

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS

Organisation: Disability Council NSW

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Sent via email: PortfolioCommittee8@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Portfolio Committee

RE: Inquiry into public toilets

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into the provision, design, accessibility, and inclusivity of public toilets across NSW.

The Disability Council NSW (the 'Council') is a statutory body that provides independent advice to the Minister for Disability Inclusion on matters that affect people with disability in NSW and their families and carers. The Council is pleased to be able to support DCJ in consulting with the disability community on this matter.

In relation to this inquiry, the Council would like to raise several key issues.

Insufficient facilities and maintenance

A primary concern is the inadequate number of accessible public toilets across NSW. Many communities lack facilities specifically designed for individuals with disability, resulting in increased dependency on limited resources. We recommend conducting a comprehensive audit to identify gaps in accessible toilet provision, followed by targeted investments to increase the number of these facilities in high-traffic areas, such as parks, shopping centres, and tourist destinations.

Additionally, regular maintenance and cleanliness of public toilets are essential. When facilities are dirty, the general public often uses accessible toilets, which can further compromise hygiene. For this reason, it is essential to ensure high hygiene standards and regular cleaning schedules are established for all public toilets.

Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK) scheme

The MLAK scheme provides a standardised key that grants access to locked public toilets and other facilities equipped with MLAK locks. For people with disability, the scheme provides reliable access to essential facilities and allows individuals to access clean and safe facilities that may not be available to the general public, reducing the misuse of accessible toilets.

Despite these benefits, the Council believes the scheme remains largely underutilised. The Council believes a campaign to promote the MLAK scheme and

encourage more facilities to participate would greatly enhance the accessibility of public toilets.

Location and signage

Accessible toilets should be strategically located in high-traffic areas and available 24/7. Proximity to accessible parking spaces and clear signage on maps, such as the *National Public Toilet Map*, are essential for improving access. However, issues with the existing filtering process on the map make it difficult for users to locate accessible facilities. Therefore, the Council believes it is crucial to update the *National Public Toilet Map* to improve its filtering process and user interface, ensuring it is user-friendly and effectively promoted among people with disability.

Automatic doors

The absence of automatic doors in accessible toilets poses significant barriers for individuals with disability. Many facilities rely on heavy, manual doors that require considerable effort to open, deterring use. To mitigate this issue, the *National Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* should be amended to require automatic doors for all accessible toilet facilities. This would greatly enhance usability and significantly reduce barriers for users.

Public changing facilities

While we acknowledge this inquiry is focused on public toilets, we would like to take the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to public changing facilities. The lack of adequate changing facilities for people with disability is another significant issue. Many existing facilities are also insufficiently maintained and poorly equipped. The Council would like to recommend an increase in the number of adult change facilities and ensuring their regular upkeep.

The Council would also like to note that as our population ages, the demand for accessible public facilities will continue to rise. With this demographic shift, we would like to emphasise the need to have a proactive approach to planning and designing public toilets that are accessible and inclusive.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Yours faithfully

Jill Duncan
Disability Council NSW Acting Chair