

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN

2007 – 2012

This plan is available upon request in alternative formats including large print, electronic format (CD or emailed), audio format and on DEC's website www.naturebase.net.

The Department of Environment and Conservation

Working with the community, we will ensure that Western Australia's environment is valued, protected and conserved, for its intrinsic value, and for the appreciation and benefit of present and future generations.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is in the portfolio of the Minister for the Environment. The department is also part of a greater environmental community and has a distinct Government responsibility for implementing Government policy within that community. Protection and conservation of the environment is a collective role.

The department has the lead responsibility for protecting and conserving the State's environment on behalf of the people in Western Australia. This includes managing the State's national parks, conservation parks, State forests and timber reserves, nature reserves, marine nature reserves and marine management areas.

Its key responsibilities include broad roles in conserving biodiversity and protecting, managing, regulating and assessing many aspects of the use of the State's natural resources. The department contributes to the development of environmental protection policies, managing the environmental impact assessment process and carrying out regulatory functions to achieve improved environmental outcomes. It is also responsible for management of contaminated sites and coordination of pollution incident responses.

The department is also responsible for fire preparedness and pest animal and weed control on 89 million hectares of unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves.

The department provides support or assists the following portfolio authorities and boards to carry out their functions regarding the requirements under the Disability Services Act, which are integral to the department achieving its vision and mission:

- Environmental Protection Authority;
- Conservation Commission of WA;
- Keep Australia Beautiful Council;
- Marine Parks and Reserves Authority;
- Waste Management Board; and
- Contaminated Sites Committee.

The department contributes to national and international programs through national Ministerial; Councils, the Natural Heritage Trust and other national programs, the work of organisations such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and to the implementation of international environmental and conservation treaties in WA.

It employs people with world-class scientific, regulatory, evaluation, policy, land and marine management, visitor services and educational skills.

The department's eight key objectives are:

1. **Conserving biodiversity** – Protect, conserve and, where necessary and possible, restore Western Australia's biodiversity.
2. **Managing natural resources and promoting environmentally sustainable practices** Protect, manage and, where necessary and possible, restore Western Australia's natural resources, including land, water and air, and promote the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices in the community, industry and government.
3. **Leading climate change actions** – Provide leadership in the development and implementation of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change for Western Australia.
4. **Creating a "World Class Parks System"** – Generate environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits through the further development of a "World Class Parks System" in terms of ecosystem management and visitor facilities and services.
5. **Implementing sustainable forest management** – Generate social, economic and cultural benefits from forest while sustaining their biodiversity, health, vitality and productive capacity.
6. **Preventing pollution and remediating contamination** – Protect the environment, and people's health and amenity, by ensuring discharges meet approved criteria and contaminated sites are appropriately remediated.
7. **Maintaining community involvement and support** – develop community awareness and appreciation of the State's natural environment and biodiversity and promote community involvement in and support for its protection and conservation.
8. **Improving the way we do business** – Foster a positive work culture of trust, continuous improvement and anticipation of environment and conservation issues and customer needs, and deliver core business activities in the most effective and efficient manner.

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

Western Australia has a beautiful, diverse and supportive environment that provides material, aesthetic and spiritual benefits. These values should be regarded as an essential part of the livelihood and quality of life of all Western Australians, including people with disabilities. People with disabilities are among the visitors to parks and recreation facilities managed by the DEC. They are among people seeking information from department public counters and are included among departmental employees.

The department is among the most decentralised State Government agencies, with approximately half of its workforce employed in country areas. Besides its Corporate and Operations Headquarters, the department operates from nine Regional and 24 District and local centres, as well as from a number of other locations.

DEC is also the major provider of outdoor recreation areas and facilities in natural areas in Western Australia. As such, it is responsible for the management of several hundred recreation developments, ranging from day-use and camping areas to extensive kilometres of bushwalking, horse riding and mountain

bike riding and other trails. The department also organises and conducts various outdoor activity programs and prepares and disseminates information to visitors and the general public in a range of formats.

DEC is committed to consulting with people with disabilities, their families and carers and disability organisations to ensure that barriers to access and inclusion are addressed appropriately. DEC's policy on access and inclusion is to ensure that everyone in the community is able to access, use and enjoy our State's natural areas and the associated facilities, services and programs provided by the department. This will be achieved by fulfilling the six desired outcomes of the DAIP.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN (DAIP)

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 1 in 5 people, identify themselves as having some form of disability.

It is a requirement of the *WA 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*.

Progress

The Department of Environment and Conservation has endeavoured to improve public access and upgrade or provide new visitor facilities and services suitable for use by all members of the community including older persons and people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Because of the size, remoteness and ruggedness of many of our national parks, State forest areas and other land, this has not been an easy undertaking. Nevertheless, the department has made considerable progress and a significant number of recreation and tourism destinations throughout the State now have wheelchair accessible facilities such as parking areas, toilets and walkways. *ParkFinder* on the department's internet site, is an invaluable aid to finding out about some of the parks with universally accessible facilities.

DEC has also actively sought to provide job opportunities for people with disabilities and employs people with a range of disabilities at all levels of the organisation. As an equal opportunity employer, the department is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are considered on merit in applications for employment, training and promotion, and that jobs and facilities are redesigned as required to remove any remaining barriers to employment and promotion.

DEC is committed to facilitating the inclusion of people with disabilities through the improvement of access to its facilities and services. Towards this goal the department adopted its first Disability Services Plan (DSP) in 1995 to address the barriers for people with disabilities wanting to access the department's services and facilities. The DSP addressed both its statutory requirements under the *WA Disability Services Act 1993* and its obligations under the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Since the adoption of the initial DSP, the department has implemented many initiatives and made significant progress towards better access.

Responsibility for the planning process

DEC's Disability Access and Inclusion Committee is responsible for the development, implementation and review of the DAIP. The committee was established in 1999 and is currently comprised of representatives from Parks and Visitor Services, Regional Services, Corporate Services, Environmental Services and Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs divisions.

Community Consultation Process

In 2006, DEC undertook to review its Disability Services Plan, consult with key stakeholders and draft a new DAIP to guide further improvements to access and inclusion.

The process included:

- examination of the initial DSP and subsequent review reports to see what has 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 key staff; and
- consultation with the community

The following consultation strategies were used:

- The community was advised of the draft DAIP through the department's website. Feedback through written submission, email or phone was required by 20 April 2007.
- Key community stakeholders were mailed printed copies of the plan. Feedback through written submission, email or phone was required by 20 April 2007.
- DEC staff were advised of the draft DAIP via broadcast email. Feedback through written submission, email or phone was required by 20 April 2007.

Responsibility for implementing the DAIP

Implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all areas of the department. The plan itemises what the department will be undertaking in 2007-2012 to improve access to its services, information and facilities for people with disabilities.

The plan is presented using a table to outline the:

- individual tasks being undertaken;
- timeline for completion of the individual tasks;
- officer position or departmental area with responsibility for completing the individual tasks;
- broad strategy that the individual tasks are supporting; and

- achievements against outcomes.

Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities

- In June 2007 the plan was finalised and formally endorsed by the Executive.
- Copies of the plan were sent to key community stakeholders.
- Printed copies of the plan were sent to all DEC managers and to staff with responsibilities in the plan.
- The department advised, through its website and through the newspaper the *West Australian*, that copies of the plan are available to the community upon request.
- As the plan is amended both staff and the community will be advised of the availability of updated plan via the department's website.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

The Disability Services Act sets out the minimum review requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs. The department's DAIP will be reviewed at least every five years, in accordance with the Act. The DAIP may be amended on a more regular basis to reflect progress and any access and inclusion issues which 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 Disability Access and Inclusion Committee will meet three times a year to review progress on the implementation of the strategies identified in the DAIP
- The review of the department's DAIP will be included in the DAIP 2012-2015 which will be submitted to the Disability Services Commission in 2012. The report will outline what has been achieved under the department's DAIP 2007-2012.
- The committee will prepare a report each year on the implementation of the DAIP to be included in the Annual Report.

Evaluation

- Once a year the department will provide advice to the community regarding the implementation of the DAIP and seek feedback on the effectiveness of strategies that have been implemented.
- In seeking feedback the committee will also seek to identify any additional barriers that were not identified in the initial consultation.
- Department staff will also be requested to provide feedback on how well they believe the strategies are working and to make suggestions for improvement.
- The DAIP will be amended based on the feedback received and copies of the amended Plan will be available to the community.

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

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
DEC staff are made aware of the DAIP and their responsibilities associated with the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan is placed on DEC's intranet. Staff are advised about the plan via broadcast email. All Managers receive a printed copy of the plan. Staff with responsibilities in the plan are provided with a printed copy. New staff are made aware of the plan via the induction program. 	July 2007	Executive Officer Disability Access and Inclusion Committee (DAIC)	
Develop links between the DAIP and other department plans and strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate the objectives of the DAIP into department's strategic business planning and all other relevant plans and strategies. 	Ongoing	Corporate Executive All Managers	
Where practical and appropriate DEC events are organised so that they are accessible to people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all appropriate events are planned using the Accessible Events checklist. Make the Accessible Events checklist available to staff on the department's intranet. Develop standard wording for all information bulletins and event invitations to allow attendees to indicate the nature of any access requirements. Place on intranet. Remind staff of checklist annually via broadcast email. 	December 2007	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Ensure that DEC agents and contractors as appropriate are aware of the relevant requirements of the Disability Services Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the Department's policy and procedures regarding the Disability Services Act in Request for Quotation documentation. 	July 2007	Manager Supply Services	
People with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to comment on access to services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise staff awareness of the importance of receiving feedback on DEC services by people with disabilities. • Staff awareness training to be provided at various seminars e.g. Business Support Workshop, Parks and Visitor Services Workshop. 	Ongoing	Manager People Services	

Outcome Two: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Ensure where practical and appropriate all new recreation facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All site plans will be developed in accordance with DEC's Policy 18 and Universal Access Guidelines. All site plans are documented ensuring rational and reason for level of accessibility is included. 	Ongoing	Recreation and Landscape Coordinator	
Ensure DEC managed recreation areas with universal access are maintained to original standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit sites annually and identify maintenance needs. Identify any access complaints to support audit results. Repair to original universal access standard. Link Access Audit with DEC's RecData audit so procedures can be completed in unison. 	Ongoing	Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator	
Continue to upgrade access to DEC managed recreation areas. Priorities are based on the following indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor numbers Costs Ease of modification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually audit and identify access barriers in recreation areas. Identify any access complaints to support audit results. Prioritise and make submission to the Regional, Branch or District Manager to commence work on rectifying identified barriers. Link Access Audit with DEC's RecData audit so procedures can be completed in unison. Contact Disability Access and Inclusion Committee for advice or funding assistance. 	Ongoing	Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator	
Review and revise DEC's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DAA is updated to reflect current 	December 2007	Manager People	

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Disability Access Audit Online (DAA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> best practice and legislation. DAA is reviewed annually. 		Services	
Promote awareness of DEC's participation in the <i>You're Welcome Access Initiative</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You're Welcome Access Initiative information is placed on DEC's website (NatureBase) and DEC intranet. The initiative is promoted via Environment and Conservation News and other media sources/publications. Information provided for the <i>You're Welcome Access Initiative</i> is updated every six months. 	Ongoing	DEC Co-ordinator – Your Welcome Access Initiative	
Ensure all new DEC buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a policy on leasing of premises to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities. 	June 2008	Manager Supply Services	
Regional, Branch and District Managers to progressively upgrade access to DEC buildings. Priorities are based on the following indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees with disabilities Visitor numbers Costs Ease of modification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit and identify access barriers to all DEC buildings and facilities. Engage consultant to prioritise list of works. Make submission to the Executive to commence work on rectifying identified barriers 	Ongoing	Manager	
Provide all regional staff with Site Planning and Design – Universal Access awareness training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Site Planning and Design – Universal Access. Training to be provided at regional meetings/seminars annually. Ensure target groups - Rangers and Conservation Employees receive 	June 2008 Ongoing Ongoing	Recreation and Landscape Coordinator Landscape Architects	

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
	training.			
Continue to improve access by ensuring practice and appropriate standards are developed for recreation facilities on DEC managed estates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing planning and design guidelines for recreation facilities. Participate in the Australian Standards Outdoor Access working group to develop appropriate national standards for outdoor access in natural areas. 	<p>December 2007</p> <p>December 2009</p>	Coordinator Recreation and Landscape Unit	
Create a list of DEC meeting rooms across the various sites that are suitable for meetings with people with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete access audit on all DEC meeting rooms. Place list of meeting rooms on intranet. Advise staff via broadcast email. 	December 2008	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	

Outcome Three: People with disabilities receive information from the Department of Environment and Conservation in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as the general population.

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Improve community awareness on DEC information being available in alternative formats upon request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All documents that can be provided in alternative formats carry a notation regarding availability. Advise the community of the above via DEC's website, Conservation News, disability group newsletters and other appropriate disability services. 	Ongoing	Director Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs	
Improve staff awareness of accessible information needs and how to obtain information in other formats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop accessible information guidelines. Promote using 'Pointsource' and broadcast email Make available on DEC's intranet. Incorporate accessible information into disability awareness training. 	June 2009	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	
Ensure that DEC's website continues to meet contemporary good practice and Government access guidelines for access for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> .Review and update annually. Expand ability of website to provide information to non-English speaking users. 	Ongoing	Director Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs	
All information presented by DEC is clear, visible and complies with required standards for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise Department staff of the minimum requirements. Adopt State Government Guidelines for Information, Services and Facilities, and incorporate into general practice. 	December 2008	Director Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs	
Increase the use of interpreters to improve the availability of DEC's services/information to people with hearing impairment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the regular use of interpreters for people with hearing impairments in DEC community-based activities. Examples include the use of interpreters once per 	December 2008	Manager People Services	

Strategy	Task	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
	month at the Penguin Island Experience, for indigenous heritage walks and for cave tours etc.			
Use services which specifically focus on providing information to people with disabilities to disseminate DEC information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of services that provide information specifically to people with a disability. • Advise staff of the above list via broadcast email, DECmatters and place information on the DEC intranet. 	December 2008	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	

Outcome Four: People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Department of Environment and Conservation as the general population.

Strategy	Tasks	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Improve staff awareness of disability and access issues and improve skills to provide a good service to people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training in disability awareness and access issues. • Include training in DEC Training Manual. • Provide training at a minimum of four sessions/year. • Promote the use of <i>'Stepping Out'</i> and <i>'Getting There'</i> videos. • Review and revise intranet documents associated with disability. • Include awareness of DAIP in DEC's induction program. • Encourage managers to show <i>'Stepping Out'</i> and <i>'Getting There'</i> videos to new staff. 	Ongoing	Policy and Diversity Consultant Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	
Further generate and sustain staff awareness of disability and access issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular information on access and inclusion in the Environment and Conservation News, DEC intranet and on DEC's website. • Develop a staff recognition program for good practice in access and inclusion. • Promote nomination of DEC initiatives for Access Awards. 	Ongoing	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee Director Corporate Services	

Outcome Five: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as the general population to make complaints to the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Strategy	Tasks	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Ensure that current complaints policy and procedure are accessible for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise current mechanisms for complaint handling. Promote accessible complaints mechanisms to the community. 	December 2009	Director Corporate Services	
Improve staff knowledge in order to facilitate the receipt of complaints from people with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all reception staff undertake disability awareness training. 	December 2012	Manager People Services Branch	
All Good Working Relations Contact Officers, Public Interest Disclosure Officers and Peer Supporters have training in disability awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability awareness training to be included in Good Working Relations Contact Officers, Public Interest Disclosure Officers, and Peer Supporter annual meetings. 	Ongoing	Policy and Diversity Consultant	

Outcome Six: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public participation processes within the Department.

Strategy	Tasks	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Improve community awareness about public participation processes within DEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the existence, role and activities of the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee to the community via distribution of DAIP to key groups. Review DEC's public participation processes in view of encouraging participation from people with disabilities. Provide staff involved in public participation with disability awareness training. Incorporate training into existing public participation/ public participation training. 	<p>July 2008</p> <p>December 2008</p> <p>December 2010</p>	<p>Disability Access and Inclusion Committee</p> <p>Director Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs</p>	
Commit to ongoing monitoring of the DAIP to ensure implementation and satisfactory outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Access and Inclusion Committee to regularly monitor the progress of the plan and be involved in all reviews of the plan. Place updated plan on the intranet and DEC's website. Advise staff of update via broadcast email and Pointsource. Develop a register of experienced persons to provide comment on access and inclusion issues on request, who may not be members of the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee. 	Ongoing	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	

Strategy	Tasks	Task Timeline	Responsibility	Achievements against outcomes
Seek a broad range of views on disability and access issues from the local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Access and Inclusion Committee to actively pursue the views of people with disabilities, their carers and other key stakeholders on a wide range of issues. Distribute draft DAIP to key groups for comment. Invite representatives from disability groups to attend Disability Access and Inclusion Committee meeting. 	Ongoing Annually	Disability Access and Inclusion Committee	

Last amended JUNE 2007