



AUSTRALIAN
NETWORK
ON DISABILITY

Annex 1 – Consultation Findings: Accessibility of Australian Parliament House

Department of Parliamentary Services 2023

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1. Introduction

Australian Network on Disability were commissioned to review the accessibility of Australian Parliament House from the perspectives of employees and visitors to understand barriers to access and to hear recommendations on how to enhance accessibility. This consultation forms part of work completed as part of Recommendation 9 of the *'Set the standard: Report on the independent review into commonwealth parliamentary workplaces'* (Set the Standard Report) which requires:

- *Access and inclusion The Presiding Officers, together with party leaders and parliamentary departments, should review the physical infrastructure, policies and practices within Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces to increase accessibility and inclusion (page 21)¹.*

The project was grounded in Human Rights approaches with the notion of 'nothing about us without us' which aligns with principles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD emphasises the need for people with disability directly affected by policies, decisions, and actions to be actively involved in shaping and informing those processes. This principle recognises the inherent dignity and autonomy of all people as a cornerstone of human rights, ensuring that voices are not only heard, but respected and valued in matters that affect their lives.

The project was also underpinned by the Social Model of Disability, which views 'disability' as the result of the interaction between people with disability and barriers in the environment which can include physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers.

Australian Network on Disability acknowledges and expresses gratitude to all people with disability who contributed to the project by sharing their lived experiences.

This report provides an overview of the method and outcomes of our consultation aimed at improving the accessibility of Australian Parliament House and details finding and recommendations.

1.1 Methodology

Australian Network on Disability adopted a multi-phase consultation process co-designed with key Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) staff to address the accessibility requirements of employees and visitors whilst also being trauma informed by responding to the comfort level of participants. Our approach consisted of surveys, walkthroughs (workshops) and interviews.

Surveys allowed us to collect broad and quantitative data providing a broader understanding of perspectives; focus groups / workshops facilitated in depth discussions, providing qualitative insights; while interviews offered a more personal and detailed exploration of individual experiences and needs.

¹ Kate Jenkins Australian Human Rights Commission. (2021). Set the standard: Report on the independent review into commonwealth parliamentary workplaces, p21. Australian Human Rights Commission.



By combining these methods, we were able to create an holistic and inclusive approach that not only met accessibility requirements, but also ensured that participants felt comfortable and heard throughout the consultation process.

Comprehensive details relating to Australian Network on Disability’s methodology are provided at [Appendix 1: Methodology](#) and includes information about consultation design, recruitment for walkthroughs and interviews, promotion of surveys and analysis of data.

1.2 Participant demographics

Table 1 provides an overview of the number of building occupants and visitors who participated in the project, demonstrating the collaborative efforts and extent of engagement throughout the project.

Activity	Number
Visitor survey	Total - 43 survey responses* with respondents identifying as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 30% disability - 14% chronic health condition - 6% experienced injury - 6% neurodivergent - 22% support person/carer *Number at 10/10/23, postal survey responses have not been received by Australian Network on Disability and are not part of these findings.
Building occupant survey	Total 73 survey responses* with respondents identifying as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 19% disability - 24% chronic health condition - 10% experienced injury - 12% neurodivergent - 9% carer - 2% advocate *Number at 10/10/23, postal survey responses have not been received by Australian Network on Disability and are not part of these findings.
2 x 2-hour onsite walkthroughs with visitors held on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 June 2023 	8 people with disability (including 1 person who provided written feedback who was unable to participate in walkthrough due to accessibility).



- 27 June 2023	2 Auslan interpreters who also provided feedback
2 x walkthroughs with building occupants 2-hour onsite walkthrough with building occupants	6 people with disability, 1 carer
Interviews with building occupants	5 people with disability

Table 1 - Number of participants involved in the project.

2. Overall findings

2.1 Enablers for an accessible and inclusive environment.

Themes throughout our consultation identified potential enablers that would collectively contribute to an accessible and inclusive environment at Australian Parliament House. These include:

- **Inclusive design** – We learnt that when updates to Australian Parliament House have been implemented there has been little to no consultation with people with disability, visitors and employees expressed the importance of engaging in consultation to enhance the accessibility of the environment and policies and processes. Findings consistently reflected the need for inclusive design approaches which involve and consider the lived experience perspectives of people with disability throughout project cycles (throughout planning, design, implementation, and evaluation) in the design and implementation of policies and environments. This approach supports understandings of the diversity of people accessing Australian Parliament House identifying solutions to enhance accessibility and inclusion.
 - By including insights of people with disability it also supports understandings about the breadth of disability, including non-visible disability.
- **Accessibility embedded into policies** – Accessibility should be incorporated in policies and processes to reduce systematic barriers for people with disability, enhancing accessibility and inclusion. Embedding accessibility into policies and processes will also reduce reactive approaches to accessibility which can acquire additional resource costs including financial and staffing resources. Embedding accessibility into policies will also support consistency in access to adjustments.
- **Psychological safety / trauma-informed approaches** – recognising and addressing emotional and psychological wellbeing of individuals is integral to supporting an inclusive and accessible environment and culture. Benefits of fostering a culture of psychological safety would allow building occupants and visitors to express their whole self, seek support when required, and raise concerns without feelings of judgement or being dismissed.
- **Inclusive and accessible communication** – Our findings emphasised the need for clear and accessible methods of communication that meet the accessibility requirements of people with disability to support knowledge/information sharing and communication.



2.2 Health and safety risks

Several health and safety risks were identified throughout our consultation (discussed in more detail throughout the report) which include:

- Seizure experienced due to use of fluorescent lighting, where a building occupant was not able to access adjustments to reduce their exposure to fluorescent lighting.
- Pathways in courtyards where people have slipped and fallen due to being slippery and uneven.
- Heavy weight of doors which can lead to injuries, strains, or accidents where they are hard to open / close. This risk is increased for people with disability.
 - In addition, the weight of heavy fire exit doors could lead to barriers evacuating the building putting people at risk.
- Lack of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) on borders of water features (including on the Great Verandah, courtyards and on the ground floor) which can create trip and fall hazards, particularly for people who are blind/have low vision.
- Risk of psychological injuries due to negative attitudes and lack of support from Managers.
- Thickness of carpet which can present as a health and safety risk for people using wheelchairs where the carpet creates increased resistance and friction making it harder to manoeuvre. This additional resistance not only places additional strain / over exertion of the body, but also increases risk of accidents and / or tipping.



3. Findings

3.1 Survey Findings

Demographics of building occupant survey respondents

The building occupants survey was open from Monday 6 September 2023 until Monday 2 October 2023 and resulted in 73 responses. Demographics of the respondents included (note respondents were able to select more than one response):

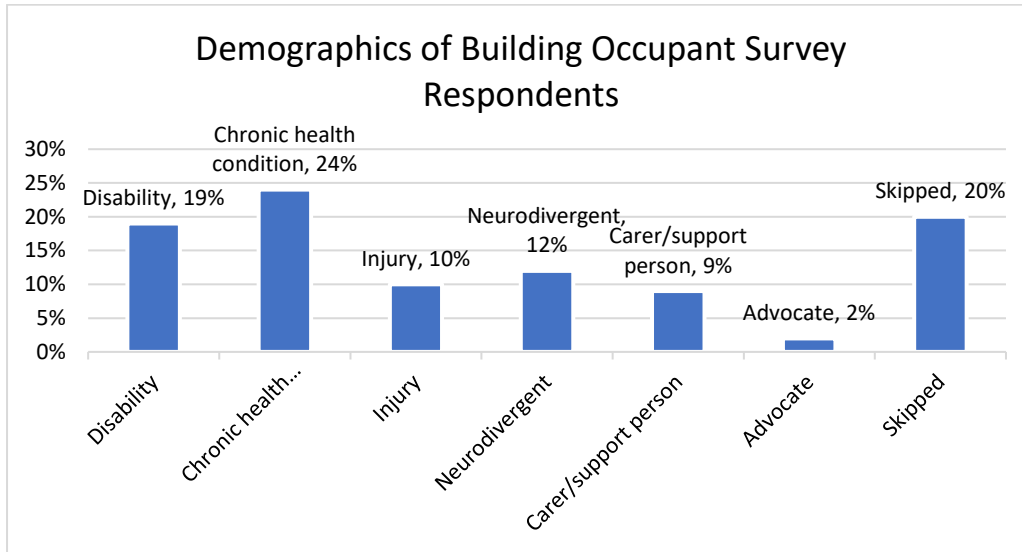


Figure 1: Demographics of Building Occupant Survey Respondents

Tenure of respondents included:

Employment type	Number = 73
Full time	79% (58)
Part time	11% (8)
Casual	3% (2)
Prefer not to say	7% (5)

Table 2 - Tenure of respondents



Role	Number = 73
Department of Parliamentary Services	55% (40)
Department of the House of Representatives staff member	15% (11)
Department of the Senate staff member	8% (6)
Senator or Member of Parliament's member of staff	7% (5)
Parliamentary Budget Office staff member	5% (4)
Other	3% (2)
Prefer not to say	7% (5)
Senator or Member of Parliament	0

Table 3 - Role of respondents

93% of respondents worked at Australian Parliament House on sitting and non-sitting days with 85% advising that Australian Parliament House was their permanent place of work.



Building occupant feedback on accessibility

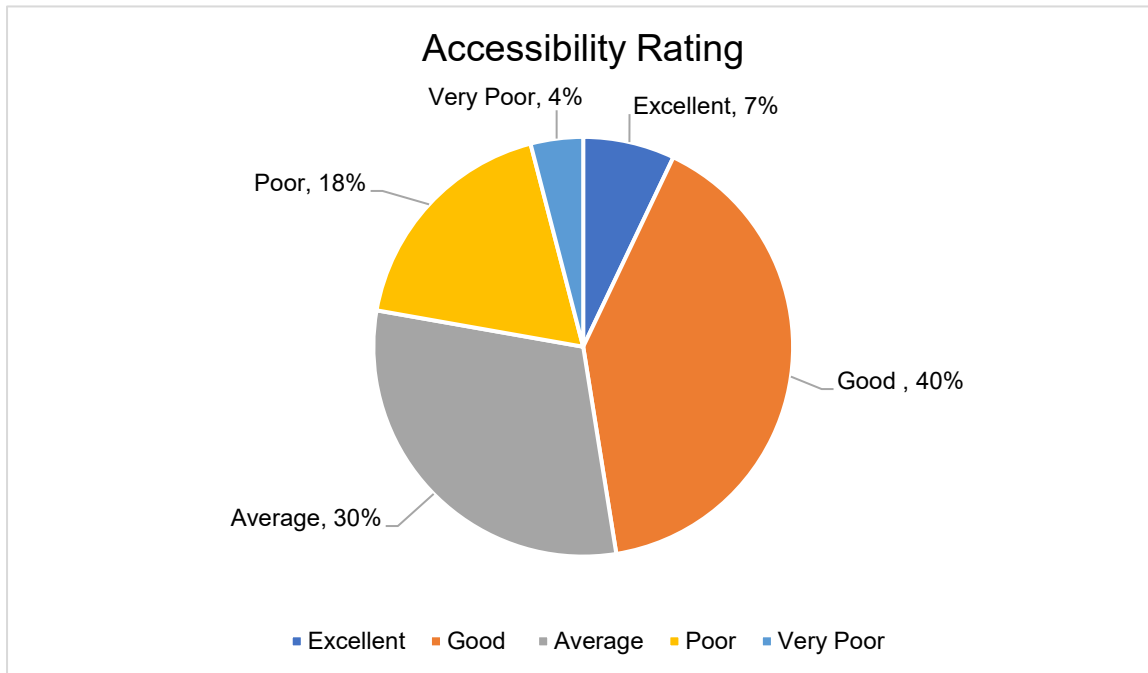


Figure 2: Accessibility Rating - Building Occupants

The most frequent factors for lower ratings included the heavy weight of doors, access to and from car parks, limitations to signage, sensory barriers including lighting and noise and distance and gradient of route from public transport.

More barriers are experienced than what was self-reported

55% of respondents identified they had experienced barriers accessing Australian Parliament House. This percentage increased to 71% when reviewing the qualitative text responses of respondents who had identified 'no' to having experienced barriers, however detailed their experiences of ongoing barriers in open response questions. These barriers related to the sensory environment (lighting, temperature and noise from bells), accessing workplace adjustments, issues with the weight of doors, lack of ramp access in some areas and issues with the thickness of carpet. This finding highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing barriers by not only reviewing quantitative indicators but also looking to understand the qualitative responses and experiences shared by building occupants.

Concerns around privacy when providing survey feedback

Concerns were raised relating to privacy of survey responses, which resulted in one respondent withdrawing their response. The concern related to a Microsoft Forms disclaimer at the end of the survey which mentions *'The owner of this form has not provided a privacy statement as to how they will use your response data. Do not provide personal or sensitive information'*. This finding has been shared to identify the potential barriers when seeking feedback from building occupants via surveys which could hinder the survey effectiveness in capturing authentic insights where building occupants have concerns about the misuse of sensitive data and potential breaches of confidentiality / being identified based upon their responses.



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Figure 3: Footer of Microsoft Forms survey

Demographics of Visitor Survey Respondents

The survey for visitors was open from Monday 6 September 2023 until Monday 2 October 2023 and resulted in 44 responses. Demographics of the respondents included (note respondents were able to select more than one response):

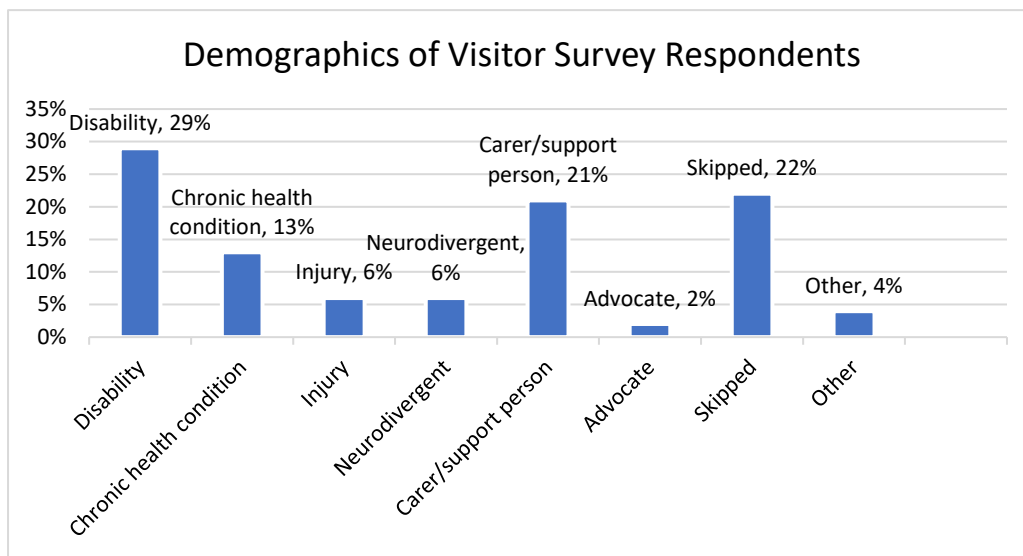


Figure 4: Demographics of Visitor Survey Respondents



Location	Number = 44
Australian Capital Territory	41% (18)
New South Wales	23% (10)
Queensland	14% (6)
South Australia	2% (1)
Victoria	16% (7)
Western Australia	2% (1)
New Zealand	2% (1)

Table 4 - Location of Visitor Survey Respondents

Date of last visit	Number = 44
Within last 3 months	59% (26)
3-6 months ago	14% (6)
12 months ago or longer	27% (12)

Table 5 - Survey Respondent Date of Last Visit



Visitor Feedback on accessibility

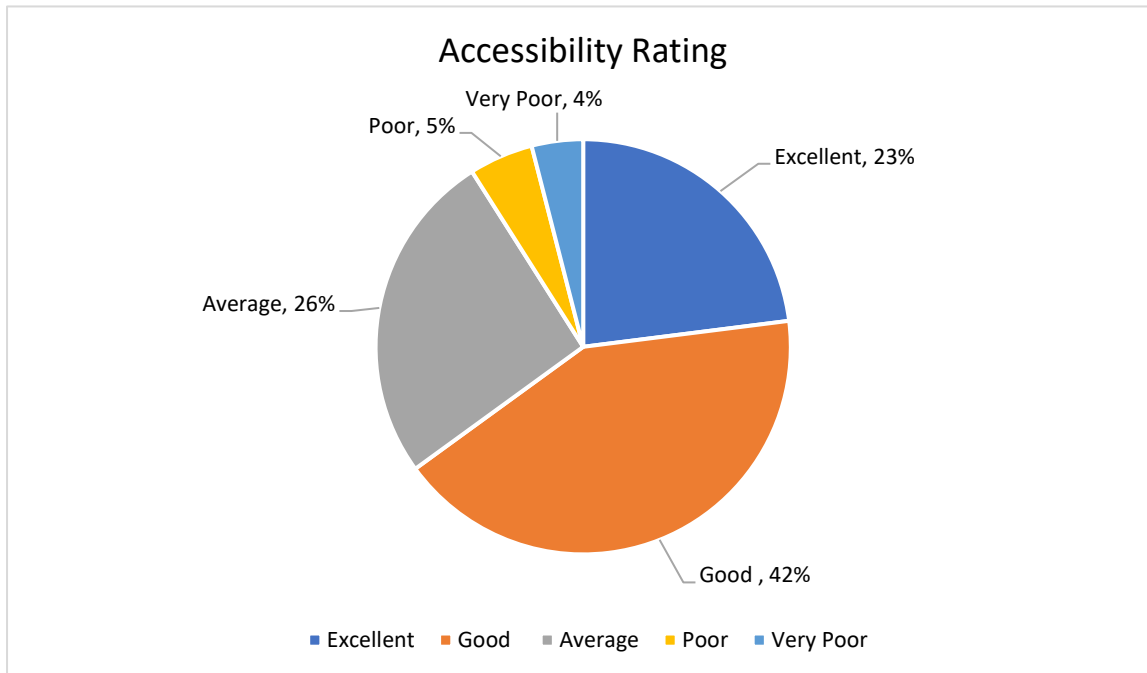


Figure 5 - Accessibility Rating - Visitors

Higher scores were attributed to welcoming staff and the knowledge and professional conduct of the tour guides who were available to provide directions and information about Australian Parliament House. This feedback is supported by 81% of respondents identifying they felt welcomed at Australian Parliament House.

42% of visitors rated accessibility as 'good', however in their responses provided feedback about barriers experienced which related to the length and steep gradient of the ramp from the car park, difficulties accessing lifts when unfamiliar with the building, and the environment not being tailored for people who are d/Deaf who use Auslan where instructions and announcements were not available in written English and Auslan.

Average to very poor ratings were related to barriers experienced with:

- Heavy weight of doors.
- Depth of carpet pile causing barriers for wheelchairs.
- Difficulties with wayfinding due to limitations with signage (small text on glared background).
- Negative experiences with staff – particularly during security screening where we heard Security staff were verging on 'intimidating'.
- Furniture – which was described as not being configured with disability in mind. The counter in the gift shop was also identified as being too high for people using wheelchairs.
- Limitations in design of bathrooms – highlighted were narrow doorways.
- Difficulty finding lift access.



Survey recommendations

- Review and update privacy settings of Microsoft Form survey to remove statement in footer 'The owner of this form has not provided a privacy statement as to how they will use your response data. Do not provide personal or sensitive information'.
- Regularly (at least annually) survey building occupants to continually enhance the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.
- Share a link to the visitor survey on the '[Plan your Visit/Accessibility at Parliament House webpage](#)' with a heading 'provide feedback'. The Visitor Services Team may also consider sharing the link after visitors have made a booking.

3.2 Culture and policies

Design Integrity and security verses accessibility

We often heard of the respect of Design Integrity with a purpose to protect and preserve the original heritage and cultural value over time and the original Architect's intent for the building to be a democratic place for all².

Whilst there was respect and support of Design Integrity, a major theme identified throughout our consultation was how the Design Integrity of Australian Parliament House superseded progress towards accessibility in the design / retrofit of the building. Australian Network on Disability note that barriers can occur where a singular policy takes precedence over prioritising accessibility efforts which can lead to initiatives to enhancing accessibility being sidelined, overlooked, or deemed secondary. This approach does not take into consideration the diverse needs of people accessing Australian Parliament House and can contribute to systemic exclusion.

Building occupants shared examples where they felt there was a culture of needing to adapt to the environment, rather than provisions being made to support their accessibility. As one building occupant shared:

'I feel my team is welcoming and including, yet the general feeling is that you need to fit into Parliament House and its conventions, rather than having adaptations to ensure it fits you, hence, and so it is not welcoming and you are not included'.

We also heard this can lead to negative power dynamics where people with disability are not included and welcomed in order to have full access to and fully participate in activities within Australian Parliament House.

Building occupants shared examples of concerns raised relating to accessibility with the Design Integrity being referenced as reason for being unable to support the request. Feedback included *'that's just the design of the building, architect has moral rights and needs to approve everything'* and *'I had raised a concern, but Design Integrity stopped the changes'*.

² Parliament of Australia (n,d). *Chapter 3: Heritage Status of Parliament House*. Retrieved from: [Chapter 3 – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](#) [retrieved on 13 December 2023]



During our consultation we learnt about the different classifications of design elements which are dependent on the area within Australian Parliament House. We heard there is increased opportunity to implement accessibility in private building occupant work areas, compared to public facing areas which include ceremonial design elements.

We heard that the work location of building occupants determined if adjustments could be made. As a result, we heard barriers to accessibility for building occupants and visitors with disability due to Design Integrity include:

- Venetian blinds
 - Fitted with glass panes which are unable to be raised to let in daylight and having reflective surfaces creating glare which was identified as a barrier for building occupants with low vision and people who experience neurological conditions including migraine.
- Wayfinding and signage (refer to the [Wayfinding](#) of this report for detailed findings).
 - Directional signage around Australian Parliament House displayed on glass creating glare and using small text with low contrast colour of text and lack of Braille.
 - Lack of use of internationally recognised signage, in particular for bathrooms.
 - Door signage with limited size of text and colour contrast.
- Flooring and carpet (refer to [Flooring and carpet](#) section of this report for detailed findings).
 - Thickness of carpet pile which caused barriers for people using wheelchairs, causing wheels to swerve in different directions and causing resistance making it harder to propel wheelchairs forward.
 - Wooden teak flooring where polish and glare of flooring was described as being slippery.
- Furniture (refer to [Furniture](#) section of this report for detailed findings)
 - Tables and desks in areas where they are not able to have customisable features (for example adjustable heights).
 - Seating and benches which were described as being inaccessible due to lack of back support and support to sit and get up.

We also heard barriers where security protocols affected accessibility. Examples included the heavy weight of doors, which were described as being used a security feature, being inaccessible for both building occupants and visitors with disability (refer to [Doors](#) section of this report). We also heard building occupants were unable to open windows in offices to improve ventilation due to windows being locked for security reasons.

We are also aware due to the security of the building maps (including sensory maps) may not be able to be made available on the website.

We learnt that the Design Integrity has been previously updated to meet security protocols in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We heard from building occupants who shared their optimism for the Design Integrity being updated to evolve with up-to-date best practice standards for accessibility and inclusion to ensure continued access for people with disability.



Recommendations

- Forward this report to Architects responsible for the ongoing management and review of the Design Integrity to review opportunities to establish a balance between aesthetics and accessibility to ensure design elements do not inadvertently create barriers for people with disability when accessing Australian Parliament House. This will ensure the Design Integrity maintains alignment of its concept of the building as the 'people's building' inclusive of people with disability.
 - Architects may engage with building occupant Advocates such as Senator Jordon Steele-John and members of the recently re-established Disability Employee Network to support this review.

Barriers accessing workplace adjustments

Building occupants highlighted the benefits that access to workplace adjustments had in their lives including supporting their health and wellbeing (avoiding aggravation of their health condition) and achieving a healthy work-life balance. With the benefits contributing to increased job satisfaction, overall wellbeing, and the ability to maintain their employment. One building occupant shared they would not be able to cope with full time work, and as a result would have needed to make personal sacrifices to maintain working a 7.5-hour workday where they would have needed to go straight to bed to recoup from longer working days.

44% of respondents to the building occupant survey identified they require adjustments or modifications to access and work at Australian Parliament House, however 50% of respondents requiring adjustments identified they experienced barriers accessing adjustments and 16% responded 'prefer not to say'.

Barriers accessing adjustments discussed throughout our consultation included:

- Cultural barriers – where it was felt Australian Parliament House did not have a culture that is supportive of adjustments.
- Lack of understanding of formal workplace adjustment processes (of employees and Managers).
 - Onus on building occupants to request workplace adjustments rather than proactive offers and support of workplace adjustments from Managers.
- Inappropriate requests for medical evidence from Managers.
 - Lack of consistency in requests where it was highlighted building occupants were asked for medical evidence for adjustments compared to colleagues, for example *'After requesting an ergonomic mouse I was told I required a letter from my GP confirming my medical condition and that the mouse was needed, yet other people at APH had requested ergonomic mouse and gotten it without any letter needed'*.
- Adjustments being declined for short term health conditions.
- Lack of response / delays in time to implement adjustments.
 - We heard from building occupants who shared long wait times for adjustments to be implemented including one person who waited six months and another who waited 18 months.



- Frequently we heard requests for adjustments were agreed by interview panels, however these conversations were not followed up and adjustments were not implemented during onboarding.
- Requests being dismissed.
- Lack of support for temporary adjustments where we heard from building occupants who were denied adjustments due to the temporary nature of their disability.

Building occupants shared a reactive approach to the provision and implementation of workplace adjustments, and a power dynamic where the seniority or status of building occupants affects access to workplace adjustments. Senator Jordon Steele-John shared:

'The building is designed to privilege the needs of Members of Parliament and I still have barriers, if I wasn't a member of Parliament, it would be near impossible to work here'.

The Senator shared it took between 6-7 months to update his office suite to be accessible, during which time he worked in a standard office. The Senator shared barriers using the standard office including being unable to access the bathroom, requiring him to use accessible bathrooms in the corridor; narrow doorways that were tight for his wheelchair which led to knocking his hands on doorframes; depth of doorway sills making it hard to maneuver into rooms; nonadjustable desk; and being unable to access cupboards in the kitchen. The Senator shared if he had been using a motorised wheelchair, he would not have been able to access the suite.

We heard barriers to workplace adjustments aggravated the medical conditions of building occupants which could lead to them not being able to continue to work and contributed to 'psychological burnout' from continually following up and advocating for adjustments.

A theme across all building occupants who experienced barriers to adjustments was taking on responsibility to follow up with implications of being labelled as 'difficult'. One building occupant shared *'You follow up multiple times before anything is done, and you are often made to feel like either it's in the too-hard basket, or you will be labelled as a 'difficult' person and disadvantaged as a result'.*

The process to request a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) to support people to evacuate / stay in place in the event of an emergency at Australian Parliament House was described as 'clunky'. Building occupants were unsure if they were 'eligible' to request a PEEP and shared the template to request PEEPs was not shared to restrict people from completing and requesting them. When considering requesting a PEEP one building occupant shared *'I'm scared to apply because I'm not sure if my disability has been long enough so I don't know if I'm eligible'.*

Building occupants shared a lack of understanding and limited guidance about their PEEP which is limited due to practice evacuations being completed outside of office hours when they are not available. One building occupant shared *'I don't know what I have to do, if I would need to just stay and wait'.*

As part of this project, Australian Network on Disability provided feedback on the DPS Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure document to support timely access to workplace adjustments for DPS employees. Our feedback suggested more emphasis on legal frameworks including the provision of reasonable adjustments identified in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The DDA uses a broad definition of disability, which includes past, present, and future



disabilities as well as imputed disabilities, which may be permanent or temporary in nature. The DDA also protects people who have an assistance animal or disability aid, as well as associates of people with disability, including family members, carers, and support workers.

Australian Network on Disability is unsure if the DPS Reasonable Adjustment policy documents would apply to building occupants who do not work for DPS. We recommend the updated policies are shared with other relevant departments / contractors to demonstrate best practice for access to workplace adjustments for other building occupants.

Recommendations

- Complete a recruitment review to consider the accessibility of the recruitment cycle and processes from promotion to onboarding.
- Review Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan policies and procedures to ensure they align with best practice including:
 - Offer PEEPs to all employees, not just employees who have identified they have disability. This avoids people falling through the cracks where a person may not need ongoing workplace adjustments but may need assistance during an emergency.
 - Review template to ensure it includes accessible language.
 - Provide relevant documentation relating to PEEPs in a centralised location promoting easy access for building occupants.
 - Include contingencies where colleagues / buddies are not available.
- Review practice evacuation processes where when a building occupant is not available for practice evacuations, Fire Wardens and buddies are available to talk through and potentially provide a one-on-one simulation of evacuation support.
- Update the DPS Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure document in line with feedback provided by Australian Network on Disability. Australian Network on Disability can support DPS with further updates of these documents if required (please note this would be at an additional cost and is separate to this project).
 - Share approved Reasonable Adjustment policy with other building occupants and contractors to ensure consistency of access to workplace adjustments across Australian Parliament House.
- Establish a comprehensive communications strategy across Australian Parliament House to ensure all building occupants are aware of their rights and ability to access workplace adjustments.
- Establish a formal mechanism to review implementation timeframes of workplace adjustments. Seek feedback from building occupants who have accessed workplace adjustments and use this to continually improve workplace adjustment processes.
- Review and formalise recruitment and onboarding processes to ensure workplace adjustments requested during interviews are implemented.



Lack of consultation with people with disability

We heard from building occupants with disability who shared they did not feel accessibility or the experiences of people with disability is included in the design and update of policies and the environment. As one person stated:

'It does not feel like people with disability are even considered when moving around Parliament House. 1 in 5 Australians have a disability, yet their national place of democracy excludes them – it's not acceptable. How do you expect to have more disabled staff or even Parliamentarians if the space does not accommodate their basic accessibility needs'.

Frequently we heard the need for consultation to occur with people with disability to avoid accessibility barriers occurring.

Recommendations

- Embed inclusive design approaches in the design of policies, processes and environments.

Lack of consistency and support from Managers

Insufficient managerial support can greatly reduce the psychological safety of building occupants. When individuals lack support in understanding and accessing resources it can result in hesitancy to openly communicate, voice concerns, or share ideas due to apprehensions about judgement, reprisal, or exclusion. As of April 1, 2023, Australia has amended its Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws to include regulations on managing psychosocial risks and hazards at work. Psychosocial hazards are “aspects of work that have the potential to cause psychological or physical harm which include:

- excessive job demands.
- low job control.
- poor support.
- lack of role clarity.
- poor physical environment.
- conflict or poor workplace relationships; and
- interactions³.

A lack of consistency in support from Managers was identified which ranged from Managers being supportive who display empathy and willingness to put in place supports, to Managers who are dismissive. Examples of responses from Managers who have been dismissive include:

- ‘people like you should be pensioned off and not working’.
- ‘this is not the kind of department where disabled people can work’.

³ Australian Network on Disability. (2023). *Employer How to Guide: Building a Disability Confident Culture*. Australian Network on Disability.



- 'I was told I was not 'disabled enough' for support.
- 'I have been pushed aside because of my disability and told I cannot work'.

37% of respondents to our building occupant survey identified they had shared accessibility concerns with their supervisor, Manager and / or other relevant staff, however 46% of these respondents advised their concerns had not been resolved in a satisfactory way. Barriers included:

- Conflicting policy priorities where Design Integrity is prioritised (see [Design Integrity verses accessibility](#)).
- Lack of response / delays in response from supervisors and Managers.
- Negative attitudes and response of Managers as detailed above, that were described as being 'obstructive' by one building occupant.
- Outcome provided did not solve the issue.

We heard the need for Managers to engage in mandatory training that focuses on accessibility, highlights the breadth of disability and confirms processes to support workplace adjustments. This suggestion aligns with best practice where organisations should embed mandatory disability awareness training during induction and regularly throughout employment, with additional role-specific training provided for each organisational area (e.g., digital accessibility training for teams in information and communication technology roles and inclusive recruitment for employees responsible for recruitment).

Recommendations

- Provide mandatory disability confidence training for all building occupants including Managers and Senior Leaders which should be available on induction and accessed regularly throughout their employment.
- Provide disability confidence training for Senior Leaders who are in decision making roles to foster an inclusive and supportive culture for people with disability at Australian Parliament House. This will support the implementation of accessible policies and procedures, allocate resources, and contribute to reducing stigma relating to disability.
- Engage in activities to enhance feelings of psychological safety, this may include:
 - Engaging consultants with expertise in supporting psychological safety. For example, Psychological Safety Australia.
 - Provide Managers and leaders with training on trauma informed approaches. Blue Knot foundation provide training for leaders [Training for Individuals \(blueknot.org.au\)](https://www.blueknot.org.au).
- Participate in Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index to understand DPS's current baseline of disability confidence and access a roadmap of opportunities and recommendations.

Lack of understanding of hidden disability

People with hidden disability experience unique barriers that other people may not be immediately aware of. This was articulated by one person shared '*people don't see it, so culturally it is harder, societally and also in work, often I feel unseen*'.



Discussions around lack of understanding of hidden disability aligned with findings in the [barriers accessing workplace adjustments](#) section of this report where building occupants highlighted that assumptions were made due to their disability being non-visible with Managers requesting medical evidence to 'prove' they have disability.

The lack of understanding of hidden disability was also highlighted around conversations occurring in teams where colleagues without disability have made negative comments. An example includes a building occupant who shared about their difficulty walking up to Australian Parliament House with their colleague, this person shared *'my colleague knows I live with disability but responded 'well I can easily do that walk'.*

During our walkthroughs, barriers related to hidden disability were identified where one visitor with low vision was not offered support going through security and sign in and was provided directions that pointed to where he needed to go which he was unable to see. As this person shared *'the person behind the desk didn't know I have low vision so just pointed and so I didn't know where to go'.*

This finding highlights the need to ensure accessibility and inclusion is fostered throughout Australian Parliament House to ensure all people including people with hidden disability receive the support and adjustments they require.

Recommendations

- Introduce the [Sunflower Lanyard scheme](#), as a way for building occupants to voluntarily share they have a hidden disability. The scheme is a global movement and is becoming more popular in the Australian context. Introducing the Sunflower Lanyard scheme would allow building occupants and visitors to express who they are and would also support accessibility for visitors accessing Australian Parliament House.

3.3 Democratic processes

Parliamentary consultation

People with disability provided feedback about barriers experienced responding to and providing feedback and submissions to Parliamentary Inquiries. We heard barriers to consultation due to the level of literacy required to review relevant information including Terms of Reference. As one person shared:

'I was left feeling too stupid to contribute, clearly the Senate is not asking to hear from ordinary people with disability only high-level professionals and organisations. The submission process is confusing and exhausting.

I have a uni degree, but the level of literacy required to navigate the website, understand the terms of reference and write a submission is higher than my own. It requires the highest level of literacy – only 1.2% of people in Australia have this level of literacy.

It gives the impression that the Senate really does not care whether the public contribute or not, especially for people from disadvantaged groups – the very groups the inquiries are asking about us'.



When reviewing Parliamentary Inquiry webpages Australian Network on Disability found guides on how to make a submission (including in Easy Read format) on [Senate Inquiry webpages](#), however the Easy Read format was not consistently available (e.g., on guides on how to make [submissions to House of Representative Committees](#)) and inconsistently available for Joint Committee Inquiries.

Whilst guides on how to make submissions were available, upon reviewing several open inquiries Australian Network on Disability found language (including Terms of Reference) did not use plain English and did not have alternate formats available (e.g., Auslan interpretation and captions for videos). We note this finding included inquiries focused on the experiences of people with disability including the [Inquiry into the Operation of the National Redress Scheme](#), and [the NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia](#) which also had videos which did not include captions or Auslan interpretation.

For each inquiry an 'Accessibility' section is included which uses outdated language referring to 'if you require any special arrangements to enable you to participate in the Committee's inquiry, please contact the Committee Secretariat'. This language should be updated to align with current best practice referring to accessibility requirements instead of 'special'.

Recommendations

- Review / develop a guideline to support the facilitation of accessible and inclusive Parliamentary consultation and Inquiries. Guidance should include:
 - Information about inclusive language including use of Plain English.
 - Provision of alternate formats including Auslan interpretation and embedding captions and providing transcripts for videos.
- Review and update Parliamentary Inquiry webpages across all Senate Committees, House of Representative and Joint Committees to ensure an Easy Read Guide on how to make a submission is available.
- Replace all references to 'special' arrangements on website to 'accessibility requirements'.

Irregular and long hours may affect opportunities for people with disability becoming Parliamentarians / working in Parliamentary services

Please note the following findings are not from Parliamentarians, however they are insights that people with disability have shared that could lead to barriers becoming Parliamentarians. These insights have been included as they align to work that is currently being undertaken as part of the '*Set the Standard Report*', in particular '*Recommendation 5 (page 20): Diversity among parliamentarians*' and '*Recommendation 6: Diversity among Members of Parliament (Staff) Act employees*' which require action to increase the representation of First Nations people, people from CALD backgrounds, people with disability, and LGBTIQ+ people⁴.

⁴ Kate Jenkins Australian Human Rights Commission. (2021). Set the standard: Report on the independent review into commonwealth parliamentary workplaces, p20-21. Australian Human Rights Commission.



People with disability shared about the accessibility requirements they would need to be able to participate as a parliamentarian acknowledging this could include fly in fly out work, long and irregular work hours that may be required.

We heard barriers could occur where Auslan interpreters are not allowed to be on Chamber floors. We also heard the need for multiple Auslan Interpreters needing to be available, particularly for longer sittings, which is important to reduce mental and physical fatigue of Interpreters to increase the accuracy of translation.

We also heard barriers may be experienced by people who use assistance animals where the animal would not be able to work long days.

Irregular and long working hours may also impact access to support workers, creating challenges for both people with disability and support workers. The unpredictability of schedules can make it difficult for people to secure consistent assistance, as support workers may find it challenging to commit to flexible shifts.

Recommendation

- Provide this report to the Australian Government Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce for review against actions under Recommendation 5 and Recommendation 6 of the '*Set the Standard*' report.

3.4 Accessibility within Australian Parliament House

Australian Network on Disability wishes to highlight the commitment and support of the Property Services Branch who are working to enhance accessibility of Australian Parliament House. We observed building works occurring which include building accessible office suites and building ramp access into courtyard. We highlight the support of this project from Trent Lister who made himself available for meetings and walkthroughs and proactively responded to feedback we provided.

The primary barriers identified throughout our consultation with building occupants and visitors include:

- Weight of doors.
- Thickness of carpet pile which is a barrier for people using wheelchairs.
- Limitations with wayfinding and signage.
- Barriers within the sensory environment.

Planning trips to Australian Parliament House

Visitors with disability shared the importance of having access to accessibility information to help plan their trip. Feedback suggested accessibility information being broken down by area for example the Rose Gardens. Visitors highlighted '*we should be able to access all areas of interest, the same as anyone without disability would be able to access, knowing what accessibility features are available allow me to plan to access these areas*'.

One visitor with disability experienced barriers accessing the website on her phone or her digital tablet where webpages would not load when using Mozilla Firefox.



To support planning for trips to Australian Parliament House visitors suggested including a video with captions and Auslan interpretation (similar to the one provided by British Parliament - [Accessibility at UK Parliament - YouTube](#)) and social stories, similar to those provided by the [Royal Australian Mint - Social Story](#).

Recommendations

- Review and update accessibility information provided on the [Parliament of Australia website](#) to include:
 - Accessibility of different areas of Australian Parliament House.
 - Update references and information about Guide Dogs to 'assistance animals'. Share information about location of animal relief stations.
 - Create a captioned and Auslan interpreted video detailing the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.
 - Create a social story to support people to understand what to expect when visiting Australian Parliament House.

Getting to Australian Parliament House

Whilst we recognise that barriers identified getting to Australian Parliament House are not the direct responsibility of Australian Parliament House, findings are shared to acknowledge the significant barriers people with disability may face when travelling to Australian Parliament House both by people living locally and people travelling interstate. These barriers can limit employment opportunities, democratic rights and rights to cultural activities and recreation.

Flights

Barriers were experienced by one of our project team members using a motorised wheelchair who had difficulties booking flights from Melbourne due to all airline carriers being unable to transport his motorised wheelchair due to the size of aircrafts used and weight restrictions. This barrier led to hours of calls to different airline carriers and changing flights due to flight cancellations. To be able to attend, our colleague needed to use a travel chair which did not have the full functionality he required to ensure comfort whilst reviewing the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.

Taxis

Wheelchair accessible taxi availability was described as being limited, where a visitor with disability involved in one of our walkthroughs was unsure if they would be able to attend due to the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis where they were reliant on being able to access a taxi.

We were advised at the time of facilitating workshops (June 2023) there were no female wheelchair accessible taxi drivers, which was seen as important for women with disability including those who have experienced trauma and abuse including sexual assault. Cost of taxis was also identified as a barrier where the current subsidy of 75% off is available for one trip per week one person shared *'this assumes that a person will only want to travel once per week'*. As noted below in barriers related to buses, people using motorised wheelchairs highlighted that they rely on wheelchair accessible taxis due to the inaccessibility of buses.



We also heard taxi drivers can be a barrier due to negative attitudes which can lead to lack of support / denying travel for people with disability and people using assistance animals. We heard *'you really need to find the right one who understand and assists'*.

Buses

The accessibility of buses was highlighted which included:

- Inaudible announcements which are hard to understand with people with low vision sharing this led to them not knowing when it was their stop.
- Lack of circulation space and weight limits for wheelchairs, which was a particular barrier for people using larger motorised wheelchairs.

The distance from bus stops to Australian Parliament House were frequently described as a barrier for both visitors and building occupants, particularly for people who have disability that affects their mobility.

Regularity / schedule of buses and available routes (with no direct route from Federation Mall and numbers 58 and 57 routes not going around Capital Circle) were identified as barriers particularly on Public Holidays with limited services. Building occupants shared bus schedules and risk of missing buses (due to lack of direct routes) had in the past resulted in them being late for work. Visitors also shared experiences of lack of direct bus and tram routes which resulted in them getting lost. Concerns were also raised if regularity of buses will be affected when the proposed tramline is established.

Pathways

Pathways for walking / riding bicycles were described as being dangerous (due to trip hazards) and people feeling unsafe due to them being unlit at night, including the gardens and pathways to Barton for buses.

Concerns were also raised about there being no Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) or railings around the fountain which one visitor with low vision identified as a health and safety risk where *'people may not see the fountain and could fall in'*.

Recommendations

- Provide these findings to relevant departments and Members of Parliament who work with transport departments and agencies.
- Consider introducing a wheelchair accessible shuttle service to transport visitors and building occupants between public transport stops and the building.
- Provide lighting on pathways to increase safety for cyclists and people walking to and from Australian Parliament House.
- Review opportunities to put TGSIs around the fountain.



Parking

Ramps

The gradient and slope of the ramp from the public underground parking to the lift access was identified as a barrier. One visitor with disability was left for 20 minutes where she was unable to manoeuvre up the ramp and with no phone reception in the car park was unable to call for assistance / advise they were running late. This person had to wait until a passer-by came to push her up the ramp, she said otherwise *'I would have had to hold the handrails and drag myself up'*.

Lack of ramps were also identified as an issue for people using bicycles who shared manoeuvring bikes or e-bikes out of the car park was difficult as *'you need to lift it up over the curb to get to the exit door as there is no ramp area'*.

Signage and navigation

We heard the confusion that is experienced by visitors finding and accessing the public car park, where visitors lack clarity finding the public car park due to all signs having just the 'P' blue signs. As a result, visitors have frequently parked down the mall, walking up to Australian Parliament House. Suggestions were made to have a sign which includes the words 'public car park' which points to the road leading to the public underground car park.

Visitors with disability highlighted the lack of directional signage on the open space between the ramp and lift access only a sign to the bathroom. This caused confusion where visitors shared *'I thought we were just headed to bathrooms and not the entry'*. We heard another example where a 100-year-old visitor had struggled up the Western Stairs to the main entrance due to the signage in the public car park to the lift not being visible enough.

It is understood what was described as a 'braille trail' (which we believe may have been TGSIs) were available in the public underground, however, were removed whilst works in that area had taken place and have not been replaced.

Accessible parking bays

Availability of accessible parking bays was described as being limited, particularly on Sitting Days. We heard from one building occupant who shared *'I have given up trying to park in an accessible parking bay as 12 bays are not enough, particularly when events are on that invite people with disability'*.

Building occupants identified barriers parking in different car parks which require walking longer distances. This was described as being difficult by several building occupants. We heard the ability for building occupants with disability to use the front public car park would reduce barriers of walking long distances from parking.

We understand the ability to book accessible parking spaces is not formalised however we heard that the Security Team had been able to organise a parking bay on specific days for building occupants on an informal and ad hoc basis.

Scanning into car parks were also described as being a barrier where building occupants shared about pain experienced hyper extending their shoulders to reach scanners.



Cost

Concerns were raised in relation to costs to park at Australian Parliament House when the boom gates are operational. Whilst building occupants advised discounts were available the cost was still considered to be expensive.

Costs for carers was also highlighted when using pick up and drop off bay, if the building occupant is longer than 30 minutes, they would have to pay parking costs.

Access to lifts

Frequently we heard barriers due to lack of lift access from level 4 parking where building occupants had difficulties using stairs. Parking in the House of Representatives car park was also described as being inaccessible due to several sets of stairs with limited access by ramps, and lifts that only go to the first level.

Recommendations

- Install parking bay empty / occupied green / red light indicator systems in car parks.
- Review gradient of ramp from public car park to lift access.
- Provide additional signage for visitors to:
 - Locate the public car park – which may include signs with directions with the text ‘public car park’.
 - Support navigation from the public carpark (including additional signage in the area between the ramp and lifts).
- Replace ‘braille trail’ (TGSIs) directional support in public car park.
- Review and identify opportunities to increase number of accessible parking bays in all car parks.
- Formalise a process to allow building occupants to book accessible parking spaces.
- Review height and reach for car park scanners.
- Review parking costs, in particular for carers to allow them to be able to pick up people with disability without experiencing additional financial costs.

Security

Lack of consistency

We observed lack of consistency in security protocols with visitors with disability when passing through the main entrance security. The first was for visitors using wheelchairs, where Security staff used a handheld metal detector to screen a visitor in a manual wheelchair. This visitor expressed feeling self-conscious while being screened in front of a queue of people and concerns of holding up the line. A second visitor using a motorised wheelchair which was larger than the manual wheelchair was asked to pass through the walkthrough metal detector which she shared ‘*I was scraping the sides as it was narrow*’.

The second inconsistency we observed related to screening with assistance animals where we observed Security staff asking a building occupant for documentation to demonstrate their



assistance dog is qualified and accredited, however documentation was not requested from a visitor with disability who was accompanied by an assistance dog.

Sensory experience in security checkpoint

The sensory environment in security was described as being 'overwhelming' by several visitors with disability. With one person with a mental health condition sharing that he felt trapped with people behind him. He shared that this could aggravate his condition which can lead to shouting and wanting to run which he feared this reaction to the environment could lead to Security staff not allowing him access / calling the Police.

Accessibility

All visitors with disability suggested a separate 'accessibility' lane which would allow people with disability the time they need to navigate the screening process without feeling rushed or pressured and provides the opportunity for additional support in the security screening process if required.

An accessibility lane would also support people when there are long queues and where people are unable to stand for long periods of time. We heard:

'I cannot stand for long periods, as I have a chronic illness that affects my joints. Luckily on the day I attended there was only a short line, but if there had been a long wait, I could not see a sign or other indication of who I could have asked for help to expedite me in the line so that I did not have to stand longer than I am able to'.

Information and guidance

Text of signage in the security area was identified as being too small, particularly for visitors with low vision. One visitor shared he uses the camera on his phone to zoom in to be able to read text, but felt he was unable to do this due to photography not being allowed in security areas. Due to his non-visible disability, he was not offered support by Security staff. He was not sure of what he needed to do, for example he didn't know if he needed to take items out of his bag. When entering the Marble Foyer there was no signage advising he could take photos. He only learned that he could take photos when the project team shared it was okay for him to do so when in Mural Hall.

We also heard text of signs should use plain English so that they are not confusing, which is beneficial for people with intellectual disability and people for whom English is their second language.

One visitor who is Deaf shared there was a lack of Auslan interpreted information available and so identified this as an issue where he would not be able to communicate with Security staff. This visitor shared the importance of information available in Auslan which is particularly beneficial for people who are d/Deaf who have limited English proficiency.

Security staff responses

We heard from both building occupants and visitors that Security staff can at times be intimidating which makes it harder navigating through the space. One person shared *'while I know that many of the security staff have a background from the military or the police, there is no reason to intimidate people, especially if they have some form of disability which makes it difficult to navigate the place'.*



Trauma informed considerations

Both building occupants and visitors shared the importance of having female Security Guards available at security checkpoints including when people require a pat down where they are unable to go through the walkthrough security scanner. We heard from building occupants who shared that on multiple occasions women have not been able to enter the building as there was not a female Security Guard available.

We also heard of barriers where Security staff were not letting people know they would do a pat down with their hands or asking consent to start. When entering the Senate Public Gallery for Question time one visitor with disability (who is a survivor of sexual assault) shared a male Security Guard patted her down without explaining what would happen, she shared *'if I had known this would happen I wouldn't have gone in due to my post traumatic stress disorder and sensory issues (relating to tactile)'*.

Recommendations

- Review security processes relating to screening of people with disability (including in relation to trauma informed responses) to ensure there is consistency for all visitors with disability.
- Provide regular disability confidence training to Security staff.
- Introduce a separate 'accessibility line' to for people with disability during security screening.
- Review and update signage used in security areas to ensure they are available in large font, have good contrast and use plain English.
 - Provide video information with Auslan interpretation and captions.

Front pass issue desk

Visitors using wheelchairs had difficulties signing in due to there being no lowered desk available. We observed the sign in clip board being moved towards visitors, however they were unable to put it on their lap so observed visitors stretching. This was identified as an additional barrier for people who have limited upper body strength to manoeuvre and stretch to reach sign in forms. Visitors shared an adjustable height desk would be better.

With the sign in form being a hard copy it was hard to see for visitors with low vision. DPS staff supported visitors to complete the form.

Recommendations

- Install a lower height section onto front pass issue desk. Best practice is to have an adjustable height desk.

Sensory environment

44% of building occupants who responded to our survey advised they did not feel Australian Parliament House is a sensory friendly environment with barriers increased during Sitting Days.

Barriers identified included:



- Sound – the sound of Division Bells and clocks were identified as a major theme throughout our consultation for both building occupants and visitors. Causing distractions and was described as triggering by several building occupants and visitors involved in our walkthroughs.
 - Talking about the sound of clocks throughout Australian Parliament House one person shared *'I can't handle the clock ticking it is everywhere, it is upsetting and reminds me of the sound of hospital'*.
 - Example of the impact of the bells included *'they drive me crazy due to the duration and continuous nature; they aggravate ringing that is already in my ears'*.
- Temperature not being consistent across the building with office spaces being cold and walkways being too hot and work areas that experienced poor ventilation. This can have negative impacts for people with disability including people who are unable to regulate their own body temperature, have conditions which are affected by temperature including circulatory conditions and Reynaud's Disease, and people who experience seizures.
- Lighting – use of florescent lighting triggering migraines for several building occupants with nil other alternatives provided other than turning off lighting. Lighting was also found to trigger the sensory experience visitors with disability who shared the 'buzz' and 'hum' of lighting was uncomfortable.
 - We also heard examples where glare from windows had lead to migraines, however due to Design Integrity anti-glare blinds were unavailable with a building occupant sharing *'I have the choice of either sitting with glare or sitting in a dark room'*.

Negative impacts can occur when the design of environments does not consider neurodivergence with impacts that can contribute to poor mental health (including anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders), hyperactivity and physical health impacts including pain, headaches, and nausea for people with sensory processing disabilities⁵⁶. We heard from one building occupant who requested an adjustment around lighting, however this was not supported and subsequently they experienced a seizure in their first week of working at Australian Parliament House. When facilitating walkthroughs with visitors with disability we observed one visitor putting on noise cancelling headphones and sunglasses to reduce their sensory input to avoid aggravating symptoms. Visitors with disability involved in our walkthroughs advised they would not be able to spend more than six hours at Australian Parliament House due to the overstimulation experienced in the sensory environment.

⁵ MacLennan, K., O'Brien, S. & Tavassoli, T. In Our Own Words: The Complex Sensory Experiences of Autistic Adults. *J Autism Dev Disord* 52, 3061–3075 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05186-3>

⁶ British Standards Institution. (2022). *PAS 6463:2022 Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment*.



Both building occupants and visitors with disability suggested the inclusion of 'sensory / wellbeing rooms' across Australian Parliament House to support people to regulate and reduce their sensory input. One person shared the purpose of these rooms can support sensory avoidance (for example reducing lighting and noise), and sensory seeking behaviours which may include but are not limited to stimming and seeking sounds etc. Both sensory avoidance and sensory seeking supports people with sensory processing disability to regulate sensory input, manage arousal levels and provide comfort from their sensory experiences.

Visitors with disability also shared the importance of having information about the sensory environment made available on the website which may include a sensory map and information about the Division Bells which may include an audio file. Audio file sounds of the Division Bell was also described as being beneficial to support visitors to know the bell is not for an emergency.

Transitioning between different environments was also a barrier experienced by the Australian Network on Disability team when transitioning in lifts from level 1 of the Member's Hall to the ground level with the difference in sensory environment which included the glare of floor surface, sound of water feature and smell of chlorine which triggered a migraine for an Australian Network on Disability project team member.

Design concepts to support the design of sensory inclusive environments include:

- Sensory input (the nature and intensity of sensory input)
 - Providing access to small and discrete sensory neutral environments throughout a building to allow people to leave overstimulating environments to regulate. Their objective is to provide a sensory haven for people. They may also include sensory kits to support people to recalibrate their sensory balance.
 - Reduction of internal and external noise sources including use of sound proofing, sound absorbent materials, special configuration to reduce echoes and limited use of sound emitting building systems and avoidance of sound-emitting fixtures such as fluorescent lighting.
- Space
 - Use of sensory maps to allow people to understand where and when environments may be busy and crowded, and / or where there may be confined spaces.
 - Includes information about location of accessible amenities including bathrooms, lifts, and sensory rooms.
 - Access to spaces for single activities with smaller numbers of people (opposite to open-plan spaces) allowing people to reduce sensory and social input to be able to focus on activities. Compartments can be created using walls and participations. These spaces are different to sensory rooms and may be considered for office spaces.
- Transitions
 - Consideration of the sensory shift from one environment to another.



- Predictability
 - Availability of information in accessible formats to help people navigate and understand the sensory environment which can include sensory maps and social stories.
 - Consistent design elements (including colours, signage styles and layouts) and clear pathways.
- Access to understanding and support from staff
 - Staff who are aware of how to support people to navigate environments including support to leave overstimulating environments.
- Adjustments
 - Timely access to reasonable adjustments to support accessibility in the environment.
 - Information and communications available in accessible formats to allow people to understand and navigate within a building.

Recommendations

- Engage in a comprehensive review to improve the sensory environment at Australian Parliament House. Australian Parliament House may engage with Autism Spectrum Australia who support businesses to create sensory friendly environments: [Creating an Autism-Friendly... – Autism Spectrum Australia \(Aspect\)](#).
- Create sensory / wellbeing rooms across Australian Parliament House in public and private areas.
- Provide training for building occupants responsible for the design, configuration and retrofit of the built environment including Australian Network on Disability's Design for Dignity training, and / or training with Autism Spectrum to support the development of sensory friendly environments.

Access to Chambers

On approach to the Senate Chamber Senator Jordon Steele-John highlighted the abrupt corner out of the Chamber which can make it easy to collide with people passing into / from the Senate Chamber, which was hard to manoeuvre his chair around people due to barriers experienced with the carpet (refer to [Floor surfaces](#) of this report). The Senator also shared the door into the Senate Chamber is too heavy for him to open. Note the weight of the door was not measured due to Senators being in session.

The Senator shared protocols of access within the Senate Chamber where when Members of Parliament increase in seniority, they move closer to the centre of the Chamber, however due to accessibility this is not possible for the Senator as the only position for wheelchairs is at the back corner. Using the ramp, the Senator shared he can access the Senate Chamber floor however needs to wait for support to wheel back up due to the steep gradient of the ramp and no handrail. Additionally, there is not wheelchair access to any other seat in the chamber.



We also heard how protocols within the Chamber where non-Members of Parliament are not allowed past the Bar. This has meant Auslan Interpreters have not been allowed access. The Senator shared an example where an Auslan Interpreter had to be shown on a screen due to this barrier.

The Senator invited the Australian Network on Disability project team to enter the Senate Chamber where he was able to highlight barriers he had experienced and observed. These include:

- Advisor boxes – a step up to Advisor boxes which would prevent access for people using wheelchairs.
- Ramp down to the Senate Chamber floor – The Senator advised several people had tripped on the ramp due to the ramp not being integrated.
- Bright lighting which can cause fatigue, particularly after a long period of time in the Chamber.
- Phones – The Senator advised his phone is not able to call other offices, whilst he had raised this issue years ago, the issue has not been fixed.
- Due to not being able to freely move around the Senate Chamber, when needing to communicate with a colleague in the Senate Chamber we observed the Senator passing a message to the person in front of him, to then pass on the message down to the person he wanted to speak with.

Recommendations

- Consult with Senator Jordon Steele-John to engage in a review of the accessibility of both the House of Representatives and Senate Chambers to include:
 - Review of protocols for access for people providing accessibility support (for example Auslan interpreters).
 - Review of the accessibility of features within the Chamber.

Access to public galleries of Chambers

Feedback in the visitor survey and during our walkthroughs with visitors expressed concern relating to the conduct of Parliamentarians in the Chamber (for example during Question Time). Concerns were raised relating to the interaction and behaviour between Parliamentarians including shouting towards one another, which was discussed as being triggering for visitors with disability and could lead to trauma and anxiety for Members of Parliament.

One person shared:

'This is extremely, extremely triggering. I know if I was a member and people were shouting, I'd just shut down and never have an input. The members need to be aware of how to debate without acting like school bullies. Quite simply I couldn't cope with it. I'm pretty sure this would apply to most people with anxiety/post-traumatic stress disorder (ptsd) / complex ptsd/autism who cannot cope with being yelled at. it is important as people get voted on for their policies, not because they can out bully their opponent'.



As discussed in the [Planning trips to Australian Parliament House](#) section of this report, we heard about the need for visitors and guests to be aware of and have advanced warning of sensitive matters and topics that may be discussed in Chambers to avoid traumatising / re-traumatising. One participant with disability, who is also a survivor of sexual assault, expressed the importance of people being able to make an informed choice if they wish to be in attendance when sensitive matters are discussed. We heard information about each day's sittings could be shared on the [Parliament of Australia website](#) and also provided by the Visitors Services Team on the day of arrival.

When reviewing the accessibility of the House of Representative Public Viewing Gallery, we observed barriers for visitors with disability which included:

- Narrow doorway into the chamber where visitors using wheelchairs (in particular motorised wheelchairs) were concerned about damaging doors.
- Wheelchair seating:
 - Lack of signage to direct to and identify wheelchair seating.
 - Positioned close to stairs causing a health and safety risk of chairs rolling downstairs. One participant shared *'I do not like being near the stairs due to the risk of falling off'*.
 - Limited space allowing wheelchair seating for one person. It was identified that if there were two people attending together who use wheelchairs, they would need to sit separately at opposite sides of the Chamber seating.
 - Limited turning space to manoeuvre into and out of wheelchair seating.
 - Positioning with back to the thoroughfare of people entering the Chamber, as one participant shared *'I would feel uncomfortable with people going behind me, my wheelchair is a part of me, and you don't touch my chair without my permission'*.
- Seating
 - Seating was described as being uncomfortable with all participants in our walkthroughs sharing, they would not be able to sit in them for more than 30 minutes due to the angle of seats.
 - Limited leg room was identified, with a suggestion made to use 'flip up' seating to create more room for people to be able to pass through the gallery.
- Assistance animals
 - Additional barriers were identified for people with assistance animals where we observed limited space for dogs in the footwell of seating.
 - For handlers with psychiatric assistance dogs, we heard the closed in nature of seating provided limited visual for the dog to communicate to their handler that it is safe. One visitor shared *'I need my dog to show me it is safe'*.
 - Participants also queried where assistance animal relief areas were, and how easy they would be to access from public galleries.

Several visitors shared they would want to be able to choose where they could sit to support their accessibility requirements. One visitor shared they prefer sitting at the back, whereas another visitor



with low vision shared he would prefer sitting on the front row to increase his view of speakers. We heard from DPS employees who advised front row seats in the public galleries are often reserved for speaker guests, and that a booking system to choose seats is not currently available.

Access to screens with captions in the public gallery were also suggested to enhance accessibility. As we understand the Hansard report all proceedings of the Australian Parliament and its Committees, where there may be an opportunity to use their dictated notes for captions due to their accuracy.

When checking into the public galleries all electronic devices are to be checked into cloak facilities unless a device is required to manage a medical condition. Visitors shared the importance of allowing the use of electronic devices as assistive technology which can support visitors to communicate, navigate in their environment and understand information. When entering the public gallery, we observed one visitor with low vision needing to use an app on his phone to read out small text on a sign which he had difficulty reading.

We are aware there are protocols in place in the Public Gallery relating to movement and sound to reduce distraction of Parliamentarians in the Chamber. Visitors spoke about the importance of the protocols and Security staff having consideration for people with disability who may need to regulate or move regularly (for example reduce joint and muscle pains).

Visitors reviewed the accessibility of the House of Representatives' sound proofed gallery which was described as having increased accessibility compared to the public gallery and could be an option for people who require translation services and / or feel concerned disturbing others in public galleries. Benefits of the sound proofed gallery which were identified included:

- Ability to move chairs to make more room for wheelchairs and assistance animals.
- More control of lighting which can be turned off if required.
- The air was described as being '*better due to having more moisture*'.
- The lift up to the soundproof gallery could fit a manual and motorised wheelchair.
 - Note a suggestion was made to include a weight limit in lifts.

Visitors felt having the opportunity to book and access the sound proofed gallery would be beneficial to support the accessibility and comfort of people with disability wanting to watch Parliamentary activities.

Recommendations

- Embed trauma informed principles into the review of Standing Orders and unwritten parliamentary conventions as identified at Recommendation 10 of the *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces report*⁷.

⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission (2021). Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workforces. Retrieved from: [Set The Standard \(humanrights.gov.au\)](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/set-the-standard) [Retrieved on 4 December 2023]



- Acknowledge within this review that behaviour can affect visitors attending Australian Parliament House.
- Explore opportunities to provide visitors with information about matters being discussed in Australian Parliament House including information on the [Parliament of Australia website](#) / when booking / on the day of visit.
- Review width of doorways into Chambers to allow access for wheelchairs.
- Review wheelchair seating allocation in public galleries:
 - Engage in a review with peak organisations representing people with disability to identify suitable solutions for wheelchair seating as well as building occupants and members of the community who use wheelchairs.
 - Provide signage to direct people using wheelchairs to available seating options.
- Access for people using assistance animals.
 - Engage in consultation with people who use assistance animals to identify accessible solutions to access in public galleries.
 - Identify an assistance animal relief area near to public galleries. Ensure this information is made available to people who have assistance animals. This can be included in information when booking / information on the [Parliament of Australia, Plan your visit accessibility information page](#).
 - Update webpage information to replace 'guide dogs' with 'assistance animals' to cover the types of assistance animals available to people with disability.
 - Ensure animal relief areas have signage with large text, use accessible contrasting colours and include braille.
 - Ensure animal relief areas have bins available.
- Review booking systems to determine if visitors are asked if they have any accessibility requirements to attend Australian Parliament House / access public galleries.
- Explore opportunities for visitors with disability to book specific seats in public galleries and access the sound proofed gallery if required.
- Install screens into public galleries and sound proofed galleries which can show coverage on the Chamber floor and provide captions.
- Review policies and guidelines for access to public galleries to ensure:
 - People with disability can use electronic devices for accessibility purposes (for example use voice to text apps etc.).
- Ensure policies consider the requirements of visitors with disability and that Security staff receive training to be respectful to people with disability who may be engaging in behaviours to support their wellbeing such as stimming.



Doors

Signage

Signage on doors was described as being hard to read due to the lack of contrast of colour between the door and text. This barrier was identified for building occupants and visitors, including those who do not have low vision. As one person shared *'the engraving looks pretty, but please add some black so I can see it'*. An additional barrier was highlighted where doors did not have signage to indicate if they are push / pull operation.

Weight of doors

The weight of doors was one of the most frequent barriers identified by visitors and building occupants who shared additional barriers when trying to open doors with an assistance animal and also when using prams, feedback included:

- *'they can be impossible to open.'*
- *'I often have to throw my entire body weight at a door to get it to open properly, and on one occasion heavy winds pushed the door closed so quickly that it could very easily have broken my arm'.*
- *'Its not doing great things for my back'.*

Additionally, we observed people in wheelchairs opening doors who had to manoeuvre and push their wheelchair against doors to create force to open doors. Where there were ramps up to doorways this was observed as requiring additional force from the wheelchair user to not only create the force to open the door, but also to avoid their wheelchair rolling back down the ramp.

Actuated doors

It was highlighted that there are actuated doors, however they are not consistently available throughout Australian Parliament House and are not automatically actuated and still require force to open. We heard automatically actuated doors would enable the ability to move throughout the building without strain of opening doors or requiring to be accompanied.

Contrast colour of doors in ministerial offices

Building occupants showed us the white colour of doors into office suites which have less contrast to identify the doorway, compared to bathroom doors which use a grey colouring to highlight the doorway in the corridor. This was identified as a particular barrier for people with low vision.

Recommendations

- Update door signage by increasing text and colour contrast of signage.
- Install automatically actuated doors throughout Australian Parliament House.
- Update colour contrast of doors into ministerial offices to increase visibility of doors.

Floor surfaces

Carpet

During our initial walkthrough we were advised by DPS' independent Access Consultant that the carpet had been designed to support manoeuvring of wheelchairs, however our observations



demonstrate a need to update carpeting across Australian Parliament House with our observations identifying health and safety concerns.

During our walkthroughs we observed several people (both building occupants and visitors) using motorised and manual wheelchairs experiencing difficulty while manoeuvring over carpeted areas. For people using manual wheelchairs the carpet created resistance requiring the wheelchair user to push harder which can cause fatigue and muscle pain or needing support from another person to push the wheelchair.

We observed wheels on both motorised and manual wheelchairs veering in different directions on the carpet, and on some occasions led to wheelchair users veering towards passers-by (particularly in the carpeted corridor to the Staff Dining Room). Veering of wheels on the carpet pile led to additional force required by wheelchair users.

To reduce the resistance required to travel along the carpet we observed people using manual wheelchairs positioning their wheel on the wooden flooring on the sides of carpet runners (for example in the Ministerial Wing, House of Reps and Senate sides). Whilst this reduced resistance there were concerns of injury with people coming out of offices, where one person shared, they had narrowly avoided injury.

Wooden teak flooring

Polish and glare of wooden flooring on the ground floor was described as being 'slippery' in particular immediately after the flooring is polished. We heard '*you get to know which are the slippery areas*'. This barrier can compromise safety and ease of movement, and can lead to an increased risk of slips, trips and falls with additional barriers for people with disability that affect their mobility.

The polish of wooden flooring created glare of its intricate patterns creating visual distortion when walking along the floor. This barrier can lead to disorientation and affect depth perception making it challenging to navigate in the environment. This was a barrier experienced by Australian Network on Disability project team members.

Recommendations

- Identify a solution that has practical functionality for people using wheelchairs to navigate across carpet without wheels swerving and increased resistance.
- Review level polishing of wooden flooring to reduce risk of slips, trips, falls and visual distortion.

Bathrooms

Australian Network on Disability acknowledges that the DPS' Property Team is currently working on upgrades of bathrooms. Insights from this report will support continued upgrades.

Signage

All visitors who participated in our workshops shared they would not have been able to identify the Changing Places accessible bathroom due to the lack of internationally recognised signage in main corridors which includes blue colouring, letters to indicate left-hand (LH) / right-hand (RH) transfer onto toilet pan and braille. We heard '*I may not have noticed the bathroom due to the limited signage*'.



Several visitors shared they had thought the sign above the Changing Places accessible bathroom entrance was for a cupboard with spare wheelchairs and / or to direct towards a ramp '*I thought it was a place to pick up a wheelchair as it doesn't have the sign for bathroom*' another person shared '*I thought it was directing me to a ramp*'.

Due to the lack of braille on the sign into the Changing Places bathroom we observed one visitor with low vision experience difficulty finding the button to open the door.

We also observed confusion due to statutory fire door signage which advised to keep the door closed and it being an offence to interfere with the door. Several visitors expressed fear entering the bathroom due to fear of potential consequences.

Weight of doors

We heard several instances where people were not able to open bathroom doors requiring support to open doors, requiring colleagues to wait outside until they had finished. We also heard from one building occupant who due to the weight of doors, was 'trapped' inside of a toilet where they had to call and wait for assistance.

Weight limit information

We also heard the importance of having information about weight limits available on equipment in the Changing Places accessible bathroom and having this information available on the website to help people to plan their trips.

The transparent material caused glare and shadow making it hard to read the sign for several visitors with one person sharing '*I would have walked past it thinking it was just a shadow*'.

Inside the Changing Places accessible bathroom, it was described as being '*roomy and clean*' by a person using a large, motorised wheelchair who was able to demonstrate there was circulation space to enter / exit and move around in the bathroom.

We observed the sink being too low for a person using a power wheelchair but was observed to be a good size for a person using a manual wheelchair.

Floor

A visitor who was accompanied by an Assistance dog shared the importance of keeping flooring clean and dry. This visitor shared he had been into one male bathroom where the floor was wet with nil signage to indicate the floor was wet from cleaning. As there was no signage his assistance dog was unable to sit on the floor making it hard to fit into the toilet cubicle.

Recommendations

- Update all signage for bathrooms and accessible bathrooms to be consistent with internationally recognised signage (including with use of braille).
- Provide weight limit information on equipment and on the website.
- Review statutory fire door signage on bathroom doors to strike a balance between communicating safety measures and ensuring people are aware they can access and use bathrooms.
- Ensure cleaners use signage to indicate when the floor is wet in bathrooms.



Wayfinding and signage

A positive finding was the consistent willingness and support from building occupants offering directional assistance to support people finding their desired locations. We did however hear a recurring issue due to limitations with directional signage.

Both visitors and building occupants expressed difficulty navigating around Australian Parliament House when familiar and after working for extended periods of time, with some building occupants choosing to reduce their movement around the building to avoid getting lost and to reduce physical fatigue associated with navigating and finding their desired location.

Whilst wayfinding and directional signage is available, we were advised frequently it was unclear in terms of being difficult to see and hard to understand.

Barriers to signage discussed included:

- Glare from materials used for signage which made it hard to see information on signs.
- Limited colour contrast and size of text used for signage.
- Lack of information available to accessible identify amenities including lifts and accessible bathrooms, animal relief areas and sensory mapping.
- Height of signage was described as being too high for people using wheelchairs.

To support navigation around the building a suggestion was made to provide tip sheets on Committee Room locations with the logic behind the set-up for example suite numbering is configured North to South in ascending order and / or identifying that outer corridor includes Suite numbers 1 - XX'.

Recommendations

- Update signage across Australian Parliament House
 - Use non glare materials for signage.
 - Increase font size.
 - Increase colour contrast between text and background colour.
- Create signage that locates accessible amenities including accessible bathrooms, lifts, animal relief areas and provide sensory mapping information.

Assistance animals

People using assistance animals highlighted the important role of assistance animals and breadth of support they can provide which can include Guide Dogs who support people who have low vision / are blind, psychiatric assistance dogs who support people with mental health conditions, and medical support animals who can alert people of a medical emergency. We heard each assistance animal will provide individualised support based on the requirements of their handler, with the animal's role having a key role in their lives supporting health and wellbeing and promoting independence.

We heard negative experiences of people using assistance animals at Australian Parliament House who experience continual requests from others to pat their dogs. We heard an opportunity to provide



information about engaging with people with assistance animals and the positive role Security staff can play in intervening if this occurs.

With a lack of information on website and signage available to locate animal relief stations we heard from visitors who shared they were concerned they would need to carry animal waste in their bag / pockets.

We also heard barriers occurred where courtyards are locked at night where building occupants have been unable to take their assistance animal outside for a toilet break.

Recommendations

- Review / develop policies to detail legal responsibilities when providing people access with assistance animals.
 - Replace any references to 'Guide Dogs', replacing with 'assistance animals'.
- Provide training to Security staff to ensure consistent approaches to security screening when people are accompanied by assistance animals.
- Provide information about location of animal relief stations on maps and on [Parliament of Australia website](#).
- Review night-time access to animal relief stations.

Mural Hall and Galleries

Visitors with disability highlighted barriers viewing artwork and public galleries which included:

- Plaques / information
 - Small size of font.
 - Plaques positioned behind rope barriers to protect artwork which made it harder to get closer to view text.
 - Limited colour contrast of plaques particularly in Mural Hall where we observed several visitors walking straight past the plaques.
 - Lack of Auslan interpreted information.
- Photo galleries of Members of Parliament
 - Positioning of top-level photos were described as being hard to see by visitors using wheelchairs.
 - A vertical glass strip down the middle of some Member of Parliament faces made it hard to see photographs and prevented Artificial Intelligence applications such as 'Be My Eyes' from being able to verbally describe photos.
- QR codes when tested were not working.
 - Several QR codes were positioned behind rope barriers making it hard to reach and scan.



Recommendations

- Locate plaques and QR codes at an accessible height and outside of rope barriers to reduce barriers to reach and reading information.
- Increase text size and increase colour contrast of text on plaques.
- Provide Auslan interpreted videos that can be accessed by scanning QR codes. The video should also have captioning.
 - Provide the Auslan logo next to QR codes to make people who are d/Deaf aware Auslan interpretation is available.

Staff Dining Room

We understand the Staff Dining Room (SDR) has been recently refurbished, however we heard there was nil consultation that occurred with people with disability.

Corridor to SDR

Barriers were highlighted accessing the SDR due to the carpet in corridor (see [Floor surfaces](#) section of this report), and due to the width of the corridor creating congestion which is increased on a 'Sitting Day'. We heard '*when the bells ring, people bolt [rush]*' with several building occupants sharing they had been knocked over. During our review we observed a building occupant being knocked by a passer-by who did not apologise or check if this person was okay.

Access to quiet areas

Lack of quiet areas were described as a barrier, where building occupants shared it would be beneficial to have access to quiet areas to avoid over stimulation from the environment.

Food area

We observed difficulties for people using wheelchairs manoeuvring around rope barriers, and opening fridges which was described as being harder where there are queues and people behind, making it harder to wheel back in their wheelchair.

Accessible table

A higher height table had been provided to provide wheelchair access however we note that only one was available. During our reviews we observed the table being next to the bins, with people passing by frequently to clear trays. One of our project team who uses a wheelchair shared the location of the table did not provide dignified access for people due to it being near bins. Having only one available we also heard it limited movement forcing people using wheelchairs to sit in only one place.

Recommendations

- In future refurbishments engage in consultation with building occupants with disability this may include with the recently re-established disability employee network.
- Review opportunities to provide quiet seated areas.
- Review placement of accessible tables to ensure dignified access to the SDR.



Courtyards

Pathways in the courtyard were described as being slippery, a health and safety risk, with additional risk experienced in winter it can be hard to see ice. We heard from several building occupants who shared they had slipped including *'I've nearly slipped a couple of times from going outside to indoors and also outdoors I've seen people almost slip on the flooring outside in the courtyards.* Building occupants shared they walk through courtyards cautiously due to the risk of falls. During our consultation we observed a building occupant slip and nearly fall when walking through the courtyard.

Access to the courtyard from the SDR currently has stepped access where we heard from Senator Jordon Steele-John that he has not been able to gain access. During one of our reviews, we observed construction works occurring where we believe ramp access is being created.

Building occupants pointed out long grass levels which were identified as causing a trip hazard. In areas of the courtyard which had wheelchair access, we observed difficulties for people using wheelchairs navigating across paving stones with surrounding grass which created an uneven surface.

Recommendations

- Review pathway surfaces to source solutions to reduce slip/fall risk.
- Ensure signage is available to identify areas which may be slippery (including when there is ice/frost).
- Update pathways to reduce uneven surface created from paving stones and grass.

Gym

We heard barriers where people with disability who had highlighted they live with a health condition were denied access until they were able to provide medical clearance from their Doctor. We heard barriers due to the cost of medical appointments with building occupants asking to review alternative (less costly) ways to enable people with disability to use the gym.

Recommendations

- Review policies and medical clearance requirements for people with disability.

Furniture

Tables and desks

Tables in Committee Rooms that do not provide adjustable height were identified as a barrier for people using wheelchairs. Several people with disability shared and demonstrated how the height of tables could either restrict their access to the table which include difficulties approaching and aligning themselves in the space where their chair may not 'fit' and can lead to injuries including hitting their legs on the table/desk. We observed this barrier for several people using wheelchairs, including one of our project team members in Committee Rooms and when trying to access reception desks in office suites. We heard this barrier can create a power dynamic which unconsciously communicates that people with disability are not welcome at the table.



Seating and benches

Seating and benches were described as being inaccessible due to lack of back support and support to sit and get up from seating. A visitor with disability demonstrated this barrier by attempting to sit on one of the wooden benches, where we observed her struggle to sit down, and where she advised she would not be able to sit on the bench for more than 5 minutes.

Recommendations

- Engage in ongoing consultation with people with disability to identify accessible solutions for tables, desks and seating.
- Review Design Integrity to identify a solution to furniture that honour the original design intent whilst enhancing accessibility for people with disability.

3.5 Digital Accessibility

Building occupants shared barriers that were experienced accessing digital software. We heard from building occupants who shared they have been unable to access 'Kronos' at home creating confusion when their roster changes.

We also heard evidence of inaccessibility of software systems and communications where we heard size and colour contrast can be limited, where we heard building occupants need to lean forward to read content which can lead to neck and back strain.

Building occupants shared the importance of consultation when building information and communication systems to ensure they are accessible and inclusive by design.

Recommendations

- Review offsite access to 'Kronos'.
- Review accessibility of all websites and digital platforms including intranet sites and learning management systems to ensure they are compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2.
 - Organisations who complete this work may include Intopia or TTC Global.
 - Ensure these policies / guidelines include information about providing alternate formats.
- Formalise processes to include consultation and testing with people with disability when designing and deploying new software/software updates.



Appendix 1: Project methodology

1. Consultation design

The design of survey questions and discussion guides for interviews and walkthroughs were informed by Australian Network on Disability's Design for Dignity Framework which considers the interactions of people in an environment relating to:

- **Vision** – barriers that may affect people being able to see within the environment including colours, brightness, lighting, colour contrast to discriminate between different surfaces or details. Also considers the size, shape, contrast, colour and placement of the graphical and text elements.
- **Auditory environment** – Considers sounds in the environment (e.g., volume, pitch, clarity and location of sounds), including the impact on the sensory experience.
- **Thinking** – Considers the cognition required to complete a task. within the environment, for example how much demand the product places on memory, attention, interpreting information and level of knowledge/experience required.
- **Communication** - Considers the ability to understand information and people within the environment, as well as the ability to other express oneself to others (this inevitably overlaps with vision, hearing and thinking).
- **Mobility** - Considers the ability to move around the space and features available to support balance and movement.
- **Reach and stretch** – Considers the reach and stretch required to complete a task.
- **Dexterity** – considers the fine motor skills required to complete a task for example if tasks require one or both hands, fine finger manipulation, pick up and carry objects, or grasp and squeeze objects⁸.

1.1. Focus on accessibility rather than disability type

In line with our commitment to inclusivity and for the psychological safety of participants, we did not ask participants to share information about their disability / health condition. Our focus was on understanding each participant's unique accessibility requirements. By doing this it ensured that participants were not defined by their disability, instead focusing on the accessibility requirements they need to participate in the project.

This approach avoids assumptions based upon disability type, where for example the assumption that captions are primarily for people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing overlooks the significance of captions for someone who lives with a mental health condition, intellectual disability or those in noisy environments where audio may not be practical.

⁸ Australian Network on Disability. (2016). Design for Dignity. Retrieved from: [Design for Dignity Guidelines Aug 2016.pdf \(and.org.au\)](https://www.and.org.au/design-for-dignity-guidelines-aug-2016.pdf) [accessed on 3 October 2023]



For surveys, recognising people may not choose to identify as living with disability due to not identifying with the term and / or due to fear of discrimination and stigma we provided multiple options (which are covered by the Disability Discrimination Act) that people could select which included:

- a person living with disability.
- a person living with chronic health condition.
- a person living with an injury.
- a person living with neurodiversity.

2. Building occupant consultation

2.1. Building occupant walkthrough

The DPS project team reached out to building occupants with disability via email to invite them to participate in a 2 hour in person walkthrough which was facilitated on Monday 26 June 2023. In total six employees identified their interest and availability to participate in the walkthrough and were offered adjustments to participate.

The Australian Network on Disability project team together with representatives from DPS briefed participants at the beginning of the walkthrough providing information that included:

- an overview of the project.
- introduced the project team.
- shared privacy, and confidentiality information (including that personal information and responses would be deidentified).
- confirmed participation would not affect their employment or career prospects at DPS, and
- advised participants could choose to withdraw from participation at any time.

The participants were asked to follow a planned route together with Australian Network on Disability and DPS project team. Australian Network on Disability noted observations of participations and asked for feedback to questions outlined in the discussion guide.

On completion of the walkthrough the Australian Network on Disability Project Team did a check in to see how employees felt before returning to work. The DPS Diversity and Inclusion project team also confirmed participants could contact them should they have any additional feedback or concerns relating to their participation, as well advising the DPS Employee Assistance Program and Parliamentary Workplace Support Service is available if required.

2.2. Senator walkthrough

The Australian Network on Disability project team were connected with Senator Jordon Steele-John, who took them around Australian Parliament House. The route of the walkthrough was determined by the Senator to highlight key barriers he experienced whilst working at Australian Parliament House.

The Australian Network on Disability project team noted feedback from the Senator as well as noting observations of barriers he experienced.

2.3. Building occupant interviews

The DPS project team reached out to employees with disability via email to invite them to participate in 30-45 minute one on one interviews held on Monday 26 June. The Australian Network on Disability project team conducted the interviews onsite at Australian Parliament House allowing interviewees to choose between an online or in person interview.

In total five interviews were completed. The Australian Network on Disability project team advised each interviewee their responses would be deidentified and that they could withdraw at any time. The Australian Network on Disability project team also did a check in to see how each interviewee was feeling at completion of the interview, advising of the DPS Employee Assistance Program and Parliamentary Workplace Support Service is available if required.

2.4. Building occupant survey

The Australian Network on Disability project team co-designed survey questions with DPS to ensure questions were relevant to the Australian Parliament House context. Feedback on survey questions was also provided by the Office of Senator Jordon Steele-John. Prior to promotion of the survey, questions were reviewed and approved by the Parliament's Presiding Officers.

The survey was hosted by DPS using Microsoft Forms and was distributed via organisation wide emails and on the intranet. Hard copy formats of the survey questions were also made available to increase accessibility for building occupants who did not have access to / did not use digital technology. The DPS Diversity and Inclusion team members were also available to provide support to any employees who required assistance completing the survey.

The completion message of the survey provided a contact detail for a range of support services including the DPS Employee Assistance Program, Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, Lifeline, 13YARN, 1800 Respect as well as contact details for the National Relay Service and Translating and Interpreting Service.

3. Visitor consultation

3.1. Visitor walkthroughs

a) Recruitment

Two in person walkthrough workshops were held on Tuesday 20 June 2023 and Tuesday 27 June 2023. The Australian Network on Disability project team sent invitations to participate via peak organisations and Australian Network on Disability's networks of students and jobseekers with disability in Canberra and universities.

During recruitment the Australian Network on Disability project team connected with people who had expressed interest in participating sharing an overview of the project, details of participation, confirmed privacy and confidentiality information (including that personal responses would be deidentified) and confirmed that participants could withdraw their participation at any time. Australian Network on Disability also asked if participants had adjustments, organising Auslan interpreters where required.

Confirmed participants were asked to complete a consent form / provide verbal consent that they agreed to the terms of participation (consent form shared at Appendix 1). Contact details for Australian Network on Disability’s Customer and Employee Experience Lead were provided to allow participants to make contact if they had additional questions, or if they needed assistance on the day of the workshop.

b) Payment and follow up with participants

Participants were provided payment of a \$100 visa gift card (with an offer of digital or physical gift card based upon their accessibility requirements). In the days following the walkthrough workshops the Australian Network on Disability project team connected with participants to check how they were feeling after the workshop.

3.2. Visitor survey

a) Co-design of survey

The Australian Network on Disability project team co-designed survey questions with DPS to ensure questions were relevant to the Australian Parliament House context. Feedback on survey questions was also provided by the Office of Senator Jordon Steele-John. Prior to promotion of the survey, questions were reviewed and approved by the Parliament’s Presiding Officers. The survey was hosted by DPS using Microsoft Forms.

b) Promotion of survey

Australian Network on Disability provided feedback to the DPS Communications and Marketing team to ensure accessibility of the promotion of survey, for example relating to the colour contrast of graphics used on the webpage and social media tiles.

The survey was circulated by DPS’ Communications and Marketing Team by email to peak organisations across Australia. Australian Network on Disability promoted the survey via social channels including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X (formerly known as Twitter), the survey was also promoted in the AND newsletter on Thursday 14 September.

Brochures with QR codes to complete the survey were also made available throughout Australian Parliament House.



To promote accessibility the DPS project team made hard copies of the survey available. QR codes for the survey were also provided across Australian Parliament House.



4. Data collection and analysis

4.1 Data collection for consultation

Feedback and notes from walkthroughs (employees and visitors) and interviews were written by Australian Network on Disability team members and were transcribed to word documents, then uploaded to NVivo, a Qualitative data analysis software.

4.2 Analysis

Raw data for the building occupant and visitor surveys was shared with the Australian Network on Disability project team which was cleaned to remove any duplicate responses, speeder detention and review of open-ended questions to check the integrity of the response to ensure it was not a response from a bot.

Incomplete surveys were kept due to accessibility, however if all responses were skipped these were deleted.

- 1 (one) response was deleted from visitor survey,
- 2 (two) responses were deleted from the building occupant survey due to all responses being skipped through.
- 1 (one) building occupant respondent had deleted all responses due to concerns of privacy of the survey and so their response was unable to be analysed.

All data (from surveys, interviews, and walkthroughs) were iteratively coded, and themes were grouped in the most common responses.



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Appendix 2: Building occupants Survey



AUSTRALIAN
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Building occupants: Have your say on the accessibility of the Australian Parliament House

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) is supporting the Department of Parliamentary Services to review the accessibility of Parliament House.

This review relates to recommendations of Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces to ensure Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are safe, respectful, accessible, and inclusive.

“Accessible” means everyone has the same opportunity to access information and engage in the same experiences.

About Australian Network on Disability

Australian Network on Disability is Australia’s peak body for disability inclusion in the workplace. We are a national, member-based organisation that helps employers welcome and retain people with disability.

For more information about the Australian Network on Disability please visit our website at www.and.org.au

What we are doing

To understand the accessibility of Parliament House, Australian Network on Disability is requesting feedback from people living with disability, chronic health conditions, injuries and carers/support people.

We would be grateful if you could complete this survey.

If you are a carer or support person, please answer questions based on your experiences supporting people accessing Parliament House.

The findings from this survey will help us make recommendations to enhance accessibility at Parliament House.

Information about the survey

The survey may take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

It asks about:

- your experiences accessing Parliament House barriers faced when accessing Parliament House
- what you think will improve access to Parliament House

All the questions are optional so you can choose what you feel comfortable answering.

If you experience text box limits in sharing your feedback, you can share any additional feedback with Hayley Brooks, Customer Experience Lead, Australian Network on Disability at userexperience@and.org.au or call (02) 8270 9209.

The closing date for all survey responses is Monday, 2 October 2023.

Privacy and confidentiality



All responses will be confidential and anonymous. Your personal responses will not be shared with anyone else.

Adjustments to complete this survey

If you require support to complete this survey or would like the survey in a different format you can contact Hayley Brooks, Customer and Employee Experience Lead on (02) 8270 9209 or userexperience@and.org.au

Demographic Information

1. What is your age group?

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-65
- Over 65
- Prefer not to say

2. Are you:

- a person living with disability
- a person living with chronic health condition
- a person living with an injury
- a person living with neurodiversity
- a carer/support person
- an advocacy organisation representative
- prefer not to say
- Other

Employment Information

3. If you work at Parliament House, please select your type of employment:

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Casual
- Prefer not to say

4. Which of the following best describes your role at Parliament House:

- Senator or Member of Parliament
- Senator or Member of Parliament's member of staff
- Department of Parliamentary Services staff member



- Department of the Senate staff member
- Department of the House of Representatives staff member
- Parliamentary Budget Office staff member
- Prefer not to say
- Other

5. Please select if you work at Parliament House on sitting and non- sitting days:

- Sitting days only
- Sitting and non-sitting days

6. Please select how often you work at Parliament House:

- Parliament House is my permanent place of work
- Parliament House is my place of work during sitting weeks only
- Attend Parliament House regularly
- Transitional employment (e.g. work in different locations/states/territories, working at Parliament House when required)
- Sessional employment
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Accessibility Feedback

7. What would you rate the overall accessibility of Parliament House:

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

8. Please provide more information why you chose this rating:

9. Have you ever experienced barriers accessing Parliament House? (e.g. entrances, bathrooms, meeting rooms, work areas, lifts, stairs)

- Yes
- No

Prefer not to say

10. If you answered yes, please provide more information:

11. Does your job require regular movement around Parliament House and the precinct?

- Yes
- No



12 If you answered yes, please provide more information:

13. Do you feel that the signage in the building identifying food services, public spaces, toilets, lifts, retail services, emergency information and general wayfinding is clear and easy to understand?

- Yes
- No

14. If you answered no, please provide more information:

15. Do you feel that Parliament House is a sensory-friendly environment? (Sensory friendly considers lighting, crowds, noise, scents and smells, temperature and cleanliness)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Prefer not to say

16. If you answered no, please provide more information:

Workplace Adjustments

17. Do you feel welcomed and included when working at Parliament House?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable

18. If you answered no, please provide more information:

19. Are there any adjustments or modifications that you require to access and work at Parliament House?

- Yes
- No
- I am unsure what to ask for
- Prefer not to say

20. If you answered yes, please share the types of adjustments you require:

21. Have you experienced any barriers accessing these adjustments or modifications?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- I am unsure what to ask for
- Prefer not to say

22. If you answered yes, please provide more information:



23. Have you ever shared any accessibility concerns with your supervisor, manager or other relevant staff?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable

24. If you answered yes, were your concerns resolved in a satisfactory way?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

25. If you answered no, please provide more information:

26. Do you have suggestions to improve the accessibility of Parliament house”?

- Yes
- No

27. If you answered yes, please provide more information:

28. Would you be interested in sharing more information about your experience accessing Parliament House?

- Yes
- No

29. yes, please provide your name and contact details:

Thank you for your time and feedback

Your feedback will help create a more accessible Parliament House. Your feedback will remain anonymous and private, individual responses will not be shared.

If any uncomfortable feelings have come up from completing this survey, you can access support:

Your organisation’s employee assistance program.

- MOP(S) Act employees: Benestar on 1300 360 364
- Department of the Senate employees: AccessEAP on 1800 818 728
- Department of the House of Representatives employees: Benestar on 1300 360 364
- DPS employees: Benestar on 1300 360 364

Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (24-hour support):

- Tel 1800 747 977
- Email: support@PWSS.gov.au
- Text: 0487 112 755



Lifeline: Tel: 13 11 14 or Text: 0477 13 11 14

13YARN: Tel: 13 92 76

1800RESPECT: Tel: 1800 737 732

You can use the **National Relay Service** if you are Deaf, have hearing loss or non-speaking. There are different ways you can contact them:

- Internet relay – nrschat.nrscall.gov.au
- Voice relay – 1300 555 727
- SMS relay – 0423 677 767
- Video relay – bit.ly/2SQSHw4

If you speak a language other than English, you can call the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** on 131 450.



Appendix 3: Visitor survey



Have your say on the accessibility of Australian Parliament House

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) is supporting the Department of Parliamentary Services to review the accessibility of Parliament House.

“Accessible” means everyone has the same opportunity to access information and engage in the same experiences.

About Australian Network on Disability

Australian Network on Disability is Australia’s peak body for disability inclusion in the workplace. We are a national, member-based organisation that helps employers welcome and retain people with disability.

For more information about the Australian Network on Disability please visit our website at

www.and.org.au

What we are doing

To understand the accessibility of Parliament House, Australian Network on Disability is requesting feedback from people living with disability, chronic health conditions, injuries and carers/support people.

We would be grateful if you could complete this online survey.

If you are a carer or support person, please answer questions based on your experiences supporting people accessing Parliament House.

The findings from this survey will help us make recommendations to enhance accessibility at Parliament House.

Information about the survey

The survey may take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. It asks about:

your experiences accessing Parliament House barriers faced when accessing Parliament House

what you think will improve access to Parliament House

All the questions are optional so you can choose what you feel comfortable answering.

If you experience text box limits in sharing your feedback, you can share any additional feedback with Hayley Brooks, Customer Experience Lead, Australian Network on Disability at userexperience@and.org.au or call (02) 8270 9209.

The closing date for all survey responses Monday, 2 October 2023.

Privacy and confidentiality



All responses will be confidential and anonymous. Your personal responses will not be shared with anyone else.

Adjustments to complete this survey

If you require support to complete this survey or would like the survey in a different format you can contact Hayley Brooks, Customer and Employee Experience Lead on (02) 8270 9209 or userexperience@and.org.au

Demographic Information

1. Please select your age group or age of person/people you supported to visit Parliament House.

- Under 16
- 16-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- Over 80
- Prefer not to say

2. Where do you or the person you support live?

- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia
- Other

3. Are you:

- a person living with disability
- a person living with chronic health condition
- a person living with injury
- a person living with neurodiversity



- a carer/support person
- an advocacy organisation representative
- Prefer not to say
- Other

4. When did you last visit Parliament House? Select one or more answers.

- In the last 3 months
- 3-6 months ago
- 12 months ago or longer

Accessibility Feedback

5. Do you feel welcomed and included at Australian Parliament House?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable

6. If you answered no, please provide more information:

7. What adjustments or supports assisted you to visit Parliament House?

- None** - no adjustments or support is needed.
- Information about accessibility** - for example, information about accessible features at Parliament House
- Physical environment of Parliament House** - for example, accessible bathrooms, lifts, hearing loops etc.
- Support from Parliament House staff** - access to services, directions and other assistance.
- Support from others** - for example, family, friends, support worker etc.
- Assistive technology** - to support communication, mobility, cognition etc.
- Other

8. What would you rate the overall accessibility of Parliament House?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

9. Please provide information why you chose this rating:



10. Were there any areas at Parliament House you were unable to access due to accessibility barriers?

- Yes
- No

11. If you answered yes, please share which areas:

12. Was there enough accessibility information on the Parliament House website to plan your visit?

- Yes
- No

13. If you answered no, please provide more information:

14. Did you experience any barriers relating to pathways, walkways or flooring at Parliament House, both inside and outside?

- Yes
- No

15. If you answered Yes, please provide more information:

16. Did you experience any barriers using public facilities such as lifts or bathrooms?

- Yes
- No

17. If you answered yes, please provide more information:

18. Do you feel that the directions and signage at Parliament House were clear and easy to understand?

- Yes
- No

19. If you answered no, please provide more information:

20. Do you feel that Parliament House is a sensory-friendly environment? (Sensory friendly considers lighting, noise, crowds, scents and smells, temperature and cleanliness).

- Yes
- No

21. If you answered no, please provide more information:

22. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the accessibility of Parliament House?

Thank you for your time and feedback.

Your feedback will help create a more accessible Parliament House.

Your feedback will remain anonymous and private, individual responses will not be shared.

If any uncomfortable feelings have come up from completing this survey, you can access support:

Lifeline: Tel: 13 11 14 or Text: 0477 13 11 14

13YARN: Tel: 13 92 76 or

1800RESPECT: Tel: 1800 737 732

You can use the **National Relay Service** if you are Deaf, have hearing loss or non-speaking.

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If you speak a language other than English, you can call the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** on 131 450.

Disclaimer

Australian Network on Disability has reviewed the premises with consideration of dignified access and user experience. This in no way replaces a full technical access audit. Australian Network on Disability has taken care to provide practical information with the knowledge available at the time of writing but accept no responsibility for any actions that arise from this information.