



**Disability Service Plan
whole-of-government
annual progress report**

2008



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Foreword

In 2003 there were an estimated 834 000 people with a disability in Queensland. This constitutes 22.1 per cent of Queensland's total estimated population of 3 775 000 people. Assuming that the age specific disability prevalence rate remained constant, the number of people with a disability was projected to reach 950 500 people by the end of 2008 — a growth of 14 per cent over the five years from 2003.

The *Disability Services Act 2006* requires every Queensland Government department to develop a Disability Service Plan (DSP) to provide increased responsiveness and gradual improvement of government services to people with a disability, including more coordinated whole-of-government responses. DSPs were implemented from July 2007.

Each DSP is unique, reflecting the size, scope and activities of the department to which it relates. When implementing DSPs departments examined their existing service delivery, identified ways to improve access for people with a disability and nominated priority areas to progress.

These are progressive plans and express the intention for continuous action over time — to ensure people with a disability have equal access to government services, like any other member of the Queensland community.

I am pleased to announce that the Queensland Government Disability Service Plans Annual Progress Report highlights significant achievements by departments in the first year of implementation.

It is important that the momentum of this work continues to be supported across government so that changes documented in the first annual report are built on and become embedded in the way government operates.

The continual improvement of programs and services to provide seamless access to and inclusion in government services for people with a disability places us in a strong position to realise the ultimate vision of ensuring that people with a disability have the same opportunity for civil, political, cultural, legal, social and economic participation as any other member of society.

Annastacia Palaszczuk

Minister for Disability Services
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Introduction

The *Disability Services Act 2006*, which required all Queensland Government departments to implement a Disability Services Plan (DSP), encourages all Queenslanders to promote inclusive principles within their own communities.

People with a disability have an equal right to services available to other members of the Queensland community. The service delivery principles encourage service providers to consider the needs of people with a disability when they design and deliver services.

This first Queensland Government DSP annual report demonstrates that the DSPs implemented across government from July 2007 are supporting positive changes in services for people with a disability. Departments identified the most significant changes that had taken place in the agency over the past year in the implementation of the DSPs and provided a description of the progress made in common areas as well as in specific departmental initiatives. The progress could be in initiatives a department currently implements or proposes to implement including changes or improvements to ensure that people with a disability have access to the services and facilities that are available to the broader community.

Of particular note in the report are the initiatives that promote equal access to government services for people with a disability. The initiatives chosen in this report represent significant change in services for people with a disability in six common areas: policy and procedures; complaints procedures; recruitment and retention; attitudes and awareness of employees (staff training); information and communication; and physical access — public

buildings. In addition to this, the report also features specific departmental initiatives.

Initiatives related to better access demonstrated improvements on two fronts: access to information, and physical access to buildings. Improvements to information provision included enhancements to websites and online services to meet information accessibility standards. In addition, departments reported upgrades to existing facilities and refurbishments to ensure compliance with building legislation and codes to ensure that structural designs are easily accessible for people with a disability.

Departmental policies and procedures were reviewed to ensure that people with a disability have equitable access to departmental services. Approximately 70 per cent of departments reported amending their complaint management system to enable complaints to be lodged in a range of communication formats. Strategies were also developed to reduce barriers to recruiting and retaining people with a disability in the workplace.

All agencies reported that they either have developed or are developing orientation programs for staff that include awareness of the needs of people with a disability. Many agencies also provided specific disability awareness training including establishing reference groups or promoting diversity events.

This important work will also be evaluated to assist in identifying the outcomes and benefits of DSPs across the Queensland Government and help to inform the development and implementation of future DSPs.

Six common areas

Six areas of common interest across government identified during the development of DSPs form the key focus for most departments' DSPs and have been the basis for coordinated work across Government during implementation. These are:

- **Policies and procedures** will be reviewed to ensure equitable access to departmental services.
- **Complaints mechanisms** will be developed to ensure people with a disability can lodge a complaint in a range of communication formats.
- **Recruitment and retention** services will be developed to ensure recruiting and retention strategies are inclusive and equitable for all.
- **Staff training** will now include disability awareness sessions to build on the organisational culture where equity and diversity are valued, understood and actively pursued.
- **Information and communication** to department's services will now be accessible, inclusive, and allow equitable opportunity for participation from people with a disability.
- **Building access** will also be developed according to a standard set of requirements to ensure that the structural designs of all services are easily accessible for people with a disability.

Responses by departments

In responding to the common areas as well as other individual initiatives:

- 18 departments reported enhancements to policies and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive of people with a disability.
- 22 departments took steps to ensure information and communication is accessible.
- 20 departments reported actions to increase the awareness of staff to the needs of people with a disability.
- 17 departments reported improvements in access to public buildings.
- 19 departments enhanced recruitment and retention strategies to be more inclusive and equitable.
- 18 departments undertook activities to ensure that complaints management systems are accessible to people with a disability.
- Six departments reported 23 activities in the other significant changes category.

Achievements

Common themes emerged from the analysis across the 23 government agencies that provided input into this report. These themes are:

- New policy documents and frameworks were developed or existing ones updated to ensure people with a disability receive a better service.
- New systems were implemented that build capacity in agencies and community groups that provide support and services to people with a disability.
- Disability-specific projects or programs to reform services to better assist people with disability were developed.
- Strategic partnerships were developed across government (such as memoranda of understanding and protocols) to progress projects and programs that contribute to improved outcomes for people with a disability.
- Major progress was noted in information and communication services with most agencies improving websites and online services to meet accessibility standards.
- All agencies either have developed or are developing improvements to their orientation programs for all staff that include awareness of the needs of people with a disability in relation to equitable access, Auslan courses and ongoing educational strategies to increase staff and community awareness.
- Many agencies provided specific disability awareness training, including establishing reference groups or promoting diversity events.
- Most agencies reported upgrades to existing facilities and refurbishments to ensure compliance with building legislation and codes for improving building access for people with a disability.
- The majority of departments enhanced recruitment and retention using the following strategies: update of equity plans, induction material and recruitment processes to ensure increased awareness of employing people with a disability, including options for flexible working arrangements, action plans to increase the number of employees with a disability; and similar strategies to reduce barriers to recruiting and retaining people with a disability in the workplace.
- Approximately 70 per cent of agencies and departments have reported amending their complaint management systems to ensure accessibility to people with a disability.

Partnerships developed

The development of the DSPs has provided an opportunity for departments to form strategic partnerships. This work will be built on in the future in order for DSPs to form part of a coordinated approach to government service delivery for people with a disability as required under the legislation. Some examples of projects in which two or more agencies have worked together to achieve positive outcomes for people with a disability are:

- **Protocol for notifications about children with a disability** — a protocol between the Department of Child Safety and Disability Services Queensland outlining the respective roles and responsibilities, and actions of staff with respect to children with a disability whose guardians wish to relinquish care of their child.
- **Evolve Interagency Services** — a partnership between the Department of Child Safety, Queensland Health, Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts to provide coordinated support for children in care who require significant therapeutic and behavioural support.
- **Housing with Shared Support** — an agreed policy framework to bring about better service delivery to the mutual clients of the Department of Housing and Disability Services Queensland to facilitate the sustainability of their support services.
- **Children with a disability who are at risk from harm memorandum of understanding** — a memorandum of understanding between Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Child Safety to promote effective communication and collaboration to achieve services for children and young people with a disability who are at risk of harm or in need of protection.
- **Housing and Support Program** — a collaborative partnership between Disability Services Queensland, Queensland Health and the Department of Housing, which supports people with a psychiatric disability to transition from a Queensland Health facility or acute care to live within the community.
- **Ed-LinQ** — Queensland Health and the education sector have established a collaborative partnership to improve prevention, early detection and intervention for school-aged children and young people experiencing a mental illness or psychiatric disability.

2008 achievements

Highlights of each department's significant achievements towards improving services for people with a disability during the first year of implementation of the DSPs have been identified as follows:

Policies and procedures

Introduced Australian Sign Language (Auslan) into schools

(Department of Education, Training and the Arts)

A total of \$30 million over four years (2007–11) was committed to transition to the use of Australian Sign Language (Auslan) for those students who require or request access to schooling via signed communication. The project provides funds for educational interpreting support for Deaf/hearing impaired students as required for access and participation in the curriculum. It also aims to assist staff to develop proficiency in Auslan and bilingual pedagogy and practices. The Transition to Auslan project will bring Queensland into line with national and international practice in the area of education for the Deaf.

Professional development opportunities have been provided to advisory visiting teachers, teachers and teacher aides across the state. These workshops will form a vital part of the rollout of the transition to Auslan. New staff working as teacher aides/Auslan language models have been provided with a three-day face-to-face training package to induct them into the specifics of this newly created position. Deaf people are discovering new employment opportunities in these positions.

Introduced a financial assistance package for specialised smoke alarms

(Department of Emergency Services)

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service introduced a financial assistance package to help Deaf and hearing impaired people make their homes more fire safe. The Queensland scheme is the first in Australia to offer beneficiaries the opportunity to choose from a range of systems to ensure that the one installed is best suited to individual circumstances. Under the scheme applicants who meet the criteria may receive up to \$800 to purchase specialised smoke alarms. The introduction of a new voucher system from 1 January 2009 will make the scheme even more accessible by reducing the requirement for applicants to make up front payments through the rebate system.

Increased accessible taxis for Queensland

(Queensland Transport)

Queensland Transport provided one-off financial assistance for the provision of a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) in rural and regional communities that do not have a WAT service. This initiative is part of the Queensland Government's commitment to increasing transport accessibility for persons with a disability and achieving compliance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002. The program has an allocated budget of \$4.8 million spread over two years from December 2006. The Accessible Taxis for Queensland (ATQ) program grew out of the work of the Disability Discrimination Act Tax Reference Group. This reference group is chaired by Queensland Transport and includes representatives of disability groups and industry.

The ATQ initiative is one of the most significant recent achievements in ensuring that people with a disability have access to reliable, responsive and accessible passenger transport services throughout Queensland. This initiative has been highly successful in meeting its objectives. During 2008, 54 wheelchair accessible taxis will be introduced into regional areas as geographically and demographically diverse as Boonah, Cunnamulla, Mount Isa, Horn Island and Mossman. At present, the overall proportion of the Queensland taxi fleet that is wheelchair accessible is 18.1 per cent. Queensland now has the highest percentage in Australia of WATs in its statewide taxi fleet (ACT 9.1 per cent, NSW 10.6 per cent, Victoria 8.1 per cent, SA 8.5 per cent, Tasmania 5.1 per cent and WA 5.1 per cent).

Implemented Housing with Shared Support *(Department of Housing)*

During 2007–08, a new framework for Housing with Shared Support (HwSS) was implemented. HwSS assists mutual clients of the Department of Housing and Disability Services Queensland to live successfully in the community with ongoing support. Support services are provided for social housing clients who have significant support needs and who share accommodation with people with similar support requirements. Complementary procedures and tools were implemented to support the framework during the first half of 2008.

Key changes implemented as part of the policy framework include:

1. alignment with Disability Services Queensland's policies, such as incorporating trial periods for prospective tenants and flexibility in sourcing housing solutions that adequately cater for clients' support requirements
2. provision of clearer guidance around communicating with clients and their families and substitute decision makers, to ensure their involvement in decision-making and consent to arrangements made in relation to their housing
3. agreed processes for resolving difficulties that may arise in relation to tenancies under this initiative between the departments, and with clients.

As at 31 May 2008, there are approximately 890 clients (in approximately 340 households) living in social housing under this arrangement.

Developed Accessible Queensland Guide *(Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry)*

The Accessible Queensland Guide has been developed to provide information to support accessible tourism in Queensland. The guide provides up-to-date information on extensive support services available to people with a disability who may be travelling to Queensland tourist destinations, including information, transport, insurance and personal care. Details of equipment suppliers and various infrastructure services (such as hospitals and libraries) are also provided with a view to making travel as comfortable as possible for visitors. The Accessible Queensland Guide has been updated and is available at www.accessiblequeensland.com

Tourism Queensland, in collaboration with Tourism Australia and other State Tourism organisations, is working with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse to develop a solution, in partnership with industry and key stakeholders, to increase the representation of accessible information for tourism consumers.

Continued enhancement of Evolve Services *(Department of Child Safety)*

The Evolve Therapeutic and Behaviour Support Services are for children in care who have complex to extreme support needs and who require significant therapeutic and behavioural support. In 2007–08, Disability Services Queensland Evolve teams commenced additional functions of Specialist Disability Assessments and established a time limited program with temporary staff to provide a Transition from Care program for young people who were identified as needing future disability services support as an adult. The Transition from Care program aims to assist young people who are leaving out-of-home care, prior to turning 18 years of age, and who are significantly disadvantaged in, and face barriers in, accessing suitable education, training, employment support, income support, housing, health and other social, family and personal challenges.

Developed Growing Stronger reforms (Disability Services Queensland)

In 2007–08 Disability Services Queensland invested \$52 million over four years in Growing Stronger to improve access to specialist disability services in Queensland. This initiative focuses on four priority areas:

1. introducing a simpler, fairer and more transparent access to services
2. introducing tailored service responses for individual needs
3. improving service management across the state
4. enhancing information and technology infrastructure to allow staff to better manage client services.

Implemented Investing in Positive Futures (Disability Services Queensland)

In association with the Growing Stronger reforms, \$113 million was allocated over four years in the Investing in Positive Futures initiative. This initiative responds to the recommendations of the 2006 report *Challenging Behaviours and Disability – A Targeted Response* by the Honourable W. J. Carter QC. The initiative will provide a positive model of care for people with an intellectual and/or cognitive disability who exhibit challenging behaviour.

Developed a Disability Skilling Action Plan (Department of Education Training and the Arts)

Under the Queensland Skills Plan, a Disability Skilling Action Plan was developed to achieve better outcomes in education and training for Queenslanders with a disability. The strategy will deliver a five-year Disability Skilling Action Plan for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Queensland. A number of key projects are already underway for completion in 2008, funded under the Australian Welfare to Work initiative.

Enhanced the Safehome program (Department of Emergency Services)

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) is working to enhance its flagship Safehome program so that it includes service provision which is

more specifically tailored to the needs of people with a disability. With the assistance of disability community representatives in the Townsville area, QFRS has commenced the development phase of the Fireable Project. This project aims to equip firefighters who conduct Safehome visits with the necessary information and skills to work with people with a disability to resolve their home fire safety issues. The advice and procedures being developed will become standard practice in the delivery of QFRS community safety programs.

Enhanced policy coordination (Queensland Police Service)

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) Disability Service Plan provides a central coordination and reference point for the development and review of policies and procedures related to service delivery to clients and members with a disability, their families and carers.

The launch of the Disability Service Plan was accompanied by a marketing campaign aimed at all QPS employees and the establishment of an Implementation Working Group comprised of representatives of those police regions, commands and divisions responsible for the implementation of the various strategies and actions documented in the plan. Progress reports considered at the implementation working group meetings indicate that the strategies and actions are being implemented according to the timings specified in the plan. The Equity and Diversity Unit and Mental Health Intervention Project are now represented on the Disability Service Plan Implementation Working Group to promote shared understanding of scope, objectives and activities.

Contributed to the national framework for Disability Parking Permits (Queensland Transport)

Queensland Transport's policy review of the Queensland Disability Parking Permit Scheme has greatly informed the development work for the implementation of a nationally harmonised parking scheme by 2011. The national framework will address some of the inconsistencies between jurisdictions to deliver a parking permit with reciprocal entitlements, uniform eligibility criteria

and parking permit design across all states and territories.

**Established greater access to JPs program
(Department of Justice and Attorney General)**

The 'JPs in the Community' program has been established at more than 115 signing locations across Queensland, including shopping centres, court registries, hospitals, public libraries and universities. This has enabled greater access to Justices of the Peace (JP) services for people with a disability as they now have greater choice in regard to JP facilities. Since this service has become available in the last year, especially in hospitals, feedback received has been extremely positive.

Training seminars and refresher courses conducted by the Justices of the Peace Branch for Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations focus on increasing awareness of different disability services available in the community. As Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations are provided with greater awareness of disability services available in the community, they have been able to provide a higher level of service to people with a disability.

Information and communication

**Established streamlined points of contact for information and referrals
(Department of Communities)**

Smart Service Queensland established a central contact point for information and referrals for people with a disability, their families and carers. To offer the best possible service to callers, all disability related information was reviewed and updated as necessary.

**Complied with website accessibility across departments
(Department of Public Works)**

The Department of Public Works made officers who are responsible for departmental websites aware of the compliance requirements for the whole-of-Government Information Standard IS26 (Internet). The standard requires state government websites to comply with the Priority 1 and 2 checkpoints from

the international World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

**Acted on audit of internet sites
(Department of Infrastructure and Planning – action also undertaken by the majority of departments)**

Many agencies are implementing actions as a result of internet site audits to ensure accessibility to people with a disability. For example, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning has now achieved compliance with standards including W3C, whole-of-government Consistent User Experience (CUE) and Information Standard 26. Ongoing work continues to minimise reliance on Portable Document Formats (PDFs) through more thorough communication planning and development of web-specific content.

**Provided departmental publications and materials in alternative formats
(Department of Natural Resources and Water – action also undertaken by majority of departments)**

Many agencies have implemented changes to their publications to improve accessibility of information for people with a disability. For example, from July 2007, all publications of the Department of Natural Resources and Water promote the availability of alternative formats (including large print, CDs, computer disks and audiotape) on request and provide a contact telephone number or email address in large font. All requests for alternative formats are centrally coordinated to ensure ease of access and consistency of information provided. All service delivery areas/offices have a generic email address for clients to access. All correspondence is processed in accordance with the service standards outlined in the Department of Natural Resources and Water Service Charter.

**Considered the needs of people with a disability when conducting meetings, forums and workshops
(Department of Communities)**

To promote social inclusion and involvement of people with a disability in policy development and service planning, Department of Communities' functions and events are conducted in a way that is inclusive of people with a disability. This includes ensuring venues are accessible and suitable support

is offered, presentation materials consider the communication needs of people with a disability, and interpreters are engaged where appropriate. A review of the existing departmental checklist for the preparation of meetings, forums and workshops was also completed.

Made accessible information available to industry (Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry)

Business management development products and services are available via a comprehensive website dedicated to providing information and resources to all clients who are considering and/or starting an accessible business. All products and services are interactive and provide a self-paced program suited to individual learning requirements. The department also has a CD resource (free of charge) containing information for operators who are considering and/or starting a business. A DVD was produced in 2007–08 and included the products and services provided by Business Information Services. It included open captions to cater for people with a disability.

Assisted people with a disability through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund (Queensland Treasury)

A percentage of revenue raised from taxes placed on Golden Casket lotteries, wagering, keno and gaming machines is returned to the community via the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The fund awards project-based grants to support the capacity of not-for-profit community organisations to provide services, facilities and opportunities for Queenslanders. In the 2007–08 financial year, 135 projects from organisations and associations representing people with a disability received funding to the amount of \$2 947 581. An example of the significant benefit that groups and associations representing people with a disability receive from the fund is as follows. The Motor Neurone Disease Association of Queensland received a grant of \$26 964 to purchase patient aids, a photocopier and provide a much needed upgrade to the association's kitchen.

Established Disability Reference Group (Queensland Police Service)

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) Disability Reference Group comprised of representatives from the QPS Office of the Commissioner, Disability Services Queensland, the Queensland Alliance, Carers Queensland, National Disability Services and Queenslanders with Disability Network has been established. This group meets to address issues affecting police interaction with people with a disability, their carers and family. It develops advice and suggestions for consideration by the Commissioner. The government agency and advocacy bodies contributing to the membership of the group ensure that the quality of advice is of the highest possible standard. Prior to the establishment of the QPS Disability Reference Group, the QPS did not have access to a standing advisory body of this type.

Established training database (Department of Education, Training and the Arts)

A new database system designed to assist TAFE institute Disability Service Officers in the recognition and learning support management of learners with a disability is in the early stages of implementation at TAFE institutes. This database will provide information about vocational education and training learners with a disability at state level. Data can then be used to inform strategies to improve the success of individuals.

Established an external standing reference group (Department of Main Roads)

The Department of Main Roads has taken steps to establish an External Standing Reference Group to guide the development of major projects. The group is made up of disability service providers, other government departments and relevant internal stakeholders. The reference group provides Main Roads with a more coordinated approach to consultation which would otherwise need to occur on a project-by-project basis.

Provided support and guidance through Disability Champion *(Department of Main Roads)*

The Department of Main Roads has established a Disability Service Plan Champion for the agency. The champion has provided support and guidance to the Diversity team. His senior position as well as his relationship with stakeholders in the department raises the status and knowledge of the plans across the department.

Built community capacity to support people with a disability *(Disability Services Queensland)*

Disability Services Queensland continued to build community capacity and promote access to generic services for people with a disability by sharing information, engagement, and communication with the Regional Disability Councils. Learning and development activities supported the capacity of Regional Disability Council members to fulfil their roles in providing advice on the views of Queensland communities on disability issues. All Regional Disability Council members have participated in an induction program to identify learning and development requirements and this informed subsequent development activities.

Increased marketing of disability issues *(Queensland Police Service)*

The launch of the Disability Service Plan has contributed to increasing awareness of disability issues when reviewing and improving policing services. ‘Marketing’ action is required to maintain momentum and build on this awareness. A marketing plan involving periodic information releases in internal publications, nomination of the plan for an internal recognition award, and promoting the plan through networks with relevant areas of the service is currently being considered.

Audited assistive technologies *(Queensland Treasury)*

Queensland Treasury audited external and internal client accessible ICT applications and developed a paper reporting the findings of the audit to ensure the needs of people with a disability were being met. Requests for assistive

technology modifications will be implemented on a case-by-case basis with reference to Treasury’s Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Guidelines. An additional recommendation of the review was that consideration needs to be given to incorporating W3C guidelines into future ICT applications.

Improved access to interpreter services *(Queensland Treasury)*

Queensland Treasury customer service points are audited annually to ensure signs advising of the availability of interpreters for people with a disability are visible. Treasury’s Language Services Policy provides for translator and interpreter services to clients who require assistance with communication. To ensure that clients with communication needs receive information appropriate to their needs, the policy and guidelines and translator/interpreter booking arrangements are regularly communicated to all staff. Client booking arrangements have been established with Deaf Services Queensland and the Treasury intranet has been updated to provide instruction on how to access Auslan interpreters.

Attitude and awareness of employees

Promoted disability awareness *(Environmental Protection Agency – disability awareness was conducted by a majority of departments)*

Many agencies increased or provided awareness-raising activities. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ensured new employees receive information about agency structure, values, culture and functions by attending a comprehensive orientation program. All permanent employees and temporary employees working with the agency for 12 months or longer are required to attend this program and in 2008 there were 208 employees in attendance. The program includes a session on equal employment opportunity (EEO) principles and includes people with a disability as one of the target groups. This aims to ensure that all EPA employees are aware of the needs of people with a disability and that equitable access is provided to EPA services and products.

Disability awareness training has been made available on the EPA staff intranet. The training includes information on working with people with diverse abilities including effective communication, guidelines and suggested solutions to barriers experienced by people with a disability in the workplace. The EPA communicates information relative to EEO issues, such as the disability awareness training in a variety of ways, including through the internal newsletter.

Enhanced disability awareness (Queensland Health)

Queensland Health's Equity and Diversity Reference Group contributed to increasing the department's responsiveness to disability issues. This includes improving disability awareness among staff; ensuring buildings, publications, materials and meetings are accessible to people with disabilities and their carers; and the development and review of departmental administrative policies and procedures that are responsive to the needs of people with a disability.

Organised Job application and interview workshops (Department of Education, Training and the Arts)

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts organised two two-day workshops to assist people with a disability to write job applications and to enhance their interview skills. Twelve members of the department's People with a Disability Network (PWDN) participated in the workshops. This initiative was planned to assist PWDN members to increase their skills and confidence in the key processes involved in securing a new position within government. Feedback from participants suggested that they had gained greater confidence in applying for jobs and promotion opportunities. This training also raises awareness of the needs of people with a disability in the recruitment and selection process.

People with Disabilities Working Group established (Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation)

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation Diversity Forum includes representation of staff from each equal opportunity target group, including a reference group for people with a

disability (People with Disabilities Working Group). The group was established officially during Disability Action Week 2007. The reference group serves as a point of contact for consultation on a range of issues relating to employment equity and diversity for people with a disability. The reference group is responsible for developing an annual improvement or action plan which contributes to the overall diversity and equity program for the department.

The People with Disabilities Working Group has doubled its membership through a very successful recruitment drive, and is planning implementation of the group's 2008–09 work plan. The major initiative for this year's work plan has been the creation of an internal newsletter distributed to all staff on a bi-monthly basis. The purpose of the newsletter is to educate staff, raise awareness and provide information on what services are accessible for people with a disability, as well as carers and family members of people with a disability.

Improved process to build awareness and support (Department of Public Works)

The Department of Public Works implemented Human Resource Monthly Theme sessions, through which equity and diversity information sessions were delivered to staff in the central business district, metropolitan and regional offices. This provided an opportunity to re-invigorate the department's 'Network Supporting People with a Disability' and promote disability issues, disability legislation and departmental policies. Information kits and fact sheets were developed and distributed and all information is available on the department's Human Resources Intranet site. During 2007, disability information sessions, with guest speakers from external organisations in the disability sector, were held in six regions to promote the employment of people with a disability and to provide information on working with people with a disability.

The department was a sponsor of a Disability Action Week award 'Building Accessible Housing and Environments' in 2008, and celebrated the week with a number of activities that promoted and raised awareness of disability issues. Disability Action Week aims to encourage positive attitudes towards people with a disability, improve access and make

our community a better place for everyone. The department also celebrates the International Day of People with Disability. Support for people with disability is also promoted through a bi-monthly online newsletter, introduced during the year to promote diversity objectives in the department.

Promoted Child Safety Research Strategy **(Department of Child Safety)**

The Department of Child Safety's Child Safety Research Strategy 2006–09 has identified disability as a priority area for research, as part of an increased focus on social science research that contributes to Queensland Government priorities. Local researchers are encouraged to undertake PhD research through the government's Growing the Smart State initiative in areas of child protection, which is inclusive of disability, mental health, education and domestic violence issues. The Department of Child Safety Research Strategy 2008 update has outlined child protection interventions with children or parents, who have a disability, including relinquishment of children, as a research priority. A child safety research forum on 'Disability and Child Protection Practice' was held in November 2007 which was open to all staff, and other government and non-government agencies. This research forum featured guest speakers from Griffith University and Disability Services Queensland.

Physical access

Built Sensory Walk and Auslan Interpreter Walk in Roma Street Parkland **(Department of Public Works)**

A new Sensory Walk and an Australian Sign Language (Auslan) Interpreter Walk has been built in the Roma Street Parkland. The Auslan Interpreter Walk follows the path of the parkland's traditional guided walk, providing people with an overall appreciation of the parkland, including some of its horticultural, artistic and historical highlights. Department of Public Works staff liaised with Vision Australia to train volunteer guides to conduct the Sensory Walk which focuses on the gardens and rainforest areas, but makes use of all the elements in the parkland including plants, artwork, water features and built materials. People with a disability

are able to experience the scent of plants, feel the texture of particular plants and materials, listen to the different sounds of moving water, as well as feel the different terrain and surfaces underfoot.

The walks are specifically designed to improve quality of life for people with a disability. These walks illustrate a commitment to promoting the rights of people with a disability and encourage participation in outdoor activities. The Roma Street Parkland staff have received excellent feedback from the public.

Designed walking tracks at Wongabel State Forest for walkers who have vision impairment **(Environmental Protection Agency)**

The Wongabel State Forest walking tracks are a Queensland first with walking tracks designed for walkers who have vision impairment. There are rocks lining the walking track to serve as a guide for walkers using canes, and textured concrete panels act as tactile indicators, identifying changes in track direction and condition. Textured concrete panels act as tactile maps and audio headsets can be provided from the Atherton Tableland Information Centre, with whom an agreement to distribute these items has been established. The initiative received an award for Innovation in Service Delivery at the Disability Action Week Awards in 2007.

Taking the diverse needs of all people into consideration when planning for new facilities across the agency will improve accessibility of some of Queensland's most beautiful aspects for all people, including those with a disability. These changes aim to improve the quality of life of people with a disability. They may also contribute to setting a precedent for accessibility options in other public areas to ensure all people have an opportunity to enjoy Queensland's natural environment.

Increased focus on people with a disability at active recreation centres **(Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation)**

During 2007–08, Currimundi Recreation Centre, widely used by schools and community organisations, purchased activity equipment, including high ropes, specialist harnesses and

beach or all terrain wheelchairs suitable for people with a disability. Currimundi staff undertook disability awareness training in preparation for a trial activity program specially developed for participants with a disability. Currimundi Special School participated in a free pilot program conducted over an eight-week period. The pilot program was considered an ideal tool in assessing and adapting the suitability of activities and facilities to meet the needs of children with a disability. Since the pilot program, several special schools now utilise the Currimundi Recreation Centre for both day and residential programs.

Ensured disability services issues are considered in infrastructure planning
(Department of Infrastructure and Planning)

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning is responsible for disability access outcomes in the areas of infrastructure planning, building codes and coordination of significant projects. The department now maintains close association with Disability Service Queensland (DSQ) on major infrastructure project proposals. For each terms of reference developed for major projects, consideration is given to inclusion of DSQ as an advisory agency. This has also resulted in future regional planning considering mechanisms for ensuring social infrastructure and planning guidelines incorporate disability issues.

Supported implementation of building codes
(Department of Public Works)

To further progress building-access issues, the Department of Public Works (DPW) implemented a process during 2007–08 to ensure that newly constructed or refurbished Queensland Government office premises, whether owned or leased, are reasonably accessible to people with a disability. This action ensures that buildings comply with at least the minimum standards in the Australian Building Code. An action plan was developed to identify shortcomings in the accessibility of existing DPW office premises, either owned or leased, as they relate to equitable access.

Department of Public Works Queensland Government Accommodation Office and Building Policy Unit promotes equitable access through the whole-of-government Capital Works Management

Framework. In particular, the department advises stakeholders that newly constructed or substantively refurbished Queensland Government buildings should be designed to the current non-compulsory Australian Standard AS1428 Part 2, and that action plans should be developed to address disability issues in existing buildings.

Department of Public Works is committed to meeting the needs of people with a disability and is progressively reviewing existing refurbished Queensland Government office premises in terms of their provision of reasonable access for people with a disability. Examples in 2008–09 will include new government buildings being built at Zillmere, Maroochydore and Cairns that include accessible toilets, tea rooms and lifts.

Most departments reported increased measures to ensure existing facilities and new premises meet legislative requirements for disability access. This has been achieved in consultation with Department of Public Works and QBuild.

Endorsed Wayfinding signage systems for people with a disability
(Queensland Health)

Wayfinding is the process individuals use to navigate unfamiliar surroundings to reach the desired destination. Wayfinding extends beyond signage to include elements of site design, site layout, and written and verbal information. Wayfinding is linked to the concept of access by all persons who use and work in a facility and the principles of universal design. Some of the physical and structural requirements to support Wayfinding are part of the regulations relating to signage and the Building Code of Australia.

In February 2008, Queensland Health endorsed the development of evidence-based, practical guidelines for effective Wayfinding and signage systems. These principles are reflected in the Wayfinding tools published by the Cooperative Research Centre for *Construction Innovation* and Disability Services Queensland in 2007. The Wayfinding Policies and Guidelines are available in the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines for use by a broad audience of facility developers and managers.

The guidelines reflect an approach that understands the needs of facility users with a disability. The advent of evidence-based guidelines will assist project teams and facility managers to develop and maintain effective Wayfinding and signage systems in health facilities, and support patients and staff to find their way safely and effectively to the appropriate point of service.

Promoted Wayfinding Guidelines *(Department of Public Works)*

Wayfinding Guidelines, which won a Disability Action Week Award in 2007, were developed to raise awareness and a need for more inclusive and accessible approaches to design principles across the building and construction industry. Promotion and implementation of the guidelines occurred in 2008.

Created a disability action plan for Arts Queensland properties *(Department of Education, Training and the Arts)*

Arts Queensland created a Disability Action Plan in 2007–08 for properties owned by the agency in accordance with the department's Disability Service Plan. The action plan lists nine key actions. One of these is to implement the mandatory inclusion of disability access consultants during the design and documentation phase of major infrastructure projects. The nine key actions will be introduced or completed over 2008–09 with appropriate ongoing review and implementation.

Recruitment and retention

A number of departments improved access and equity in recruitment and retention processes through the development, implementation and review of human resource policies and practices, the introduction of reasonable adjustment policies and guidelines, the review of recruitment and selection guidelines and practice, and provision of work experience and ongoing employment opportunities to clients of the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service.

In addition, departments undertook a number of specific activities to increase the representation of people with a disability in the workforce.

Extended the Wide Bay Burnett Region Employment Pilot Program *(Department of Education, Training and the Arts)*

A 12-month trial was held in selected state schools in the Wide Bay Burnett Region to employ seven people with a significant disability during the 2006 school year. The trial was conducted in partnership with Jobmatch Employment Agency from Gympie. People were employed in selected schools as assistants to the school librarian, cleaners and janitors/groundspersons. A support worker from Jobmatch trained and assisted each person until the person was able to work independently.

People were employed under a Supported Wage System and paid a productivity-based wage that was supplemented by an Australian Government scheme. The trial was extended to two years and, in July 2008, was extended for a further two years. Seven employees remain on this program, although in some cases they may not be the original trial participant. Those employees involved in this program have displayed a willingness to learn and an enthusiasm for the work environment. They have acted as role models for students with a disability within schools. The program has been highly successful in this region.

Established work experience pilot *(Department of Natural Resources and Water)*

In 2007–08 the Department of Natural Resources and Water participated in a work experience pilot with the Endeavour Foundation's Latch-on program, a literacy and technology program for young people with an intellectual disability. The participant worked with buddies from four different business areas. Several regions are exploring similar opportunities, with North Region due to commence a work experience placement in 2009.

Implemented of Skilling Queenslanders for Work *(Department of Employment and Industrial Relations)*

People with a disability often experience difficulties in obtaining secure and sustainable employment.

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative (one of the key components of the Queensland Skills Plan) was fully implemented on 1 July 2007 replacing the highly successful Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. Skilling Queenslanders for Work focuses on maximising workforce participation levels and improving the skills and productivity of people who want to work. The initiative provides assistance to enable eligible groups of Queenslanders who are disadvantaged in the labour market to secure sustainable employment outcomes. The initiative consists of a suite of strategies to support clients to develop the skills and experience they need to compete in the labour market.

Overall, under Skilling Queenslanders for Work and programs closely aligned to the initiative, more than 1500 people with a disability received some form of employment and training assistance in 2007–08. Assistance under the initiative is varied with some people gaining a traineeship under the First Start program, others receiving customised assistance and many undertaking community literacy training.

Ensured equitable access was reflected in people policies and procedures
(Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries)

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPIF) ‘people policies’ have incorporated a number of equity performance indicators into the Senior Executive Team (SET) Resource Agreements, Workforce Planning Strategies, Corporate Development Strategy 2008–13 and DPIF People Strategy 2008–13.

Underpinning these initiatives, DPIF will continue to enhance external and internal websites profiling the department as an employer of choice committed to promoting equitable access and employment opportunities to all members of Queensland’s community, promoting the department’s flexible work practices and corporate standards — specifically ‘Reasonable Adjustment for Staff with a Disability’ (HR.8.10) — engaging workplace rehabilitators across the state to develop return-to-work plans and assist staff when returning from an extended periods of leave (sick) and through staff engagement initiatives increasing staff awareness of DPIF’s workforce diversity, including EEO groups.

Explored and established solutions to attract and retain people with a disability
(Department of Main Roads)

In order to explore and establish contemporary solutions to attract and retain people with a disability, the Department of Main Roads attended the Brisbane Schools Expo (for students with a disability) to provide information about Main Roads’ career options and identify needs of job seekers from this market. The expo provided a good opportunity for the agency to establish contact with service providers who are able to assist with investigations into entry-level positions.

During the 2007–08 financial year, Main Roads provided two work experience places to clients of the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, one in engineering and the other in computer-aided design. This provided positive experiences for both the participants and supervisors.

Developed strategies to increase the number of staff with a disability
(Department of Mines and Energy)

The Department of Mines and Energy has initiated strategies to promote the agency as an employer of choice including a structured approach to the recruitment of students with a disability, through the School-Based Apprenticeships Scheme and new trainee and cadetship initiatives.

Established employment initiatives
(Department of Public Works)

The Department of Public Works delivered recruitment and selection information sessions to staff across Queensland. A package of resources, such as fact sheets, policies and directives and information on employing people with a disability, has been made available on the Human Resources intranet which is readily accessible by all staff. The Human Resources intranet site was upgraded in early 2008 providing easy access to recruitment information and all relevant documents.

Disability information sessions (with guest speakers from external organisations in the disability sector) were held in six regions in 2007 to promote the employment of people with a disability and to provide information on working with people with a disability.

The department's Equity and Diversity Plan 2007–08 requires that all business areas develop actions within their own business plans to increase the number of employees in the department with a disability.

Changes have been made to the delivery of diversity sessions at corporate inductions with a greater focus on employing people with a disability.

The department's Workforce Plan includes strategies to address overall attraction and retention issues.

Implemented recruitment and selection initiatives *(Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry)*

Recruitment and selection guidelines and a training package were implemented by the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry and web pages were updated to include information about removing barriers for people with a disability. An electronic recruitment and selection kit was developed, which included information on recruitment and selection for people with a disability, and information was incorporated into selection panel training rolled out in August–September 2008.

The development of an electronic recruitment and selection kit was one of the strategies developed after consultation with established focus groups, represented by management and employees, including employees from EEO target groups. Any significant impact will be seen after the implementation of the selection panel training that is to be held in August–September 2008. Different ways to promote the recruitment of people with a disability are being considered. This includes considering promotion opportunities during Disability Action Week 2008.

Progressed accessible recruitment practices *(Queensland Treasury)*

Queensland Treasury established networks and contacts with community groups and specialised employment agencies to provide advice on departmental vacancies. Queensland Treasury are exploring opportunities for increasing the representation of people with a disability in the departments' workforce and then conveyed this

information to the Disability Service Plan liaison officer network. The department established a project under Treasury's Workforce Strategy to increase 'attraction' to the department and is ensuring that Disability Service Plan action items are incorporated into any products that are developed.

Complaints

Developed accessible complaints management *(Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation)*

The majority of departments reviewed Complaints Management Policies and Procedures. Actions undertaken by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation provide an example of activities taken across government to improve access to complaints processes for people with a disability. In March 2008, the department conducted a self-audit of its complaints management practices, based on the Queensland Ombudsman's guide, identifying areas of good practice to be built on and areas of system deficiency. The Complaints Management policy now includes a section on access and visibility. The policy provides for accessibility to the complaints management process through allowing complaints to be submitted in a range of communication modes.

Promoted accessible complaints mechanisms *(Department of Infrastructure and Planning)*

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning promoted accessible complaints mechanisms to the community via the departmental internet site. The department's Complaints Management Policy and associated forms are available on the department's internet and a complaints electronic mailbox is also operational. The development of a Complaints Management policy and complaint application form, along with publishing the policy on the internet and conducting internal training, is reported to have had an immediate impact on client service culture. As the procedures for managing a complaint have direct links with the procedures for reviewing services, it is expected the complaints process will eventually have a direct impact in improving services.

Established protocol for notifications about children with a disability

(Department of Child Safety)

The Department of Child Safety and Disability Services Queensland established a protocol to establish the respective roles and responsibilities, in cases where guardians of children with a disability wish to relinquish care of their child. The protocol, *Responding to notifications by DSQ regarding children with a disability whose guardians indicate they are unwilling or unable to care for their child*, is significant, as it seeks to assist families to maintain the care of children within the family home.

Developed protocol for investigations into the residential services sector

(Department of Communities)

During 2007–08 the Department of Communities operationalised the Department of the Premier and Cabinet’s protocol for the coordination of investigations into allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with a disability in the residential services sector. A draft protocol has been developed in consultation with the Residential Services Senior Executive Group. This protocol establishes the role and responsibilities of government agencies in responding to instances of alleged abuse and neglect of residents residing in the residential services sector. These changes are considered significant as they demonstrate the department’s commitment to providing equitable access to government services for people with a disability and responding to complaints of alleged abuse and neglect of residents residing in the residential services sector.

Other significant changes

In addition to the highlights associated with the six common areas a number of departments highlighted specific departmental activities that improved service delivery to people with a disability.

Implemented Home Access Information trial

(Department of Housing)

The Home Access Information Trial was implemented with the aim to encourage real estate agents to identify and promote residential properties with

design features that make them highly valued by people with mobility impairment. The trial is a key initiative of the Home Access Strategy 2003–08 and was launched by the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology on 7 June 2007 to address the growing need for homes with accessible features. This benefits both property managers and property seekers by reducing the number of unsuccessful viewings. The trial has been embraced by health association groups and community organisations representing the interests of seniors and people with a disability.

Established Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Procedure

(Queensland Health)

The Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Procedure in the Queensland Paediatric Rehabilitation Service (QPRS), Royal Children’s Hospital has been established to improve clinical efficiencies and to ensure that all children admitted to the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury unit are provided with appropriate education and follow-up services. QPRS has addressed the growing demand for the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Procedure by improving waiting times and accessibility.

Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service

(Queensland Health)

The Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service provides a statewide service to the families of infants and children who are Deaf or have permanent hearing loss until the child has completed Year 1. The service offers families support, advocacy, assistance in coordinating the different services they access, and counseling. All children following diagnosis of permanent hearing loss in a public-hospital or Queensland Health-funded audiology service are identified and offered a service of family support by Queensland Hearing Loss Family Support Service. During 2007–08 coordination and monitoring of referral pathways both within government and non-Government sectors have been enhanced to support better engagement, tracking of patients and early intervention responses.

Hanen 'It Takes Two to talk' or Hanen 'More than Words' *(Queensland Health)*

The Hanen 'It Takes Two to Talk' Parent Program is used by Queensland Health speech pathologists with parents of children with receptive and/or expressive language delays, which may be due to a range of disabilities, including cognitive impairment, developmental delay or hearing impairment. The Hanen 'More than Words' Parent Program is used by Queensland Health speech pathologists for parents of children with diagnosed or suspected Autistic Spectrum Disorder or other related significant language disorders and social communication disorders. In addition, this program highlights the importance of affect, predictability, structure and the use of visual supports to enhance learning in children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Community Rehabilitation *(Queensland Health)*

The Gold Coast Health Service District has been funded to establish a Community Rehabilitation Program in 2008–09 that will provide ambulatory services to clients with a disability in a centre and at home.

Initiated ED-LINQ *(Queensland Health)*

Funding was approved to plan and establish Ed-LinQ, a collaborative partnership with the education sector to improve the prevention, early detection and evidence-based interventions for school-aged children and young people experiencing mental health problems. The collaboration will seek to improve the quality and effectiveness of the intervention and support provided through school – based student support services. Queensland Health has appointed a statewide Ed-LinQ coordinator for a 12-month period to develop an operational model for collaboration with key stakeholders. The final evaluation and progress report of the Ed-LinQ service development model is due in mid-2009 which will highlight challenges and provide recommendations.

Young Disabled Project *(Queensland Health)*

The Young Disabled Project aims to promote and/or maintain the maximum level of physical ability for people who live in the Bayside area, who are between the ages of 18 and 45 years old and have a permanent physical and/or intellectual disability. The Young Disabled Project team consists of an occupational therapist, physiotherapist and leisure therapist. The Young Disabled Project is unique in that it promotes and/or maintains the physical abilities of its members through rehabilitation therapies which combine physical activities and a social atmosphere.

Departments

The following departments reported to Disability Services Queensland on the achievements in the first year of implementation of Disability Service Plans.

- Department of Child Safety
- Department of Communities
- Department of Education, Training and the Arts
- Department of Emergency Services
- Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
- Department of Housing
- Department of Infrastructure and Planning
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation
- Department of Main Roads
- Department of Mines and Energy
- Department of Natural Resources and Water
- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
- Department of Public Works
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry
- Disability Services Queensland
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Transport
- Queensland Treasury