

equal access strategy and access policy

September
2004



**Developing a strategy for equal access.
Who needs it? We all do.**

Hobart City Council

Equal Access Strategy

and

Access Policy

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Hobart City Council

Access Policy

Policy Statement

In recognition that all residents and visitors to the City have the right to equal access and full community participation, it is Hobart City Council's policy to :

- frame its responses to the needs of people with disabilities and others with access limitations, within the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) through the implementation of the Equal Access Strategy
- liaise and consult with people with a range of disabilities and other people with access limitations, on all access and disability related matters
- remove barriers - physical, communication, attitudinal - which may prevent people with disabilities and other people with access limitations from participation and access to Council facilities, services, programs and activities as far as practicable
- monitor new Council services as they come on line and new Council developments and upgrades at design stage, and regularly monitor and review existing facilities and services for modification where necessary
- promote awareness of DDA requirements, and the benefits to the whole community of ensuring equal access for all, to the development industry
- treat people with disabilities fairly - according to the Merit Principle and its Equity and Discrimination in the Workplace Policy - when they are seeking employment with the Council, or as an employee of the Council.

Principles Underpinning the Policy

- People with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community.
- People with a disability should not be defined by their disability.
- People with disabilities have a right to equal access to facilities, services, programs, activities and employment in order to fully participate in the community and have equal opportunity to fulfill their individual potential.
- Changes to the physical and social environment to improve access and equity assist people with disabilities to integrate more completely into the community, and also benefit the wider community.

Desired Outcomes

- People with disabilities are acknowledged as members of Hobart's diverse community, having the same fundamental rights as all other members of the community.
- Both Council employees and the wider community have an increased awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.
- Barriers which presently exist which restrict access and participation are removed as far as possible.
- Any discriminatory practices towards people with disabilities, both members of the community and employees, are addressed in a timely manner.
- Relevant Council officers are appropriately trained and informed about disability discrimination issues, and that knowledge and understanding of the relevant codes and standards are maintained.
- Council will apply the attitudes and principles of best practice when addressing access issues.
- Responsiveness and appropriateness of all Council services for people with disabilities are improved.

Introduction



The purpose of the Equal Access Strategy is to meet Hobart City Council's requirements under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992, and the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1999, particularly as a provider of goods and services and as an employer.

Council also has broader social responsibilities to its community, as reflected in its **Strategic Plan** 2001-2005 and **Access Policy**.

The **Strategic Plan** includes as results to be achieved:

- A harmonious community in which all people are valued, and can be active participants in community life
[KEY AREA 4 COMMUNITY & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT]
- A City in which all people have equal access to facilities, services and programs
[KEY AREA 4 COMMUNITY & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT]

The desired outcomes of Council's **Access Policy** are detailed on the previous page.

The Strategy provides a framework for a "whole of Council" approach to equal access issues in the City, and builds on the work of Council's earlier document the Hobart City Council (HCC) DDA Action Plan. While access is a primary concern for people with disabilities, many other groups in the community have an interest in access - older people, parents of children in pushers and prams and workers delivering goods to premises. While the outcomes of improved access benefit people with disabilities, ease of access around the City - to Council facilities and programs - is beneficial for the whole community and enhances community participation.

According to 2001 Census data, 47,319 people reside in Hobart, with the daily population swelling significantly as workers, shoppers, tourists, students and others visit the City for many varied purposes. 19.3% of the population have a disability. 15.4% of the Hobart population are aged over 60, a number of whom may also have a disability, and 4.79% are children under 4 years of age.

The Strategy also acknowledges that the barriers to access, and the limits this places on full participation in community life, are often attitudinal, as well as physical and communication barriers. Attitudinal barriers are also addressed in this Strategy.

Background



In January 1998, following extensive consultation with people in the community with a disability, Council approved an Action Plan. The Plan, which was lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), included an Access Policy, and outlined Council's

- consultative process through an Advisory Group comprising people with a lived experience or knowledge of disability;
- other processes which had been formulated in developing the Action Plan, such as auditing;
- staff awareness raising strategies; and
- detailed actions to improve access in Council buildings, parks and streetscapes, over a period of time.

For further information please refer to the HCC DDA Action Plan 1998.

Late in 2000, a complete review of the actions indicated that almost all had been completed or were scheduled for work in the following year.

For further detail please refer to 2000 Action Plan Review and List of Achievements.

A proposal to revise the Action Plan was put to the Access Advisory Committee in April 2001, on the basis that:

- most actions had been completed,
- actions listed in Part 2 the Action Plan were often repeated in other Council planning documents, and
- Part 1 of the Action Plan, which includes the Access Policy and information about processes which have been developed to address disability access matters, had not been reviewed or updated since the Action Plan was adopted.

The Access Advisory Committee agreed to the proposal.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was advised of Council's intention. Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) endorsed the proposal. In February 2002, a sub-committee of the Access Advisory Committee - the DDA Action Plan Review Working Group - was established.

Part 1 of the 1998 HCC DDA Action Plan has been revised. It has been re-named the Hobart City Council Equal Access Strategy. The detailed actions, which comprised Part 2 of the Action Plan, are now incorporated into Council's other planning documents.

How does this strategy link to the Council's Strategic Plan



It is closely linked to Council's Strategic Plan 2001-2005, which outlines broad objectives in the area of equal access.

The Strategic Plan comprises of a number of key areas. Council's activities in the area of improving access and facilitating participation in community life for all are reflected in the following key areas:

- Capital City Governance
- City Infrastructure Management
- Community Safety & Health
- Community & Cultural Development
- Land Use Planning & Development
- Transportation
- Organisational Management & Financial Performance

Key Elements of the Equal Access Strategy



The Strategy includes the key elements listed below. Each element:

- outlines the links to the Strategic Plan and/or Council's Access Policy, and
- has its own strategy and a list of actions / procedures.

1 Community Consultation/Participation

2 Addressing Barriers to Access - Physical, Communication, Attitudinal

3 New Works and Upgrades

4 Other Access Initiatives

5 Education and Awareness

6 Employment

7 Accountability

8 Communication Plan

KEY ELEMENT 1

Community Consultation / Participation



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Capital City Governance, Community & Cultural Development

The **Strategic Plan** states that Council “has responsibilities to ensure good governance of the capital, to involve its citizens in decisions about the future of the City...” (KA 1)

Key results to be achieved

- Greater community involvement in City planning initiatives and activities (KA 1)
- A City in which people are actively involved in shaping the community to meet its needs (KA 4)

The **Access Policy** states that Council will ... “liaise and consult with people with a range of disabilities and other people with access limitations, on all access and disability related matters.”

Strategy

To provide a framework for active community participation in addressing access matters in the City.

Actions / Procedures

- The activities of Council’s Access Advisory Committee are facilitated and supported.
- The Committee operates according to its Terms of Reference.

- Committee membership includes representatives of all in the community who may have an interest in access – people with disabilities, older people, parents of small children.
- Working groups and sub-committees are established as required to address specific issues of concern.
- Broad community consultation is undertaken on a regular basis, including Council's biennial survey of the community as part of the review and development of Council's strategic planning process.

KEY ELEMENT 2

Addressing Barriers to Access – Physical, Communication, Attitudinal



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Capital City Governance, City Infrastructure Management, Community Safety & Health, Community & Cultural Development and Transportation

The **Strategic Plan** states that “Council plays a leading role in facilitating community ... development by working with the community in identifying community need and taking appropriate action.” (KA 4)

Key results to be achieved

- A City in which all people have equal access to facilities, services and activities (KA 4)
- A harmonious community in which all people are valued and can be active participants in community life (KA 4)

The **Access Policy** states that Council will “remove barriers - physical, communication, attitudinal - which may prevent people with disabilities and other people with access limitations from participation and access to Council facilities, services, programs and activities.”

Strategy

To identify physical, communication and attitudinal barriers which limit access to Council’s facilities, services, programs and activities, and to implement processes which address these barriers.

Actions / Procedures

PHYSICAL

- In consultation with the Access Advisory Committee,
 - monitor new developments and upgrades at design stage, and regularly monitor and review existing facili-

ties, which may include site audits, in buildings, parks and streetscapes as appropriate, to identify barriers to access;

- set priorities for minor and major works in February each year.
- Responsible officers include proposed works in unit plans. (March-June)
- Responsible officers prepare appropriate budget allocations for proposed works. (March)
- When Council has approved the budget, Access Advisory Committee is advised of works which will proceed for the forthcoming financial year.
- Responsible officers provide progress reports to each Access Advisory Committee meeting.
- A summary of works undertaken is provided to the December Access Advisory Committee meeting.
- In addition, responsible officers respond as soon as possible to reports which threaten public safety, such as tripping hazards in the footpath caused by pot holes, exposed tree roots and uplifted pavers, and overhanging vegetation.
- Procedure for new works and upgrades - see Key Element 3.

COMMUNICATION

- A number of procedures which facilitate communication to community members with a disability have been developed in consultation with the Access Advisory Committee:
 - written communication to Access Advisory Committee is provided in Arial font, size 14 with appropriate spacing.

- the inclusion of appropriate elements for people with a vision impairment in Council brochures and signage.
- the provision of a signing interpreter and an audio loop with appropriate signage, at Council events.
- the provision of a tele-typewriter (TTY) service at Council's Customer Service Centre, with appropriate staff trained in the use of the service.
- Council's Marketing and Communications Group considers the communication needs of people with disabilities when Council communication strategies are being considered and/or developed. For example - the provision of significant Council documents in alternative formats - audio, CD and website.

ATTITUDINAL

- Staff surveys may be undertaken to monitor levels of staff awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.
- Regular disability/access awareness training is provided for staff.
- See more detail in Key Element 6.

KEY ELEMENT 3 New Works and Upgrades



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: City Infrastructure Management, Community Safety & Health, Community & Cultural Development and Transportation.

The **Strategic Plan** states that “Council has a responsibility to plan, manage and develop a range of infrastructure services and facilities that support the operation of the City. These include ... provision of local roads and footpaths, ... maintenance of parks, gardens and public spaces and management of major facilities ...” (KA 2)

Key results to be achieved

- Improved management and maximum use and performance of existing infrastructure assets. (KA 2)
- A City in which all people have equal access to facilities, services and activities. (KA 4)

The **Access Policy** states that Council will “monitor ... new Council developments and upgrades at design stage, and regularly monitor and review existing facilities and services for modification where necessary, ... and promote awareness of DDA requirements ... to the development industry.”

Strategy

To ensure equal access provisions are included in any new works and upgrades to Council facilities, and to promote the requirements of the DDA to the private sector.

Actions / Procedures

NEW COUNCIL WORKS AND UPGRADES

- Where possible, the sub-committee of the Access Advisory Committee is involved at the planning stage for any new Council developments or upgrades, and/or
- Development & Environmental Services staff forward plans for new Council works to the Community Development Officer (DDA Co-ordinator).
- Community Development Officer convenes a meeting of the sub-committee of the Access Advisory Committee to view the plans and provide comment.

Development & Environmental Services officers, relevant staff representing the client of the project and Tecton design officers (if appropriate) also attend.

Community Development Officer notes comments and forwards them to the relevant Development & Environmental Services officer.

- Tecton staff - Council architects and designers - design to a level of best practice in the provision of equal access, where possible, including Part 2 of AS1428.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS

- A brochure outlining information about the DDA is attached to all private, non-Council, development applications.
- A DDA Advice is attached to all building permits for Class 2 to 9 buildings.
- Building Surveyors - internal and privately contracted by the Council - approve Council and private developments at both the planning and building stages, according to AS 1428.1 and other relevant standards required under the Building Code of Australia. They are encouraged to be rigorous in their application of the detail within the relevant standards. (Note: significant changes to AS 1428 are expected by June 2004.)

KEY ELEMENT 4 Other Access Initiatives



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Capital City Governance, Community & Cultural Development

The **Strategic Plan** states that “Council plays a leading role in facilitating community ... development by working with the community in identifying community needs and taking appropriate action.” (KA 4)

Key results to be achieved

- Greater community involvement in City planning initiatives and activities (KA 1)
- A City in which people are actively involved in shaping the community to meet its needs (KA 4)

Council’s **Access Policy** states that “Council will ... liaise and consult with people with a range of disabilities and other people with access limitations, on all access and disability related matters.”

Strategy

To maintain an environment which fosters the development of initiatives which provide and promote a high level of access in the City.

Actions / Procedures

- Council Aldermen, staff, Access Advisory Committee and/or community members present/propose an access initiative.
- Proposals are listed for consideration on Access Advisory Committee meeting agenda.
- A sub-committee may be formed to progress the initia-

tive. Alternatively, relevant Council staff respond as appropriate depending on the outcome of discussions at the meeting.

- Examples of initiatives developed to date, include:
 - Streetwork Master Plan
 - free wheelchair access service in the CBD and at Salamanca Market
 - redevelopment of the Hobart Mobility Map
 - involvement in the Association of Consultants in Access (Australia)
 - work of the Development Approvals sub-committee
- Staff respond promptly and sensitively to access queries, and refer to other Council staff or outside agencies as necessary.

KEY ELEMENT 5 Education and Awareness



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Community & Cultural Development (KA 4) and Organisational Management & Financial Performance (KA 10)

The **Strategic Plan** states that Council will “facilitate, support and develop a range of programs and activities to enhance the City where people are highly valued and can play an active role in community life.”

Council will “provide a workplace that is safe and free from harassment and discrimination.”

Key results to be achieved

- A harmonious community in which all people feel valued and can be active participants in community life (KA 4)
- Trained, informed and motivated staff to deliver Council’s functions and services (KA 10)

Desired outcomes of the **Access Policy** include ... “both Council employees and the wider community have an increased awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, ... and that relevant Council officers are appropriately trained and informed about disability discrimination issues.”

Strategy

To raise the awareness of staff and the general community about the needs of people with disabilities and disability discrimination issues through the provision of information and appropriate training.

Actions / Procedures

- Disability awareness training sessions are provided annually for relevant Council staff.
- Disability discrimination issues are included in Equity and Discrimination in the Workplace awareness sessions for Council staff.
- Relevant staff and Council's Equity and Discrimination Co-ordination Panel are advised by Human Resources Unit of changes in disability-related legislation as required.
- Opportunities to work in partnership with key organisations to provide specialised training are investigated and developed.
- An event is organised each December on the International Day of People with a DisAbility to celebrate the abilities and achievements of people with a disability.
- Council participates in the development and implementation of activities initiated by other organisations which raise awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.

KEY ELEMENT 6 Employment



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Organisational Management and Financial Performance

The **Strategic Plan** states that Council will “create an environment that provides for staff to maximise their potential and contribution to the organisation.” (KA 10)

Key results to be achieved

- An organisation of excellence which embraces the principles of quality, best practice and continuous improvement. (KA 10)

Council’s **Equity and Discrimination in the Workplace (E&D) Policy** states that “The Hobart City Council is committed to the principles of equity and equal employment opportunity and to the elimination of inappropriate and unlawful discrimination, all forms of harassment and bullying in the workplace.” The Policy also recognises the importance of workplace diversity - a workforce which is representative of the community as a whole.

Council’s **Access Policy** states that Council will “treat people with disabilities fairly - according to the Merit Principle and its Equity and Discrimination in the Workplace Policy - when they are seeking employment with the Council, or as employees of the Council.”

Strategy

To apply the principles of equal employment opportunity and workplace diversity in relation to existing and potential employees with disabilities.

Actions / Procedures

COUNCIL

- Gives equal consideration to employment opportunities in Council to both existing and potential employees, regardless of their individual characteristics.
- Selects individuals for employment, promotion or advancement, training and staff development according to the Merit Principle - the practice of appointing or selecting the most suitable person for a position or for training in terms of applicants' abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience, characteristics and personal qualities relevant to carrying out the duties in question.
- Will consider appropriate adjustments in the workplace for employees with a disability.
- Will take the views of people with disabilities into account when selections for disability-specific positions are being made.

KEY ELEMENT 7 Accountability



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Capital City Governance

The **Strategic Plan** states that “Council will provide effective leadership through open, consultative and accountable public policy and decision making processes and strategic alliances.” (KA 1)

The **Access Policy** states that Council will “frame its responses to the needs of people with disabilities and others with access limitations, within the requirements of the DDA through the implementation of the Equal Access Strategy.”

Strategy

To be accountable for actions and initiatives addressing access, which have been developed in consultation with the Access Advisory Committee.

Actions / Procedures

- Council’s Access Policy is adhered to, and actions are developed in accordance with the principles underpinning the policy.
- Council is seen to meet its requirements as outlined in the DDA, particularly as a provider of goods and services and as an employer.
- The strategies and actions relating to access included in Council’s Strategic Plan are undertaken and reported in Council’s Annual Report.
- Access actions, developed in consultation with the Access Advisory Committee, are included in relevant unit plans and implemented, monitored with progress reporting provided to meetings of the Access Advisory Committee by the responsible Council officers.

- The Access Policy and the Equal Access Strategy is reviewed annually.
- Access activities are reported regularly to the Council, Council's Corporate Management Team and the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission.

KEY ELEMENT 8 Communication Plan



Strategic Links

KEY AREAS: Capital City Governance, Organisational Management & Financial Performance

The **Strategic Plan** states that “Council will develop processes whereby a broad range of methods are used to inform and involve the community in decisions about the community.” (KA 1)

Key results to be achieved

- Better informed community on Council matters (KA 1)
- Trained, informed and motivated staff to deliver Council’s functions and services (KA 10)

The **Access Policy** states that “Council will promote awareness of DDA requirements, and the benefits to the whole community of ensuring equal access for all”

Strategy

To communicate Council’s Equal Access Strategy to Council staff and the broader community.

Actions / Procedures

- The Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission and the Anti-Discrimination Commission are advised of the Strategy; Council will request that the Strategy is listed on their respective websites.
- Copies of the Strategy will be distributed in a variety of formats to the Access Advisory Committee, Council staff, Local Government Association of Tasmania, other Councils and relevant State Government agencies and community organisations.

- The Strategy will be promoted through appropriate training to relevant Council units.
- The Strategy will be accessible through Council's website.