

# **DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN**

of the

# **SOUTH WEST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

This plan can be available, if requested, in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disk or emailed), audio or Braille.

**June 2007**

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The South West Development Commission is a State Government agency empowered to act under the Regional Development Commissions Act 1993.

### **Objectives and Functions**

**(Based on the Regional Development Commissions Act [1993]) are to:**

- Maximise job creation and improve career opportunities in the region.
- Develop and broaden the economic base of the region.
- Identify infrastructure services to promote economic and social development within the region.
- Provide information and advice to promote business development within the region.
- Seek to ensure that the general standard of government services and access to those services in the region is comparable to that which applies in the metropolitan area.
- Generally take steps to encourage, promote, facilitate and monitor the economic development in the region.

To achieve these goals the Commission operates within the framework of a strategic plan. During 2004 and early 2005, the Commission developed a new direction to take the organisation forward from 2005 through to 2020. The new SWDC Strategic Plan 2005-2020 provides a planned approach over three time horizons. Such an approach clearly requires flexibility and review, and both have been built into the plan.

The Commission intends working closely with its partners and other key stakeholders to implement this ambitious plan and to secure a sustainable future for the region.

## **MISSION**

To develop the region's economy and enhance those qualities which make the South West the best place in which to live, work and invest.

## **CORE VALUES**

### **LEADERSHIP**

We will provide leadership to the region that is inspiring, motivating and relevant.

### **PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

We will act at all times with honesty, integrity and fairness, recognising the importance of being open and accountable for our actions.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

We will take a well-planned, considered approach to our projects to ensure that the qualities and opportunities of the region are enhanced for both present and future generations.

EXCELLENCE OF SERVICE

We aim to be global leaders in regional development, with valued and skilled personnel and a responsive attitude to people.

VISION

By 2020 the South West of Western Australia is recognised internationally as a region of excellence.

STRATEGIC THEMES

The following three themes have been identified as the future directions for South West Development Commission activities during the period 2005-2020:

- ❑ Investing in People
- ❑ Investing in Infrastructure and Place
- ❑ Investing in Knowledge, Enterprise and Innovation

The Commission sees partnerships as a key to achieving the outcomes of these themes.

**Corporate Structure and Area of Responsibility**

The South West Development Commission has a board of 10 members which is its executive and policy making body.

The Board is comprised of members from the South West Region, and the Chief Executive Officer.

The Board meets periodically, usually monthly with a formal meeting and a regional visit rotated on a monthly basis. The Commission also has operational staff to manage the day-to-day administrative affairs and its main development projects.

The Commission has 25 staff with regional offices/rooms in Busselton, Manjimup, Collie, Harvey and Margaret River.

The activities of the Commission are focused in the South West Region, which is bounded by the Indian and Southern Oceans in the South West corner of Western Australia and covers an area of 23,998 square kilometres. It incorporates 12 local government areas: The City of Bunbury and the shires of Harvey, Dardanup, Capel, Busselton, Augusta-Margaret River, Nannup, Donnybrook-Balingup, Collie, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Boyup Brook and Manjimup.

The Commission is mindful of the needs of all people and delivers its services to include people with physical, sensory, cognitive and psychiatric disabilities. The Commission recognises that all people have the same rights and will be catered for accordingly.

## South West Development Commission – Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

The South West Development Commission has advertised its services widely and has also prepared a Customer Service Charter.

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan of the Commission is regarded as a component of the Customer Services Charter. The Commission is committed to providing quality services to clients and to deliver value for money.

The Commission acknowledges that all clients have a right to consultation, courtesy, information and the opportunity to express their views on government services.

### **ABOUT THE PLAN**

The South West Development Commission has adopted this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan to ensure that all people can access the Commission's services and facilities. The plan is subject to review and may be amended and extended as priorities and needs change, and as new capabilities emerge with respect to disabled access methodology and with the introduction of new technologies.

#### **The plan includes:**

- Information on the Commission's facilities and services.
- A policy statement about the Commission's commitment to addressing the issue of access for all people, their families and carers.
- Information on how this plan was developed.
- The identification of objectives and strategies to overcome barriers faced by people with physical, sensory, cognitive and psychiatric disabilities.
- Expected timelines and persons responsible for the proposed strategies.
- A method of review and evaluation for the plan.
- Information about how the plan is being communicated to staff and people with disabilities.

### **HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED**

The Commission established an internal Committee to look at what was required to review and change the Commission's current Disability Services Plan (DSP) to conform to the requirements of the new Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP).

The Committee is made up of the Chief Finance Officer, Senior Corporate Communications & Marketing Officer and the Regional Coordinator-Vasse.

The Committee consulted with the Disability Services Commission Busselton and Margaret River to provide professional input on the development, implementation, review and evaluation of the plan.

Further consultation with the general public will be undertaken with the new DAIP being advertised on the Commission's website for comment/feedback. The plan will then be further developed from this information.

## **SERVICES OF THE COMMISSION**

The South West Development Commission provides:

- Business advice and information to developers.
- Partnership assistance to local governments for regional development programs.
- Policy advice to government on regional development issues.
- A leadership role amongst regional development organisations in the South West.
- Project management assistance for certain projects meeting specific criteria.
- Promotional assistance for projects and events that will benefit the South West Region.

The Commission will respond to requests from individuals and the community for information and assistance with projects that relate to the mandate of the Commission.

## **ACCESS POLICY FOR ALL PEOPLE, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS**

The South West Development Commission is committed to ensuring that all people, their families and carers are able to fully access the range of services and facilities of the Commission. It is also committed to ensuring that all people are given the opportunity to participate in shaping the development of their community through consultative processes with local business, industry and the three levels of government.

The South West Development Commission recognises that all people are valued members of the community who make a variety of contributions to community, economic and cultural life. The Commission is committed to consulting with people facing access difficulties, their families and their carers, and where required, disability organisations, to ensure that barriers to access are addressed appropriately.

The South West Development Commission is committed to achieving the following outcomes:

## **OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES ON HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS**

Specifically the Commission outcomes are:

### **1. All people have the same opportunities to access services of, and any events organised by the Commission**

- Be flexible and adaptable in responding to barriers experienced by people due to various disabilities, including physical, sensory, cognitive and psychiatric disabilities.

- Be responsive to addressing the barriers experienced by the families and carers of people with disabilities.
- Ensure that all policies and practices that govern the operation of the Commission’s services are consistent with the Commission’s policy on access.
- Ensure that all people have access to the services of the Commission and any events organised by the Commission.

**Actions**

- Undertake an initial audit of Commission facilities and put in place a regular review process.
- All Commission events are assessed as to the accessibility by all people.
- All grant agreements and contracts include reference to the Commission’s DAIP.
- Facilitate staff awareness training including values-based training.
- Review and modify relevant policies to include strategies under the DAIP.

**2. All people have the same opportunities to access the buildings and other facilities of the Commission**

- Ensure that access to the Commission’s office premises is available to all people.
- Ensure there are toilet facilities accessible to all people including those with physical or mobility difficulties.
- Develop awareness and a culture within the Commission that ensures there are no barriers to the Commission’s offices or information available from the Commission.

**Actions**

- Undertake an initial audit of Commission facilities and put in place a regular review process.
- Maintain a register of sources for alternative formats for information services, including Braille, TTY, Signing (Auslan) and Commonwealth Care Link.
- Raise staff awareness of issues of accessibility (see Outcome 4).
- Include awareness of DAIP in employee ‘Position Descriptions’ and induction documents.
- Review and modify relevant policies to include strategies under the DAIP.

**3. All people receive information from the Commission in a format that will enable them to access information readily**

- Produce all SWDC information on services and public functions using clear and concise language.
- Advise the community that, upon request, information about the Commission’s services can be made in alternative formats.

**Actions**

- Maintain and promote the Commission website as an accessible source of information.

- All communications include reference to the availability of alternative formats available for information services.

**4. All people receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Commission**

- Provide training to all staff to ensure that in relation to service provision and community consultation, they are aware of the key access needs of all people, their families and carers who use the Commission's services.
- Work collaboratively with the local Disability Services Commission office and other government agencies on how to meet the access needs of people with various disabilities, including physical, sensory, cognitive and psychiatric disabilities.

**Actions**

- Provide staff training sourced from the private sector, other government agencies and through mainstream organisations such as TAFE.
- Engage in formal awareness training on an annual basis;
  - Deliver deafness awareness training in 2007/08.
  - Vision impairments 2008/09
  - Social Role Valorisation 2009/10

**5. All people have the same opportunities to make complaints to the Commission**

- Accept complaints from all people in a variety of formats.

**Actions**

- Provide formats such as telephone, email, written and in person for the lodgement of complaints to the Commission.

**6. All people have the same opportunities to participate in any public consultation by the Commission**

- All invitations to attend public workshops, public forums or community consultation processes of the Commission, will inform the public of the accessibility.
- Information is available in clear and concise language on how customers can participate in decision-making processes, public consultations and grievance mechanisms.
- Public forums will be held in facilities that can be accessed by all people.

**Actions**

- Advice to be provided of the alternative formats available in publications and notices.
- Advice of the accessibility of the venue to be included in the invitations.

## **REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

### **Review and monitoring**

The Chief Finance Officer will maintain an ongoing review of the plan and provide information for the Commission's staff on issues concerning access by all people and the initiatives of the Disability Services Commission.

The Chief Finance Officer will also report the achievements under the plan annually in the SWDC Annual Report.

### **Evaluation**

Annually the Chief Finance Officer will also seek to identify any additional barriers that were not identified in the initial plan.

The Commission will make the plan available to the Disability Services Commission and seek feedback on the plan and its strategies.

The plan will be amended, based on the feedback received and, once endorsed by the Board, will be available to the community, including alternative formats, if requested.

Endorsed amended plans will be submitted to the Disability Services Commission on an annual basis.

### **Evaluation of the former Disability Services Plan**

The Commission operated under a Disability Service Plan (DSP) that this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is replacing. The following is a review of the outcomes under the DSP.

#### **Standard 1: Service Access**

Any barriers to the Commission's services that were identified had appropriate policies or procedures put in place.

#### **Standard 2: Individual Needs**

The Commission worked with individuals to overcome any barriers to Commission services whether they were in the nature of age, sex, cultural linguistic or religious needs.

#### **Standard 3: Decision making and Choice**

Every opportunity was given for customers of the Commission to be involved in decision-making and choice related to the individual or service need.

#### **Standard 4: Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality**

All information held by the Commission was treated appropriately in relation to the privacy, dignity and confidentiality required in all instances.

## South West Development Commission – Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

### Standard 5: Participation and Integration

The Commission ensured that all customers were supported and encouraged to participate and be involved in the life of the community.

### Standard 6: Valued Status

The Commission ensured that all people were encouraged to take an active role in their community and worked to ensure any barriers were overcome.

## **COMMUNICATE THE PLAN TO STAFF AND THE PUBLIC**

The staff of the Commission will be briefed on the plan and made aware of their responsibilities under the plan. The availability of the plan will be advertised on the Commission's website and in the Commission's Regionwide publication, and a copy of this plan will be provided to the Disability Services Commission.