

ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE PUBLIC TOILETS A WALKER'S REALITY OR DREAM?

Building Better Health

WHY A FOCUS ON PUBLIC TOILETS?

Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD), Centre for Population Health (CPH) are working with Councils to:



- * Promote walking and
- * Improve the 'walkability' of our neighbourhoods.

Because walking improves our health, connects us to our community and reduces the environmental impact of our cars.

Walkers have told us that one of the barriers to walking is:



Poor access to public toilets, which restrict where and for how long they are willing to walk.



Older people, young children and people with disabilities need fast and ready access to toilets.

Toilets support the active inclusion of all people in public spaces' and support 'tourism, transport, public health and physical exercise strategies.¹

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

In 2019 we:



Mapped public toilets across all 4 Councils in WSLHD.



Reviewed the literature, policies and practices, to provide examples of best practice for toilet strategies and design.



Presented our findings to all 4 Councils.



Established a Network for Councils to share information and solutions.

WSLHD, CPH ACKNOWLEDGE THE :

- * Challenge of managing public toilets; achieving a balance between providing access to and minimising potential risks is complex, with no easy solutions.
- * High costs of maintenance and construction of public toilets.

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND SO FAR?

WSLHD Council's with a Toilet Strategy

Are developing a strategy

50%

25%

Do not have a strategy

25%

Have a strategy

Barriers to accessing public toilets, include :



Limited opening hours:
32% of Council toilets are open in daylight hours.



Lack of information on the location of public toilets
Information on websites and Apps are out of date.



- * Safety and perceptions of safety.
- * Inadequate design to support the needs of all users.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS



Maintain a register:

- * Update and maintain information about the location, opening hours and amenities of toilets.

Decommission:

- * Remove poorly located, old toilets in poor condition.



Increase access:

- * Open well located toilets in good condition, during daylight hours.
- * Promote well located toilets, including those in community facilities (e.g. libraries) and shopping centres. Include information on the National Public Toilet Map <https://toiletmap.gov.au/>
- * Provide directional signage to the nearest toilet in popular areas/playgrounds without toilets.
- * Expand access to frequent user groups in addition to sporting clubs e.g. Heart Foundation Walking Groups and Playgroups.
- * Subject to funding provide new amenities of good design standard in high use, highly visible locations.

HOW CAN WE USE THIS INFORMATION?



Work with Councils to explore innovative and practical solutions to increase access to public toilets.



Amplify the importance of public toilets, as a key amenity that supports all residents to actively participate in public spaces.



Apply the information on public toilets, in submissions on Plans and Strategies, relating to:

- * Active travel (specifically walking) strategies
- * Implementation of the Green Grid
- * Town centres; green open space (parks, playgrounds, etc.) developments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Contact the Partnerships and Healthy Places Team, Centre for Population Health, WSLHD on:



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www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/population-health-services/home

References

- 1 Katherine Webber 2018 Exploring Accessibility and Inclusion in Public Toilets, 2018 Rodney Warrington Churchill Fellow to increase accessibility and inclusion in public toilets by researching taboos, design, policy and legal barriers. <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/4395/Katherine+Webber>