



AUSTRALIAN  
NETWORK  
ON DISABILITY

# Executive Summary

## Dignified Access and User Experience of Parliament House

Department of Parliamentary Services 2023

02 8270 9250  
[www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)  
Level 3, 80 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000

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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):

*Recommendation 9: 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 (p. 21).*

Australian Network on Disability would like to acknowledge and thank the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) project team who have been instrumental in managing logistics / coordination of project activities.

We share special mention to:

- Crystal Tunningley, A/G Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services
- Jeremy Mann, Assistant Director, Diversity and Inclusion
- Brooke Edwards, Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
- Tim De Raadt, Director, Parliamentary Coordination
- Daniel Simmons, Strategic Advisor, Corporate Services
- Trent Litster, Assistant Secretary, Property Services

## 1.1 Scope of report

The project included three parts:

- Consultation with building occupants and visitors with disability led by Customer and Employee Experience Lead, Hayley Brooks.
- Dignified Access Review led by Dignified Access Lead, Tom Bevan.
- Initial review of Department of Parliamentary Services Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure – written feedback was provided by email on 15 September 2023.

Our findings are detailed across three reports:

- Executive Summary – provides an overview of overall findings and recommendations detailing opportunities and implications relating to the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.

- Annex 1 – Consultation Findings with Building Occupants and Visitors with disability highlights qualitative findings and recommendations from our consultation.
- Annex 2 – Dignified Access, sharing findings and recommendations from reviews undertaken by the Australian Network on Disability Project Team.

We suggest our dignified access review findings are read in conjunction with our consultation findings to provide insights into the impacts of barriers experienced by building occupants and visitors with disability.

## **1. Consultation with building occupants and visitors with disability**

Between March 2023 and October 2023, the Australian Network on Disability Project Team consulted with building occupants and visitors with disability which included:

- 2 x surveys (1 x with building occupants, 1 x with visitors with disability).
- 2 x walkthroughs\* (1 x Sitting Day, one non-Sitting Day) within Australian Parliament House with visitors with disability.
- 1 x walkthrough within Parliament House with Senator Jordon Steele-John.
- 1 x walkthrough with building occupants (on non-Sitting Day).
- 5 x interviews with building occupants.

\*Where we refer to ‘walkthrough’ we refer to facilitation of workshops by Australian Network on Disability who walked through different areas of the building with building occupants and visitors, observing their interactions and asking targeted questions to gain insights into their accessibility experiences and perspectives.

Consultation 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 are also respected and valued in matters that affect their lives.

Consultation 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.

Please refer to Annex 1 – Consultation Findings: Accessibility of Australian Parliament House for detailed information about our method, findings, and recommendations.

## 2. Dignified Access Review

In March 2023 Australian Network on Disability completed 2 x dignified access reviews (1 x on a Sitting Day, 1 x on a non-Sitting Day).

The Access to Premises Standards apply to new buildings and new or affected parts of existing buildings submitted for building approval after 1 May 2011. In practical terms that means businesses are compelled to upgrade accessibility only as part of refurbishments requiring building approval. Many progressive organisations realise the benefits of attracting employees with disability and the cross-benefits for other staff when their premises are accessible.

It is worth noting that when modifying a part of a building, businesses also need to make sure that the affected parts are also compliant. An affected part is the principal entrance of the building and any part of the building that is necessary to provide a continuous accessible path of travel from the entrance.

The other legislative framework that applies to property is the Disability Discrimination Act in relation to workplace modifications. Whilst Department of Parliamentary Services is not compelled to change the features of its property until it is upgraded, employees with disability may request changes as part of a workplace modification to enable them to do the essential requirements of their role. Department of Parliamentary Services would then need to establish that the change would create unjustifiable hardship to avoid doing it.

Australian Network on Disability also refers to 'Dignified Access'. Dignified Access should be available for all employees, visitors and clients. Everyone should be able to access the premises in a dignified way. This goes beyond compliance and takes into consideration the user experience of the environment from the perspective of:

1. Vision – Considers 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.
2. Hearing – Considers sounds in the environment (e.g., volume, pitch, clarity and location of sounds), including the impact on the sensory experience.
3. 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.
4. 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).
5. Movement - Considers the ability to move around the space and support features available to support balance and movement.

6. Reach and Stretch – Considers the reach and stretch required to complete a task.
7. 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 objects.

Please refer to Annex 2 – Dignified Access Review of Australian Parliament House for our detailed findings and recommendations.

## 1.2 Context for accessibility and inclusion

### Statistics

Over 4.4 million people experience disability in Australia<sup>1</sup>. The actual number is likely to be much higher as many people who experience disability may not identify as doing so. Most disability is non-visible and non-physical so in most situations you would not be aware of it.

1 in 3 of us either experience disability or are close to someone who does; this could be a colleague, family member or friend.

The likelihood of experiencing disability increases as we age. At age 15 and 25 it's a 1:12 likelihood; at Age 45 it's 1:4, at Age 60 it's 1:3; and by the time we are 75, 1 in 2 of us will experience disability – you or your partner; or you or your best friend. It's a case of if not when disability is likely to impact you either directly or indirectly<sup>2</sup>.

### Employment trends for people with disability

Labour force participation rates for people with disability in Australia are low. In 2012, the labour force participation rate for people with disability was 52.8%, compared with 82.5% for people without disability<sup>3</sup>. This figure has not changed since 1993<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). *People with Disability in Australia*. Retrieved from: [People with disability in Australia, Prevalence of disability - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/australian-institute-of-health-and-welfare/reports-and-publications/people-with-disability-in-australia). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023]

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *SDAC - Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*. Retrieved from: [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australian-bureau-of-statistics/reports-and-publications/sdac). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023]

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). 4433.0.55.006 - Disability and Labour Force Participation. Retrieved from: [4433.0.55.006 - Disability and Labour Force Participation, 2012 \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australian-bureau-of-statistics/reports-and-publications/4433.0.55.006) [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

<sup>4</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. (2023). *Inclusive Education, Employment and Housing – Part B*, p378. Retrieved from: [Final Report - Volume 7, Inclusive education, employment and housing - Part B \(royalcommission.gov.au\)](https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/reports-and-publications/inclusive-education-employment-and-housing). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

Statistics also highlight lower labour force participation rates for people with psychosocial disability (34%), people with intellectual disability (38%) and head injury, stroke or acquired injury (32%) and First Nations people with disability (45%)<sup>5</sup>.

Barriers to employment highlighted in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability highlighted barriers to employment which include:

- Attitudinal barriers – negative attitudes, stereotypes and misconceptions held towards people with disability.
- Physical and environmental barriers – The ability to physically access a workplace, move around the space, and use equipment and facilities is a key aspect of enabling people with disability to gain and maintain employment. Environmental barriers relate to how people get to work and where they live.
- Organisational barriers –relate to the way in which a workplace functions. Examples of organisational barriers include inaccessible systems and recruitment processes, lack of appropriate support services and refusal to make adjustments.
- Structural barriers – Relate to policies, systems, government programs and legislation are examples of structures that can create barriers to employment for people with disability<sup>6</sup>.

People with disability are also more likely to experience unemployment for periods longer than 12 months, with employers less likely to employ people with longer periods of unemployment<sup>7</sup>.

## **Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act**

The purpose of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) is to eliminate discrimination against people with disability, and to promote recognition and acceptance that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community. The DDA protects against two types of discrimination which include:

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<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. (2023). Inclusive Education, Employment and Housing – Part B, p378. Retrieved from: [Final Report - Volume 7, Inclusive education, employment and housing - Part B \(royalcommission.gov.au\)](#). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

<sup>6</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. (2023). Inclusive Education, Employment and Housing – Part B, pp381-397. Retrieved from: [Final Report - Volume 7, Inclusive education, employment and housing - Part B \(royalcommission.gov.au\)](#). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government, The Treasury. (2023). Working Future. The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities. Retrieved from: [Working Future \(treasury.gov.au\)](#) [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

1. Direct discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than others because of their background or certain personal characteristics. For example, being refused employment due to disability.
2. Indirect discrimination occurs when there is an unreasonable rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people who share a particular attribute. For example, a building that only has an entrance through stairs would indirectly discriminate against a person with limited mobility.

The DDA uses a broad definition of disability, which includes past, present, and future disabilities as well as imputed disabilities that include:

- physical disability – affects a person’s mobility or dexterity.
- intellectual disability – affects a person’s ability to learn.
- psychosocial disability – affects a person’s thinking processes.
- sensory disability – affects a person’s ability to hear or see.
- neurological disability – affects the brain and central nervous system.
- learning disability – affects acquisition, organisation, retention and understanding of information.
- physical disfigurement – affects a person’s physical appearance.
- immunological disability – the presence of organisms causing disease in the body.

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. Along with the DDA, there is equivalent state legislation in eight Australian jurisdictions.

In financial year 2022 to 2023, 46% of complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission related to disability discrimination with 25% of these complaints relating to employment, 37.5% relating to goods, services and facilities and 6% relating to Access to premises<sup>8</sup>.

## **Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces**

The *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* (Set the Standard Report) details findings from the Independent

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission. (2023). 2022-2023 Complaints Statistics – Retrieved from: [ar 2022-23 complaint stats tables.docx \(live.com\)](https://www.hrc.gov.au/2022-23-complaint-stats-tables.docx). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023]



Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces which was conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission and led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner<sup>9</sup>.

We understand an update relating to the work undertaken by Australian Network on Disability was shared in the Australian Government, Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce in the 2022 Annual Report: Update on the Implementation of recommendations from the Set the Standard Report to identify work was in progress (page 8)<sup>10</sup>, and a subsequent update was provided by DPS to the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce identifying reviews and consultation were complete and awaiting this report.

Whilst the work undertaken by Australian Network on Disability relates to Recommendation 9 of the Set the Standard Report, we identify below where findings from this project can be used to support further recommendations:

<b>Set the Standard Recommendation</b>	<b>Findings from Australian Network on Disability</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Individual leadership</b></p>	<p>Annex 1 – Consultation Findings provide findings and recommendations relating to barriers accessing workplace adjustments (pages 18-20) and lack of consistency and support from managers (pages 21 – 22) where we share examples of responses from managers which include negative attitudes, lack of response and barriers to workplace adjustments.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5: Diversity among parliamentarians</b></p> <p><b>(c) specific actions to increase the representation of First Nations people, people from CALD backgrounds, people with disability, and LGBTIQ+ people.</b></p>	<p>Overall findings from Annex 1 and Annex 2 identify barriers that may lead to people with disability experiencing barriers becoming parliamentarians.</p> <p>In particular at Annex 1, 4.3 Democratic processes (pages 23 to 25) provide insights into barriers that may affect people with disability. We also refer the reader to</p> <p>We note Senator Jordon Steele-John was the only</p>

<sup>9</sup> Kate Jenkins Australian Human Rights Commission. (2021). Set the standard: Report on the independent review into commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. Australian Human Rights Commission.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Government, Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce. (2022). 2022 Annual Report: Update on the implementation of recommendations from the Set the Standard Report. Retrieved from: [Set the Standard 2023 Update Report Feb 2023.pdf](#).

	parliamentarian who participated in the project.
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Diversity among Members of Parliament (Staff) Act employees</b></p> <p><b>(b) specific actions to increase the representation of First Nations people, people from CALD backgrounds, people with disability, and LGBTIQ+ people.</b></p>	<p>Overall findings from Annex 1 and Annex 2 identify barriers that may lead to people with disability experiencing barriers becoming and maintaining employment as Members of Parliament (Staff).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10: Everyday respect in the parliamentary chambers</b></p> <p><b>(a) eliminating language, behaviour and practices that are sexist or otherwise exclusionary and discriminatory (b) improving safety and respect in the parliamentary chambers.</b></p>	<p>Annex 1 details findings at Access to public galleries of Chambers (page 35) where visitors with disability shared relating to psychological safety and triggers to trauma in relation to interactions within Chambers.</p> <p>These findings could lead to people with disability (particularly those who have experienced trauma) experiencing barriers becoming parliamentarians.</p> <p>We also note that a member of the Australian Network on Disability project team also experienced triggers being in the Public Gallery observing Question Time where male parliamentarians were shouting and pointing at female Members of Parliament.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14: Best practice training</b></p> <p><b>(a) the Office of Parliamentarian Staffing and Culture (see Recommendation 11) should develop and deliver mandatory best practice training for parliamentarians and Members of Parliament (Staff) Act employees, to be conducted during induction and annually on: i. respectful workplace</b></p>	<p>Findings in Annex 1 consultation findings highlight the need for disability confidence training for managers and senior leaders to foster an inclusive and accessible working environment.</p> <p>In particular barriers accessing workplace adjustments (pages 18-20) and lack of consistency and support from managers (pages 21 – 22) where we share examples of responses from managers which include negative attitudes, lack of response and barriers to workplace adjustments.</p>

<p><b>behaviour ii. relevant Codes of Conduct.</b></p> <p><b>(b) the Office of Parliamentarian Staffing and Culture (see Recommendation 11) should develop and deliver best practice people management and inclusive leadership training for parliamentarians and senior Members of Parliament (Staff) Act employees.</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 24: Ensure protections against age and disability discrimination The Australian Government, in line with recent amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), should ensure that the Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) and Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) are amended to clarify that the laws apply to staff and consultants employed or engaged under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (Cth).</b></p>	<p>Findings and recommendations throughout Annex 1 and Annex 2 highlight potential risks of direct and indirect discrimination.</p> <p>Australian Network on Disability has shared best practice recommendations for accessibility to reduce these risks.</p>

## **Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability**

The Royal Commission into the Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability was established in 2019 with the Final Report handed to the Australian Government on Friday 28 September 2023. The final report includes 12 volumes; 222 recommendations on how to improve laws, policies, structures, and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society to support people with disability.

People with disability have been at the heart of the Royal Commission. Their voices and experiences have guided all aspects of the work.

Whilst Australian Government has yet to respond to recommendations, Australian Network on Disability highlight the opportunity for findings from this project to be used to contribute to recommendations contained within the DRC Report.

Australian Network on Disability refers particular attention to DRC Report recommendations which include:

- A new Australian law to recognise the human rights of people with disability – by way of an enactment of a Disability Rights Act
- A new National Disability Agreement – to advance equality, inclusion, and the rights of people with disability in Australia. This would be the framework for intergovernmental collaboration.
- A new national Accessible information and communications plan to promote accessible information and communication.
- Increase public sector employment for people with disability – through targets and public reporting.
- Support transitions to inclusive employment – ‘open employment first approach’.
- Develop a roadmap for inclusive employment.

### **Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031**

The Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (the Strategy) is a national framework developed by the Australian Government, Department of Social Services to guide the policies and initiatives of governments at all levels working with the community and business to support the accessibility and inclusion of people with disability. The vision for the Strategy Vision is *‘for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community’* (page 5)<sup>11</sup>.

Findings and recommendations from this project may support DPS to meet actions identified in ‘Priority 1 – Increase employment of people with disability’.

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Government, Department of Social Services. (2021). Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031. Retrieved from: [Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031 \(disabilitygateway.gov.au\)](https://disabilitygateway.gov.au). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

## Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities

This project coincides with the release of the Australian Government, The Treasury's 'Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities (the Roadmap)' which outlines plans to create an inclusive and dynamic economy which includes considerations around under employment.

The Roadmap emphasises the need to eliminate discrimination and broaden job opportunities for people with disability by including 10 policy areas including '8. *Reducing barriers to work by addressing disincentives to participate, improving the quality of support for people with disability, and promoting gender equality*'<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. Overall findings

### 2.1 Impact of accessibility barriers

Our findings identify the impact accessibility barriers within Australian Parliament House can have on people with disability they include:

- Health and safety risks where people with disability may experience falls, trips and/or strain to their bodies due to lack of accessibility features.
- Aggravation of health conditions/symptoms
- Reduction of psychological safety / risk of traumatisation and / or re-traumatisation – noting that 1 in 2 (47%) of adults with disability have experienced violence since the age of 15, and 1 in 4 (25%) of women with disability have experienced sexual violence after the age of 15<sup>13</sup>.

As a result of barriers, people with disability may also experience barriers in recruitment, career development and retention at Australian Parliament House. Barriers may also limit opportunities for people with disability to participate in democratic activities including becoming parliamentarians.

### 2.2 Enablers for an accessible and inclusive environment

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Government, The Treasury. (2023). Working Future. The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities. Retrieved from: [Working Future \(treasury.gov.au\)](https://www.treasury.gov.au/workingfuture) [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

<sup>13</sup> Australian Government, Institute for Health and Welfare. (2022). People with Disability in Australia. Retrieved from: [People with disability in Australia, Violence against people with disability - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/people-with-disability-in-australia). [Retrieved on 14 December 2023].

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

1. 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 use 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.

2. 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.
3. 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 employees to express their whole self, seek support when required, and raise concerns without feelings of judgement or being dismissed.
4. 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.

These enablers can be used by DPS as a framework which may support ongoing activities to increase the accessibility of the culture, environment and policies and processes within Australian Parliament House.

## **2.3 Design Integrity and security versus accessibility**

Australian Network on Disability highlight how the prioritisation of policies over accessibility can lead to initiatives to enhancing accessibility being sidelined, overlooked, or deemed secondary and can contribute to systemic exclusion.

Whilst there was respect and support of Design Integrity, a major theme identified throughout the project was how the Design Integrity and security protocols of Australian Parliament House superseded progress towards accessibility in the design / retrofit of the building.

We heard examples where concerns relating to accessibility were dismissed due to the prioritisation of Design Integrity including *'that's just the design of the building, the Architect has moral rights and needs to approve everything'* and *'I had raised a concern, but Design Integrity stopped the changes'*.

We also heard barriers relating to security protocols including where building occupants have been unable to open windows to improve circulation within offices and the weight of doors creating barriers opening and passing through the building.

Our findings identify opportunities for Security Guards to participate in regular disability confidence training to ensure consistency and accessibility security screening where inconsistencies were identified relating to screening of people using wheelchairs and assistance animals, and barriers where male security guards patted down a visitor (who has experienced sexual assault) without providing information or seeking consent before the pat down (refer to Annex 1, page 27, Security).

## **2.4 Reactive approach to accessibility**

Our findings highlight a reactive approach to accessibility where adjustments are often made in response to specific needs or issues.

By engaging in proactive approaches to accessibility in the design and implementation of policies and environments, this can provide numerous benefits for individuals where their accessibility needs are met and for Australian Parliament House which may include reduce costs (particularly relating to retrofitting) and reduce risks of complaints relating to discrimination.

## **2.5 Sensory environment and sensory processing**

Findings suggested a lack of understanding relating to non-visible disability which is detailed in Annex 1 Lack of Understanding of Hidden Disability (page 20) which describes the unique barriers people with hidden disability experience that other people may not immediately be aware of.

A sentiment shared by visitors with disability was there are unspoken social norms required to access Australian Parliament House. Our findings however identify barriers in the sensory environment which can be overwhelming and distressing particularly for people with sensory processing disabilities which can lead to heightened stress and anxiety and lead to behaviours that may not align with 'social norms' and people being negatively labelled. We heard from one person who experienced overwhelm from the sensory environment in the

main security area. Australian Network on Disability provided support to this individual to reduce overwhelm. This individual shared that if he did not have support it could have led to him shouting where he feared security guards would call the Police.

A major theme throughout the project was how the sensory environment can lead to overstimulation for people accessing Australian Parliament House with increased barriers experienced for people with sensory processing disability.

A summary of barriers include:

- Sound – review of division bells and clocks which were described as aggravating health conditions, including causing distractions, and being triggering.
- Temperature – consistency of temperature across Australian Parliament House with areas being described as ‘too hot’ too cold’ and areas with poor ventilation. We note temperature 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 and causing a ‘buzz’ and ‘hum’ for people with sensory processing disability. Findings in Annex 1 share an example where a building occupant experienced a seizure due to fluorescent lighting with their requests for adjustments being denied. Glare from windows were also identified as being a barrier where building occupants shared they were provided the option to sit with glare or sit in dark rooms (with blinds closed).
- Crowding – where crowded spaces can increase noise levels, activity and close proximity to others which can lead to overwhelm and anxiety.

Our findings highlight the need for a comprehensive review of the sensory environment within Australian Parliament House including considerations on Sitting Days. We also recommend the provision of sensory / wellbeing spaces in public and private areas to support people to regulate and reduce their sensory input and provision of sensory maps which may support people avoiding overstimulating environments.



### 3. Summary of recommendations

The summary lists recommendations that have been identified as a result of our dignified access review and consultation with building occupants and visitors with disability.

The recommendations go beyond Standards and Code and looks at how to enhance the experience and interaction within Australian Parliament House.

Item / Location	Dignified Access Recommendation	Recommendation from Consultation Findings
<b>Surveys</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share a link to the visitor survey on the <a href="#">‘Plan your Visit/Accessibility at Parliament House webpage’</a> with a heading ‘provide feedback’. The Visitor Services Team may also consider sharing the link after visitors have made a booking.</li> <li>• 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’.</li> <li>• Regularly (at least annually) survey building occupants to continually enhance the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.</li> </ul>
<b>Access to workplace</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a recruitment review to consider the</li> </ul>

**adjustments**

accessibility of the recruitment cycle and processes from promotion to onboarding.

- 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.

<p><b>Inclusive leadership</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Engage in activities to enhance feelings of psychological safety, this may include:</li> <li>• Engage consultants with expertise in supporting psychological safety. For example, Psychological Safety Australia.</li> <li>• Provide Managers and leaders with training on trauma informed approaches. Blue Knot foundation provide training for leaders <a href="https://blueknot.org.au">Training for Individuals (blueknot.org.au)</a>.</li> <li>• Participate in Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index to understand DPS's current baseline of disability confidence and access a</li> </ul>

		roadmap of opportunities and recommendations.
<b>Inclusive design</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed inclusive design approaches in the design of policies, processes and environments. Australian Network on Disability can support DPS with this.</li> </ul>
<b>Non visible/hidden disability</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the <a href="#">Sunflower Lanyard scheme</a>, 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Democratic activities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review / develop a guideline to support the facilitation of accessible and inclusive Parliamentary consultation and Inquiries. Guidance should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Information about inclusive language including use of Plain English.</li> <li>○ Provision of alternate formats including Auslan interpretation and embedding captions and providing transcripts for videos.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review and update Parliamentary Inquiry webpages across all Senate Committees, House of Representative and Joint Committees to ensure an</li> </ul>

		<p>Easy Read Guide on how to make a submission is available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace all references to ‘special’ arrangements on website to ‘accessibility requirements’.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Planning trips to Australian Parliament House</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert visitors of the accessibility features and barriers by including comprehensive site access information on your website (potentially on your contact page), and when sending meeting / event / interview invitations (including availability of accessible features). Include sensory barriers too, e.g., café noise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update accessibility information provided on the Parliament of Australia website to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accessibility of different areas of Australian Parliament House.</li> <li>○ Update references and information about Guide Dogs to ‘assistance animals’. Share information about location of animal relief stations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create a captioned and Auslan interpreted video detailing the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.</li> <li>• Create a social story or virtual tour to support people to understand what to expect when visiting Australian Parliament House.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Main Entrances / Pathways to Entry</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise the provision and update of signage, wayfinding, and instructions communicating to users regarding disability access and the availability of independent building access.</li> <li>• Review contrasts on glass doors. Requirement is solid contrasting lines not less than 75mm wide with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide these findings to relevant departments and Members of Parliament who work with transport departments and agencies.</li> <li>• Consider introducing a wheelchair accessible shuttle service to transport visitors and building occupants</li> </ul>

	<p>lower edge between 900mm and 1000mm.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocate touchpoints such as swipe access, hearing augmentation and intercoms to accessible heights between 900m and 1200mm.</li> <li>• Provide railings on either side of a stairwell to support all users with mobility needs.</li> <li>• Remove ankle height bins along the wall of the public entrance.</li> <li>• Review contrast of bollards and additional installations such as intercom poles to reduce the risk of them being a tripping hazard.</li> <li>• Review application of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSi) and apply them consistently and logically.</li> <li>• As a best practice measure, install beacon technology e.g., Blindsquare / Bindi Maps in the lobby and surrounding public areas.</li> <li>• Seek to provide a step free path of travel through the gardens and park off Wyman Street to the Formal Gardens East.</li> <li>• Install an accessible bathroom in addition to the male and female bathrooms in the park at Wyman Street.</li> </ul>	<p>between public transport stops and the building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lighting on pathways to increase safety for cyclists and people walking to and from Australian Parliament House.</li> <li>• Review opportunities to put TGSIs around the fountain.</li> </ul>
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## Parking

- Review path of travel from public accessible parking bays to the Great Verandah public entrance via ramp, steps and lift 12 V1 to G and upgrade current accessible features, with special consideration of the ramp, signage, and wayfinding provisions.
- As part of the accessible features review consider surface contrast finish of walls and floors within the basement level car parks. Currently all surfaces are concrete and offer no visual contrast.
- Install better contrast finish to bollards.
- Alert visitors of accessibility features and barriers of your building by including site access information on your website (potentially on your contact page), and when sending meeting / event / interview invitations.
- 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.

<p><b>Security</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide multiple height or adjustable security desks.</li> <li>• Provide cut out spaces at security desks so wheelchair user need to stretch is reduced.</li> <li>• Review widths of security gates ensuring wheelchair users are able to easily move through without fear of getting stuck, damaging their equipment or self (hands getting stuck).</li> <li>• Provide clear information including a social story so users are able to understand expectations before arrival.</li> <li>• Co-review security procedures and policies with users with a lived experience to inform Parliament House on creating a best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Provide regular disability confidence training to security guards.</li> <li>• Introduce a separate 'accessibility line' to for people with disability during security screening.</li> <li>• Review and update signage used in security areas to ensure they are available in large font, have good contrast and use plain English. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide video information with Auslan interpretation and captions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Reception / Front pass issue desk</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for staff on how to welcome visitors with disability. Australian Network on Disability would be happy to facilitate this training.</li> <li>• Provide multiple height or adjustable reception desks.</li> <li>• Check the provision of hearing augmentation and instruction of usage and process.</li> <li>• Be aware of movable furnishings or signage within the space ensuring they are not in the circulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install a lower height section onto front pass issue desk. Best practice is to have an adjustable height desk.</li> </ul>



	<p>pathway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace gloss finish laminate on signage with matte finish to reduce glare of signage.</li> <li>• Provide multiple seating options including seating with arms supporting mobility outcomes.</li> <li>• Review power point access and seek alternative reducing the need to reach.</li> <li>• Ensure furnishing contrasts are good allowing for easy identification of elements.</li> <li>• Consider carpet colour and pattern use as it is a significant element of enabling design. Patterns can be interpreted as barriers or level changes by people with neurological, sensory processing or sight conditions.</li> <li>• If using touch screens provide alternative options as they can present as a barrier to some users especially those with vision impairment.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Meeting Rooms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there is enough circulation space with clearance so users with mobility devices feel included.</li> <li>• Consider reach and dexterity when locating controls and power points on meeting tables.</li> </ul>	

- Provide automated adjustable tables with braille tactiles within meeting rooms allowing accommodations for all wheelchair types.
- Consider privacy when using spaces and pick the right space for the right meeting.
- Revise visual surface contrast and furnishings to support improved identification by people who are blind or partially sighted for safe and effective circulation.
- In future refits / refurbishments, technical controls should be at an accessible height (ideally 900mm to 1200mm).
- Provide alternative options to touch screens. Touch screens can present as a barrier to some users especially those that are blind or have low vision. Users that are blind or have low vision are not able to use current meeting room booking systems.
- Provide portable hearing augmentation.
- Where hearing augmentation is available provide clear instructions on process, use and barriers to consider.
- Replace gloss finish laminate on signage with matte finish to reduce glare of signage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide instructions for room controls.</li> <li>• Provide seating with arms to support mobility or provide a range of seating options.</li> <li>• Consider environmental elements such as temperature and sound as both impact the comfort and productivity of users, especially those who are hypersensitive or neurodiverse.</li> <li>• Provide open bins.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doors / Doorways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the force required to open all non-automated doors – standards require only twenty newtons of force (2kg). A priority should be the accessible bathroom doors.</li> <li>• Install automatic doors where possible.</li> <li>• Pay special attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff dining room terrace doors 10kg</li> <li>○ Internal corridor doors 8-10kgs</li> <li>○ Manual accessible bathroom door 5kg</li> <li>○ Accessible bathroom 6kg</li> <li>○ House of Representatives courtyard door 9kg</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Senator lobby door 6kg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update door signage by increasing text and colour contrast of signage.</li> <li>• Install automatically actuated doors throughout Australian Parliament House.</li> <li>• Update colour contrast of doors into ministerial offices to increase visibility of doors.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Stairways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review internal and external stairways to bring them up to standard.</li> <li>• Provide handrails on either side of the stairwells.</li> <li>• Upgrade and improve nose contrasting.</li> <li>• Seek options to mitigate current glare on wood finished surfaces.</li> <li>• Where steps are the only option for users seek dignified alternatives such as the squash court at the gym and path of travel through Wyman Street parklands.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Lifts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review accessibility features of lifts ensuring all features are engaged, especially audio.</li> <li>• Door dwell time should be at least 8 seconds.</li> <li>• Review audible information and indication to be provided in a range of between 20-80dbA at a maximum frequency of 1500Hz.</li> <li>• Provide accessibility interfaces button which enables features such as audible announcements.</li> <li>• A mirror should be provided to assist backwards movement by the wheelchair user.</li> <li>• Platform lifts should be easily accessed and have</li> </ul>	

	<p>clear instructions for use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure controls can be reached by seating and standing users.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Accessible Bathrooms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible bathrooms should be available on each level.</li> <li>• Opportunity to install automated doors.</li> <li>• Provide and display the international sign of access.</li> <li>• Provide signage indicating left- or right-hand use.</li> <li>• Review accessible bathrooms and ensure they meet standards.</li> <li>• Improve contrast of personal emergency button. This is currently white on white.</li> <li>• Ensure cleaners / building management have instructions that sanitary bins should be placed wall-side of the toilet pan.</li> <li>• Replace any gloss finish laminate on signage with matte finish to reduce glare of signage.</li> <li>• Investigate opportunity to install kickplates to manual doors as they support wheelchair users and protect the doors (note not required with automated doors).</li> <li>• Review door knob on inside of door lock and seek to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update all signage for bathrooms and accessible bathrooms to be consistent with internationally recognised signage (including with use of braille).</li> <li>• Provide weight limit information on equipment and on the website.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Ensure cleaners use signage to indicate when the floor is wet in bathrooms.</li> </ul>

replace with alternative >45mm long.

- Provide lever handle for shower head within bathrooms that include a shower.
- Noting the strong bathroom deodoriser smell sensory differences - a person can be over-sensitive, under-sensitive or both. Someone can experience sensory differences with sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, balance, or body awareness. Sensory experiences can change how someone feels physically, where they can go and how they interact with others. Recommend working with cleaning management to change or reduce spray frequency of the deodorisers.
- Note accessible toilets are only used by employees, visitors or clients that need to use the accessible toilet. Not as a matter of course for all employees, visitors, or clients.
- Install a visual emergency evacuation alarm (refer to Fire and Emergency Procedures section of this report).
- Install an emergency help button linked to reception / security in case a person comes out of their chair and requires assistance. ISO 21542 CI 26.14 requires “an assistance alarm, which can be reached from changing or shower seats, from the

	<p>WC and by a person lying on the floor, shall be provided in all accessible toilets and accessible sanitary rooms. This alarm should be connected to an emergency help point, or where a member of staff can assist.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review phone coverage of accessible bathrooms especially those located in basement levels.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Kitchen and Dining Spaces</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider reach and position of appliances and dispensers such as microwaves / dishwashing liquid / common tea and coffee amenities etc. to ensure they are accessible for someone using a wheelchair or of short stature.</li> <li>• Locate taps at front or side of bowl, rather than the back to allow access for everyone.</li> <li>• Ensure cups, plates, crockery and any other regularly used items are available at lower accessible heights (between 900mm and 1200mm).</li> <li>• Add a cut-out section underneath sinks in all kitchens to allow for wheelchair access.</li> <li>• Explore matte finish options for signage to reduce glare and reflections which can limit visibility of signage.</li> <li>• Review lay of carpet and fix uneven surface within</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In future refurbishments engage in consultation with building occupants with disability this may include with the recently re-established disability employee network.</li> <li>• Review opportunities to provide quiet seated areas.</li> <li>• Review placement of accessible tables to ensure dignified access to the Staff Dining Room.</li> </ul>

the entrance / exit of the staffing dining area corridor.

- Automate doors to courtyard and provide ramped access.
- Review outdoor pathways of travel with the aim to provide step free, slip free and obstacle free options.
- Provide seating options with arms to support users requiring ambulant supports.
- Provide a mixture of tables that provide options in height and clearance allowing for all needs to be accommodated (rather than isolating a single accessible table).
- Review no smoking policy and management.
- Locate fire blankets and fire extinguishers to be at accessible height and nearer kitchen appliances (900mm to 1200mm).
- Review kitchen appliances, especially fans and lighting, considering sensory processing, try reducing sound and light luminance.
- Sensory differences - a person can be over-sensitive, under-sensitive or both. Someone can experience sensory differences with sights, sounds,



	<p>smells, tastes, touch, balance, or body awareness. Consider noise from the kitchen fridges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider neutral pattern free carpets - colour and pattern use is a significant element of enabling design, patterns can be interpreted as barriers or level changes by people with neurological, sensory processing or sight conditions.</li> <li>• Ensure well stocked First Aid Kits with relevant signage and First Aid Officer contact details are available near to kitchen areas be at accessible height and nearer kitchen appliances (900mm to 1200mm).</li> <li>• Engage captioning if TVs are in use.</li> <li>• Remove or relocate items such as bins / plants blocking natural pathways of travel.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Utility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider clearance space within utility areas being aware of obstacles in pathways and on bench tops.</li> <li>• Replace any gloss finish laminate on signage with matte finish to reduce glare of signage.</li> <li>• Consider font size when providing written information supporting ease of reading.</li> <li>• Use larger font for labels to inform users of</li> </ul>	

	<p>cupboard and drawer contents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add handles to cupboards. Handles should be easy to open with one hand, without twisting the wrist or using any tight grasping or pinching motion. The best handles for this purpose are U-shaped. Levers or push-type mechanisms also are acceptable.</li> <li>• Ensure all staff are asked if they require any adjustments to access lockers, putting in place any adjustments as required noting they should be appropriate for people with limited reach, strength, and dexterity.</li> <li>• Relocate First Aid Box and AED to a location that provides ease of access at a height of no more than 1200mm.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Workstations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review power point access and reduce the need to reach.</li> <li>• Improve circulation and remove obstacles from pathway of travel.</li> <li>• Consider sensory processing in the workspace and especially reduce audio disturbances.</li> <li>• Provide seating with arms to support mobility or provide a range of seating options.</li> <li>• Add handles to cupboards. Handles should be easy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in ongoing consultation with people with disability to identify accessible solutions for tables, desks and seating.</li> <li>• Review Design Integrity to identify a solution to furniture that honour the original design intent whilst enhancing accessibility for people with disability.</li> </ul>

to open with one hand, without twisting the wrist or using any tight grasping or pinching motion. The best handles for this purpose are U-shaped. Levers or push-type mechanisms also are acceptable.

- Replace gloss finish laminate on signage with matte finish to reduce glare of signage.
- Ensure all staff are asked about the adjustments that they may require. This should be an ongoing process as an individual's requirements may change across the entire organisation / across their employee lifecycle.
- Where staff experience distractions working in an open plan environment, work with staff members to identify adjustments. These may include allocating desks in quieter areas, allocating quiet rooms, adding partitioning to an allocated desk, or working from home.
- Review visual surface contrast and furnishings to support improved identification by people who are blind or partially sighted for safe and effective circulation.
- Review brass door stops to improve contrast and mitigate potential tripping hazard.
- Engage captions on TVs.

<p><b>Sensory Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the sound of clocks.</li> <li>• Work with cleaning management to moderate deodoriser frequency.</li> <li>• Build a sensory map of Parliament House.</li> </ul> <p>Consider best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sounds, of various types, including intermittent or continuous, from loud to very quiet and particularly when unexpected.</li> <li>• Visual “noise” which may be caused by light, glare, shadows, colours, patterns, movement, proximity, technology, or clutter.</li> <li>• Spatial and layout considerations.</li> <li>• Unwanted or extreme sensory feedback through smell, touch, taste, or temperature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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: <a href="#">Creating an Autism-Friendly... – Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)</a>.</li> <li>• Create sensory / wellbeing rooms across Australian Parliament House in public and private areas.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wayfinding and Signage</b></p>	<p>Consider best practice guidelines for signage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent design throughout the spaces.</li> <li>• The introduction of different colours, or styles or signs at later points in a building should be avoided to prevent attentional bias.</li> <li>• The International Symbol for Access on all facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update signage across Australian Parliament House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use non glare materials for signage.</li> <li>○ Increase font size.</li> <li>○ Increase colour contrast between text and background colour.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create signage that locates accessible amenities</li> </ul>

for people with a disability.

- Appropriate sign size and height for viewing angles and distances.
- Good visual contrast and lighting.
- Use of tactile letters and symbols for people who are unable to read visual information.
- Size and case of typography and symbology, suitable for reading distances.
- Signs positioned to avoid reflections from daylight or artificial lights and provided with sufficient lighting.
- Signboards that contrast with their background.
- Short, simple, easily understood messages, used only where necessary.
- Review and update signage design guide for all signage at Parliament House.
- Remove the use of glass as an element of signage as it creates glare and reflection, rendering the intent of information provision obsolete.
- Explore matte finish options for signage to reduce glare and reflections which can limit visibility of signage.
- When considering wayfinding (or any) design

including accessible bathrooms, lifts, animal relief areas and provide sensory mapping information.

	<p>elements embed access needs in the process, with special consideration of sensory sensitivities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore new options for arrival wayfinding signage and indicators especially from basement carpark.</li> <li>• Remove, or relocate items such as bins / plants blocking natural pathways of travel.</li> <li>• Incorporate sensory considerations into wayfinding. Stockland have just released a sensory map of their shopping centres which can act as a guide. Australian Network on Disability would be happy to connect Parliament House with Stockland to learn more about their sensory mapping project.</li> <li>• Where required provide guided tours of premise to assist with memory mapping of premise.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Senate and House of Representatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide step free access to the floor and advisors seating.</li> <li>• Review carpet lay and pile to support improved transition.</li> <li>• Investigate the opportunity for automated / modular seating and desks.</li> <li>• Provide handles to drawers and cupboards. Handles should be easy to open with one hand, without twisting the wrist or using any tight grasping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review of protocols for access for people providing accessibility support (for example Auslan interpreters).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review accessibility features within the Chamber.</li> </ul>

	<p>or pinching motion. The best handles for this purpose are U-shaped. Levers or push-type mechanisms also are acceptable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review hearing augmentation provision, process, and instructions.</li> <li>• Provide a ramp within the House of Representatives.</li> <li>• Automate doors.</li> <li>• Review visual contrast between fixtures and fittings, and room surfaces inclusive of the lobby space.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Public Galleries of Chambers</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed trauma informed principles into the review of Standing Orders and unwritten parliamentary conventions as identified at Recommendation 10 of the <i>Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces report</i><sup>14</sup>.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Acknowledge within this review that behaviour can affect visitors attending Australian Parliament House.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> 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]

- 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 /



		<p>information on the <a href="#">Parliament of Australia, Plan your visit accessibility information page</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Update webpage information to replace 'guide dogs' with 'assistance animals' to cover the types of assistance animals available to people with disability.</li><li>○ Ensure animal relief areas have signage with large text, use accessible contrasting colours and include braille.</li><li>○ Ensure animal relief areas have bins available.</li><li>● Review booking systems to determine if visitors are asked if they have any accessibility requirements to attend Australian Parliament House / access public galleries.</li><li>● Explore opportunities for visitors with disability to book specific seats in public galleries and access the sound proofed gallery if required.</li><li>● Install screens into public galleries and sound proofed galleries which can show coverage on the Chamber floor and provide captions.</li><li>● Review policies and guidelines for access to public galleries to ensure:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ People with disability can use electronic devices for accessibility purposes (for example use voice to</li></ul></li></ul>
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		<p>text apps etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mural Halls and Art Galleries</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate plaques and QR codes at an accessible height and outside of rope barriers to reduce barriers to reach and reading information.</li> <li>• Increase text size and increase colour contrast of text on plaques.</li> <li>• Provide Auslan interpreted videos that can be accessed by scanning QR codes. The video should also have captioning.</li> <li>• Provide the Auslan logo next to QR codes to make people who are d/Deaf aware Auslan interpretation is available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Courtyards</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review pathway surfaces to source solutions to reduce slip/fall risk.</li> <li>• Ensure signage is available to identify areas which may be slippery (including when there is ice/frost).</li> <li>• Update pathways to reduce uneven surface created</li> </ul>

		from paving stones and grass.
<p><b>Senate Office Suite</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider universal design and dignified access for all office spaces.</li> <li>• Provide automated slide doors both at the entrance and internally.</li> <li>• Install colour contrast around door frames.</li> <li>• Maximise circulation space with modified open plan layout.</li> <li>• Provide adjustable tables.</li> <li>• Access to technical controls to be at an accessible height ideally 900mm to 1200mm.</li> <li>• Remove raised transition strips.</li> <li>• Add handles to cupboards. Handles should be easy to open with one hand, without twisting the wrist or using any tight grasping or pinching motion. The best handles for this purpose are U-shaped. Levers or push-type mechanisms also are acceptable.</li> <li>• Add user signage / labels of cupboards and draws.</li> <li>• Provide adequate ventilation.</li> <li>• Locate taps at front of bowl, rather than the back to allow access for everyone.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add cut-out sections underneath sinks in all kitchens.</li> <li>• Provide low level microwaves and dishwashers.</li> <li>• Provide accessible bathroom layout dimensions so that office bathrooms can be fitted out as accessible.</li> <li>• Provide accessible bathroom features as standard such as automated door, accessible facilities taps, dispensers, sink cut out, clothes hooks etc.</li> <li>• Review power point access and seek alternatives which reduce the need to reach.</li> <li>• Provide multiple seating options including chairs.</li> <li>• Consider sensory processing in the workspace and especially reduce audio disturbances.</li> <li>• Ensure photocopier is at accessible height and has a adjustable display screen</li> </ul>	
<p><b>First Aid Room</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review furnishings and equipment layout to maximise circulation.</li> <li>• Install lever taps to improve ease of use.</li> <li>• Provide an accessible bathroom.</li> <li>• Location away from the main work environment and</li> </ul>	

busy areas.

- Signed and designated private space.
- Lockable door with status indicator (e.g., occupied / unoccupied).
- Neutral and calming colours to promote a sense of calmness and well-being.
- Quiet acoustic space.
- Facilities for washing and sanitisation.
- Suitable and accessible storage.
- Range of furniture including a fully adjustable bed or similar that is large enough to enable a person to lie flat.
- Sufficient space for wheelchair access and circulation within
- Visual contrast between fixtures and fittings, and room surfaces.
- Adjustable environmental controls (e.g., air conditioning, lighting).
- One elevation should be kept free of artwork or plants to avoid excessive stimuli.
- A wellbeing kiosk and noticeboard to display

	<p>wellbeing information may be included, but ideally both should be positioned at one end of the room and not encroach on the seating area or natural light.</p>	
<p><b>Multi-Faith Room</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a multifaith room both for the public and staff.</li> <li>• Investigate the opportunity to provide a private space.</li> <li>• Need for step free entry.</li> <li>• Signed and designated private space.</li> <li>• Visual privacy and sound insulation.</li> <li>• Neutral design aesthetic.</li> <li>• Wudu facilities for completing ablutions, with at least one accessible ablution unit available in each ablution room.</li> <li>• Facilities for accessible access (e.g., step free access, sufficient space to manoeuvre a wheelchair next to one prayer washing facility, wall mounted grab rails and drop downs support rails).</li> <li>• The accessible ablution unit is nearest to the entrance.</li> <li>• Shoe rack and low shelf for drying clothing.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate areas for males and females.</li> <li>• Sufficient space for wheelchair access and circulation within.</li> <li>• Visual contrast between fixtures and fittings, and room surfaces.</li> <li>• Adjustable environmental controls (e.g., air conditioning, lighting).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Floor Surfaces</b></p>	<p>Consider best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access routes that have a firm slip-resistant and reasonably smooth surface.</li> <li>• Floor surfaces that avoid producing glare.</li> <li>• Highly contrasting floor patterns are avoided due to potential disorientation and interference with any safety features (e.g., hazard markings).</li> <li>• Firm slip resistance.</li> <li>• Good contrast with wall surfaces.</li> <li>• Avoidance of very shiny finishes (e.g., to protect against glare and perception of being slippery).</li> <li>• Even flooring surfaces, and where two different thicknesses of flooring are laid adjacent to one another, a bevel trim or strip is used to address the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a solution that has practical functionality for people using wheelchairs to navigate across carpet without wheels swerving and increased resistance.</li> <li>• Review level polishing of wooden flooring to reduce risk of slips, trips, falls and visual distortion.</li> </ul>

	<p>difference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blocks or edges of highly contrasting floor surfaces or patterns are avoided as these can be interpreted as barriers which can result in confusion and a lack of confidence for some people.</li> <li>• Very large patterns can be interpreted as barriers or level changes by people with neurological, sensory processing or sight conditions, and are avoided.</li> <li>• Repetitive patterns can be difficult for people with balance conditions and are avoided.</li> <li>• Where a slope is present this is denoted by a visually contrasting floor covering and may need a higher slip resistance.</li> <li>• Carpets or mats are even and with a shallow pile.</li> <li>• Surfaces which promote a good acoustic environment.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Gym</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a multi-level reception desk.</li> <li>• Review and note stepped entry points and inaccessible elements of the gym.</li> <li>• Seek to provide step free entry to all facilities.</li> <li>• Review contrast stripes of glass doors and windows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review policies and medical clearance requirements for people with disability.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate provision of hoist pool entry clarifying equipment availability, process, and instructions.</li> <li>• Instigate an accessibility review of entire gym complex ensuring access for all.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Fire and Emergency Procedures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the design of emergency alarms within Parliament House and revert to traditional red colour vs brass fittings.</li> <li>• Understand where emergency alarms are audible and visual and where there are any gaps.</li> <li>• Ensure Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are in place and managers ask employees periodically if they require one. If a plan includes locating staff member in fire stairwell, please consider space provided and question whether there is enough additional room for circulation.</li> <li>• Review instruction signage with goal to provide in a more accessible format and matt finish to reduce glare.</li> <li>• Relocate AED and fire blankets between 900m and 1200mm.</li> <li>• Relocate emergency phones, break glass panels and emergency contact information/diagrams at accessible height between 900m and 1200mm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan policies and procedures to ensure they align with best practice including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Review template to ensure it includes accessible language.</li> <li>○ Provide relevant documentation relating to PEEPs in a centralised location promoting easy access for building occupants.</li> <li>○ Include contingencies where colleagues / buddies are not available.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide alternative means of communication for fire wardens and first aiders in addition to phone numbers and email: SMS.</li> <li>• Review fire escape doorways and remind staff of importance of keeping doors clear of obstacles.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Digital Accessibility</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review offsite access to 'Kronos'.</li> <li>• 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Organisations who complete this work may include Intopia or TTC Global.</li> <li>○ Ensure these policies / guidelines include information about providing alternate formats.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Formalise processes to include consultation and testing with people with disability when designing and deploying new software/software updates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assistance Animal Facilities (best practice recommendation)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assistance animal facilities for the public and staff.</li> <li>• Clear communication that the relief area is for both pets and service animals.</li> <li>• Easy access to the relief area and its amenities,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review / develop policies to detail legal responsibilities when providing people access with assistance animals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Replace any references to 'Guide Dogs', replacing with 'assistance animals'.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

including for pet parents using assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, or canes.

- Pet-friendly turf, grass, or another surface that's gentle on paws in all types of weather.
- Non-slip easily cleaned surface around the relief area.
- A waste bag dispenser with a trash receptacle attached or nearby, both of which are regularly serviced.
- Adequate lighting for safe use by people and pets.
- Effective drainage and a spray or sprinkler system that ensures the pet relief area is properly cleaned and helps to minimise odours.
- Sanitising or hand-washing options for pet parent hygiene. Also consider a leash hook or carrier space to safely free up pet parents' hands for hand washing.
- A readily visible resource number or QR code for questions or issues.
- Documented cleaning and maintenance standard operating procedures and a regular schedule for area maintenance, such as spraying down the surface, removing trash and refilling waste bags.

- Provide training to Security Guards 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly signage that encourages responsible practices like keeping dogs on leash and/or cleaning up after them.</li> <li>• If indoors, ensure adequate ventilation to maximize air flow and minimize odours.</li> <li>• If outdoors, ensure adequate separation from vehicular traffic areas, at minimum allowing a few feet between the relief area and a parking lot or street.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Sensory Wellbeing Room (best practice recommendation)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a sensory wellbeing room both for the public and staff.</li> <li>• An accessible workstation, including height adjustment and wheelchair access.</li> <li>• A location away from the main work environment and busy areas, without being remote and feeling separated.</li> <li>• Signed and designated private space with occupied status indicator.</li> <li>• Low arousal, low reflective, low pattern, neutral and calming colours to promote a sense of calmness and well-being.</li> <li>• Colours should reflect nature (e.g., browns, greens), with plain ceilings, matte walls. Bright and vivid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sensory / wellbeing rooms across Australian Parliament House in public and private areas.</li> </ul>

	<p>colours should be avoided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex, repetitive patterns and bold linear patterns should be avoided.</li> <li>• Quiet acoustic space, with a low level of background noise and utilising absorptive materials to minimise echo.</li> <li>• Utilisation of natural light with measures to control glare or shadows (e.g., blinds).</li> <li>• A range of furniture that can be easily re-positioned, including seating with arm and back support, and soft seating and reclining options.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Parents Room (best practice recommendation)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a parents room both for the public and staff.</li> <li>• Signed and designated private space.</li> <li>• Lockable door with status indicator (e.g., occupied / unoccupied).</li> <li>• Comfortable chair and table that can be rearranged.</li> <li>• Access to power points and a microwave to sterilise storage containers.</li> <li>• Breast pump with a power socket, and a dedicated storage area.</li> <li>• Wheelchair accessible facilities, including a lowered</li> </ul>	

or adjustable worktops.

- Storage cupboards with easy to grip handles and sink with soap dispenser.
- Baby changing facility (e.g., pull down baby changing table) with nappy disposal.
- Suitable fridge for storing expressed milk, with method of designating ownership.
- Provide sufficient space for wheelchair access and circulation
- Good visual contrast between fixtures and fittings, and room surfaces.
- Adjustable environmental controls (e.g., air conditioning, lighting).

## 4. Opportunities

Findings from this project present a unique opportunity for DPS to meet recommendations contained within the 'Set the Standard Report' as identified at the [Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces](#).

Our recommendations may also contribute to DPS' actions relating to recommendations and policy priorities contained within the Disability Royal Commission report, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 and the 'Working Futures Roadmap'.

When the Australian Parliament House was built in 1988, to encourage public access, it met accessibility requirements of the time. Our findings highlight opportunities to increase the Accessibility of Parliament House to become in line with up-to-date accessibility standards and embed inclusive design approaches to support the ongoing accessibility of Australian Parliament House.

Australian Network on Disability note the Parliament House Construction Authority have acknowledged changes to the building will be required to meet the emerging needs of building occupants<sup>15</sup>. Findings and recommendations may be shared with the Parliament House Advisory Panel to support ongoing decisions relating to the accessibility of Australian Parliament House whilst aligning with the design intent of the building.

In 2023 DPS relaunched their disability employee network (DEN), where there is opportunity for the DEN to review their Terms of Reference to provide consultative support to embed accessibility into the design and implementation of policies, procedures, and environments.

Having received feedback from 136 people with disability (building occupants and visitors) this identifies a passionate and supportive community who want to support the accessibility of Australian Parliament House where there is opportunity to establish an Accessibility Advisory Panel for building occupants and visitors to provide feedback to enhance ongoing accessibility.

Australian Network on Disability is aware that UK Parliament has been engaging in consultation to increase accessibility of UK Parliament and is happy to explore opportunities to connect DPS with relevant people.

## 5. Risks and implications

DPS may experience risks if recommendations are not supported, these include:

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<sup>15</sup> Parliament of Australia (n,d). *Chapter 3 – Parliament of Australia*. Retrieved from: [Chapter 3 – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](#) [Retrieved on 14 December 2023]

- Discrimination complaints – There may be risk DPS may experience complaints relating to direct and indirect discrimination which can lead to legal costs and reputational damage.
- Increased costs – associated to retrofitting existing structures, compared to costs when inclusive approaches that embed accessibility are incorporated from the beginning of projects.
- Barriers recruiting people with disability – candidates with disability may feel reluctant applying for roles within Australian Parliament House due to barriers in the environment.
- Increased staff turnover – if building occupants experience a lack of support or access to workplace adjustments, which may lead to them being unable to continue their employment.
- Health and safety risks (including risks to psychological safety) – where building occupants and visitors may experience accidents or incidents that could have been preventable through proactive accessibility measures.

## 6. Implementation of recommendations

Australian Network on Disability acknowledge the number of recommendations shared which may incur significant costs. It is essential that we highlight that progress towards accessibility and inclusion occurs over time and all recommendations would not need to immediately be implemented.

There is opportunity for DPS to strategically prioritise recommendations giving precedence to identified health and safety risks. DPS may also identify 'quick wins' which require reduced resources (including time and costs) which can demonstrate immediate positive outcomes as a result of this project.

To foster and support a positive and inclusive culture we recommend updates on implemented recommendations are shared to all Australian Parliament House building occupants to demonstrate there is a commitment to accessibility and inclusion within DPS.

## Conclusion

Australian Network on Disability are honoured to have led this project and celebrate the commitment of DPS to enhance the accessibility of Australian Parliament House.

We are grateful to all Advocates with disability across Australia who have shared their experiences and insights to enhance accessibility.

We have highlighted the impact of accessibility barriers which can lead to health and safety risks, reductions in psychological safety, aggravate health conditions and may lead to barriers to employment at Australian Parliament House and democratic processes.





Australian Network on Disability is happy to provide ongoing support to priorities recommendations and support in relation to implementation of activities (for example review of policies / development of guidelines, training etc).

## 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.