio books for people with print and vision impairments, as well as captioned videos for those with hearing difficulties. These materials are available through inter-library loan and document delivery services.
- A significant collection of Western Australia's documentary heritage materials that are collected, organised and maintained for future generations.
- A website that includes the State Library's database of library materials available from the State Library, as well as in public libraries throughout the State, access to electronic databases, digitised heritage materials and a range of online exhibitions. An Information Gateway for people with disabilities is available on the website, as well as the Infolink government and community information database which provides information about a wide range of services for people with special needs.
- An accessible building for people with disabilities, including a theatre and a range of meeting rooms. The State Library recognises the needs of people with disabilities and has continually worked to upgrade features as standards have changed. A range of special needs equipment is available for library users with disabilities.

Planning for Better Access

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.

A disability is any continuing condition that restricts everyday activities and the *Disability Services Act, 1993* defines disability as a condition that:

- is attributable to an intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments;
- is permanent; and
- may or may not be episodic in nature.

Disabilities can result in a person having a substantially reduced capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services in daily life. However, with the assistance of appropriate aids and services, the restrictions experienced by many people with a disability may be overcome.

Under the *Disability Services Act 1993* it is a requirement that the State Library develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) that outlines the ways in which it will ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities to access the State Library's services, information and facilities.

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

The State Library has also looked at best practice world wide for the delivery of library services for people with disabilities and many of these actions have been included in its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

An Implementation Plan has been developed in conjunction with the DAIP to satisfy the requirement of the *Disability Services Act* and to provide guidance and structure to the achievement of the objectives, including the identification of people responsible for the proposed strategies and timelines for completion of the strategies.

Progress since 1995

In 1995, the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA), as the State Library was then known, developed its first Disability Service Plan. It was developed in consultation with staff, persons with disabilities, support agencies for persons with disabilities and other community and public sector organisations. Since the release of the Plan in 1996, many of the Actions from that plan were implemented and they have been reported in the Annual Report.

A review of the implementation of the Disability Services Plan was undertaken by an external body in 2000, as was an Access Audit of the State Library's building. These reviews highlighted areas for further development. There have also been significant changes in technology and service expectations.

Governments and other regulatory bodies have introduced stronger legislation and standards to ensure that organisations take their responsibilities in regard to people with disabilities seriously. Changes in technology have provided a greater range of options in overcoming barriers that people with a disability face, and provide opportunities for organisations to deliver more targeted services.

This Plan updates work that was done in the 1996 Plan as well as addressing new issues that have emerged. We hope that it will make the State Library a very accessible organisation.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS

Libraries represent an essential part of any community's social infrastructure and are centres for communication, learning and culture. One of the important qualities of a library is that it represents a safe environment where all members of society can feel relaxed in each other's company.

A disability brings many personal challenges, and people with a disability may face economic inequity, literacy problems, cultural isolation, and discrimination in education, employment and participation in a broad range of activities. Libraries can play a pivotal role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their participation in society.

The State Library of Western Australia is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities, their families and carers have the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed as others to access the range of library services and facilities it provides. It is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in shaping the Library's services and objectives through a consultative process.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan provides a framework for the identification of areas where access and inclusion can be improved and for the development of strategies to best improve access and inclusion. These strategies work towards a number of access and inclusion outcomes, which are defined in the Act as the minimum standard for DAIPs.

There are six access and inclusion outcome areas specified in the Act.

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

Outcome 2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the State Library and its facilities;

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

Outcome 4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from State Library staff as other people receive;

Outcome 5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the State Library;

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

In addition to these six prescribed minimum standards under the Act, the State Library has included an additional outcome stating that:

Outcome 7. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to seek employment at the State Library.

The DAIP will be implemented over five years, guided by an overarching set of strategies that drive individual tasks to support the achievement of each outcome area. Each year an Implementation Plan will be developed and activities undertaken to improve access to the State Library's services, buildings and information.

The Implementation Plan will outline the:

- individual tasks being undertaken;
- timeline for completion of the individual tasks;
- teams within the Library with responsibility for completing the individual tasks; and the
- broad strategy that the individual tasks are supporting.

Developing and implementing annual Implementation Plans throughout the lifespan of the DAIP provides the opportunity to manage strategies carefully across a five-year time span and respond to emerging access and inclusion barriers.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN

Responsibility for the Planning Process

The development of the State Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan was undertaken by staff from across the organisation, who looked critically at all aspects of the previous Plan, taking into consideration changes in structure, technology and expectations, as well as the recommendations from the external review of the Plan from 2000. A literature survey was undertaken to determine best practice for the delivery of library services from around the world, and the results of that survey are included in an Appendix.

The final version of the DAIP, and the accompanying Implementation Plan, will be approved by the State Library's Executive Team and the Library Board of Western Australia. A Disability Services Committee, comprising relevant staff from across the organisation, is proposed as one of the strategies in the Plan to progress the Implementation Plan and to review and evaluate the Plan annually.

Consultation Process

The State Library joined with the Department of Culture and the Arts and the other agencies within the portfolio to undertake community consultation. Two public consultations were undertaken on Monday 2 April and Wednesday 4 April 2007 and advertised through a notice in *The West Australian* on Saturday 3 March 2007.

The Library's Plan was made available on the State Library website and linked from the Department's website. A notice regarding the public consultation was also displayed in the State Library. Public Librarians were made aware of the Plan through the Public Librarians Online website.

To raise awareness of the Plan with staff it was made available through the organisation's Intranet, and discussed at an organisation wide staff meeting and to Managers at their monthly meeting.

Findings of the consultation

The positive role that libraries play in the lives of people with a disability was highlighted during the consultation process.

A number of common themes for arts and cultural agencies were raised at the public consultations:

- Improving the ease of physical access to buildings and function venues.
- Arranging special programs for people with disabilities that allow them to access services or exhibitions with ease.
- Improving the timeliness and ways of communicating access information to clients regarding buildings and events.
- Cues or signs to services and facilities in large spaces.
- Training for staff and acceptance by them of people with a disability.

- Clear information about accessible parking near cultural buildings.

Responsibility for Implementing the DAIP

It is a requirement of the *Disability Services Act 1993* that public authorities must take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP is implemented by its officers, employees, agents and contractors.

Accordingly the implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all teams in the State Library. Some strategies in the DAIP apply to all areas of the Library, while others apply to specific directorates. The Implementation Plan sets out who is responsible for each individual action under each broad strategy.

Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities

Internal consultation was undertaken in conjunction with the cycle of public consultation in April and May 2007. Through this process, staff and people with disabilities were informed of the DAIP development and were able to shape and contribute to the Library's access and inclusion strategies.

To maintain awareness of the Plan within the organisation it is proposed to create a Disability Services Committee to implement the Plan and raise awareness of disability issues throughout the organisation. As part of its charter the group will invite people from various organisations to attend meetings to ensure that we continue to listen to the needs of people with disabilities in Western Australia.

The State Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan will be advertised in State Newspapers and the Library's newsletter and made available to the public on the State Library's website. Copies of the Plan will be circulated to relevant stakeholders through the Department of Culture and the Arts' Disability Services Planning Committee. A printed copy of the Plan can be supplied if requested in both standard and large print. Copies will also be supplied in other formats on request to meet client needs including electronic format, audio format on cassette or CD and by email.

The Plan will be made available to staff via the intranet and through the internal staff e-newsletter. Regular presentations will be made to State Library staff at staff meetings, and updates on achievements promoted to staff via that forum. New staff will be made aware of the Plan through the staff induction training. Public library staff, including new staff, will be made aware of the Plan through the Public Librarians Online website. As plans are amended both staff (including agents and contractors) and the community will be advised of the availability of the updates plans, using the same methods.

There will be a link from the online version of the Plan to the State Library's feedback mechanisms.

Review and Evaluation Mechanisms

The *Disability Services Act* sets out the minimum review requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs. The State Library's DAIP will be reviewed at least every five years in accordance with the Act. The DAIP Implementation Plan may be amended on a more regular basis to reflect progress and any access and inclusion issues that may arise. Whenever the DAIP is amended a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission.

Review and monitoring

The State Library's DAIP will be reviewed and monitored through a range of ongoing means, including:

- The State Library's Disability Services Committee will meet quarterly to review progress on the implementation of the strategies in the DAIP.
- A review report of what has been achieved through the Library's DAIP 2007-2011 will be included in the DAIP 2012 – 2016, to be submitted in 2012.
- A report on the activities undertaken to progress the DAIP in that year will be included each year in the Library Board's Annual Report.
- The committee will prepare the DAIP progress report that is required to be submitted to the Commission each year. The report will be aggregated with the progress reports of other public authorities to provide a statewide DAIP progress report for the Minister for Disability Services.

Evaluation

- The State Library's Executive will endorse any reports on the disability access and inclusion implementation process annually.
- Once a year prior to 31 July, the Library will provide information to the community regarding the implementation of the DAIP and seek feedback on the effectiveness of strategies that have been implemented.
- The State Library's existing feedback mechanisms will be used as an evaluation tool to review existing services and make improvements to those services.
- Statistics and performance indicators from the Implementation Plan will be used to monitor the progress of strategies.

REPORTING ON THE DAIP

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

The State Library will report annually on the implementation of its DAIP using the prescribed proforma that will be used to aggregate information about DAIP progress into a report for the Minister for Disability Services. This proforma will provide information about progress towards the desired outcomes of its DAIP.

The Library will also provide information about the progress made on the implementation of its DAIP in the Annual Report.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR CARERS AND FAMILIES

The following overarching strategies will guide the individual tasks, detailed in the Implementation Plan, that the State Library of Western Australia will undertake from 2007-2011 to improve access to its services, buildings and information. The seven 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 State Library.

Specifically the State Library will:

- Ensure that all policies, procedures and practices that govern the operation and services of the State Library conform to the requirements of the *Disability Services Act 1993* and ensure equity of access for people with disabilities, their carers and families. Timeline: June 2008
- Review service delivery to people with disabilities in view of identified barriers and develop strategies to overcome these barriers. Timeline: June 2009
- Form a Disability Services Committee within the State Library to implement and report on the plan as well as to raise awareness of the needs of people with disabilities within the organisation. Timeline: October 2007
- Ensure that the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is monitored during the period of its implementation. The annual progress report to be co-ordinated and documented in keeping with legislative requirements. Timeline: June 2008
- Ensure that where events and functions are held in the State Library they are accessible for people with disabilities and information about access is included on the invitation. Timeline: June 2008

Outcome 2: People with Disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the State Library and its facilities.

Specifically the State Library will:

- Undertake an access audit of the State Library and public access areas and assess if they meet the mandatory and recommended Australian standards on access. Timeline: June 2009
- Evaluate the physical barriers to people using the State Library's services and be responsive and adaptable in overcoming the barriers experienced by people with disabilities, their carers and families. Timeline: June 2009
- Ensure that all contracts with service providers take the special needs of people with disabilities into consideration and comply with State Government *Guidelines on*

Buying Wisely to Ensure Access for People with Disabilities. This may be in the form of a clause in relation to provision of access for people with disabilities when tendering for services, or through a process of negotiating the provision of service.

Timeline: June 2010

- Ensure that the State Library's electronic services, including websites, are accessible for people with disabilities by complying with the *State Government Access Guidelines for Information, Services and Facilities*. Timeline: June 2008
- Be proactive in identifying and assessing relevant technology and best practices that will assist people with disabilities use the State Library's services.
Timeline: June 2009
- Where items of equipment to assist people with disabilities are identified to improve access, look at various ways of funding the purchase of the items. The development of a strategic list of equipment to be purchased over a number of years would assist in developing funding options.
Timeline: June 2009

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

Specifically the State Library will:

- Promote community awareness of the State Library's special needs services and facilities for people with disabilities through printed and electronic mediums.
Timeline: June 2008
- Be responsive to requests for information and services from people with special needs, their carers and families.
Timeline: Ongoing
- Identify and promote relationships with support agencies to assist the State Library in providing services for people with disabilities.
Timeline: June 2010

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

Specifically the State Library will:

- Progressively provide training for staff in interacting effectively with people with disabilities to ensure customer service delivery is enhanced.
Timeline: June 2009
- Progressively provide training to staff on the operation of special needs equipment for customers with disabilities to enhance customer service delivery.
Timeline: June 2008

- Continue to encourage awareness of public library staff of the needs of people with disabilities. Timeline: June 2008
- Ensure that State Library staff have ready access to information about providing services to people with disabilities from the Intranet, as well as government guidelines and standards. Timeline: June 2008

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

Specifically the State Library will:

- Ensure that information about the State Library's complaint procedures, and mechanisms for making complaints, are accessible for people with disabilities. Timeline: June 2008

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

Specifically the State Library will:

- Consult people with disabilities, their carers and families, and key community support groups by making direct contact with people with disabilities when the State Library seeks public input for plans, policies and proposed services. Timeline: June 2009
- Develop contacts with, and consult relevant people and groups so that the State Library can get feedback on its services and facilities, including satisfaction surveys, and to raise the awareness of the State Library's staff to disability issues. Timeline: June 2009
- Ensure consultation with people with disabilities and/or their representative groups to promote awareness of their needs and new developments. Timeline: June 2009

Outcome 7 – People with disabilities have opportunities to seek employment at the State Library.

Specifically the State Library will:

- Encourage and provide opportunities for people with disabilities to work in paid and skills development opportunities. Timeline: June 2009
- Provide a supportive and accessible workplace for people with disabilities. Timeline: June 2008

APPENDIX

To look at world's best practice in delivery of library and information services for people with disabilities the State Library undertook a literature review of relevant State Government resources as well as library literature throughout the world.

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