

ACCESS AND EQUITY POLICY

PREFACE

We aim to be an effective organisation. Having an access and equity program to make sure that our services are accessible to all members of the public and to disadvantaged groups in particular is one way of achieving this. It is essential that our office is accessible to anyone who needs our services and any barriers are identified and where possible eliminated.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide the framework for our Access and Equity activities.

The following communities, which are widely recognised as being disadvantaged, have been identified as our target groups for the purpose of this policy:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Children and young people
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- People in custody including juveniles
- People in non metropolitan and regional areas
- People with disabilities
- Older people
- Women

Special consideration includes implementing strategies for removing barriers and facilitating access. However it should be noted that while we endeavour to ensure ‘equity’ for all, we do not intend to use the same strategies for all target groups. We will develop strategies that are relevant for a particular group to ensure appropriate levels of assistance.

Separate strategies supporting this policy are:

- the Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement Forward Plan
- the Disability Action Plan
- the Action Plan for Women

The *NSW Ombudsman Multicultural Policies and Services Program Forward Plan* details the manner in which we conduct our affairs, observing the principles of cultural diversity as defined by the *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*. Our current forward plan expires at the end of 2009. A new forward plan will be developed using the revised Multicultural Planning Framework developed by the Community Relations Commission.

The *NSW Ombudsman Disability Action Plan* details the methods in which we will meet our obligations under the *Disability Services Act 1993*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1997*, and the objectives of the NSW Government Guidelines for Disability Action Planning.

The *Action Plan for Women* details the strategies that we will implement to meet our obligations under the NSW Government’s policy for improving outcomes for women.

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Related policies:	Disability Policy, Multicultural Policies and Services Program Forward Plan, Disability Action Plan 2010-2014, Action Plan for Women
File reference:	ADM/6929
This policy does not supersede any other policy.	

The Ombudsman has established a working party to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy. This working party will examine our existing communication/information strategies and if necessary, develop a comprehensive program for improving how we consult with and inform our stakeholders, including the target groups identified in this policy. Our identified programs may need to be modified following this review.

Strategies for other target groups are included in relevant division/team business plans.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Director Corporate is responsible for overall coordination of each of our separate access and equity programs. Business specific programs, eg correctional centre visits are the responsibility of the relevant business unit.

Individual staff will be identified in each of the accompanying plans to progress the implementation of the relevant plans.

Changes to these separate programs can be approved by the Director Corporate.

LEGISLATIVE/POLICY FRAMEWORK

Disability Services Act 1993

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977

Guidelines for disability action planning by NSW Government agencies

Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000

Multicultural Planning Framework

DEFINITIONS

Not applicable.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Ombudsman should be accessible.

In accordance with legislative provision and NSW Government policies, we will take all necessary steps to:

- consult with relevant target groups about service provision
- identify and remove, where possible, barriers in our service provisions
- provide information about services and processes in accessible formats
- increase the representation of relevant target groups in our staffing profile.

The contents of this policy document, the strategies/action plans that accompany it and any of the policies and procedures manuals referred to in these documents, outline the processes that relate to the Office's commitment to improved access and equity.

OMBUDSMAN APPROVAL



Bruce Barbour

OMBUDSMAN