

2016 – 2021

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Electoral Commission

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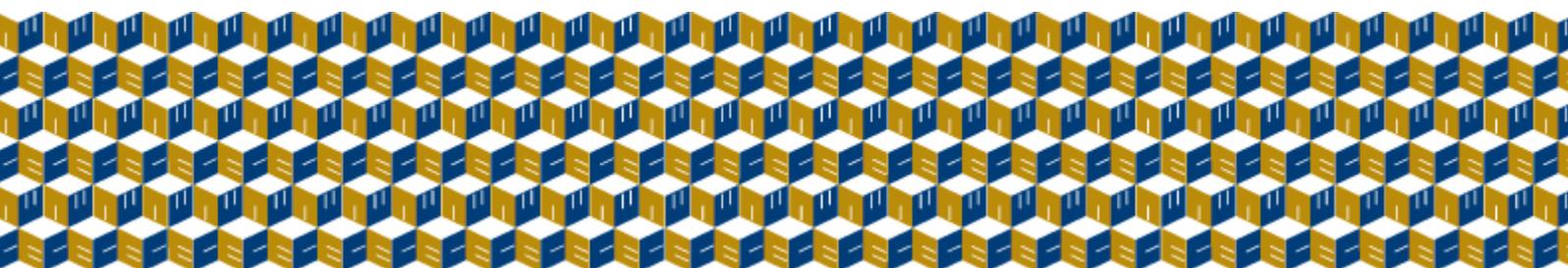
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The DAIP is available in alternative formats on request, in electronic format, hard copy format in both standard and large print, in audio format on cassette or compact disc, and by email.





Background

The Western Australian Electoral Commission (the Commission) is an independent State government agency responsible for electoral services for the people of Western Australia.

Our key areas of operation are:

- the conduct of State, local government elections, referendums and private elections;
- maintaining the State electoral roll; and
- promoting community understanding and participation in electoral processes.

Disability in Western Australia

In Western Australia, the prevalence of disability in the community is measured. In 2012, the disability rate was 16% of the Western Australian population (ABS data). This is a significant proportion of the community.

Based on current figures, it is estimated that a significant number of the Western Australian community who have a disability, would be over 18 years of age and potentially eligible to be enrolled and able to vote.

Our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)

The Commission has demonstrated ongoing commitment to people with disability through its *Disability Action and Inclusion Plan* (DAIP).

The focus for our third DAIP (2016-2021) will be on improving access to electoral services for people with disability. This forms part of a broader commitment under the Commission's *Strategic Plan 2015-2018* to embrace diversity. The DAIP provides strategies to be undertaken during the year and during elections where many initiatives can be progressed. Within the timeframe of this DAIP, the Commission will conduct two State general election (March 2017 and March 2021) and local government elections (October 2017, October 2019, October 2021) in addition to its other core business responsibilities.

Planning for Better Access

The Commission is committed to access and inclusion, equal opportunity, substantive equality and diversity.

The Commission is particularly focused on improving and modernising electoral processes. The Commission plans to provide internet voting options for electors with disability for the first time, at the 2017 State general election. This is a significant development. Internet voting will allow electors with a disability to vote with independence and equality, and allow many to vote in secret for the first time.

Given the significant number of people currently affected by disabilities who are eligible to vote in Western Australia and future predictions, it is important to ensure that people are provided with:

- convenient access to the electoral system;
- the means to easily understand the processes involved; and
- the opportunity to cast their votes with the same knowledge and access as electors without disability.

Access and Inclusion Policy Statement

The Commission seeks to provide appropriate and quality services for all electors in an ever-changing electoral environment. As a small organisation serving all current and potential Western Australian electors, there are challenges in meeting the diverse needs within the community. However, we are committed to ensuring that the needs of electors with disability are considered and access requirements are a priority.

Commission staff, consultants and contractors will be encouraged to support access and inclusion, and embrace diversity in providing electoral services to all Western Australians.

Development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

Review and Consultation Process

The methodology for the development of the DAIP involved reviewing the Commission's previous two DAIPs, consulting Commission employees, advertising for community feedback, sourcing the latest statistical data, and analysing DAIP progress reports and other Commission planning documents and publications. The Commission also considered best practice initiatives from the Disability Services Commission, the Australian Electoral Commission and other State Electoral Commissions.

As required under the *Disability Services Act 1993*, the Commission placed an advertisement in the *West Australian* newspaper on Friday 13 May, 2016 and a notice on the front page of the Commission's website calling for feedback. Submissions closed on Monday 13 June, 2016.

The Commission acknowledges the assistance of the Disability Services Commission in preparing our DAIP through the consultation phase. The Commission would also like to acknowledge the work of disability groups in the community who are assisting in developing and testing new access initiatives for use at various electoral events.

Findings of the Consultation Process

The Commission received little public feedback through its DAIP review. This can be partly attributed to many disability groups having offered feedback in previous review processes and during community consultation processes which occur in the lead-up to electoral events.

Communicating the Plan

The Electoral Commissioner approves the DAIP, which is then communicated by:

- registering the DAIP with the Disability Services Commission;
- a notice on the Commission's Intranet and an email to all staff;
- a notice published in *the West Australian* newspaper advising of the new DAIP;
- providing a link to the DAIP on the front page of the Commission's website; and
- having the DAIP available to electors, consultants and contractors as applicable.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The DAIP officer is responsible for the monitoring and review of the DAIP in conjunction with the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and the Business Services branch.

Our DAIP will be reviewed at least every five years and a new DAIP registered prior to the current DAIP's expiration date. Our DAIP Implementation Plan may be amended on a



more regular basis to reflect progress made and address any access and inclusion issues which may arise.

Disability access and inclusion strategies will continue to be reviewed before major State and local government elections and evaluated after such elections. In addressing the feedback, any additional barriers that arise that were not identified in the initial consultation will be considered and incorporated in project plans and through future Commission planning documents.

The DAIP will also be reviewed at annual reporting time and progress made during the previous year assessed.

Reporting on the DAIP

The *Disability Services Act 1993* sets the reporting requirements for public authorities. The Commission will annually:

- report on the progress of our DAIP through the prescribed progress report template to the Disability Services Commission by July 31 each year; and
- outline progress towards the seven key DAIP outcomes in its Annual Report.

Implementation Plan

Outcome 1: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|------------|
| Ensure that our employees, contractors and agents are aware of and comply with our DAIP. | Ongoing |
| Continue existing and explore new polling place accessibility options including wheelchair access, RAMP assist, provision of ACROD parking bays and drive in polling. | March 2017 |
| Ensure that events organised by the Commission are accessible to people with disability. | Ongoing |
| Ensure enrolment and early voting opportunities, are promoted to electors with disability. | Ongoing |
| Continue mobile polling at state elections that provides voting services to people in hospitals, institutions and aged care facilities and ensure they are well advertised. | March 2017 |
| Enable prospective casual employees to declare if they have a disability, which may affect their duties, so that suitable employment can be found. | March 2017 |
| Identify polling places close to public transport where possible. | March 2017 |



Outcome 2: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|------------|
| Include public access information, including location and accessible parking map, and public transport access links on the Commission's website. | Ongoing |
| Ensure our offices meet legislative requirements for accessibility. | Ongoing |
| Ensure signage to our offices, facilities and polling places is clear and easy to understand and increase signage during electoral events. | Ongoing |
| When training election staff, ensure that they are aware that as many as practicable polling places should cater for people with disability and polling places should be set up accordingly. | Ongoing |
| Advertise polling place lists in pre-election advertising and indicate those that are more accessible by using the wheelchair symbol. | March 2017 |

Outcome 3: People with disability receive information from the Commission in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|------------|
| In consultation with people with disability and their representative organisations, develop an internet voting system. This would allow electors with disability to register and vote from their home and in secret at state elections. | March 2017 |
| Supply polling places with assistive tools including desktop voting compartments, magnifying sheets, Better Hearing counter cards, hearing loops, posters with infographs and other materials. | March 2017 |
| Review brochures designed for electors with disability, for appropriateness and distribution possibilities. | March 2017 |
| Improve community awareness that our information is available in alternative formats upon request. | Ongoing |
| Ensure that upgrades to the Commission's website are in a format suitable for people with disability and readable with screen-readers and other assistive technology. | Ongoing |
| Continue to explore the opportunities of new technologies to improve electoral services for electors with disability. | Ongoing |



Outcome 4: People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Commission as other people receive from the staff of the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|----------------------------------|
| The Commission to attend events relevant to people with disability and promotes its services. | Ongoing |
| Improve and maintain employee awareness about people with disability through promotion of events, materials and training. | Ongoing |
| Provide Disability Awareness training for Returning Officers prior to elections to ensure access and other needs of people with disability are understood. | March 2017 and October 2017/2019 |
| Supply polling place staff with high vis vests so they are easily visible to electors who may need assistance. | March 2017 |
| Ensure Commission employees have ready access to the Commission's Writing Accessible Documents guide. | Ongoing |
| Commit to ongoing reporting of our DAIP in the annual report and to the Disability Services Commission. | Ongoing |

Outcome 5: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|----------|
| Ensure the complaints system is accessible to people with disability. | Ongoing |
| Ensure that relevant Commission information channels refer to the complaints process. | Ongoing |
| Respond to complaints in a timely and respectful way. | Ongoing |

Outcome 6: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|----------|
| Ensure when the Commission undertakes public consultation that people with disability and representative organisations are invited to attend. | Ongoing |
| Provide sufficient notice of meetings, suitable venues and an appropriate level of support to people with disability who are directly involved in consultation processes. | Ongoing |
| Assess the experiences of people with disability during elections. | Ongoing |



Outcome 7: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|----------|
| Review recruitment practices to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to people with disability. | Ongoing |
| Provide appropriate support for employees with disability. | Ongoing |