



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2011–2015

Ombudsman Western Australia
Serving Parliament – Serving Western Australians

Policy Statement

The office of the Ombudsman (**the Office**) is committed to developing a strong disability access and inclusion framework supported by a range of proactive initiatives. These are designed to maximise the opportunities for people with a disability to access the services provided by the Office and employment opportunities in the Office.

Application of Policy

This plan applies to all products, services, events and programs developed or hosted by the Office.

Background

It is a requirement of the *Disability Services Act 1993 (DS Act)* that public authorities develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (**DAIP**). The Office has developed a DAIP to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services, facilities and information of the Office. This includes both service delivery and employment.

Other legislation supporting the aims of a DAIP includes:

- The Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* which makes discrimination on the grounds of a disability unlawful in both service delivery and employment; and
- The Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. A DAIP may also satisfy the Disability Discrimination Act's requirements for an Action Plan.

While action plans are not compulsory under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* or the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, they can assist organisations to become more accessible and inclusive, and can provide some clarity in the event of a disability discrimination proceeding.

Part IX of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* also requires WA public authorities to develop Equal Employment Opportunity (**EEO**) Management Plans. The Office's plan is included in the Workforce and Diversity Plan and focuses on:

- Workplace culture and accountability;
- Workplace support equity and diversity; and
- An equitable and diverse workplace profile for people with disabilities and other equity and diversity groups.

The achievement of accessible workplaces under the DAIP is closely related to the achievement of employment objectives through EEO Management Plans and these documents are closely related.

Definitions

DAIP – Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

Disability – as defined in the *Disability Services Act 1993* - means a disability:

- which is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments;
- which is permanent or likely to be permanent;
- which may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature; and
- which results in substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services.

EEO – Equal Employment Opportunity

Principles

The Office recognises the rights of people with disabilities as listed in the *Principles applicable to people with disabilities* in Schedule 1 of the *Disability Services Act 1993 (DS Act)*:

1. People with disabilities have the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity.
2. People with disabilities, whatever the origin, nature, type or degree of disability, have the same basic human rights as other members of society and should be enabled to exercise those basic human rights.
3. People with disabilities have the same rights as other members of society to realise their individual capacities for physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.
4. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to services which will support their attaining a reasonable quality of life in a way that also recognises the role and needs of their families and carers.
5. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to participate in, direct and implement the decisions which affect their lives.
6. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to receive services in a manner that results in the least restriction of their rights and opportunities.
7. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to pursue any grievance concerning services.
8. People with disabilities have the right to access the type of services and supports that they believe are most appropriate to meet their needs.

9. People with disabilities who reside in rural and regional areas have a right, as far as is reasonable to expect, to have access to similar services provided to people with disabilities who reside in the metropolitan area.
10. People with disabilities have a right to an environment free from neglect, abuse, intimidation and exploitation.

Role of the Office

The Ombudsman is an independent officer appointed by the Governor of Western Australia and is responsible directly to the Parliament rather than to the Government of the day or a particular Minister. The Ombudsman has four principal functions. The Office:

- Receives, investigates and resolves complaints about State Government agencies, local government and universities;
- Reviews certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities;
- Improves public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations, and education and liaison programs with public authorities; and
- Undertakes a range of additional functions that fit within the broad category of integrity oversight, including inspections of telecommunications intercepts and investigation of public interest disclosures.

The Ombudsman also undertakes the role of the Energy and Water Ombudsman.

Access and inclusion for people with disabilities

The Office is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are able to access the full range of services, facilities and information provided by the Office and enjoy the same opportunities as other community members to participate in employment, programs and services run by the Office.

Structure of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

This DAIP identifies areas where access and inclusion strategies are being implemented to optimise the accessibility of facilities, products and services. The objectives and strategies of this DAIP support access and inclusion outcomes that are defined as the minimum standard for DAIPs under the DS Act.

The plan covers strategies to achieve the following outcomes:

- Inclusive programs, services and events;
- Physical accessibility;
- Accessible information;
- Skilled and aware staff;
- Accessible complaints processes; and
- Public consultation.

The initiatives relate primarily to service delivery. Initiatives relating to employment of people with disabilities are included in the Office's EEO / Diversity Management Plan.

Governance and Accountability

Governance and accountability arrangements within the DAIP will ensure that the objectives and outcomes of this plan are monitored and integrated into existing systems. Further, new strategies will be implemented and/or revised in a way that is consistent with the objects of the DAIP and the DS Act.

DAIP planning, evaluation and continuous improvement will be integrated into business processes and systems by ensuring that Disability Access and Inclusion issues are identified in corporate planning and both recurrent and asset replacement funding.

Current initiatives

Outcome 1: Inclusive programs, services and events

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Office.

Strategies	Initiatives	Timeframes
Ensure that the Ombudsman complaint handling function is accessible to people with disabilities.	Provide ongoing review of the website and any publications to ensure they are accessible and available in alternate formats.	Timeframe: Ongoing
Ensure that Ombudsman events and activities are organised at venues that are as accessible as possible.	Check function centres for best practice disabled access before booking.	Timeframe: As required
	Staff responsible for organising events run by the Office will be aware of best practice with regard to organising events that are accessible for people with disabilities.	Timeframe: Ongoing
	Ensure that customers have an opportunity to identify special needs they may have in event invitations.	Timeframe: As required

Outcome 2: Physical accessibility

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the building and other facilities for the Office.

Strategies	Initiatives	Timeframes
Optimise accessibility and safety of the Office	Negotiate with building management on access issues associated with common property outside of leased space including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking facilities; • Accessible toilets; and • Accessible lifts. 	Timeframe: Ongoing
Optimise accessibility of public and shared areas within leased spaces	Ensure the Office's reception area provides accessibility for people with disabilities.	Timeframe: Ongoing
Review general level of access within the office environment.	Use the access guidelines, as set out in the <i>Advisory Notes on Access to Premises</i> on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission website, to review access. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches and entrances; • Controls; • Furniture and fitments; and • Symbols and signs. 	Timeframe: Ongoing
Optimise future leased accommodation to meet best practice	Ensure any future rental accommodation occupied by the Office meets best practice disabled access for staff and customers before a lease is signed.	Timeframe: As required

Outcome 3: Accessible information

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities receive information in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

Strategies	Initiatives	Responsibility and Timeframes
Optimise the accessibility of information resources to clients and the public	Ensure the Office's website is in line with best practice established by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) <i>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines</i> .	Timeframe: Ongoing
	Provide information resources in alternative format on request.	Timeframe: As required
	Develop publications with accessibility principles in mind.	Timeframe: Ongoing
Ensure that information provided in the course of delivering services is accessible to people with disabilities	Prepare letters and process documents from the Ombudsman and official documents to Parliament in accordance with information accessibility guidelines. Include a statement about availability of information in alternative formats in official reports.	Timeframe: Ongoing

Outcome 4: Skilled and aware staff

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from our staff as other people receive from our staff.

Strategies	Initiatives	Timeframes
Use DAIP process and plan to promote an awareness of people with disabilities service and access issues and priorities	Disseminate information regarding DAIP to all staff via the Intranet and staff meetings.	Timeframe: Ongoing
Coordinate training to improve knowledge and skills of staff	Include disability access and awareness in staff induction.	Timeframe: Ongoing
	Provide staff of the Office with access to guidelines and periodic training in access and awareness issues for people with disabilities.	Timeframe: Ongoing
	Run short 'how-to' sessions to provide information about very specific tools and services. (Eg TTY telephony, speech to text software. operation of 'screen reader' software, providing material in alternate formats.)	Timeframe: Ongoing

Outcome 5: Accessible complaints processes

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Office.

Strategies	Initiatives	Responsibility and Timeframes
Ensure that complaint services offered by the Office are accessible.	Ensure website information on making a complaint meets accessibility guidelines.	Timeframe: Ongoing

Outcome 6: Public consultation

The Office will use the following strategies to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Office.

Strategies	Initiatives	Responsibility and Timeframes
There will be an opportunity for public consultation on the DAIP.	Seek feedback regarding the DAIP on the Office's website. Include a notice that the DAIP can be provided in an alternative format on request.	Timeframe: Ongoing
Other consultation	Make any other public consultation accessible as outlined in Outcome 3: Accessible Information.	Timeframe: Ongoing