



State Library of Western Australia

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2013 - 2017

December 2012 (Revised 2015)

This plan is available upon request in large print, electronic format or audio formats.

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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 Statewide public library network.

The State Library of Western Australia's mission is:

For the benefit of all Western Australians, the State Library:

- **treasures the stories of Western Australia;**
- **champions literacy and learning;**
- **cultivates creative ideas; and**
- **leads the development of the Western Australian public library network.**

This is achieved by providing an extensive range of services to clients of all ages who visit the State Library in person or who access resources and services through the website. This includes researchers and family historians who use the Library's Western Australian collections, students, children, artists and musicians, and those who want to access electronic resources and the internet.

Services to support the public library system in Western Australia are also provided. The State Government, through the State Library, provides catalogued and processed library materials for public libraries throughout Western Australia, including access to electronic resources.

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 Library welcomes those people and aims to ensure that these venues are accessible.

The State Records Office is located within the State Library building, and some of the strategies and actions outlined in this Plan (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:

- A significant collection of Western Australia's documentary heritage materials that are collected, organised and maintained for future generations.
- 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 or electronically through e-mail or from our website.
- Access to information technology to access the world's digital information. This includes access to over 100 PCs, digital micrographic equipment, multifunction devices, free wireless access and digital photography.
- Promotional and outreach services to inform and educate people about our collections and services. These services include tours, exhibitions, seminars, holiday and reading programs, and film screenings.
- Specialist services for those clients interested in music, family history and Western Australia, as well as services to children and Aboriginal people.
- Library materials provided to public libraries throughout the State, including large print and audio books for people with print and vision impairments, as well as captioned DVDs for those with hearing difficulties, and access to electronic databases. These materials are available through inter-library loan and document delivery services.
- 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 accessible building for people with disabilities, including lockers, 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, Australia (2009)*, 18.5% of Australians or nearly 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*, the Commonwealth *Disability Act 1992* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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 will be 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.

Significant Achievements of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2007-2012

Since 1995 the State Library has developed and implemented plans to improve access to its building, collections and services.

The Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2007 – 2012 included the following achievements:

- Events and functions at the Library are now more accessible for people with disability.
- A Disability Services Committee was formed to progress the DAIP Implementation Plan and review and evaluate the Plan annually.

- An Access Audit of all public areas in the State Library was completed in 2010. The recommendations from the extensive report were reviewed and where possible actioned immediately, with implementation of more costly recommendations budgeted for over a number of years.
- Refurbishment of the public lifts enabled new features to be included to comply with access standards for people with disability.
- A new accessible/family toilet was created on the ground floor to meet building standards.
- A new Reading Room for access to archival and rare materials was moved to a more accessible location for wheelchair access.
- An Audio Induction Loop system was installed in the Library theatre as an aid for those with a hearing disability.
- A special needs PC was provided on the ground floor of the Library and two additional wheelchair access PCs located on upper floors. In addition, a computer was made available in a low light position for clients who are unable to work in fluorescent white light.
- Service areas suitable for wheelchair access were created at the Welcome Desk on the ground floor.
- Advice was sought from access agencies on refurbishment plans prior to final approvals to ensure accessibility for people with disability.
- Continuous improvement in signage was undertaken to improve visibility for wheelchair users.
- The State Library continued to provide public library resources in alternative formats to assist people with disabilities. While this stock ebbs and flows, at 30 June 2012 the following library stock in alternative formats was available:
 - Large print books 198,408
 - Videos/DVDs 172,754
 - Audio books 117,321
 - CD-ROMs 12,476
- Specific funding was provided to the Association for the Blind for library services for people with a visual impairment.
- The State Library's website complied with the 'State Government Access Guidelines for Information, Services and Facilities'. Details of the State Library's special needs services and facilities were made available on the Library's website and on the 'You're Welcome WA' website.
- A range of training was provided to staff to increase awareness of best practice in providing services to people with disability.
- The State Library was a venue for a Living Libraries event during Mental Health Week in 2008. For this event the books in the Living Library were human beings, and the "books" and the readers enter into a personal dialogue for a set time.
- The Library contributed to the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA) Disability Services Planning Committee, which includes consumer representatives, and aims to improve services to people with disability.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT

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 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 disability by facilitating their participation in society.

The State Library of Western Australia is committed to ensuring that people with disability, 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 disability 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 implement this. These strategies work towards the access and inclusion outcomes defined in the Act.

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

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

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

Outcome 3. People with disability 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 disability receive the same level and quality of service from State Library staff as other people receive;

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

Outcome 6. People with disability 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 disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the State Library.

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 the Library's Disability Services Committee which includes staff from across the organisation, who looked critically at all aspects of the previous Plan, taking into consideration changes in structure, technology and expectations. 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, were approved by the State Library's Executive Team and the Library Board of Western Australia.

Consultation Process

The State Library joined with the Department of Culture and the Arts and the other agencies within the portfolio to undertake a process of community consultation. The Department, in partnership with Portfolio agencies held consultation forums in Fremantle, Perth and Swan during July and August 2012.

The forums were promoted through several avenues including the Department's website, print newspapers, funded organisations, Portfolio staff, word of mouth and key disability organisations. Participants in the forums were representative of parents, carers, friends, funded organisations, key stakeholders in the disability sector and people with disability.

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. There were also indications that progress has been made toward achieving the outcomes of the DAIP 2007 - 2012. Despite this, feedback highlighted barriers that continue to prevent people with disability accessing arts and cultural services, events, information and facilities.

The areas of most significant concern raised were:

Access to services and events

- Events, exhibitions and programs need to be inclusive of a wider range of people with disability.
- Publically funded events, exhibitions and programs should be held in accessible venues.
- Exhibitions need to consider the practical needs of people with disability.
- Event organisers should be more flexible in meeting the needs of people with disability.
- People with disability should not be treated differently unless the different treatment is in order to treat them equally.

Physical access

- Catering to the most complex or challenging disability means the needs of many will be covered.
- Look beyond mere compliance to access standards.
- Use of accredited access consultants.
- Architects, planners and designers should work with people with disability to ensure universal way finding.
- Toilet facilities should be built to facilitate larger wheelchairs and to accommodate carers as well as the person with disability.
- Parking facilities for people with disability and their carers should accommodate wider and higher vehicles.

Access to information

Not enough is being done to make publications available in alternate formats and/or at an appropriate content level for people with learning or intellectual disability.

- Plain English versions of key relevant documents should be made available upon request.
- A broader range of alternative formats should be made available upon request, for example Auslan and audio versions.

Level of service

There needs to be regular and ongoing disability awareness training. Training should focus on:

- the diversity of disability groups and the needs and inclusion of people with multiple and severe disability;
- protocols for relating to people with disability; and
- people with disability, their family and carers should lead or assist in delivering training.

Consultation

The consultation process should be simplified and broadened to reach a more diverse range of people with disability.

- Extend time frames for consultation periods.
- Be flexible consulting. Tailor the format and venue of the consultation to the target audience. Go to the people; don't expect them to come to you.
- Explore how social media can be used to simplify the consultation process.
- Use established networks to get information about consultations out to people with disability.

Employment of people with disability

There needs to be greater effort to increase the employment of people with disability.

- Use legislative provisions to facilitate greater employment of people with disability. Positively discriminate in favour of people with disability.
- Distinguish vacancies that may be suitable for people with disability.
- Liaise with Disability Employment Services for prospective applicants.
- Be flexible in working arrangements to accommodate a person with disability's needs.

Responsibility for Implementing the DAIP

The DAIP will be implemented over five years, guided by an overarching set of strategies which drive individual initiatives to support the achievement of each outcome area.

The Library's Disability Services Committee, which includes staff from a wide range of areas, will be responsible for developing an annual Implementation Plan with more specific actions to improve access to the Library's services, facilities and information. The annual Implementation Plan will provide the opportunity to manage strategies carefully and respond to emerging access and inclusion barriers. Initiatives from Implementation Plans will be incorporated into operational and project planning.

Communicating the plan to staff and people with disability

The State Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan will be on the State Library's website and available to staff via the Intranet. A printed copy of the Plan can be supplied if requested, and copies in other formats will be supplied on request to meet client needs. Public library staff will be made aware of the Plan through the Public Librarians Online website.

Regular presentations will be made to State Library staff at staff meetings, and updates on achievements promoted to staff via that forum.

Review and Evaluation Mechanisms

The State Library's DAIP will be reviewed at least every five years in accordance with the Act. The DAIP Implementation Plan will be reviewed annually to reflect progress and any access and inclusion issues that may arise.

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 regularly to review progress on the implementation of the strategies in the DAIP.
- A review report of the achievements of the Library's DAIP 2007-2012 is included in this document.
- A report on the activities undertaken to progress the DAIP in that year will be included 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.
- 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 State Library will follow the requirements of the *Disability Service Act* for the minimum reporting requirements by:

- reporting 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.
- Reporting on progress of the DAIP in the Library's Annual Report.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, THEIR CARERS AND FAMILIES

The following overarching strategies will guide the individual tasks, as detailed in the Implementation Plan, that the State Library of Western Australia will undertake from 2013-2017 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 Disability 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 disability, their carers and families. Timeline: June 2013
- Review service delivery to people with disability in view of identified barriers and develop strategies to overcome these barriers. Timeline: June 2014
- The State Library's Disability Services Committee will meet regularly to implement and report on the plan, as well as to raise awareness of the needs of people with disability within the organisation. Timeline: Annually
- 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: Annually
- Ensure that where programs and events are undertaken by the State Library they are accessible for people with disability, and information about access is included on promotional material. Timeline: Annually

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

Specifically the State Library will:

- Implement the recommendations of the access audit of the State Library and public access areas (2010). Timeline: June 2015
- Regularly evaluate the physical barriers to people using the State Library's services and equipment, and be responsive and adaptable in overcoming the barriers experienced by people with disability, their carers and families. Timeline: June 2014

- Ensure that all contracts with service providers take the special needs of people with disability into consideration and comply with *State Government Access Guidelines for Information Services and Facilities*. Timeline: June 2013
- Ensure that the State Library's electronic services, including websites, are accessible for people with disability by complying with the State Government's *Website Accessibility Policy*. Timeline: June 2014
- Be proactive in identifying and assessing relevant technology and best practices that will assist people with disability use the State Library's services. Timeline: June 2014
- Enable public library resources in alternative formats be made available to the people of Western Australia through the network of public libraries throughout the State. Timeline: ongoing

Outcome 3: People with disability 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 disability through printed and electronic mediums. Timeline: June 2013
- 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 2015

Outcome 4: People with disability 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 2013
- Progressively provide training to staff on the operation of special needs equipment for customers with disabilities to enhance customer service delivery. Timeline: June 2014

- 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 2014

Outcome 5: People with disability 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 2013

Outcome 6: People with disability 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 disability when the State Library seeks public input for plans, policies and proposed services. Timeline: Ongoing
- Consult relevant people and groups so that the State Library can get feedback on its services and facilities. Timeline: Annually
- Ensure consultation with people with disabilities and/or their representative groups to promote awareness of their needs and new developments. Timeline: June 2014

Outcome 7 – People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with 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: Ongoing
- Provide a supportive and accessible workplace for people with disabilities. Timeline: Ongoing

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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