



Access to Government Strategy Report 2006

Improving access to ACT Government services and facilities
for people with disabilities.

July 2007

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1. Introduction

In July 2003, the ACT Government launched its *Access to ACT Government Strategy*. The Strategy was an initiative of the ACT Disability Advisory Council, and completed in collaboration with Disability ACT, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

In launching the Strategy, the then Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Mr Bill Wood MLA, described it as “*an implementation framework that will assist government agencies to identify areas where access barriers exist*” and through an audit process, develop action plans to eliminate such obstacles.

In addition to demonstrating the ACT Government’s commitment to improving access to government services and facilities, it also demonstrates the ACT Government’s commitment to being an employer of choice for people who have a disability.

The commitment of the ACT Government to the implementation of the Strategy has been reinforced through many of the goals identified in the Canberra Social Plan launched in February 2004.

Overview of the Strategy

The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that services and facilities provided by the ACT Government are accessible to members of the ACT community who have a disability.

The stated objectives of the Strategy are:

- To raise the awareness of the types of problems people with disabilities experience when accessing government services;
- To give ACT Government agencies the mechanisms by which areas for improvement can be identified; and
- To encourage ACT Government agencies to address identified access problems through Disability Action Plans.

The Strategy seeks to do this through the use of a number of tools:

Access to Government Audit Kit

Launched in 2003, the Access to Government Audit Kit contains fact sheets and checklists to assist ACT Government agencies to conduct audits and develop disability actions plans.

The Access to Government Audit Kit spans six access audit areas:

1. Information and communication
2. Physical and sensory access
3. Inclusive consultation
4. Policies and practices
5. Employment, and
6. Delivering to customers with disabilities.

Access Audits

All government agencies undertook an access audit that would identify and assess impediments to access by people with disabilities and specify areas of risk for each agency.

Disability Action Plans

From their audits, each agency was required to develop an individual Disability Action Plan that:

- identified barriers to access and other access issues,
- outlined performance targets under each of the six access audit areas, and
- detailed strategies and timeframes to address identified issues, as well as existing and additional financial resources required to implement the plans.

Under the Strategy each agency was required to complete the audit and implement the subsequent action plans within a twelve-month period.

Reporting and Monitoring

- Since 2005, individual agencies have been required to report against Disability Action Plans in their Annual Report.
- The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services is responsible for producing an annual evaluation report on the Strategy. This is the first such report.

Whole of Government approach

The Access to Government Strategy was designed as a Whole of Government Strategy.

In addition to the responsibilities of individual agencies, as outlined above, the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) is responsible for the coordination, advice and evaluation across government. Within DHCS, Disability ACT has responsibility for this role, which includes:

- Coordinate the development of a whole of government Access to Government Strategy.
- Consult with departments and agencies in the development and application of the evaluation process; and
- Complete an annual whole of government evaluation report on the Strategy;

Whole of government Strategy

Disability ACT has established a number of mechanisms to work with other agencies to ensure a whole of government approach, including:

- Establishing and facilitating the Access to Government Coordinators Network, including representatives from each agency. The Network meets quarterly to provide updates about implementation and discuss strategies for improving access to ACT Government facilities and services.
- Organising quarterly information forums to inform ACT Government officers about access issues. Topics for the forums are suggested by a range of people, including Access Coordinators, other government officers involved in access issues and people with disabilities.
- An internal government information resource available across government

Whole of government Evaluation Report

This is the first whole of government evaluation report. Production of this report has been delayed for a number of reasons, including the availability of information right across government that would inform a meaningful report.

This report covers the period from the Strategy’s launch in July 2003 to 30 June 2006.

Progress across Government

All agencies have undertaken an access audit and have developed and commenced implementation of Access Action Plans. One agency, the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (formerly Urban Services), released its second Action Plan in 2006.

Agencies report the following range of percentages of actions completed in key areas:

Key areas	Range of actions completed as at 30 June 2006
Physical and sensory access	45.45% - 100%
Inclusive consultation	33.33% - 100%
Accessible information	50% - 100%
Staff training and support	0% -100%
Employment	87.5% -100%
Business process & Procurement	0% -100%

Related initiatives

ACT Public Service Employment Framework for People with a Disability

Employment for people with a disability within the ACT Public Service is an important element of access to government. In recognition of this, the Strategy requires agencies to incorporate employment practices and issues into their respective Access Audits and Action Plans.

In September 2004, the Chief Minister launched the Employment Framework for People with a Disability as part of the ACT Public Service Equity and Diversity Framework. The Framework was developed in conjunction with the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and members of the community, and requires government agencies to address potential barriers to employment and create opportunities to recruit more people with a disability. It can be found at: www.psm.act.gov.au/disability.htm.

Implementation of the framework during 2005–06 included:

- an advertising campaign to encourage graduates with a disability to apply for the ACT Public Service Graduate Program,
- the engagement of *Disability Works Australia* to provide a brokering service between Disability Employment Support Services and public sector agencies, and
- the development of an online toolkit to provide practical information about employing people with a disability in the ACT Public Service. A copy of the toolkit can be found at website.

Access City Hotline

The Access City Hotline is an information, referral and advocacy service based within the Citizens Advice Bureau ACT and funded by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. It aims to remove barriers to access in the community, listening to community concerns and approaching government agencies and private businesses as appropriate.

The Hotline provides referrals to the appropriate government area, business or community organisation to deal with the issue. It will also refer complaints directly to the relevant organisation and assist people with disabilities to access advocacy services.

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (formerly Urban Services) both have representatives on the Access City Reference Group.

2. AGENCY REPORTS

Below are the reports from nine agencies on the work they have undertaken relating to the Access to ACT Government Strategy.

The following agencies have reported using a standard reporting template:

Chief Minister's Department

Department of Treasury

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Department of Urban Services (now Department of Territory and Municipal Services)

ACT Health

ACT Planning and Land Authority

Department of Education and Training

Information for the following three agencies has been included from their last Annual Report:

Department of Justice and Community Safety

ACT Emergency Services Authority

Canberra Institute of Technology

2.1 Chief Minister's Department

During 2005-2006, the Chief Minister's Department has continued to implement and review its Disability Access Action Plan as part of the Access to Government Strategy to improve access to ACT Government services and facilities for people with disabilities.

A summary of the Chief Minister's Department's progress in implementing objectives of the Strategy as contained in the Authority's Access to Government Access Action Plan is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

Access Audit:	External consultant WestWood Spice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in June 2004 with the final report provided to the Department in July 2004.		
Action Plan:	Implementation commenced in August 2004.		
Key Areas	Actions completed	Actions incomplete including those due to changes within the Department*	Actions on hold
Physical and Sensory Access	55.56%	0.00%	44.44%
Inclusive Consultation	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Accessible Information	92.86%	7.14%	0.00%
Staff Training and Support	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Employment	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Processes & Procurement	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

* Excluding action items on hold

Note: The Disability Access Action Plan is designed to be a living document. Chief Minister's Department regularly reviews the Action Plan to update access related initiatives and to set priorities for future action.

Achievements & Outcomes

To date, the Chief Minister's Department has successfully achieved 37 of the 45 actions recommended in the Disability Audit Action Plan. These include:

- A whole of government framework to enhance employment opportunities for people with a disability in the ACT Public Services has been developed.
- Development of a Publications Policy for documents which includes advice on alternative format options for the department.
- ACT Government Cabinet handbook has been updated and the Cabinet Submission cover page template requires agencies to state any impact of a proposal on people with a disability.

- The ACT Government Boards and Committees Handbook is currently being updated and recruitment processes specifically include measures to encourage greater participation and representation of people with a disability on Boards and Committees.
- An ACT Government Website Policy, which includes guidelines on design and accessibility.

Barriers to Implementation

Several action items have been considered and will not be completed due to competing priorities. As noted in the Performance table above 44.44% of actions will not be completed and is represented by four physical access items.

These items will be continually monitored and treatments implemented to minimise risk exposure. These are:

- Consideration of auditory lift signals in Nara House.
- Modification of the public counter at Nara House.
- The location of the after-hours exit switch.
- Consideration of disabled toilets on all floors.

Some Inclusive Consultation action items were not completed due the Administrative Arrangements in November 2004, which resulted in major structural changes to the Chief Minister's Department. These include:

- Review the DHCS Public Consultations and Forums Guidelines for whole of government applicability and consequent implementation.
- Community Engagement Unit to include implementation strategies for ensuring awareness of preferred access standards for public consultations across ACT government agencies.

Way Forward

The Disability Access Action Plan will continue to be implemented and disseminated to staff on a regular ongoing basis to lift the awareness of staff to access issues of the community and provide the community with better services and understanding.

2.2 Department of Treasury

During the year, Treasury continued to implement and review its Disability Access Action Plan as part of the Access to Government Strategy to improve access to ACT Government services and facilities for people with disabilities.

A summary of Treasury's progress in implementing objectives of the Strategy as contained in the Authority's Access to Government Access Action Plan is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

Access Audit:	External consultant WestWood Spice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in June 2004 with the final report provided to Treasury in July 2004.	
Action Plan:	Implementation commenced in August 2004.	
Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule or on hold**
Physical and Sensory Access	45.45%	54.55%
Inclusive Consultation	100.00%	0.00%
Accessible Information	100.00%	0.00%
Staff Training and Support	100.00%	0.00%
Employment	100.00%	0.00%
Business Processes & Procurement	100.00%	0.00%

* Includes actions where the foundation work is complete but may require ongoing work to maintain

** Action items not being progressed or on hold

Note: The Disability Access Action Plan is designed to be a living document. Treasury periodically reviews the Action Plan to update access-related initiatives and to set priorities for future action.

Achievements & Outcomes

Treasury has successfully completed 15 of the 22 actions recommended in the Disability Audit Action Plan. These include:

- Revising the protocol and procedures facilitating access by people with a disability to tendering or procurement information sessions.
- Revising tender processes for contractors to identify and remove barriers to equality of competition for tenderers who have a disability.
- Developing a Publications Policy for documents that includes advice on alternative format options.
- Engaging in new policy development activities with specific impacts on people with disabilities.
- Treasury Annual Reports comply with the Annual Report requirements as prescribed in the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and through Chief Minister's Department Annual Report guidelines promulgated on a whole of government basis.

- Treasury is committed to facilitating the engagement of people with disabilities wherever possible, consistent with the whole of government framework to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- A “Disability Impact Statement” has been considered insofar as Treasury is engaged in new policy development activities with specific impacts on people with disabilities – for example, providing duty concessions for disabled ACT car owners, and owners of cars used to transport a person with a disability.
- People with disabilities are able to access concessions under the *Duties Act 1999* on the duty payable for the registration of a motor vehicle. Full duty exemptions are limited to persons who either have a TPI card, or who are unable to use public transport (because of the loss of, or loss of use of, a leg or both legs) and require a vehicle to travel to and from work. An extension to this exemption commenced on 18 May 2006. The cost of modifications to motor vehicles to accommodate the needs of people with a disability is now exempt from duty. The exemption is intended to be broad and applies to an owner with a disability, or a person who owns a specifically modified vehicle used to transport a person with a disability.
- Accordingly, the definition of ‘disabled person’ in the Duties Act has been broadened to give effect to this proposal and to make the definition consistent with the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement. People with a disability, and people who transport a person with a disability, will be eligible for this new exemption if they purchase a modified vehicle or have modifications made as part of the vehicle purchase agreement. This exemption may be claimed at the time duty is payable (on the application for, and transfer of, motor vehicle registration) at the Dickson Motor Registry Office (Rego ACT) or at an ACT Government Shopfront.
- Procurement Solutions publish information related to tender opportunities and contracts awarded by the Territory, in addition to a range of other procurement related information, on the Buyers’ and Sellers Information Service (*BASIS*) website located at www.basis.act.gov.au. Documentation available from the *BASIS* website is formatted to allow access by persons who are sight impaired, and is available both electronically or, if requested, in hard copy format.
- A number of Procurement Solutions staff also attended information sessions, facilitated by Disability Works Australia, to gain an understanding of how the ACT Government’s disability employment Strategy impacts on the responsibilities of employees involved in recruitment processes.

Barriers to Implementation

As noted in the Performance table above, 54.45% of Physical and Sensory Access actions have been considered but have not been completed or are on hold at this stage, either because of physical building limitations or because there have been higher priority items for expenditure.

The following physical access items are involved:

- Improving external signage to indicate the direction to Nara Centre and Dame Pattie Menzies entrances.
- Upgrading the fire alarm system to include flashing lights in both Nara Centre and Dame Pattie Menzies.
- Incorporating a desk-height customer service area in each service centre, including appropriate security screening for Nara Centre (Shop-Front) and Dame Pattie Menzies.

Consideration will continue to be given to installing auditory lift signals and door widths that are at least 850mm in Nara Centre and Dame Pattie Menzies, and converting general car parking spaces to disabled parking in the undercover area at Nara Centre according to new standards yet to be promulgated (i.e. AS1428.1 and AS2890.6).

Treasury has a fee-for-service arrangement with Chief Minister's Department. Accordingly, these items are the responsibility of the Facilities Management area within Chief Minister's Department and will be continually monitored and treatments implemented to minimise risk exposure.

Modification of the after hours switch at Nara Centre foyer for better access by people in wheelchairs (consistent with new standard AS1428 yet to be promulgated) has not been completed to date. Facilities Management are currently assessing the overall lighting in the building and will consider modifying the after hours switch as well.

Way Forward

Treasury is currently conducting an analysis of its future accommodation options. An important priority is that any future office accommodation has regard to the draft *Disability Access to Premises (Buildings) Guidelines* promulgated by the Australian Building Construction Board in February 2004, and the draft *Disability Standards for Access to Premises (Buildings)* promulgated by the Federal Attorney-General in January 2004.

Treasury's Disability Access Action Plan will continue to be implemented and disseminated to staff on a regular ongoing basis to heighten staff awareness of community access issues, as well as to provide the community with better services and understanding.

2.3 Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

During the year, the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services has continued to implement and review its Disability Access Action Plan as part of the Access to Government Strategy to improve access to ACT Government services and facilities for people with disabilities.

A summary of the progress of the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services in implementing objectives of the Strategy, as contained in its Access to Government Access Action Plan, is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

Access Audit:	External consultant Westwood Spice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in May 2004 with the final report provided to Department of Disability Housing and Community Services in July 2004.		
Action Plan:	The Action Plan was completed in December 2004 and its implementation commenced in January 2005.		
Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule**	Actions on hold
Physical Access	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%
Consultation and participation	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Information	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Staffing and Training	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Employment	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Process	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

* Includes actions where the foundation work is complete but may require ongoing work to maintain

** Excluding action items on hold

Note: The Disability Access Action Plan is designed to be a living a document. Department of Disability Housing and Community Services regularly reviews the Action Plan to update access related initiatives and to set priorities for future action.

Achievements & Outcomes

Housing ACT has developed a project officer position to consult with Occupational Therapists, Spotless, Disability ACT and people with disabilities regarding any disability modifications or accessibility issues. This process has reduced the number of complaints dramatically, and, by liaising with health professionals during the initial consultation period the correct modifications were carried out in the first stages which has proven to reduce the budget considerably.

New and updated DHCS policies take into consideration the needs of people with disabilities, and are subject to consultation and/or Cabinet consideration. These policies are designed to maximise equity of access for all people with disabilities, to support the independence of all people with disabilities and to significantly reduce the possibility of discrimination due to disability.

DHCS Public Consultations and Forums guidelines have become a part of the Community Engagement Manual.

DHCS provided one-off funding of \$35,000 to the Young Women's Christian Association of Canberra as part of its commitment to enhance the participation of people with disabilities in its decision-making structures. A letter was developed and forwarded to relevant agencies promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities on ACT government boards and committees.

Housing ACT developed the Joint Champions Group that was set up under the 'Raising Our Voice – Tenant Participation Development Project', to encourage tenant participation. All ACT Housing tenants were invited to be involved through an expression of interest, currently 25 tenants are involved in this Group. The group meets on a monthly basis. This action was completed in October 2005.

DHCS Multicultural Affairs website includes a list of various concessions this is commonly referred to as the Concession Program. This program is available for all persons holding a concession card.

A disability case study has been incorporated into the induction training/process for new employees to DHCS to raise awareness of Human Rights.

DHCS Human Resources Team provides reports of employment outcomes from the ACT Government Employment Framework for People with a Disability. Successes during 2005- 2006 included assisting 4 work experience participants from the Hartley Lifecare Steps program over a period of 8 weeks. Work training placements have also occurred with Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services (CRS) resulting in 2 temporary employment contracts. DHCS will endeavour to compare the disability work experience programs with that of the Work Experience & Support Program (WESP).

Barriers to Implementation

Housing ACT identified that the ongoing condition audit program was still being developed. A review of the data collection survey form for properties with modifications is being incorporated into this process. This will then enable accurate data collection on individual housing stock accessibility features and assist with appropriate allocation of modified properties to clients.

In relation to DHCS multi-storey premises, people with use wheelchairs are currently required to assemble in stairwells during evacuation alerts to await evacuation by emergency services. In the absence of large ground floor conference rooms on DHCS premises, DHCS has been advised by TrimEvac consultancy services that other venues with ground level rooms should be used for community meetings where a large number of people with mobility limitations are expected.

Contact with Disability Works Australia (DWA) has been limited since October 2005 due to the position of Senior Project Manger within DWA being vacant for a considerable period of time.

Way Forward

DHCS conducted an audit on the availability of disabled car parks for DHCS premises. DHCS has the flexibility to make changes and increase the number of disabled car parks to leased car spaces on an ongoing basis as the need arises. Changes in public disabled car parking requirements in the vicinity of DHCS premises can be negotiated with Territory and Municipal Services.

All new government policy decisions are subject to Cabinet consideration. The current convention for developing Cabinet submissions includes a heading for considering Human Rights implications.

Housing ACT has introduced Property Standards training for Housing Managers, which includes information on disability access requirements and improved business practice. Staff development modules will include training on diversity issues including people with disabilities.

Access to departmental information through print and other media is being approached on a case by case basis to ensure that individual needs are appropriately addressed. DHCS has upgraded the Internet and Intranet to improve accessibility features.

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Publication guidelines have been revised to include information on when and how 'easy read' materials are to be produced. For example, larger print is made available if required and is accessible across the whole of government. Information was made available in Braille for the ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards. These awards are organised through DHCS and acknowledge the outstanding achievements of business, organisations and individuals who have demonstrated a clear commitment to include people with a disability in their organisation, business and/or community.

Access to training material for staff with a disability is being approached on a case by case basis to ensure that individual needs are appropriately addressed. Training nomination forms are to be amended to include alternative format materials.

DHCS continues to maintain ongoing relationships with specialist employment agencies, through the Disability Employment Support Officer.

Housing ACT has undertaken a pilot project to address a mentoring program to provide feedback to and from supervisors and employees. It is intended that this program will be implemented in other sections of department.

DHCS has established a Disability Working Group to investigate avenues to address the lack of career opportunities for people with a disability within the department.

Fortnightly reports are forwarded to DHCS Executive regarding the number of applicants interviewed and employed by the Department. Consultation occurs with managers who have received applications from DWA for feedback prior to publishing advertisements. The data is collated from these consultations and submitted as part of a fortnightly brief to Executive of DHCS.

New staff and existing staff are able to access workplace assessments and where required, modifications to workspaces to assist with their adjustment to the work area.

The Disability Access Action Plan will continue to be implemented and disseminated to staff on a regular ongoing basis to lift awareness to access issues and provide the community with better services and understanding.

2.4 Urban Services – now the Department of Territory and Municipal Services

In 2002, the Department of Urban Services was the first ACT Government agency to develop an Access Action Plan, released in 2003. Urban Services has recently released its second Access Action Plan for 2005-2008. This report includes achievements from both Access Action Plans until 30 June 2006.

The *Access Action Plan 2002-2004* contained 37 actions for implementation. With 10 of those actions the responsibility of business units, which have since been transferred to other departments. The *Access Action Plan 2005-2008* reflects a total of 30 actions for implementation, with 23 identified as either ongoing or for completion by 30 June 2006. Therefore the information below reports the achievements against a total of 50 actions.

A summary of the Department's progress in implementing the actions identified in both of Urban Services Access Action Plans is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plans – commencement to 30 June 2006

Action Plans:		Implementation commenced in January 2003		
Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule**	Actions on hold or not proceeding	
Physical and Sensory Access	95.83%	.00%	4.17%	
Consultation & Participation	100.00%	.00%	0.00%	
Accessible Information	100.00%	.00%	0.00%	
Staff Training, Advice and Support	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	
Business Processes	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	

* Includes ongoing actions

** Excluding action items on hold or not proceeding due to constraints outside the control of the department

Note: Urban Services includes its recruitment & employment related actions/statistics under the Business Processes heading.

During 2005-2006 the Department facilitated sixteen (16) work experience placements for people with a disability at various business units including Yarralumla Nursery, Parks & Places, Tuggeranong Library and Domestic Animal Services.

In 2006 the Department supported three Graduate Administrative Assistants who identified as persons with a disability. In preparation for this the Department ensured a welcoming environment existed, workplace modifications were undertaken and induction information was provided to new starters in suitable formats.

Key Achievements & Outcomes

Urban Services has progressed a significant number of its actions with 94% completed. This has been achieved by:

taking a continuous improvement to the development of both access action plans;

- the commitment of management to ensure the issue of disability access continues to be a priority for the Department; and

- the involvement of a range of staff members in the development and implementation of both action plans.

The following is an indication of the range of achievements and projects that Urban Services has undertaken in the last 4 years to improve access to its buildings, services, information and workplace for people with disabilities.

Equitable Access to Services & Facilities:

In July 2004 the Department published the *Updated Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT 2004-2007*. Implementation of this plan aims to improve the accessibility through addressing physical access to transport vehicles and infrastructure, as well as issues of policy and planning, information and communication. A key objective of the plan is to improve the performance of the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) fleet, which continues to be monitored by the department.

The Department is also assisting in the implementation of the recommendations of the *Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Reference Group Report*, released in September 2005. Progress against this report includes the introduction of micro-management of the WAT fleet, which was mandated by new minimum service standards for taxi networks and notified on 20 February 2006. The service standards also require taxi networks to improve customer information and complaints handling for wheelchair hirings and the Department continues to conduct random checks of WATs to ensure that drivers are correctly securing passengers and their wheelchairs in the vehicle. Urban Services has also allowed existing WAT operators to take over decommissioned vehicles, bringing the WAT fleet from 14 vehicles up to the present 18.

Bus stops and taxi ranks continue to be upgraded to provide accessibility with 9.6% of bus stops now fully accessible and 77% of taxi ranks have accessible boarding points. The department has commissioned a scoping study to assess the level of funding required to ensure all bus stops in the Territory are accessible and comply fully with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. A scoping study of the ACT's four bus interchanges has also been commissioned to gauge accessibility and compliance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport were developed in 2002 to ensure compliance with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth). Required work identified at Tuggeranong and City Interchanges is currently being implemented.

Urban Services is responsible for much of the public space in the ACT. The Department works toward creating public spaces that are accessible by everyone through a range of initiatives. The Civic Accessibility Study was commissioned in 2001 to determine strategic principles and guidelines to provide a framework for ensuring a high quality, accessible public realm and the development of a works program to achieve full access throughout Civic. This framework was applied to stage 1 of the City Walk upgrade in 2005 and the Childers Street upgrade, currently in progress.

In 2005 the Urban Services Community Partnerships program funded the development of *Access for Everyone – Civic Entertainment and Retail Guide*, managed in conjunction with People with Disabilities In ACT (PWD). A consultant, Eric Martin and Associates, was engaged to conduct an access audit of retail premises willing to participate in the project, and develop an access map. The Guide highlights accessible premises for those in the community who have mobility or sensory limitations and is available on www.pwDisabilityACT.org.au.

The Community Partnership program also funded *Gather and Grow*, a project to build a garden for Tuggeranong and Weston Creek Seniors in an enclosed space adjacent to the Weston Creek Community Centre. The garden has wheelchair access and raised garden beds for those with disabilities. It was successfully completed in early 2006 and people who are elderly, frail aged and disabled are able to access the garden, participate in gardening activities and enjoy the outlook.

Property Branch continues with its ongoing program of building audits, which are used to identify works to address access issues. When issues are identified they are included in the 5-year capital works program.

Equitable Opportunities for Participation

The ACT Government established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Reference Group in May 2005, supported by Urban Services. The Reference Group, including members of the disability community and representatives of carers and the aged, were brought together to provide recommendations to the Minister for Urban Services to improve the levels of taxi service to wheelchair users. A public forum on the issue was held and the Reference Group took written submissions from the public to inform its recommendation. In September 2005 it released the *Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Reference Group Report*, with the government subsequently agreeing to all of its recommendations.

The Department launched an Integrated Customer Support (ICS) system in February 2006, which collects customer feedback provided to Canberra Connect. Customers are able to provide a range of comments (including complaints, compliments, requests for information, requests for service, notifications and suggestions) to the ACT Government via this online system. Customer comments received through the Canberra Connect Call Centre and Shopfronts are also recorded on the system. Customers wishing to track their feedback have the ability to do so through the ICS system. The system also allows for the feedback to be automatically forwarded to the responsible agency for a response and to enable service improvement.

In May 2006 Urban Services finalised an investigation into consultation strategies preferred by people with disabilities. A survey was distributed to 21 local peak disability bodies and other representative service groups to ascertain how the department could improve its consultation processes with this target group. Responses to the survey have been collated and will inform the design and implementation of consultations to be undertaken later in the year with people in the community who have a disability.

Urban Services also recently established a Community Advisory Group to provide advice on appropriate strategies to engage communities and groups. This Group has 10 community representatives, including people with disabilities, and meets bimonthly to provide strategic advice to the department on community engagement issues.

Accessible Information

The Department continues to facilitate the enhancement of accessible information in public spaces and in 2004 installed a prototype Information Pillar in Petrie Plaza, providing map information of the local area for people with limited vision.

Urban Services is also responsible for providing accessible signage at bus interchanges, tactile indicator paving at bus stops and taxi zones, and continues to install audible signals at traffic intersections and pedestrian crossings, with 17 installed across the ACT in the last two years.

Locations for audible signals are prioritised based on requests from disability interests groups or other government stakeholder groups (i.e. Disability ACT) or at locations where there is a clear immediate need.

The Department manages the ACT Government, Canberra Connect and Urban Services' websites. The department's web centre continues to ensure these sites comply with the ACT Government Website Policy in the development and management of its websites. This policy requires agencies to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium, as recommended by the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission. Asset Management Services make active maps available through the Internet site ACT Locate at www.gim.act.gov.au. This service continues to research how maps could be more accessible for people with colour blindness.

Canberra Connect and the ACT Library and Information Service have TTY (Telephone Typewriter) services available, while other services like the Women's Information and Referral Centre (WiRC) uses the National Relay Service and email to communicate with people with sensory disabilities.

The Department also continues to send information for the public and media releases to Vision Australia and Radio 1RPH, which is a radio station for the print handicapped.

Equitable Business Processes

To develop an approach for Urban Services to become a truly 'inclusive' organisation and to assess its capacity to establish an inclusive workplace that supports diversity a department-wide culture mapping and validation exercise was conducted in early 2006. This involved a cross section of 120 staff and managers attending various workshops, with participants encouraged to articulate disability and inclusion issues. To address issues raised Strategic Human Resources is focusing on tailoring recruitment processes, support provided for managers and increasing the promotion of the department as an employer committed to diversity.

Through its Property Branch, Urban Services manages the Territory's owned commercial buildings, acts as lessee on behalf of the Territory for commercial leases and manages government office accommodation at a whole of government level. The department's Lease Evaluation Plan, used when procuring properties for government accommodation, has been amended to include a requirement for the property to meet current Building Code of Australia requirements in relation to disability access and a range of specific accessibility requirements. Fit-out Guidelines have also been adopted by the Interdepartmental ACT Property Forum. These guidelines provide agencies with assistance when preparing office fit-out plans and include information about their responsibility to comply with building regulations and accessibility requirements.

Staff Training, Advice and Support

Urban Services is implementing the *ACT Public Service Employment Framework for People with a Disability* via its *disABILITY in DUS – Action Plan*, finalised in March 2006. A consultant was engaged by the department in late 2005 to assist with consultations with external stakeholders, management and staff. Information from these consultations informed the development of the *disABILITY in DUS - Action Plan*, which identifies the following outcomes for the Department:

- an inclusive organisational culture which is welcoming to people with a disability;

- a workplace which is sensitive to disability issues, confident in dealing with them and linked appropriately to disability employment supports; and
- a greater representation of people with a disability in the Urban Services workplace at all levels and across functional areas.

Progress against the *disABILITY in DUS – Action Plan* to date includes identifying a Disability Employment Contact role to provide information and support for current and potential staff and management.

The Department is developing benchmarks to identify the current number of people with a disability working across business units, including permanent employees, contract employees, people employed through other organisations and those undertaking work experience. It is also developing a disability employment website on the department Intranet to provide a range of information and resources for managers and staff. An electronic toolkit for managers will have information that supports them to appropriately and effectively manage staff with disabilities, as well as dispel some of the myths about the perceived risks of employing people with a disability.

To increase the Department's capacity to employ a greater proportion of people with disabilities guidance is provided to managers on modifications to the merit principle, consistent with the Public Sector Management Standards, and using a tailored approach to match individuals skills and abilities to positions. Urban Services' induction program includes a module on diversity and disability awareness. The department has also been revitalising its Workplace Diversity Contact Officer Network through the recruitment of more members, greater promotion of their role across the Department and facilitating refresher training on responding to issues relating to disability.

Urban Services has a competency based approach to training and has identified relevant public sector diversity competencies. It has developed a blended learning approach that utilises national training toolboxes and e-learning with relevant workplace disability awareness and information. A range of training is offered to ensure staff are supported and appropriate services are provided. Regular training has included the provision of the TTY (telephone typewriters) service offered through Canberra Connect, accessing the National Relay Service, the range of services in the ACT that assist people who have a disability, computer software to assist staff with visual impairment and deafness awareness training. Customer Service training continues to be delivered for staff with customer services responsibilities, including sessions on Customers with a Difference and Workplace Diversity.

The Department has recently established an Urban Services Disability Reference Group (DRG) to assist with the promotion of the *Access Action Plan 2005-2008* and the *disABILITY in DUS – Action Plan* across the department, monitor their implementation and provide ongoing advice to the Department's Strategic Management Team on disability access issues, priorities and reporting. The DRG includes representation from trade unions, disability employment agencies, the ACT Disability Advisory Council, specific business units in the department and employees. Approximately 50% of employee representatives on the DRG identify themselves as a staff member with a disability.

Barriers to Implementation

Urban Services has encountered minimal barriers in implementing both of its Access Action Plans. However, departmental restructures have at times contributed to the complexity of managing the plans or delaying the commencement of activities. Three actions were not completed, one of which was planned involvement in the evaluation of the access ADAPT service, funded by DHCS, which did not occur. The department also indicated that it would work

with the Human Rights Office to provide biannual training on discrimination legislation specifically for Urban Services. This did not occur, however, staff are encouraged to participate in this training regularly offered across government. The other action required First Aid officers to be trained on specific treatments for conditions such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy. Strategic Human Resources is planning to provide some information sessions for staff on these topics in the next 12 months.

Generally, one of the ongoing challenges to promoting greater disability access for the community and improving the workplace for staff with disabilities, is continuing to build an organisational culture of valuing diversity and service improvement to respond to different needs. There is a range of myths across the community about people with disabilities that also infiltrate the workplace. Agencies need to recognise that equal treatment of everyone in the community can inadvertently lead to indirect discrimination, which is why specific access initiatives and programs are required to ensure equal opportunity to information, services, facilities and employment.

Way Forward

In 2006-07 priorities for the Department include:

- Reviewing the *Access Action Plan 2005-2008* to reflect the new structure and functional responsibilities resulting from the creation of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services on 1 July 2006.
- Progressing the work of the DRG and particularly promoting the department's commitment and activities that will assist to improve services and the workplace for people with disabilities.
- Implementation of a Staff Seminar Series, which will include a panel of staff members with a disability and managers sharing their experiences of the workplace, as well as sessions on providing services to and supporting colleagues with mental health issues.
- Consultations with people with disabilities in the community to gather feedback on the accessibility of the services provided by the Department. These will inform the development and provision of department information in more accessible formats and through a variety of mechanisms.
- Continuing to monitor and assist with the implementation of the *Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Reference Group Report* recommendations to improve transport services for people in wheelchairs.
- Piloting a specialised tool kit and training for managers in dealing with mental health issues in the workplace.
- Establishing a department awards scheme to recognise business units for work in supporting employees with disabilities and providing appropriate services to people with disabilities.

2.5 ACT Health

During the period 2005-06, ACT Health has continued to implement and review its Disability Access Action Plan as part of the Access to Government Strategy to improve access to ACT Government services and facilities for people with disabilities.

A summary of the ACT Health progress in implementing objectives of the Strategy as contained in the Authority's Access to Government Access Action Plan is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

Access Audit:	External Consultant WestWood Spice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in July 2004 with the final report provided to ACT Health in August 2004.		
Action Plan:	Implementation commenced in October 2004		
Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule**	Actions on hold
Physical and Sensory Access	57.00%	43.00%	0.00%
Inclusive Consultation	71.00%	29.00%	0.00%
Accessible Information	83.00%	17.00%	0.00%
Staff Training and Support	78.00%	22.00%	0.00%
Employment	72.00%	28.00%	0.00%
Business Processes & Procurement	56.00%	44.00%	0.00%

* Includes actions where the foundation work is complete but may require ongoing work to maintain

** Excluding action items on hold

Note: The Disability Access Action Plan is designed to be living a document. ACT Health regularly reviews the Action Plan to update access related initiatives and to set priorities for future action.

Achievements & Outcomes

Key achievements of ACT Health in the period under review are:

- Consideration and support for staff with a disability has been incorporated in all Director and Team Leader Performance Management Agreements of Mental Health;
- All emergency plans and training incorporate the needs and considerations of staff with disabilities;
- A Mental Health Consumer and Carer Participation project was conducted. The draft report has been prepared and is to be submitted to the Mental Health Executive for consideration;
- Consumer and carer representatives have been included in Mental Health advisory committees;
- The design of the Older Persons Mental Health Inpatient Unit includes appropriate planning of disability access for staff and consumers;
- A Disability Access Audit Specification to undertake the physical audit of ACT Health properties not previously assessed has been drafted by an external Consultant;

- A Select Tender process has been commenced to identify a Consultant. The Tender process is to be completed by August 2006;
- Action taken to ensure all resources are clearly written in plain English, designed simply and available in other formats on request;
- All consultative processes include consideration of venue, event process and appropriate promotion to those with a disability;
- Central Policy Register developed for inclusion on the ACT Health website in order to provide ease of access for those with disabilities;
- Portfolio publication policy and guidelines developed;
- National Information and Library Service (NILS) guidelines adopted on preparation of documents for people with disability. These guidelines are to be incorporated in the ACT Health Style Guide;
- ACT Health *Guide to Adjustments in the Workplace for People with Disabilities* developed with input from the disability employment support services and Disability Works Australia (DWA). The first edition of the Guide and the Summary Poster have been displayed on the ACT Health intranet;
- Regular presentations against discriminatory processes in the workplace have been incorporated in the Orientation Program and the ongoing educative processes for Managers and Supervisors. On-site presentations provided to functional work areas;
- Disability Working Party established within HRMB;
- Revised *Staff Recruitment and Selection Processes* approved October 2005 and published on the ACT Health Intranet site;
- Consumer representatives with a disability have been included on key Community Health advisory committees;
- Employment of a Consumer Feedback Coordinator undertaken by Community Health, The Canberra Hospital, Calvary Health Care ACT and Mental Health;
- Consumer Feedback Forms made available in all areas including the Community Health Internet site;
- ACT Health has representation on planning and process committees and Working Groups within DHCS;
- Initial draft of the ACT Health Disability Impact Statement has been completed. Comment and input is to be sought from DHCS and peak bodies within the community; and
- Increased involvement of Disability ACT staff in the development of Population Health policy documentation.

Barriers to Implementation

Several Action Items remain as unaddressed or incomplete at the conclusion of the period under review. Factors contributing to this include:

- procurement processes resulting in delayed completion of the physical access audits of ACT Health assets; and
- unresolved debate on the single point of responsibility for a Strategy or initiative that has a clear whole of government implication.

Way Forward

The ACT Health Access to Government Reference Group will continue to identify and implement strategies to resolve barriers to access for the community at large and those members with a disability.

The Disability Access Action Plan will continue to be implemented and disseminated to staff on a regular ongoing basis to lift the awareness of staff to access issues of the community and provide the community with better services and understanding.

2.6 Department of Education & Training

The DET Disability Access Action Plan commenced in early 2005 following an audit, report and draft plan delivered by an external consultant, WestWoodSpice in December 2004.

There has been significant progress against the Department's action plan to increase accessibility to its services for people with a disability, with significant developments focussed on progress against high risk objectives. Progress against all objectives is well advanced.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

The DET Disability Access Action Plan addresses approximately 150 tasks across twenty-eight objectives under the six access audit areas. High risk objectives have been identified under four categories: physical and sensory access; inclusive consultation; accessible information; and employment.

The Department reports quarterly to the Department's Audit Committee on progress of mitigation strategies put in place to address audit recommendations.

All high risk objectives have been implemented, except in relation to Information Technology areas which are facing constraints linked to technological delays for implementation of the ACT wide content management system.

Access Audit:	External consultant WestWoodSpice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in August 2004 with the final action plan provided to Department of Education and Training in December 2004.		
Action Plan:	Implementation commenced in March 2005.		
High Risk Objectives in Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule**	Actions on hold
Physical and Sensory Access	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Inclusive Consultation	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Accessible Information	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Staff Training and Support	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Employment	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Business Processes & Procurement	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

* Includes actions where the foundation work is complete but may require ongoing work to maintain

** Excluding action items on hold

Achievements & Outcomes

Achievements and outcomes include:

- Establishment and implementation of procedures for people with a disability during emergency situations.
- Implementation of an employment framework to enhance employment opportunities for people with a disability.

- Inclusive consultation practices were strengthened this year through changes to the survey methods for the regular School Review and Development program. This year the survey was made available online to support for all stakeholders including those people who require the use of assistive technologies. Modified surveys were made available for students attending special schools.
- A review of DET's online material by National Information and Library Service (NILS) has identified that the content was to a high standard of accessibility.
- Improved access to schools remains a high priority and each year modifications are made to a number of schools through the provision of ramps, appropriate toilet facilities and adjustable benches to support students in wheelchairs. The recently opened Amaroo School features automatic doors, ramps and toilet facilities to support people with a disability accessing all areas of the school.

Barriers to Implementation

Information system constraints are due to delays by the whole of government information technology content management system (CMS) project. DET web content is ready for migration to the new ACT system when it becomes available.

Way Forward

The ACT Government provided an additional \$4.1 million over four years in the 2004-05 Budget and an additional \$4.2 million over four years in the 2005-06 Budget to improve access to education and training services for people with a disability. Funding is being used to provide resources to schools to support students with a disability. Principals are responsible for using the funding to achieve the goals identified in students' Individual Learning Plans. This could include, but is not limited to, employment of teaching and non-teaching staff, or for professional learning.

2.7 ACT Planning and Land Authority

During the year, the Authority has continued to implement and review its Disability Access Action Plan as part of the Access to Government Strategy to improve access to ACT Government services and facilities for people with disabilities.

A summary of the Authority's progress in implementing objectives of the Strategy as contained in the Authority's Access to Government Access Action Plan is detailed below.

Performance Against Action Plan – commencement to 30 June 2006

Access Audit:	External consultant WestWood Spice undertook the Audit and subsequent development of the Action Plan. The Audit was completed in July 2004 with the final report provided to the Authority in August 2004.		
Action Plan:	Implementation commenced in October 2004		
Key Areas	Actions completed*	Actions behind schedule**	Actions on hold
Physical and Sensory Access	84%	4%	12%
Inclusive Consultation	50%	40%	10%
Accessible Information	100%	0%	0%
Staff Training and Support	100%	0%	0%
Employment	85.71%	0%	14.29%
Business Processes & Procurement	100%	0%	0%

* Includes actions where the foundation work is complete but may require ongoing work to maintain

** Excluding action items on hold

Note: The Disability Access Action Plan is designed to be a living document. The Authority regularly reviews the Action Plan to update access related initiatives and to set priorities for future action.

Achievements & Outcomes

- Refurbishment of the Authority's leased premises at Dame Pattie Menzies House, 16 Challis Street Dickson including items noted in the Access Action Plan relating to physical access by both customers and staff.
- Redesign of the Customer Shopfronts at Dickson and Mitchell with wheelchair height writing slopes and reception/counter areas while maintaining security for Authority staff.
- Business Continuity Plan, Emergency Response Plan and Incident Management Plan incorporate protocols for team members and customers with a disability in the event of an evacuation.
- Redesign of forms and documents being undertaken as part of the Planning System Reform Project and within the Regulatory Reduction Incentive Fund project, production and evaluation of documents for electronic transactions and lodgements.
- Redesign the Authority's website to be more user friendly, and enhanced access for people with a disability in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).
- Provision of meeting facilities within the Authority to be more accessible and provide T-coil hearing aid system.

Barriers to Implementation

Some physical access action items were not completed on time due to the Dame Pattie Menzies Building refurbishment schedule undertaken. A number of these items have now been completed with the remaining under review and evaluation on an ongoing basis.

As noted in the Performance table above, some actions will not be completed due to such constraints as physical building limitations, and these are represented by the following actions, 3 physical access, 1 consultation and 1 employment. These items will be continually monitored and treatments implemented to minimise risk exposure.

Way Forward

- Utilising the Planning System Reform Project the Authority will continue to align changes to documentation and legislation with the Access to Government Strategy, develop streamlined planning and approval processes, and simplified documentation requirements. This will be an ongoing project through 2006.
- Review HR performance in relation to Disability Access and revisit the action plan to ensure that we have given consideration to outstanding actions, and improved current policies and procedures for dealing with Disability Access issues.
- Finalise the website redesign and investigate the option of an intranet for dissemination of information to staff.
- The Disability Access Action Plan will continue to be implemented and disseminated to staff on a regular ongoing basis to lift the awareness of staff to access issues of the community and provide the community with better services and understanding.

2.8 Department of Justice and Community Safety

Following the 2004 audit conducted across government, the Department has developed a comprehensive draft Disability Action Plan (DAP). Work has commenced to implement actions in the draft plan.

Key achievements to date have included conducting a staff satisfaction survey in May 2006, which covered a broad range of issues affecting staff, including diversity and work/life balance. The results of the survey will be available in late 2006.

Other progress across the organisation included:

- the results from the 2004 physical audit will be incorporated into the Department's relocation of significant functions during 2006;
- ensuring website compliance with disability access standards;
- a Disability Policy Statement being developed for the Alexander Maconochie Centre;
- reading resources in different languages developed for the Belconnen Remand Centre libraries; and
- provision of consumer protection advice to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups within the community through the OFT outreach programs.

2.9 Emergency Services Authority

The ESA has completed a draft action plan in accordance with the Access to Government Strategy. The Plan contains a number of actions designed to reduce any barriers that may limit or restrict access the accessibility to ESA premises and services for people with a disability.

An audit of the ESA's headquarters facilities at Curtin was undertaken which identified numerous access issues. These requirements, and the extensive remedial work and cost involved was one consideration in deliberations resulting in the decision to establish the ESA's headquarters in the Fairbairn Precinct of Canberra International Airport.

The ESA makes its services accessible to all members of the community in a number of ways.

For the hearing impaired who may not be able to use a conventional telephone, the ESA's Communications Centre (comcen), which is responsible for receipt of all emergency and non-emergency requests for assistance and the dispatch of response resources, can be contacted via TTY. For the visually impaired, the production *Emergencies and the National Capital—A Residents Guide*, which was released during the reporting period, is available in both audio CD and Braille formats.

2.10 Canberra Institute of Technology

In response to the ACT Government's launch of the Access to ACT Government Strategy in July 2003, CIT undertook an audit of its facilities and services and developed a five-year action plan.

Actions completed in 2005 included:

- additional parking spaces
- larger disabled parking spaces
- repositioning of kerb ramps to facilitate easier and safer access
- the provision of non-parking areas to facilitate access to walkways
- improved signage for facilities such as reception areas, lifts and toilets
- improved signage on steep ramps and walkways, with identification of alternative routes
- installation of infrared light beams to ensure adequate door opening time
- lowering of lift control panels
- improved height and provision of fixtures, fittings and towel dispensers
- the provision of wheelchair space in lecture theatres
- reduction of clutter in corridors
- improved lighting in corridors, stair wells and fire stairs
- the addition of cup dispensers and disposal units to water fountains
- the development of an information book relevant to education delivery for people from equity groups, including those with disabilities
- the creation of a dedicated page for Disability Support on CIT Staff Information System
- compliance of the new CIT website, CIT Solutions website and CIT Staff Information System with priority one checkpoints as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium, as well as compliance with the ACT Government Information Management web guidelines.

It is CIT policy that people with a disability are referred to a Disability Coordinator prior to enrolment for individual program advice and educational support. Disability Coordinators work with students throughout their association with CIT to ensure available support services are structured to meet their individual needs.

3. Summary

The Access to ACT Government initiative which was launched in July 2003 has resulted in a major examination by ACT Government agencies of the accessibility of their services, facilities and employment opportunities for people with a disability. Agency Access Audits have formed the basis of Access Action Plans which are managed by Access Coordinators. Progress on the Access to Government Strategy has been reported on in agency's Annual Reports since 2005.

Access Coordinators from each major agency have formed a Network which meets quarterly, shares information and manages the overall Strategy. Quarterly Access Information Seminars are also held on topics which serve to inform Coordinators, and other ACT Government staff, on disability issues.

The Strategy has successfully brought the issue of accessibility to the forefront within all ACT Government agencies e.g. through the work of the Chief Minister's Department on updating the ACT Government Cabinet Handbook, requiring agencies to state on all Cabinet Submission cover page templates any impacts of a government proposal on people with a disability.

For the Strategy to remain robust, all agencies must continue to see access as a priority issue, the Access Coordinators Network and their open Information Seminars must be maintained, and agencies need to be held continually accountable on access issues through their annual reports.