



BOROONDARA
City of Harmony

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**SUBMISSION TO THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF
THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA**

REGARDING

Draft Access to Premises Standards

Pursuant to

The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) & subsequent amendments

Introduction.

The City of Boroondara has followed with interest the development of all standards and amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), (DDA). As an inner Melbourne municipality which has many heritage buildings and very little space, the issues of development are frequently raised by rate payers and visitors. Matters such as appropriate parking for people with disabilities have been brought to the attention of Council's Disability Advisory Committee on a regular basis. Access to Council's many leisure facilities and club houses are also high on the agenda for many people with disabilities in Boroondara, their friends and families as well as community support organisations.

The City of Boroondara has also tried to be proactive on many issues affecting the rights of people with disabilities in other areas such as employment and the civic participation of people with disabilities. In 2005, the City of Boroondara received the Prime Ministers Award for employment of people with disabilities. In 2007 Vision Australia awarded Council a Making a Difference award for innovation and achievement in many areas affecting people who are vision impaired. Council's newsletter *The Boroondara Bulletin* is made available in audio format for all residents who request it. The City of Boroondara is currently undertaking Stage 2 of a *Good Access = Good Business project* which maps the accessibility of businesses in selected shopping precincts. This project has been very well received by the business community and community support organisations and Council has invested financial resources into developing this project.

Implementation of Standards

The City of Boroondara recognises the need for workable balanced approaches to access for people with disabilities, which take into account DDA requirements and economic consideration. From an economic perspective, Council welcomes the fact that these standards primarily apply to the planning and construction of new buildings. The City of Boroondara has been taking DDA compliance into consideration for some time now and has made the necessary budgetary allocations to ensure that new buildings and renovations of existing buildings comply with standards. Modifications to Council's Hawthorn Town Hall, for example, which involve the installation of a lift in a heritage building, will increase access for people with disabilities to meeting and function rooms. We note with interest the arguments in the "Regulation Impact Statement" which envisage a net growth to the economy of increased participation of people with disabilities in community life balanced against any compliance costs new standards may create.

Leisure Facilities

The City of Boroondara owns four public swimming pools all of which are over 40 metres in circumference. Council's new Boroondara Sports Complex has a fully accessible pool and pools at Hawthorn Kew and Ashburton leisure centres have hoists. These pools are managed by the YMCA on behalf of the City of Boroondara. Council hosts a number of programs for people with disabilities at these leisure centres and we are confident that the changing, transferring and entry/exit

arrangements are satisfactory for all users. On this basis, we expect that there will be no major cost in implementing the new standards. There are many smaller club rooms and facilities in Boroondara which are owned by community organisations and will not easily comply with the new standards. Council has been proactive in encouraging these organisations to improve access and inclusion for people with disabilities, however, we have had a mixed response. The issues here are more around community education than standards and Council has been willing where possible to assist clubs to make properties more accessible to members or potential members who have disabilities.

Council Buildings

Council is completing construction and renovation of new offices in Camberwell, which comply with current DDA and Building Code standards. The renovation and construction of these and other Council buildings will therefore have little cost impact on Council. This is because Council already factored DDA compliance into the long term budgetary planning of Council's building services division.

Due to construction and renovations of our Camberwell offices, Council is utilising portable offices to accommodate staff. This temporary complex has complied with DDA standards including ramps and tactile ground surface indicators (TGSI'S). Although there has been a cost impact on Council and contractors, Council maintains the highest possible access standards notwithstanding changes to codes.

Car Parking.

Because the City of Boroondara is situated in inner Melbourne, car parking spaces are at a premium. The demands on limited space are very high and accessible spaces are no exception to this situation. Issues do arise from time to time between privately owned car parks and disability advocates in the City of Boroondara around the number of fully accessible car parks and about numbers of accessible car park spaces available near health services. Current ratios of accessible to normal car parking spots comply with existing standards and local laws officers are proactive about policing situations whereby accessible car parks are being occupied by people who do not have appropriate authorisation to occupy them.

Conclusions

On the whole the new draft standards achieve an equitable balance between the social justice objectives of the DDA and the level of reasonable adjustments which need to be made to effectuate the DDA. The requirements of the DDA and standards made in pursuance of it give predictability and certainty to the process making it more feasible for large organisations with multiple premises to modify or renovate those properties.

