



Survey Findings on accessible temporary toilets

Are they meeting patron's needs?



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- WALGA
- Disability Services Commission
- Commonwealth of Social Services
- Equal Access
- People with Disabilities (WA) Inc
- Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
- Spine and Limb Foundation
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- People With Disability WA
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Ages and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Independence Australia
- Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre
- Changing Places Australia
- National Disability Services WA
- Ability Centre
- Spine and Limb Foundation

Executive Summary

In Western Australia (WA) the design and construction of standard temporary toilets is regulated by Part 2 of the *Health (Temporary Sanitary Conveniences) Regulations 1997*. These regulations are silent on how accessible temporary toilets should be designed and constructed.

As part of the *Public Health Act 2016* regulatory review program the WA Department of Health (DOH) acknowledges that there is a regulatory gap when regarding the design and construction of accessible temporary toilets. The DOH wanted to assess how this has impacted members of the disability community.

The DOH initiated a survey about the provision of accessible temporary toilets at Western Australian events; to:

1. Determine if people from the disability community have been provided with adequate toilet facilities; and
2. To seek comments/feedback on two of the most common types of accessible temporary toilets that are provided at events.

Key findings included:

- Nearly 50% of respondents indicated that the type of toilet that will be provided at an event is extremely important in influencing their decision to attend the event or not.
- 69% of respondents have been to an event where they couldn't go to the toilet because it was not suitably designed for them.

Results indicated that the two most common toilet types are generally adequate for ambulant type disability where a person requires a mobility aid only. Where a person is in a wheelchair or has a profound disability that requires continence aids or assistance with transferring to the toilet, the current toilet types are not adequate.

The results of the survey indicate that the current lack of regulation relating to the design and construction of accessible temporary toilets has led to designs that are not adequate for many members of the disability community. Better designs are needed to meet the needs of people with disability.

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Introduction

Currently in WA the design and construction of standard temporary toilets is regulated by Part 2 of the *Health (Temporary Sanitary Conveniences) Regulations 1997*. The design and construction of accessible temporary toilets has never been regulated in Western Australia.

The WA Department of Health were interested to see how the current accessible temporary toilet designs are working for people within the disability community. Prior to undertaking the survey the DOH had been advised anecdotally (Figure 1) that the majority of accessible temporary toilets had a number of issues including:

- Insufficient door widths for some styles of wheelchair to access the toilet
- Insufficient circulation space for wheelchairs, particularly when the door is closed
- not enough transfer options/non-peninsular toilet (side transfer/front transfer)



Figure 1: Picture showing accessible temporary toilet style A not meeting the needs of a wheelchair bound patron (Bromley, 2014).

To assess the validity of these accessible temporary toilet issues the DOH set up a survey to investigate how accessible temporary toilets are meeting the needs of the people of WA.

Accessible temporary toilet means a toilet of a temporary nature that is designed for people with disability who have greater access requirements due to limited mobility or use equipment such as wheelchairs, walking aids or require carer assistance. It may be a single toilet or a group of toilets.

Method

The DOH ran a survey from 1 December 2016 to 3 March 2017 (the WA summer) to assess two things.

- 1) Were the toilets being provided at events adequate for persons with disability to go to the toilet?
- 2) How are the designs of two of the most common accessible temporary toilets working for persons with disability?

A copy of the survey can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Even though there are many situations where accessible temporary toilets are provided; provision of accessible temporary toilets at events were chosen for the survey as events represent the majority of situations where an accessible temporary toilet is provided and is the only option available for a person with a disability. The survey was conducted from December 2016 to March 2017 as this is the peak period for events in WA.

Two toilet styles were chosen for inclusion in the Survey;

1. Accessible temporary toilet Style A (Figure 2) and
2. Accessible temporary toilet Style B (Figure 3).

Style A was chosen as it is the most common style of accessible toilet provided at events. Style B was chosen as it gave the impression to DOH staff of being one of the better accessible toilet options available.

	
<p>Figure 2 WA accessible temporary toilet Style A (Photo DOH Dec 2016)</p>	<p>Figure 3 WA accessible temporary toilet Style B (Photo DOH Dec 2016)</p>
<p>Specifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Tank – Capacity 125 Litres • Fresh Water Tank – Capacity 151 Litres <p>Dimensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height – 2310 mm • Width – 1570 mm • Depth – 1570 mm • Door opening width – 810 mm <p>The specifications were found through Instant Toilets Website http://www.instanttoilets.com.au/product/ive-star-event-disabled-toilet/</p>	<p>Specifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Tank – Capacity 190 Litres • Freshwater Tank – Capacity 100 Litres <p>Dimensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height – 2305 mm • Width – 1956 mm • Depth – 1956 mm • Door Opening width – 820 mm <p>Specifications were found through Formit’s Portable Toilets and Accessories Brochure http://formit.com.au/products/portable-toilets/</p>

The survey asked 18 questions (See [Appendix A](#) for details). The questions were designed to ascertain if the provision of toilets at events are meeting patrons needs and to ascertain how well accessible temporary toilet Style A and Style B worked.

The survey was done through the publically accessible website Survey Monkey. The Department of Health wanted to target users of accessible temporary toilets and so sent the survey link to a variety of disability advocacy groups, service providers and agencies including:

- Access Institute
- WALGA
- Disability Services Commission
- Commonwealth of Social Services
- Equal Access
- People with Disabilities (WA) Inc
- Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
- Spine and Limb Foundation
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- People With Disability WA
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Ages and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Independence Australia
- Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre
- Changing Places Australia
- National Disability Services WA
- Ability Centre
- Spine and Limb Foundation

These organisations could circulate the survey by whatever means they chose and access was open for everyone who clicked on the link.

Results

The survey received 104 responses with 61 respondents fully completing the survey. All results were analysed based on the 61 respondents who fully completed the survey only. All 61 respondents lived in WA.

The 43 respondents whose results weren't included the analysis only filled in the identifying information and didn't answer any questions relating to toilet design.

Respondents

The breakdown of how respondents identified themselves is shown in Figure 4 with the majority of respondents identifying as a carer for someone who requires an accessible temporary toilet.

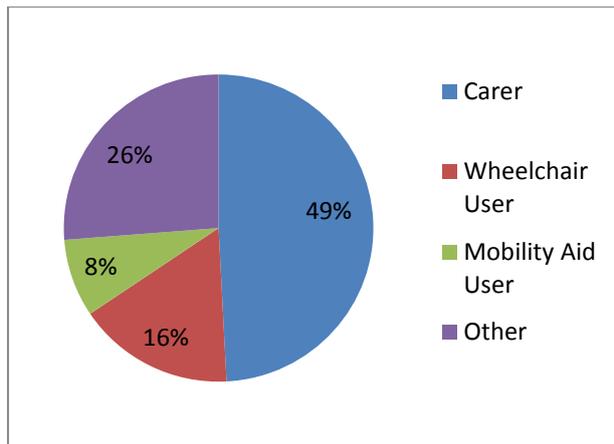


Figure 4 Respondent type

‘Other’ included:

- A wheelchair user who can also use a K-Walker
- Access Consultant
- Allied Health Professional
- Person with Autism
- Building Surveyor
- Community Services Staff
- Disability Advocate
- Didn’t specify
- Environmental Health Officer for Local Government
- Manager Community Inclusion
- Occupational Therapist (2)
- Ostomate (2)
- Physiotherapist
- Teacher of special needs students

Provision of toilets at events

In general the provision of accessible temporary toilet at WA events is not adequate with 59% of respondents indicating that they are never or not really adequate (Figure 5) and 69% of respondents indicating that they have been to an event where they could not go to the toilet as the toilet was not suitably designed for them (Figure 6)

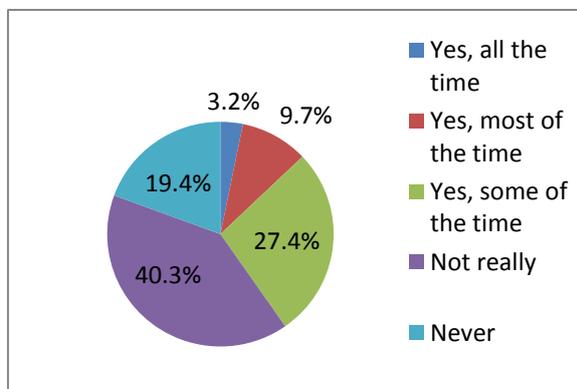


Figure 5 In general, are the accessible temporary toilets provided at events in Western Australia adequate?

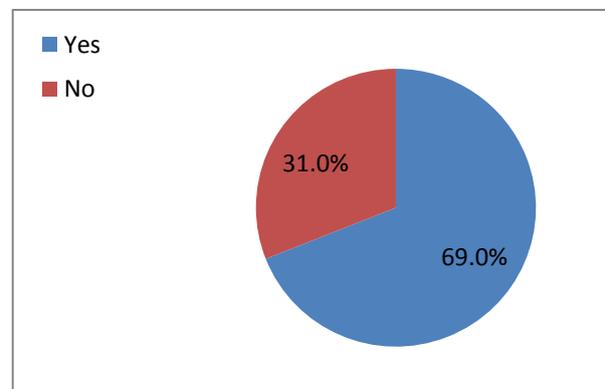


Figure 6 Have you ever been to an event where you couldn't go to the toilet because the accessible temporary toilet was not suitably design for you?

Of the respondents who stated that the toilets provided at events never met their needs all were carers except for 1 who was a wheelchair user. Of this group 7% hadn't gone to an event where only temporary toilets were available; indicating that this group of people may be choosing not attend events as they believe that the toilets provided at events will not be adequate for them.

Current toilet designs

The survey identified that the two designs included (Style A and Style B) are not catering to the needs of persons with severe disability, continence requirements or persons who require carers. Areas of concern that were identified from the survey include:

- Door width
- Circulation Space
- Shelves or other storage options for medical supplies and other items
- Adult Changing options (such as adult change table)
- Room for more than one person to be in and manoeuvre in the toilet with the door closed
- Transfer options (Left, right or front self-transfer, multiple person transfer or hoist options)
- Use of the toilets by non-disabled patrons
- Privacy when using the toilet (separation for the carer and toilet user)
- Options for carers to go to the toilet if the person they are caring for cannot be left alone
- Presence of steps or ledges
- Flimsy/Inadequately designed grabrails
- Heights and locations of items such as soap dispensers
- Flushing and washbasin mechanisms (the force needed to use them, lack of leg space underneath and the fact that they are sometimes foot operated)
- Door locking mechanisms
- Emergency options, egress and access

69% of respondents indicated that they have been to an event where they could not go to the toilet as the toilet was not suitably designed for them.

Assessment of accessible temporary toilet Style A

Accessible temporary toilet Style A (Style A) is the most common accessible toilet type found at events across Western Australia. Respondents were asked to rate the door width, circulations space, washbasin, flushing mechanism, fixtures and grabrails. Respondents were given the choice of:

1. Terrible Poor and Average (Which were grouped together as negative responses) and
2. Excellent and Ok (which were grouped together as positive responses).

The responses to each of the design elements identified were mainly negative (Figure 7). The main theme identified was lack of space, specifically:

- Narrow door
- No room for additional persons
- No changing space
- No circulation/manoeuvring space
- No space for legs under the sink
- No space for side transfer
- No storage space for medical supplies or other items

This toilet did have some positive response from the Mobility Aid Users indicating that this toilet style could be reclassified as an ambulant or family friendly toilet for families without a member who has a disability.

These results are concerning for the DOH as it indicates that the most common toilet type provided for wheelchair access, is designed such that:

1. wheelchairs cannot get through the door
2. they do not have enough circulation space and
3. users cannot transfer onto the toilet.

These results also indicate that there other disability groups such as persons with continence requirements, or profound disability that require one or more carer that have not been considered in the design of accessible temporary toilet Style A.

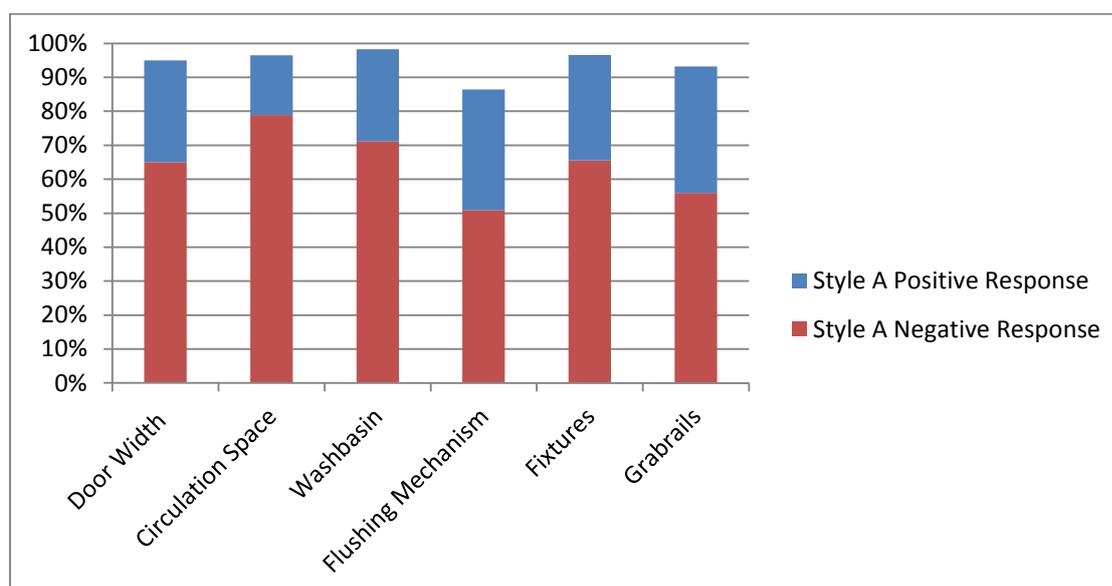


Figure 7 Accessible temporary toilet Style A

Assessment of accessible temporary toilet Style B

Accessible temporary toilet Style B (Style B) is found less often than Style A at events across WA. Respondents were asked to rate the door width, circulations space, washbasin, flushing mechanism, fixtures and grabrails. Respondents were given the choice of:

1. Terrible Poor and Average (Which were grouped together as negative responses); and
2. Excellent and Ok (which were grouped together as Positive responses).

The responses to each of the design elements identified were mainly positive (Figure 8).

Positive themes were identified as follows:

- More space than Style A
- Solid Grab rail
- Some bench space for resting supplies on

- Potentially room for one carer and wheelchair to be in and manoeuvre about whilst the door is closed
- Side and front transfer option

Whilst there were less negative responses, concerns were raised regarding the following:

- Location of flush mechanism – may not be able to reach whilst sitting on the toilet
- No provision of a rubbish bin or hanging hooks
- Designed for wheelchair users so doesn't acknowledge the needs of all other accessible toilet users
- Internal door handle is too small and is located too high for a person on a wheelchair to reach
- Door is not self-latching
- Potential that the grabrail will get too hot in sun to allow for comfortable transfer
- The sink may be too small

These results indicate that while this toilet has is better than Toilet Style A for persons with a wheelchair, other disability groups such as persons with continence requirements, or profound disability that require a change table or transfer via hoist have not been considered in the types of toilets generally available at events in WA.

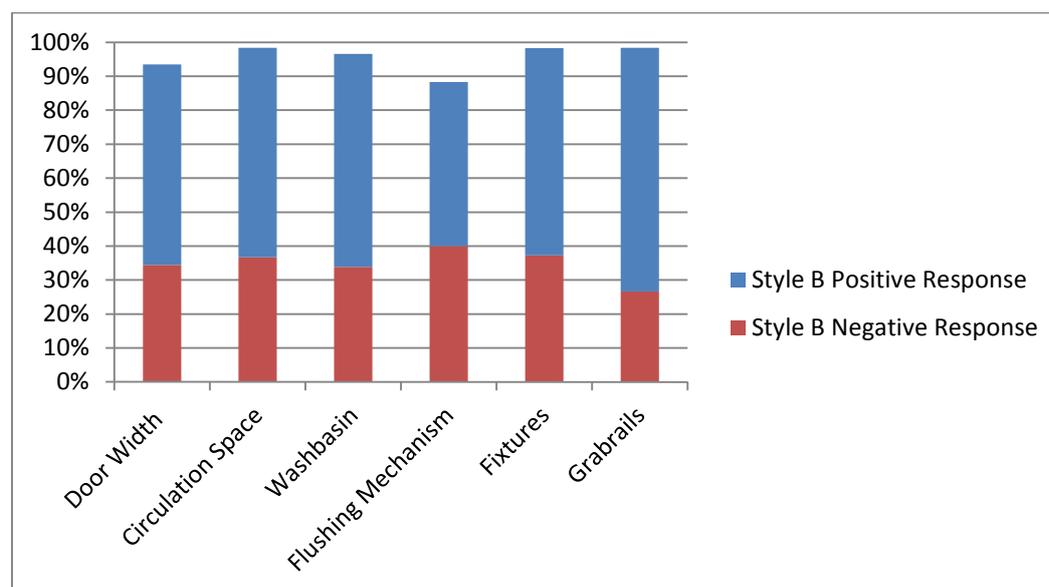


Figure 8 Accessible temporary toilet Style B design ratings

General findings

Respondents were asked an open ended question about the issues relating to accessible temporary toilet design, in general all respondents noted the number of accessible temporary toilets provided at events (often only one) is not enough and that the cleanliness of the toilet is often not maintained due to the greater than expected volume of use. Responders expressed concern about how to manage use of the toilet, noting in one case that the toilet was locked and event staff were too busy to open it. In many other cases where the toilets do not require a key for access they are used by able-bodied patrons, particularly families with children.

Specific findings for each respondent group are summarised below.

Carers

The majority of respondents (49%) identified as Carers. This group generally found that accessible temporary toilets provided at events are not adequate for them (Never adequate 33%, Not really adequate 40% and adequate some of the time 27%).

The reason why toilets are not adequate for this group is due to the fact they are often caring for people with profound disability who require changing options or assistance with toilet transfer. This means that they currently have to make do with toilets that are not designed with them in mind. Issues of concern raised through the survey were:

- Wheelchairs can be large; meaning they can't fit through the door or manoeuvre in current toilet designs
- Toilet transfer may require one, two or more people or may require a mechanical hoist.
- Due to continence requirements adult change tables are required but never provided
- Privacy options for toileting when another person is in the toilet are not provided, this is particularly a concern when the carer and client are not related
- Toileting options for carers when the person they are caring for cannot be left alone are not provided

83% of carers indicated that that they had been to an event where they or the person they were supporting couldn't use the toilet due to inadequate design. 68% of respondents indicated that the lack of adequate toilets means that they leave events early or go offsite to find a toilet. This means that long events where a no pass-outs rule is enforced could be discriminatory for members of the disability community.

Sometimes, if a carer is caring for a child, they will change the child in the car and return to the event afterwards, however once the child is fully grown this is no longer an option. A number of carers also indicated that the person they are supporting reduces their fluid intake so as to not need to go to toilet during the event (4%).

Wheelchair users

The main issues identified by wheelchair users related to circulation space provided within accessible temporary toilets. In addition, door width and the location of the toilet were noted as issues. Often the toilets are located on soft or muddy ground which a wheelchair cannot move on or through easily.

To cope with these issues, 20% of wheelchair users reported reducing liquid intake so that they wouldn't need to go to the toilet in a situation where an accessible temporary toilet was the only toilet type available.



20% of wheelchair users reported reducing liquid intake so that they wouldn't need to go to the toilet during an event.

Mobility aid users

Although this group of respondents indicated that generally the toilets provided at events are adequate, 80% of respondents had been to an event where they couldn't go to the toilet. The main issues were the location of the toilet; including a steep incline to access the when the toilet was not on flat ground.

In contrast to both wheelchair users and carers mobility aid users had all attended an event in 2016. This could indicate that the issues they face in relation to accessible temporary toilets are not enough to stop them from considering attending events.

Others

75% of the 16 people who identified as other (i.e. not a carer, wheelchair user or mobility aid user) had never been to an event where they couldn't go to the toilet because the toilet wasn't designed for them. This group where the main group that questioned why Toilet Style A and Toilet Style B were not built in line with AS 1428.1:2009 Design for access and mobility – General requirements for access – New Building work.

Most people within this group were involved in the disability sector or had another type of disability. Where people were not directly involved in the disability sector (such as Environmental Health Officer) they were more likely to be under the impression that the toilet types provided were meeting the needs of patrons. This indicates that the perceived versus actual experience differs based on lived experience. This highlights how our current lack of regulation for the design and construction of accessible temporary toilets is resulting in toileting options that are not meeting the needs of some members of the WA community.

Discussion

Should an accessible temporary toilet be designed or constructed in a way that is not meeting the needs of patrons, then persons with disability can lodge a formal complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. This Commonwealth Legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on their disability.

Issues relating to the process of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 are:

- It is hard to rectify the problem once an event has past
- If there are no toilets available on the market that meet the needs of the complainant then there is no solution to the problem.
- If the entity that the complaint is against can claim that providing an adequate accessible temporary toilet will cause unjustifiable hardship they may be exempt from rectifying the situation.

The Human Rights Commission has only received one design/construction based complaint relating to accessible temporary toilets in the last 5 years Australia wide indicating that whilst this survey shows that people are experiencing problems with the toilets provided, they are not complaining about them. This is possibly due to the issues stated above, plus the fact that the Human Rights Commission is a federal agency and making a complaint requires a large amount of effort with minimal perceived benefit.

Alternatively, person with disability can make a complaint under the WA *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*; however a claim can only be made under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* or the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* but not both. The WA Equal Opportunities Commission had not received any complaints relating to the design and construction of accessible temporary toilets any complaints in the last year. This could be because the issues with the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* are the same as for the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

A number of people (4%) were under the impression that accessible temporary toilets have to be designed and constructed in accordance with the standards for permanent accessible toilets AS1428.1. The Building Code of Australia makes reference to these standards for permanent toilets only. As no legislation that makes reference to these standards for accessible temporary toilets there is no legal requirement for accessible temporary toilets to be built in accordance with AS1428.1 and there are no tools to penalise someone who has built or provided a toilet which is not construction in accordance with AS1428.1.

Another assumption is that the Australian Building Codes Board Temporary Structures Standard (2015) provide guidance on the design of temporary toilets, however this standard specifies that it is not for temporary toilets.

The combination of lack of adequate prescriptive requirements and enforcement tools has resulted in the disability community being provided with temporary toilets that are not meeting their needs and no way of requiring design improvements. This indicates a failure in the current system, particularly when 69% of respondents indicate they have been to an event where they couldn't go to the toilet because the toilet was designed in a way that did not meet their needs.

As highlighted by survey respondents, wheelchair users are only one sector of the disability community. Any accessible temporary toilet design needs to take into account the needs of other disability types, including severe disability where a person cannot transfer onto the toilet without assistance or have continence requirements and needs changing facilities.

The DOH did not ask about items such as the age of respondents, however comments indicated that a number of the carers were people who dealt with young people with disability. Younger people, particularly those who are in school are likely to be encouraged to attend events or have events organised for them. A respondent indicated that current school transportable toilets are also designed in a way that is not meeting the needs of students with disability. This and the accessible temporary toilets designs currently available may be stopping special needs teachers, assistants, parents or interested groups from running events for their students resulting in less educational opportunities.

This survey did not investigate whether accessible temporary toilet demand will increase due to increasing levels of obesity and an aging population; however it is assumed that this is likely and issues relating to the number of accessible temporary toilets provided at events and the design of accessible temporary toilets will occur into the future.

Conclusion

The results of the survey indicate that there are people with many different types of disability that may need to use accessible temporary toilets. These include:

- Persons in a wheelchair
- Persons who need walking aids (Scooters, sticks, K-walkers etc)
- Persons who require an additional person or persons to assist them while they are in the toilet.
- Persons who require changing tables and/or mechanical assistance with toileting

The survey indicated that the lack of legislated prescriptive design requirements has led to accessible temporary toilet design that is inadequate for people with disability. It is recommended that all types of disability are considered in the further design and approval of accessible temporary toilets and legislative options.

It is suggested that four toilet design types are created going forward. These four design options suggested are:

- Ambulant
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Multiple Carer Accessible
- Fully Accessible/Changing Places

In addition to the above, it is suggested that a general education campaign about accessible toileting requirements is conducted. Many event organisers and event approvers are not aware of the issues that are facing members of the disability community when they choose one accessible temporary toilet design over another. In addition other situations including at schools and at buildings undergoing renovation so any education campaign would have to consider different situations where accessible temporary toilets may be provided.

The lack of legislated prescriptive design requirements has led to accessible Temporary toilet design that is not working for people with disability.

Appendix A – Survey Questions

Q1 – Are you:

- A wheelchair user?
- A mobility aid user?
- A carer for someone who requires an accessible temporary toilet?
- Other (please specify)

Q2 – Do you live in Western Australia?

- Yes
- No

Q3 – If you do not live in Western Australia, have you attended an event in Western Australia before?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Q4 – In general, are the accessible temporary toilets provided at events in Western Australia adequate?

- Yes, all the time
- Yes, most of the time
- Yes, some of the time
- Not really
- Never

Q5 – Have you ever been to an event where you couldn't go to the toilet because the accessible temporary toilet was not suitably designed for you?

- Yes
- No

Q6 – If yes, what was the issue?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q7 – In 2016, for the events that you went to where the only toilet option for you was an accessible temporary toilet how often did you find that it met your needs?

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- None of the time
- I have not been to an event with only accessible temporary toilets as an option in 2016

Q8 - When the toilet did not meet your needs, what were the consequences? How did you deal with the situation?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q9 – How important is the type of accessible temporary toilet that will be available to you at an event in influencing your decision to attend the event or not?

- Extremely important
- Very import
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important

Q10 – Do you wish to make any additional comments regarding the provision of accessible temporary toilets at events?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Users were then shown the following picture of a toilet called toilet Style A



Q11 – How do you rate toilet Style A?

	Terrible	Poor	Average	OK	Excellent	Don't Know
Door width						
Circulation Space						
Washbasin						
Flushing Mechanism						
Fixtures						
Grabrails						

Q12 – What features of the toilet Style A contribute to it being a good accessible temporary toilet?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q13 – What features of the toilet Style A contribute to it being a bad accessible temporary toilet?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Users were then shown the following picture of a toilet called toilet Style B



Q 14 – How do you rate toilet Style B

	Terrible	Poor	Average	OK	Excellent	Don't Know
Door width						
Circulation Space						
Washbasin						
Flushing Mechanism						
Fixtures						
Grabrails						

Q15 – What a feature of the toilet Style B contribute to it being a good accessible temporary toilet?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q16 – What features of the toilet Style B contribute to it being a bad accessible temporary toilet?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q17 – What are your main concerns (if any) about current accessible temporary toilet designs?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q18 – Do you wish to make any additional comments regarding the design of accessible temporary toilets?

- Open ended question where the respondent could write their own answer.

Q19 – Do you have any evidence from a time where an accessible toilet did not meet your needs? (e.g. photograph, letter to event organiser or letter to relevant advocacy body)

- The respondent could attach a file.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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