



# Zoological Parks Authority

## Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) 2007 - 2011

This plan is available upon request in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disk or emailed) and audio.



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# BACKGROUND

## The Zoological Parks Authority (Perth Zoo)

Perth Zoo operates under the *Zoological Parks Authority Act (2001)* to provide a range of services relating to the husbandry and display of a collection of plants and animals for conservation, research, scientific, education, cultural and recreational purposes.

Perth Zoo's vision is *a world where diversity of species and habitats is secure*. Its purpose is to *secure long-term populations of species in natural environments while engaging the community in global conservation action*.

The Zoo's key stakeholders include zoo visitors, the general community, Government agencies, volunteers, collaborating institutions, regional authorities, corporate and industry partners and the conservation and animal welfare sectors.

## Functions, facilities & services (in-house and contracted) provided by the Zoological Parks Authority (Perth Zoo)

*Conducting and collaborating in breeding programs and research programs for the preservation of threatened animal species* Through its operations, strategic partnerships and collaborations, Perth Zoo maintains world-class reproductive biology and research units, multiple breeding programs for native and exotic species under threat, and contributes directly to conservation programs in the wild through financial support and provision of expertise.

*Conducting public education programs*. Perth Zoo offers formal and informal conservation education experiences to over 550,000 visitors per year both on-site and in the community. Through a range of exhibits, programs, events and activities the community is encouraged to interact with and learn about our natural world.

*Providing recreational services and facilities*. The Zoo has been an important cultural icon for over a century. It provides a venue for recreation and to the local, interstate and international community. It is a key Western Australian tourism asset.

*Conserving and enhancing the gardens, amenities and natural environment of Perth Zoo*. Perth Zoo is an important botanical estate and its natural heritage value is significant. The Zoo presents one of Western Australia's best collection of native trees and exotic palms as well as examples of living habitats from a range of ecosystems across the world.



## Specific Services of the Zoological Parks Authority (Perth Zoo)

Key services and facilities provided by Perth Zoo to the community include:

- Animal exhibits and wildlife experiences
- Conservation information - signage, AV presentations, publications, website, face to face interaction through staff programs and Zoo volunteers (Docents)
- Lawns and gardens
- Visitor amenities – toilets/parents facilities; first-aid room; telephones; drinking fountains, BBQ, Picnic facilities, rest areas and shelters
- Concert events
- Café/food outlets & vending facilities
- Venue hire: Function centre & lecture theatre & seminar rooms
- Children's Playground with facilities for children with disabilities
- Shop & retail services
- Educational facilities (formal and informal)
- Guided tours and keeper talks
- Behind the scene tours
- Zebra Car (tours)
- Publications and internet website

## Planning for better access

One in five Australians identify themselves as having some form of disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers [2003]).

The *Disability Services Act 1993* requires that public authorities develop and implement a *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)* that outlines the ways in which the authority will ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to its facilities and services.

Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the *WA Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*.

## Progress since 1995

Perth Zoo is committed to ensuring that its services are accessible to all members of our community and all zoo visitors. Our facilities and operations are unique and present a wider range of accessibility issues than many other Government agencies.

A Disability Services group was formed at Perth Zoo in 1995 and the first *Disability Services Plan* was developed in 1996. The *Disability Services Plan* addressed the Zoo's statutory requirements under the *WA Disability Services Act (1993)* and its obligations under the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*. Perth Zoo's *Disability Services Plan* has been internally reviewed twice since 1996 and was also updated to create this DAIP.

Since the adoption of the initial *Disability Services Plan*, Perth Zoo has implemented several initiatives and has made significant progress towards better access for Zoo visitors. Some of these are highlighted in Appendix 1.



# ACCESS & INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT

## FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES & CARERS

Perth Zoo is committed to:

- ensuring that people with disabilities, their families and carers are able to access the range of Perth Zoo's services and facilities;
- consulting with people with disabilities, their families and carers and (where appropriate) disability organisations to help ensure that barriers to access and inclusion are identified and appropriately addressed;
- ensuring that staff, agents and contractors work towards the desired access and inclusion outcomes in the DAIP; and
- working in partnership with community groups and other public authorities to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities through improved access to information, services and facilities.

The Zoo identifies an accessible and inclusive organisation as one in which all its functions, facilities and services (both in-house and contracted) are open, available and accessible to people with disabilities—providing the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities enjoyed by all other people in the community.

Furthermore, the Zoo is committed to achieving the six desired outcomes of its DAIP. These are:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the relevant public authority.
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the relevant public authority.
3. People with disabilities receive information from the relevant public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the relevant public authority.
5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the relevant public authority.
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the relevant public authority.

**Special note:** Perth Zoo is classified as a Quarantine Approved Premises under the *Quarantine Act (1908)*. This legislation overrules the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and means that Perth Zoo is one of few places in Western Australia that seeing-eye dogs/assistance dogs cannot enter. Zoo visitors who bring such a dog may be asked to leave their dog in a safe, supervised, indoor location at the entry to the Zoo. On request, human guides can be arranged in place of a seeing-eye dog.



# Development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

## Responsibility for the planning process

Established by Perth Zoo in 1995, the Zoo's Disability Services Group remains functionally responsible for the planning, development, review and evaluation of the DAIP. This committee comprises representatives from the Zoo's Visitor Services, Facilities, Education and Human Resources departments as well as two Zoo volunteers with significant professional experience within the Disability services sector. The Zoo's CEO and Corporate Executive remain responsible and accountable for the DAIP's implementation.

## Community consultation process

Perth Zoo's Disability Services Plan is due to expire in 2008. Prior to then—in 2006/07—Perth Zoo undertook to review its *Disability Services Plan*, consult with key stakeholders and draft a new DAIP to guide continuing improvements to access and inclusion.

The process included:

- examination and review of the existing *Disability Services Plan* identifying progress, achievements and what still needs work;
- investigation of contemporary trends and good practice in access and inclusion;
- consultation with key staff and stakeholders; and
- consultation with the community.

Perth Zoo formed a focus group which comprised members of the disabled community, their family and carers as well as individuals from the professional disability sector. Group participants were gathered through invitations to sector organisations and individuals. This group was invited to experience the Zoo's facilities/services (free of charge) and then provide their feedback via one or more of the following methods:

- verbal feedback on a range of services/facilities based on their own visit/experience; or
- written feedback on a range of services/facilities based on their own visit/experience; or

The feedback received was analysed according to the six DAIP outcomes and avenues of redress were examined. A number of these avenues have been included in the DAIP Implementation Plan 2007-08 and others will appear in future Implementation Plans.

Subsequent to this focus group work, the Zoo called for general comment submissions from the community on its draft DAIP via its website and newsletters targeted at its large member/volunteer base. The draft DAIP was also published on its website. No comments were received via this avenue.



## Findings of the consultation

The review and consultation found that many of the objectives in the first Disability Services Plan had been achieved. Those items that were still to be addressed or were not completed would be carried forward into the DAIP. Movement from the Disability Services Plan to the DAIP was identified as being timely to update the plan to ensure currency and relevance. It has been designed to address current access barriers and to ensure a high level of organisational responsiveness to issues of access and inclusion.

It has been identified that the unique operations, site and business of Perth Zoo presents access challenges that may not be faced by more traditional service providers. Perth Zoo will seek to implement solutions to more commonplace access issues whilst also finding creative and lateral solutions to some of the access issues unique to its operations.

## Access barriers

While the review and consultation noted a great deal of achievement in improving access since 1995 (see Appendix 1), it also identified a range of access barriers;

- better processes to ensure access/inclusion are considered in the development of new exhibits/facilities
- staff training to ensure all staff are adequately skilled to provide service to people with disabilities;
- building a broader understanding amongst key decision making staff about access and inclusion in disabilities other than mobility-related;
- some physical infrastructure may still not meet the needs of people with disabilities;
- only some of the materials are readily available in alternative formats and there is no promotion of the availability of those materials that are available;
- people with disabilities may not be aware of consultation opportunities with the Zoo.

The identification of these barriers informed the development of strategies in the DAIP. The barriers have been prioritised in order of importance, which has assisted in setting timeframes to complete strategies to overcome those access barriers.

## Responsibility for implementing the DAIP

It is a requirement of the *Disability Services Act* that public authorities take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP's are implemented. Implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all areas of the Zoo with overall implementation responsibility sitting with the Zoo's CEO and Corporate Executive. The Implementation Plan sets out sectional responsibility for each action. The Zoo's Disability Services Group will guide the overall implementation of the plan in close consultation and reference to the Zoo's CEO and Corporate Executive team.



## Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities

In May 2007 the Authority sent copies of the draft DAIP to those who contributed to the planning process. This included staff, people with disabilities, their families, carers, disability organisations and relevant community groups. In June 2007 the plan was finalised and formally endorsed by the Zoo Executive.

The Zoo has advised, through the local media – newspaper and radio – that copies of the plan are available upon request and in alternative formats if required [Alternative formats include hard copy in large print, electronic format, audio format on cassette, CD or MP3, by email and on the Authority's website].

The plan was promoted to staff at a full staff meeting, via email and also published on the Zoo's intranet. It was promoted to volunteers through the July *Docent News*.

As plans are amended both staff and the community will be advised of the availability of updated plans, using the same methods.

## Review and evaluation mechanisms

The Zoo will review its DAIP at least every five years in accordance with the *Disability Services Act*. The implementation plan of the DAIP may be amended more regularly to reflect progress and emerging issues. Whenever the DAIP (or implementation plan) is amended, a copy will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission.

Monitoring and reviewing processes will include:

- The Zoo's Disability Services Group will meet every quarter to discuss issues of access and inclusion and to review progress on the implementation of the strategies identified in the DAIP.
- The review of the Authority's DAIP will be included in the DAIP 2011-2015 which will be submitted to the Disability Services Commission in 2011. The report will outline what has been achieved under the Authority's DAIP 2007-2011.
- The committee will prepare a report on the implementation of the DAIP annually.



## Evaluation processes include:

- The Zoo's Disability Services Group will evaluate the progress of the implementation process annually through an 'output' report based on the key tasks identified in the DAIP.
- The Executive will consider and endorse the Output Report annually.
- The Zoo will continue to seek feedback from the community through periodical consultation on the effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented.
- Annual outputs will be published on the Zoo website and feedback will be sought.
- In seeking feedback and through ongoing consultation, the Disability Services Group will also seek to identify additional barriers that were not identified in the initial consultation.
- The Disability Services Group will incorporate any new barriers identified in the feedback process into its Implementation Plan for the coming year.
- Copies of the amended Implementation Plan will be available to the community in alternative formats once endorsed by the Zoo's Executive.

## Reporting on the DAIP

The Zoo will report on the implementation of its DAIP through the *Zoological Parks Authority Annual Report* and will submit a progress report to the Disability Services Commission by 31 July each year. This will outline:

- progress towards the desired outcomes of its DAIP;
- progress of its agents and contractors towards meeting the six desired outcomes; and
- strategies used to inform its agents and contractors of its DAIP.



# Strategies to improve access and inclusion

As a result of the review of Perth Zoo's *Disability Services Plan* and the consultation process, the following overarching strategies will guide tasks that the Zoo will undertake from 2007-2011 to improve access to its services, buildings and information. These are reflected in more detail in the Implementation Plan. The six desired outcomes (below) provide a framework for improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

**Outcome 1:** *People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, a public authority.*

Strategy	Timeline
Continue quarterly meetings of the Disability Services Committee and task them with overseeing the implementation of the DAIP 2007-2011	February 2007 and ongoing
Through communication strategies, ensure that people with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to comment on issues related to access to services at Perth Zoo.	Ongoing
Incorporate the DAIP and its implementation into the Zoo's strategic planning, budgeting processes and other relevant plans and strategies.	June 2008
Ensure that events are organised so that they remain accessible to people with disabilities.	June 2007
Ensure that staff, agents and contractors are aware of the relevant requirements of the <i>Disability Services Act</i> .	June 2008
Continue to actively support federal and state initiatives to improve access (eg: ACROD program, Companion Card)	December 2007



**Outcome 2:** *People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of a public authority.*

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure that all new exhibits, facilities and premises are physically accessible to people with disabilities	June 2011
Prioritise accessibility/inclusion issues in the design of new facilities, the selection of new premises or the purchase of new equipment.	June 2007
Ensure that issues of access/inclusion external to the Zoo (but which impact on visitor access) are addressed alongside internal facilities issues.	June 2008

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

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure the variety of formats in which information is kept/published as a standard and ensure it uses clear and concise language.	March 2008
Develop communication strategies that improve community awareness that Zoo information is available in alternative formats.	May 2008
Develop a manual of resources available to facilitate access to people with disabilities if an appropriate format for them is not available	December 2008
Maintain the Zoo's website so that it continues to meet contemporary good practice in accessibility.	July 2007



**Outcome 4:** People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of a public authority as other people receive from the staff of that public authority.

Strategy	Timeline
Provide training and awareness-raising for staff to successfully manage disability and access issues.	June 2008
Ensure that frontline staff have adequate access to resources/materials which will aid them in providing good service levels to those with disabilities.	June 2008
Ensure that services provided to those with disabilities are the same as those provided to others and are provided sensitively	June 2008

**Outcome 5:** *People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to a public authority.*

Strategy	Timeline
Provide training and support to staff/volunteers so they can facilitate the receipt of complaints from people with a disability.	June 2008
Maintain the variety of formats in which complaints can be made to the Zoo.	June 2008
Ensure that grievance mechanism processes and outcome satisfaction surveys are available in formats to meet the needs of people with disabilities.	August 2008

**Outcome 6:** *People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in public consultation by a public authority.*

Strategy	Timeline
Ensure access for people with disabilities to any consultative processes undertaken by the Zoo	Ongoing
Work with Zoo consultants to ensure that annual market research processes are inclusive of those with a disability	June 2007
Seek a broad range of views on disability and access issues from the community through community groups, Zoo visitors with disabilities and the wider community.	March 2008



# Appendix 1

## Progress since 1995 under the Disability Service Plan

A significant amount of capital works has been undertaken in the past decade. These also address needs of access for those with disabilities. Additionally, systemic and policy changes have led to improvements in provision of Zoo services.

### **OUTCOME 1: Existing facilities and services are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities.**

- Multiple exhibits (Savannah, wetlands, tortoises) have been modified to improve viewing opportunities for wheelchair users or general disability access.
- Where appropriate, difficult gate systems have been removed, reduced or modified (Harmony Farm, Wetlands, Bushwalk).
- Several roads and pathways have been modified to within standard. Roads/pathways outside of standard have been identified and prioritised for modification.
- New exhibit areas have been created with disability access incorporated including ramps, see-through barriers, fewer 'no through roads', low gradients and glass fronted exhibits.
- Shelter/rest areas have been increased on the Zoo main lawn with the introduction of bench/table combos with open ends for wheelchair users. Paved areas have been introduced on periphery of main lawn for wheelchair users. Layout modified to facilitate use by people who use wheelchairs.
- All drinking water-fountains have been replaced with universal access design.
- Large playground for children with and without disability to play together has been introduced. This includes scented garden, sensory playground, ramp access slides, 'sound-garden', swings with seatbelts & crash-mats and a special, tranquil 'rest area' for children. This facility is regularly audited to ensure compliance to standard(s).
- Transport options for all visitors (including those with disabilities) improved following implementation of one-hour guided tours on a 'Zebra car' (including a wheelchair accessible model). Provided at low cost & frequently provided FOC to groups from aged care or disability organisations. Ten free manual wheelchairs available for visitor use daily. Ride-on 'scooters' available for a moderate daily hire fee.
- Number of food outlets/café increased to minimise distance between services. Additional 'fixed' facilities, introduction of mobile 'carts' and increase in number of vending machines.
- Frequency & quality of visitor seating increased. Audit carried out to relocate seating to most appropriate/necessary locations.
- All major events are accessible to those with disabilities. Paved wheelchair areas are set aside for those who cannot use their chair on grass, carers/companions are provided with FOC access to events and key information during events is communicated verbally as well as in writing.



## **OUTCOME 2: Ensure all buildings are accessible to people with disabilities**

- Zoo Shop modified to introduce ramp and more accessible fittings.
- Information Centre rebuilt to lower counter height.
- New (lower) admissions booth built at entrance to cater for people who use wheelchairs or are of short stature.
- Three new accessible toilet facilities (including baby change facilities) introduced in visitor areas.
- Toilet facilities in the conference centre were completely redesigned. This includes an accessible toilet facility (unisex) which features an accessible shower facility.
- Zoo offers free-of-charge admission to carers of people with disabilities (which would prevent them visiting without assistance) or companions of companion card holders.
- Number of ACROD parking bays up from 5 to 13. Seven of these located within 20m of the Zoo's main entrance/reception.

## **OUTCOME 3: Information about facilities and services is provided in different formats that meet the needs of people with disabilities.**

- Interpretive signage written in plain English utilising images and diagrams.
- Directional signage high-contrast & utilises animal symbols.
- Zoo map utilises colour-coding and animal symbols.
- Tactile experiences increased through provision of 'touch-table' experiences by Zoo volunteers, life-like animal statues and models, and paw-prints set into the roadways.
- Zoo advertising and promotion utilise all mediums. Newspaper/magazines, television, commercial radio, community radio & internet are all important tools and ensure that key Zoo information is accessible to a wide range of audiences including those with disabilities.
- Reception staff are well trained to answer telephone queries and a recorded Info-line with key Zoo information is provided 24 hours a day.
- Alternative methods of providing information are available.
- Pre-recorded audio-tour introduced to provide an alternative information source about Zoo animals & services.
- Docents provide one-on-one and group information daily.
- "Zoo to You" program provides FOC offsite talks to community groups on various topics relating to the Zoo.
- Two new interpretive hubs with audio-visual facilities created. These provide animal/species information in visual, audio and captioned forms.
- Keepers provide talks daily to present animal information to visitors in-person. Text-version scripts for these are available on request.
- Daily activities are promoted over the Zoo's public address system to the benefit of those with reading/learning disabilities.



- A range of formal education experiences specifically designed for those with disabilities can be modified for different-needs groups or if an individual in the group has different needs.
- The Zoo's website has been completely redeveloped three times to keep up with advancing standards in websites including disability access. It now features increased audio, video and interactive components as well as being compliant for use by people who use text-readers or other technologies. It meets all the 'Priority 1' criteria of the W3C and the majority of 'Priority 2'.

**OUTCOME 4: Employees are aware of, and understand, the different needs of people with disabilities:**

- Training provided to staff in providing service to people with disabilities. Additional training provided to frontline staff in specific disabilities.
- Recruitment policy modified to ensure that people with a disability felt welcome to apply and supported in their application for employment at Perth Zoo.
- The Zoo sourced training funding which allowed it to provide one-on-one specialised training for individuals with specific needs resulting from a disability and their supervisors.
- Specific training in 'Managing people with special needs' offered to supervisors. This included awareness & skills in dealing with employees with a disability.
- Expansion of the work experience program for those with disabilities and found ways outside of the mainstream to provide meaningful, skill-developing work experience opportunities to people with a disability.
- The Zoo's Disability Services Group conducts audits of key facility areas to catch emerging access issues.

**OUTCOME 5: People with disabilities are consulted and provided with the opportunity to participate in public surveys and decision making processes on issues that may affect them:**

- "Comment card" system introduced to ensure people with disabilities were able to provide feedback that led to service improvements.
- Annual Market Research is conducted with strict methodology. "Intercept" interview protocol and 'random' telephone interviews both ensure that people with disabilities are not over- or under-represented in key research feedback.
- Visitor Services Officers regularly interact and proactively solicit feedback from all visitors.

