



DHW Technical Guideline

TG014 Designing for Inclusion and Diversity

1. Objective

The Department of Housing and Works (DHW) is committed to supporting the construction of non-residential buildings that meet the needs of all people. The purpose of this document is to provide technical guidance to designing for inclusion and diversity. Diversity pertains to an array of human attributes and inclusion is the extent to which these are recognised and valued.¹

2. Methodology

It is fundamental to consider what experience and support we require our spaces deliver for the intended user. Building design for diversity and inclusion should be guided by

- Practical and evidence-based understanding of diversity and inclusion.
- Focus on safety and security, social interactions, sensory needs, physical accessibility, and visual/tactile/auditory/spatial wayfinding.
- Initial and ongoing consultation with project user groups.

2.1 Co-design

Co-design is a collaborative process where stakeholders—such as end users, designers, and project teams—work together to create solutions. By actively involving the people who will use or be affected by the outcome, co-design ensures their needs, experiences, and insights shape the final product or service. This approach fosters inclusivity, shared ownership, and better alignment with real-world requirements, ultimately promoting positive diversity and inclusion outcomes.

The following resources may be relevant when establishing a co-design approach:

1. [Co-design Toolkit \(Western Australian Council of Social Service 2021\)](#).
2. [Co-design toolkit: Working as equals in leadership, design and decision making \(NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation n.d., 06:13\)](#).
3. [Guide to Best Practice Planning Engagement in Western Australia \(Western Australian Planning Commission 2024\)](#).

¹ Katz and Miller 2016 as cited in Khanom and Shee 2024; Mor-Barak, 2017 as cited in Ng, Rajendran, & Waheduzzaman 2023).

3. Certification

3.1 Accreditation

Best practice approaches can be informed by recognised organisations that set design standards ahead of legislative frameworks. Many of these organisations also offer accreditation, which building owners or occupiers may choose to pursue.

While DHW does not formally endorse any specific organisation, their design requirements and accreditation processes may be supported, provided all building certification, legislative and regulatory obligations, and specific project briefing needs are met. Project teams are responsible for conducting due diligence to ensure the suitability and appropriateness of any organisational affiliations or accreditations. For example, accreditation for a breastfeeding friendly workplace (BFW) is offered by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) through their [BFW program](#).

3.2 Registration

To improve accessibility at a community level, the project should refer to and make consideration for lodgement with relevant and supporting registers, including for example:

- [National Public Toilet Map](#)

Managed by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing as part of the National Continence Program. This interactive map App provides information on the location and available range of ablution facilities, including accredited adult changing facilities, accessible and gender-neutral/unisex facilities, as well as those controlled by a master locksmith access key (MLAK).²

4. Guiding principles

The following section 4.0 includes guidelines for selected dimensions of diversity. Please note that they do not encompass all possible aspects or topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These guidelines are intended as a starting point and should be complemented by ongoing learning, dialogue, and engagement with broader diversity dimensions.

² Developed by Master Locksmiths and Spinal Cord Injuries Australia, MLAK is a nationally implemented universal keying/locking system, designed to permit secured universal access to facilities such as public ablutions and playground equipment, to community members with a proven and legitimate need.

4.1 Gender inclusive bathroom facilities

Although not yet represented in the NCC, all-gender sanitary facilities are a topic of ongoing consultation. Otherwise known as “Gender-neutral toilets”, these sanitary facilities are designed to accommodate for peoples of all genders.

When planning and designing gender inclusive facilities, consider the following:

- Ensure security, safety, privacy, and comfort for all users, and people with varying abilities.
- Comply with AS/NZS 1428.1 accessibility standards and meet NCC requirements via Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions or a Performance Solution.
- Provide alternative facilities (e.g. gender-specific toilets or UAT) nearby and clearly visible.
- Avoid isolated locations; design for passive and active surveillance to prevent bullying or harassment.
- Include clear, easily identifiable signage as part of a wayfinding strategy.
- Ensure uninterrupted use during operating hours with adequate lighting.
- Allow space for prams, dependent children, or a support person where appropriate.
- Avoid retrofitting existing toilets (e.g. UAT or female toilets) to prevent discrimination.
- Urinals should not be included.
- Collaborate with facility management on waste disposal, including biological waste.
- Consider whether in-cubicle or shared handwashing facilities—or a combination—best meets user needs.
- Privacy of cubicles, including between, over and to the front of partitions. Water resistant doors that extend fully to the floor and solid partitioning may be appropriate.

4.2 Accessible adult change facilities

While the NCC defines the minimum requirements and location for accessible adult change facilities within a limited number of public building typologies, the need and inclusion for these facilities should be considered in all new and refurbished non-residential government building typologies.

4.3 Parenting rooms

Parents returning to work after the birth, adoption, or care of an infant are to be supported through appropriate onsite facilities for feeding and care. Lack of such facilities may be considered discriminatory and could breach work health and safety laws.³

³[*Fair Work Ombudsman - Returning to work from parental leave*](#)

In addition to meeting the relevant requirements of the NCC, standards and any nominated accreditation pathway, when planning and designing parenting/feeding rooms, the following should be considered:

- Reference the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines (AusHFG): Standard Components - [Parenting Room data/layout sheets](#).
- Located where there is an appropriate level of passive and active surveillance. Isolated or remote locations should be avoided to prevent misuse.
- Must be readily accessible by all staff and facility visitors by arrangement, during the building's usual operations hours.
- Wheelchair accessibility.
- Acoustically private to ensure minimal disruption to the user and adjoining spaces.
- Securable, including entry door with internal privacy snib or similar.
- Appropriately illuminated (considering colour and illumination points) with ability to dim the lighting.
- Space for parking of large, double sized pram.
- Child safe. For further reference: www.kidsafewa.com.au and www.productsafety.gov.au/products/babies-kids/kids-equipment
- Sink with cold and hot-tempered water.
- Benchtop with electrical point for bottle warming equipment.
- Electrical point for equipment, such as breast pumps, in vicinity of the feeding chair.
- Lockable cupboards for personal storage of feeding equipment for regular users.
- Visual privacy such as blinds to windows or partitioning device in large multiuse rooms etc.
- Calm, comfortable, non-clinical/sterile interior, as users may use the room for a length of time.
- Fixed or pull-down baby change table, meeting the required legislated safety standards.
- Facilities for waste disposal (including nappies), appropriately considered in conjunction with the Facility Manager
- Hand sanitising and drying facilities, including paper towel dispenser.
- Loose furniture:
 - Seating suitable for feeding.
 - Small, movable table to support feeding incidentals and other sundries.
 - Chair and facilities for other dependent children and/or support person.
 - Fridge for the storing of milk and other incidentals.
 - Microwave.

- The room and furniture be easily cleaned, within the agreed facility management framework.
- Signage - see section 5.

4.3.1 Baby change station

On a project-by-project basis, when planning and designing baby change facilities (and a parenting room is not available), the following should be considered:

- When included in a facility, such as a universal access toilet (UAT) or adult change facility, ensure any required clearances meet NCC requirements and functional use. This includes ready and safe access to necessary features from the change table location.
- Facility must be safe, durable, hygienic and accessible to a wide range of users.
- Compliance with any Australian standards for example AS4688.
- Accessible to wheelchair and mobility aids.
- Securable, including entry door with internal privacy snib or similar.
- Sufficient and safe space for parking of large, double sized pram and co-occupation of dependent children or a support person.
- Fixed or pull-down baby change table, meeting the required legislated safety standards.
- Appropriate structural wall support.
- Sink with cold and tempered hot water.
- Facilities for waste disposal (including nappies), considered in conjunction with the facility manager.
- Hand sanitising and drying facilities, including paper towel dispenser.

4.4 People with disability

The history of diversity and inclusion regarding people with disabilities is well documented.

AS/NZ 1428.1 – 2009 (Standards Australia) defines the minimum design specifications for people with physical and visual needs. Further, it is important to note that people with disabilities can experience additional challenges. As such, the following guidance is offered for consideration:

- Designing to promote safety and security for people with additional physical and/or intellectual needs.
- Accommodating for formal and informal support accompaniment.
- Acoustic treatments for auditory management.
- Consideration for those who use physical mobility aids.
- Consideration for ease of visual, tactile, and acoustic wayfinding.

- Access to natural daylighting to assist visual luminance contrasting and time-of-day recognition.

4.5 Aboriginal people

A culturally responsive design approach that draws upon Aboriginal people's '...perspectives, priorities, knowledge, experience, and ways of working' is more likely to positively influence the service delivery of the facility. This approach aligns with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021-2029, specifically the strategic element: Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work.

Consideration may be made, where appropriate, for including specialist advisors or a community-nominated elder, representative or spokesperson on the project team. They may support, endorse and guide the project as necessary.

4.6 Cultural diversity

“Cultural diversity means having a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds – it can include differences in cultural/ethnic identity (how we identify ourselves and how others identify us), language, country of birth, religion, heritage/ancestry, national origin, and/or race.⁴

4.6.1 Wellbeing rooms

It is recommended that projects consider provision of space to cater exclusively for a variety of non-work-related culturally diverse needs for example meditation, multifaith customs, grieving.

Where implemented as part of the project's briefing and design definition, the use of the space should be defined by co-design processes.

The planning and design of a wellbeing room could consider the following:

- Locate in a quiet and discreet position, easily accessible by all staff and visitors by arrangement.
- Washroom facilities should be in close proximity.
- Acoustic control should be appropriate.
- Natural and/or artificial lighting and the ability to dim lighting.
- Privacy should be considered, including in-use signage or privacy snib locking.
- Clearly defined signage to show the room use but remains faith and gender neutral.
- Free of culturally specific decoration.
- Appropriate storage, including securable options for regular users.
- Carpet or similar soft flooring options.

⁴ Diversity Council Australia and the University of Sydney Business School (J O'Leary, and D Groutsis), Cultural Diversity Definition, Sydney, DCA, 26 June 2020.

- Subject to facility size, it may be appropriate to consider strategies to divide the space, such as a temporary partition or curtain. This is, for example, to enable the division of sexes for religious prayers.
- The space should accommodate the ability to be bookable.
- Reinforce to the customer agency and facility management that this space should not be considered, or otherwise identified, for use for any other purpose.

5. Signage and visual cues

It is important to ensure the location and function of facilities is clearly articulated to avoid offence, discrimination, confusion, and discomfort, as well as unintended or inappropriate use. Consider:

- Room use is clearly defined, but remains gender-neutral, supporting all gender users (e.g. 'mothering' or 'breastfeeding' are potentially exclusionary terms).
- 'Humorous' signage should typically be avoided, as it may generate unintentional offence.
- For gender-neutral ablutions:
 - Signage and visual cues must be clear, visible and understandable.
 - Stereotypical colours should be used with caution as these may confuse.
- For parenting facilities:
 - Avoid signage that presumes the chosen/necessary feeding approach (e.g. breast pump).
 - Consider signage that identifies the room is in use or a booking is in place.
 - Consider signage identifying alternative locations for caring needs.

6. Percent for Art

Where the budget for a new building exceeds \$2 million, up to 1% of the total construction budget can be allocated to public art (DHW 2025). As it relates to diversity and inclusion, the following resources apply:

1. Percent for Art Scheme (DHW 2025).
2. The Australia Council - Creative Australia: New protocols on First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property (Australian Government 2020).

The following technical guidance applies:

- Co-design is the preferred Percent for Art approach.
- Art must not misrepresent any person or group.
- Art must not contravene any existing copyrights or cultural protocols.
- Art must not breach any associated regulations.

- Consultation should be sought from specialists with expert knowledge of the artistic content.

7. References

1. AusHFG (Australasian Health Facility guidelines) 2024. "Parenting Room: PAR Revision: 4.0 Date published: 30/06/2022." Australasian Health Infrastructure Alliance. [Parenting Room | AUSHFG 2025](#)
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (February 2024) [Mental health findings for LGBTQ+ Australians | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).
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6. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* No. 135, 1992. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text>.
7. Diversity Council Australia and the University of Sydney Business School (J O'Leary, and D Groutsis), Cultural Diversity Definition, Sydney, DCA, 26 June 2020.
8. DPLH (Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage) [Guide to Best Practice Planning Engagement in Western Australia](#).
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13. Master Locksmiths Association of Australasia. n.d. Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK). <https://masterlocksmiths.com.au/mlak/>
14. Ng, Eddy S., Diana Rajendran, and Wahed Waheduzzaman. 2023. "Promoting Workplace Inclusion and Self-Efficacy among Skilled Migrant Workers in Australia." *International Journal of Manpower* 44 (2): 267-282. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-01-2022-0044>.
15. NSW Government. n.d. "Co-design toolkit: Working as equals in leadership, design and decision making." NSW Government: Co-design toolkit: Agency for Clinical Innovation. <https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/co-design>.

8. Document Control

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9. Document Approval

Document approval
<p>This guideline was endorsed and approved for use on 14/11/2025 by:</p> <p>Dean Wood, Principal Architect</p> <p>Department of Housing and Works</p>

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