



Disability Action Plan 2009 - 2012

South East Water Limited

Foreword

We welcome the first Disability Action Plan (DAP) for South East Water Limited (SEW), prepared for our staff and for the members of the communities we serve.

Researching and preparing this DAP has been an instructive experience for us.

Our vision and strategic priorities reflect our goals and aspirations for our customers and community. We are concerned that too often, when 'serving the community' means excluding, inadvertently or otherwise, a significant proportion of that same community.

Our DAP will alert us to measures to make sure we do not overlook those with a disability. We expect it will go further, and help us understand the value of those with a disability and the part they can play in our organisation. As such, our DAP is a timely and welcome document.

SEW undertakes to support and resource the DAP, to review it, and to make sure it is as effective as it can be. My personal thanks go to the staff who prepared and developed the DAP.

Shaun Cox
Managing Director
South East Water Limited

What we do

South East Water is one of Melbourne's three retail water businesses.

We are a State-owned company providing water, recycled water and sewerage services to around 1.4 million residential, commercial and industrial customers across 3,640 square kilometres from Port Melbourne to Portsea, and from Mordialloc to some 40 kilometres east of Berwick.

At its core, our job is to apply our commercial and technical expertise to the challenge of taking a naturally-occurring resource from the environment, treating it, pumping it, piping it, maintaining the systems, measuring it and bringing it to customers to meet their needs and removing it safely when they finish with it. It means acknowledging that customers have different needs for water (drinking, cooking, washing, watering, etc.). We need to adapt our products and services to those different needs.

The second part of our job is to influence the behaviour and attitudes of the community - our customers - to help them use water more efficiently, and actively manage their needs and changing expectations. We need to find innovative response to a changing environment and create customer choice through integrated water solutions. The future belongs to those who can adapt to change, and we welcome change.

SEW has 500 plus staff and contractors based at its Heatherton and Lynbrook offices.

About disability

While disability may be difficult to define, formal definitions written in legislation (The Victorian Disability Act 2006 and Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992) reveal disability is much wider than generally thought.

For the purposes of this plan, SEW is using the definition of disability in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. This covers disabilities which are physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory and neurological. The definition also covers physical disfigurement and the presence of disease causing organisms, such as HIV. It is important to note that this definition covers a disability that currently exists, may exist in the future or is imputed to a person. Please refer to appendix 1 for the full definition and examples.

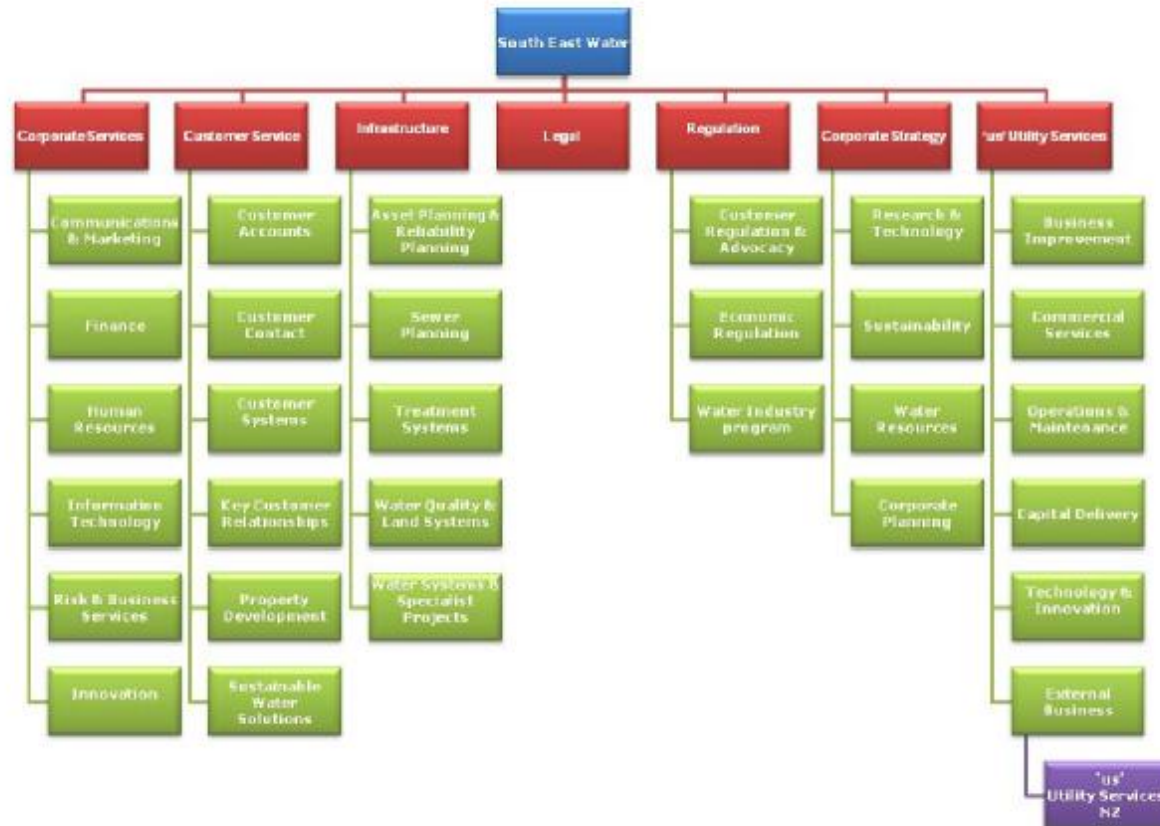
With such a wide-ranging definition, the incidence of disability is far higher than generally considered. The Australian Bureau of Statistics in their **Disability, Ageing and Carers; summary of findings** report in 2003 reveals 20 per cent of the Australian population has a disability.

The data also reveals that the incidence of disability is increasing, in line with the ageing of the population as the baby-boomer generation moves into retirement.

SEW acknowledges the significance of the data and the need and urgency of co-ordinated disability policy reform across the public sector. We are taking our first steps with this, our inaugural DAP.

Organisational chart

The organisational structure of SEW reflects seven groups: Corporate Services, Customer Service, Infrastructure, Company Secretary and Legal Counsel, Regulations, Corporate Strategy and 'us' Utility Services.



SEW organisational structure

SEW contains seven business groups.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services group encompasses all the combined support services provided, based on specialised knowledge, best practices and technology to serve customers and business partners.

Customer Service

The Customer Service group provides a comprehensive range of services to all segments of our customer base, including residential and commercial customers and the property development industry.

Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Group's role is ensure that the water, sewerage and recycled systems are capable of meeting our customer service standards in an efficient manner now, and into the future, by optimising the development and operational capability of the systems and their assets.

Company secretary and Legal Counsel

The Legal Group provides legal advice to the company, reviews and drafts legal documentation including legal correspondence and notices under the Water Act (1989) (Vic) and Water Industry Act 1994 (Vic), manages compliance, arranges and conducts training and education, and provides proactive strategic legal input.

Regulation

The Regulation Group provides support and advice to South East Water on a range of economic and customer service related regulatory matters. The Group also manage and administer a range of water industry programs such as the Smart Water Fund.

Corporate Strategy

The Corporate Strategy Group provides South East Water Ltd with a coordinated approach to strategy development and analysis, research, business development and environmental and social responsibility. It also coordinates the development of the Corporate Plan and ensures it is supported through the Water Plan.

'us' Utility Services

Utility Services – 'us' is an alliance between SEW, Thiess and Siemens and covers the construction, operation and maintenance of water and sewerage infrastructure, including pipeline renewals, water quality and the operation of the Sewerage Treatment Plants

Disability Policy

SEW recognises the number and diversity of people with disabilities in the community, and as such within its own workforce.

SEW will use its position of influence in the community and within the network of public sector bodies to promote consistent business practices that do not exclude people with disabilities from its own services, programs and facilities, and in its dealings with other agencies in the public and private sectors.

SEW's disability action plan (DAP) addresses the four outcome areas as set out in section 38 of the Disability Act 2006 (Victoria):

- a) reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;
- b) reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;
- c) promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;
- d) Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

SEW undertakes to consult regularly with people with disabilities, to follow best practice principles in hiring and sustaining its employees with disabilities, and to encourage similar undertakings with other organisations.

SEW will resource it's DAP. It undertakes to monitor, evaluate and review it regularly. SEW will report on the implementation of it's DAP in its annual report as consistent with section 38 of the Disability Act 2006.

Item noted at

SEW Board Meeting

February 2009

Consultation

South East Water's DAP is guided by its Disability Advisory Group (DAG), one of SEW's consultative and advisory groups made up of people with a particular interest and expertise.

The DAG, is co-chaired by the General Manager, Customer Service, who is also Chairman of the Diversity Council at SEW. This strategy fits with SEW's strategic approach to diversity, recognising the benefits of diversity to the organisation's ability to better serve its staff and customers. The chairman will monitor progress on the implementation of the DAP. The chairman reports on the advisory group's activities to SEW's Diversity Council and to the Executive Group and Board. The DAG is broadly supported by the Human Resources.

The group meets a minimum of four times per year, and at other times on demand. It comprises a mix of employees with disabilities or with a particular interest in disability, and from time to time calls upon some outside people with disabilities or with a particular knowledge of disability policy and interest in the administrative functions of South East Water.

In developing the plan, broad consultation has been undertaken. Participation in Office of Disability workshops held during 2008 and sub-group water authority specific sessions. Staff involvement from across the organisation, in the form of workshops and information sessions has been invaluable in developing the plan, and establishing the DAG. Support from Department of Human Services, and consultation with a number of councils ensured input to the plan was sought from our diverse customers.

South East Water - Disability Action Plan - Action Items 2009-2012

Reducing Barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities.			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Organise two Web based interactive forums on disability consultation	Communications & Marketing Branch/ Diversity Council	Jun-09	Target Information sent to 50 percent of public sector bodies to participate in either session
Subscribe to disability policy publications	Human Resources Branch/Diversity Council	Jun-09	Regular Electronic News feeds & Printed Publications
Participate in Public Seminars relating to disability policy	Human Resources Branch/Disability Advisory Group	On-going	Participation by two or more staff at least twice per year - including sessions with Office of Disability, HREOC meetings, Water Authorities Network meetings or other.
Establish SEW's Disability Advisory Group	Human Resources Branch	Dec-08	Ensure the group has focus, Terms of Reference & holds regular meetings with actionable items.
Conduct access audits of the Heatherton office, Lynbrook office & Mt Martha Treatment Plant	Risk & Business Services Branch/ OH&S Management Committee	Jun-09	Access audits conducted and report accepted by SEW board
Prepare implementation plan for buildings based on audit reports	Risk & Business Services Branch	Aug-09	Implementation plan endorsed by Senior Management and has a budget allocation
Investigate and implement web compliance with relevant standards	Communications and Marketing/IT	Jun-10	SEW website achieves AAA rating for disability access (*AAA is the highest rating you obtain for web accessibility. The criteria for AAA rating is governed by the W3C and is included in their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0)
Produce SEW's public information in accessible formats	Communications & Marketing Branch/Customer Advocacy Group	Jun-11	Assessment Audit of what accessible information is required by SEW customers
Conduct one fully accessible public meeting	Communications & Marketing Branch/Customer Advocacy Group/Disability advisory Group	Jun-10	Monitor attendance level for benchmarking of future public meetings to evaluate effectiveness

Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Develop inclusive employment procedures and practices	Human Resources Branch	On-going	Communicated & understood inclusive employment policies and practices. They are regularly updated and posted on line and are included within the manager's toolkit. Also to be evaluated in our annual disability survey.
Include a paragraph in the Position Descriptions informing new staff of the disability action plan.	Human Resources Branch	Dec-10	Raising staff awareness and support for the DAP, and seek feedback from staff.
Research Best Practice and develop a reasonable adjustment procedure to meet SEW needs	Disability Advisory Group/Risk & Business Services Branch/ OH&S Committee	Dec-09	Procedure in place and endorsed by the Disability Advisory Group and Executive Team.
Establish a system to inform disability groups of vacancies which arise in SEW	Human Resources Branch	Dec-10	Information on vacancies regularly appears in disability-related newsletter and on relevant websites. A minimum of 25% of advertised roles.

Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Display the Disability Action Plan for staff and public viewing	Disability Advisory Group/Risk & Business Services Branch/ OH&S Committee	Jun-09	The DAP is displayed in a prominent area for both staff and customers to access including publication on the WebPages
Provide access to existing committees in SEW to Disability groups	Disability Advisory Group	Dec-09	Disabilities groups provide input on Customer Committees
Investigate current technologies for additional or alternative uses	Disability Advisory Group	Dec-10	Multiple use applications are available and promoted within SEW and External Website
Conduct Customer segmentation research for SEW disability action needs	Communications & Marketing Branch/Customer Service Group	Dec-10	Able to access and accurate summary of disabilities needing consideration of SEW customers
Develop SEW's links with disability groups	Disability Advisory Group	Dec-11	Solid links have been established between SEW and Disability groups after segmentation research has been conducted.
Revise funding agreements, hiring and supplier contracts with a view to inserting a "disability access" clause	Legal Group	Dec-11	All new contracts have a disability access clause
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Achieving tangible changes in attitude and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Staff attend disability training	Disability Advisory Group/Diversity Council	Dec-09	Annually provide staff training with a minimum of 25% of SEW staff have completed a disability training session.
Release a quarterly disability update to staff	Communications & Marketing Branch/ Disability Advisory Group	Jun-09	Quarterly articles in Flow
Devise whole of organisation training policy in disability and awareness	Human Resources Branch	Jun-09	Policy Prepared and approved by board
Enquiries and Front counter staff to attend specialist training	Customer Service Group	Dec-09	All such staff undertake training and new staff are trained during induction
Prepare a training calendar for SEW staff	Human Resources Branch	Dec-09	Calendar released and disability part of organisation training strategy
Promote Best Practice and positive attitudes to disability within SEW	Executive Team/Branch Managers	Aug-09	Promotion material and awareness actively raised at branch meetings through agenda placement
Review of process and Cultural shifts to identify opportunities to embed Best Practice throughout SEW	Human Resources Branch	On-going	Conduct an annual survey and analyse results for awareness and changes in attitudes.

Further Questions

If you have any questions in relation to the SEW DAP please contact:

The Human Resources Manager

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If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print, please telephone

(03) 9552 3000, or email info@sewl.com.au . This publication is also published in PDF and Word formats on www.sewl.com.au

Appendix 1

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines disability in relation to a person;

1. Total or partial loss of the persons bodily or mental functions; or
2. Total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
3. The presence on the body of organism causing disease or illness; or
4. The presence in the body of an organism capable of causing disease or illness;
5. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
6. A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
7. A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement o that results in disturbed behaviour;

And includes a disability that:

- Presently exists; or
- Previously existed but no longer exists; or
- May exist in the future; or
- Is imputed to a person.

There are five broad categories of disability in common use;

- Physical disability – A Physical disability affects a person's mobility, this means the physical environment such as steps, roads, footpaths and public transport can be very difficult to negotiate.
- Sensory disability - A Sensory disability affects one of more of the five senses most commonly hearing and sight. For each sense there are separate conventional terms.
- Intellectual disability – Intellectually disability is generally defined as having an onset before 18 years of age. People with this disability may learn slowly and who are significantly below average in intelligence as measured by standard tests.
- Mental disability – Mental illness is a general term for a large group of separate illnesses. Examples can include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and clinical depression.
- Neurological impairment – This disability covers a range of conditions that affects the way the brain functions. Some examples include epilepsy, Huntington's disease and Parkinson's disease.