

**Submission
No 3**

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS

Organisation: Port Kembla Chamber of Commerce

Date Received: 21 August 2024

The suburb of Port Kembla has a population of approximately 5,500 people. The town centre of Port Kembla including the central roadway, Wentworth Street, does not have an accessible public toilet.

In 2016 Wollongong City Council successfully secured a grant, as part of the Port Kembla Community Infrastructure Funds (PKCIF), to prepare the Port Kembla 2505 Revitalisation Plan. The intent was to develop a vision and strategies that would be used to direct initiatives to revitalise the suburb of Port Kembla. As part of this plan, the Council recognised clean, safe and well-located public toilets were an essential amenity that was lacking in Port Kembla. Since this time, the Port Kembla town centre continues to be without an accessible public toilet.

The nearest closest accessible public toilet is located at Port Kembla Beach. Two major issues with this facility are (1) it is located almost 2 km from the Town Centre and (2) they are only open during the lifeguard season. Council refuses to consider leaving this toilet open and cleaned outside the patrol season, even though Port Kembla is one of the largest and most popular beaches on the South Coast.

As a local representative of the area and business community, we continue to receive feedback and messages from a community frustrated with the lack of response from Local and State governments on this matter.

In December 2023, a petition was introduced to Local Council December 2023 and provided to Council. The petition received the support of over 400 signatures, from local business, community and local leaders. Council advised these facilities would be considered when the budget came around. The toilet was not funded.

In early 2024, Local Council again investigated existing external toilets including initial improvements, only to once again confirm the existing external toilet sites in Port Kembla were unsuitable for use as public toilets and, any existing toilet facilities in the area are outdated and do not meet community and industry standards.

The only provision provided by Council was to provide further analysis of toilet facilities across the region over the next 12 months and have since advised they are continuing to investigate opportunities for funding for the placement/access for toilet provisions within the Port Kembla Town Centre area and once identified, it will form part of the Infrastructure Delivery Program, but only in future years.

Therefore, confirming the Port Kembla Town Centre will continue to be excluded from any budget allocation for a new or upgraded accessible public toilet.

We have received reports of people who regularly defecate on Wentworth Street out the front of businesses and parents with small kids are forced to use the toilets in the pub and other private businesses because there is no other option. Those community members with a physical, social or intellectual disability are further disadvantaged by these circumstances. Businesses have been asking for this for a long time and they feel embarrassed to tell visitors to the street there are no public toilets available. Council have not even considered including design for public toilets on Wentworth Street as a pathway for funding via the Port Kembla Community Investment Fund grants.

We desperately need an accessible public toilet in Port Kembla's Town Centre and a review of our Local and State Government's approach to our local facilities.