



Submission No 71

12 March 2009

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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Dear Secretary

Parliamentary Inquiry on Disability Access Standards

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) thanks you for providing the opportunity to comment on the draft *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards*.

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The *Local Government Act 1995* and other Acts of State Parliament confer specific powers upon local government. Whilst the constitutional status of Local Government places some constraints on Councils to determine independently their policy stances in relation to legislative functions, there does exist scope for choice

Local Government has a role in disability services through:

- Its provision of public services and facilities;
- Its regulatory role in the development of facilities and premises;
- Its mandate to govern on behalf of all of its residents; and
- Its mandate to advance that well being of all of its residents

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LANDSCAPE

Since 2004 WALGA has been engaged in a sustained effort to lead the Local Government Sector in addressing issues of sustainability. Many of the issues focus on the pressures associated with maintenance and renewal of infrastructure and assets central to health and well-being in Western Australia.

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The Association's Systemic Sustainability Study (SSS), *In Your Hands Shaping the Future of Local Government in Western Australia*, Final Report, December 2006, found a number of critical issues facing Local Government which include:

- 83 Western Australian Local Governments were assessed as financially unsustainable;
- There is an estimated \$2 billion infrastructure backlog;
- There are critical labour shortages in key technical and professional areas central to the current role of Local Government; and
- Cost shifting and the growing compliance roles determined by over 400 pieces of State legislation as significant drivers of cost and sustainability challenges.

The Local Government sector has considered these recommendations culminating in *The Journey*. *The Journey* represents a blueprint to position Local Government into the future and proposes a new structure to improve delivery of services to communities while retaining local representation, through a regional model. The final report and 39 recommendations are available on our website www.walga.asn.au.

WA Local Governments are currently undertaking a six-month investigation of a sector-wide reform process at the direction of Local Government Minister, the Hon. John Castrilli MLA. WALGA's State Council strongly supports voluntary structural reform but opposes any forced amalgamation process.

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DISABILITY ACCESS

Disability Access and Inclusion Plans

Following an amendment to the Disability Services Act in December 2004 all Councils in WA were required to develop and implement Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) by 30 June 2007 to make their services, buildings and information accessible for people with disabilities. DAIPs support the achievement of six desired outcomes which relate to the provision of accessible services, buildings, information, consultation processes, complaints processes, and that staff are appropriately aware of the needs of people with disabilities.

The Association in partnership with the Disability Services Commission (DSC) administered of two rounds (\$700,000) of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Grants (DAIPs) to assist Local Governments in the implementation of initiatives outlined in their DAIP.

National Harmonisation of Parking Schemes for Persons Holding Disabled Parking Permit

The National Disability Services (NDS) is involved in the development of the Harmonisation of Accessible Parking Schemes initiative. This will provide an integrated national approach to support greater participation of drivers with disability and eligible carers in the community through improved access to parking options.

WALGA is involved in this project through liaison with the Department of Local Government and Regional Development and the Australian Local Government Association.

Provision for Accessible Bus Stop Infrastructure

A partnership is being developed between the Association, the Commission and Perth Transport Authority (PTA) and Local Governments in relation to compliance with The *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*. A key outcome of the Working Group was an *Accessible Bus Stop Compliance Checklist* for use by government to audit bus stops for compliance against the Standards along with guidance on the minimum requirements as set out in the PTA *Public Transport Bus Stop Layout Policy for Universal Access*.

Code of Practice for the Design, Construction, Operation, Management & Maintenance of Aquatic Facilities 2008

The Code of Practice has ensures public facilities are operated to consistently high health and safety standards, by minimising the occurrence of disease, injury and other health-related complaints associated with the use of these facilities.

It is aimed primarily at designers, builders and operators of aquatic facilities, together with the agencies responsible for administration of the Health Act, such as State and Local Government Health Departments, Environmental Health Officers and associate partners.

The Code is published by the Executive Director, Public Health under the provisions of section 344A(2) of the *Health Act 1911*, and is to be read in conjunction with the *Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007*.

Thank you once again for providing us with the opportunity for comment.

For enquiries please contact Jodie Holbrook, Community Policy Manager on 9213 2044 or email

Yours sincerely

W (Bill) Mitchell
President