



# Changing Places

A Call to the Australian Building & Design Industry



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There are currently around 200,000 Australians living with a severe disability who require assistance to use the bathroom. A current lack of appropriate toilet facilities means these people are confined to the four walls of their homes, with the only other choice being for their carers to change their continence pad on the unhygienic floors of public toilets.

The Changing Places project advocates for the creation of fully accessible and appropriate toilet facilities in major public spaces across Australia to meet the needs of people with severe and profound disabilities.

The project has already seen resounding success in the United Kingdom where, since its 2006 launch, has resulted in the installation of over 800 Changing Places facilities across the country.

While at present there are no provisions in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) mandating the implementation of Changing Places in Australian buildings, a groundswell of support being driven by high-profile organisations, industry leaders and state governments has seen the issue come to the fore.

Ultimately the responsibility of the inclusion of Changing Places in new projects in Australia will fall to architects, designers, developers and building owners to incorporate these facilities into their buildings, helping to create inclusive and accessible communities and allow everybody to enjoy the day to day activities the majority of us take for granted.



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## The Changing Places campaign

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It is clear that the facilities provided in conventional disabled toilets are insufficient for the needs of a significant number people living with severe disabilities. These disabilities can include but are not limited to people with profound learning disabilities, as well as people with physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. People with these disabilities are often limited in their mobility and require equipment and/or the support of one or two carers to use the toilet or change.

Without access to the required facilities these peoples' lives and the lives of their carers remain restricted in where they can go and what they can do on a daily basis.

The Changing Places project began in the United Kingdom in 2006 to address these issues, and assist in providing everyone access to the facilities required to enable them to live a full life.

The success of the program is evidenced by its rapid growth and acceptance into building requirements throughout the UK. After introducing nine facilities containing Changing Places features in 2006, there are today over 800 facilities across the UK in public spaces including, but not limited to, shopping centres, parks, football stadiums and pubs<sup>1</sup>.

The technical requirements for Changing Places have now been adopted in the British Standards Institution's best-practice guide BS 8300<sup>2</sup> and referenced in UK Building Regulation which recommends that large public buildings install a Changing Places facility<sup>3</sup>.

## Changing Places in Australia

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Australia has begun to follow in the footsteps of the UK, the successes of the campaign there and its importance to social change has seen a growing awareness of the campaign here.

In 2012 the Changing Places Australia consortium was formed. Inspired by the Changing Places campaign in the UK, the consortium developed a relationship with the UK consortium to set about developing designs for Changing Places facilities in Australia.

2014 saw the first major steps by government in Australia toward a commitment to Changing Places with the Victorian Government investing \$750,000 for six new Changing Places facilities. Some of the locations included the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne Zoo and Rod Laver Arena<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the 3 locations, the Victorian Government also funded a mobile Changing Places unit.

In 2015 the Victorian Government announced ongoing funding for three new facilities in regional Victoria, as well as providing funding to the Association of Children with a Disability to support the promotion and implementation of Changing Places facilities in other key locations around the state.

In December 2015 the Western Australia State Government became the first in Australia to commit to creating and funding a network of Changing Places. \$2 million was committed to establishing a network of Changing Places across Western Australia, with the first 14 Changing Places locations having been identified throughout metropolitan and regional areas<sup>5</sup> - the first in Elizabeth Quay to open in early 2016.



## Changing Places and the National Disability Strategy

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The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (NDS) provides a ten-year national policy framework for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. It represents a commitment by all levels of government, industry and the community to a unified, national approach to policy and programme development<sup>6</sup>.

It is acknowledged that equal participation by people with disability in Australian life will enrich life for all Australians<sup>7</sup>.

The benefits of Changing Places align strongly with core NDS policy directions including:

- Increased participation of people with disability, their families and carers in the social, cultural, recreational and sporting life of the community

- Improved accessibility of the built and natural environment through planning and regulatory systems, maximising the participation and inclusion of every member of the community
- A public, private and community transport system that is accessible to the whole community

Improving the physical and mental wellbeing of carers are also key to the NDS, and better access to Changing Places will help to alleviate many of the most common issues faced by the carers including chronic pain, injuries, and depression.

## The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

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The NDIS is a healthcare program initiated by the Australian Government Change to the way that people with a disability are supported in the community. After being trialled in various regions throughout Australia over the past 3 years it will see a national rollout in 2016.

The aim of the NDIS is to provide support to people with a permanent and significant disability that affects their ability to take part in everyday activities. The support will help people achieve life goals including greater independence, involvement in the community, education, employment, health and wellbeing.

With the Australian Government providing \$19.3 billion for the roll out of the NDIS, and a combined \$22.2 billion from both Federal and State governments funding to run the scheme, the next ten years will see people with a disability and their carers gaining unprecedented access to the wider community.

There will be an expectation that the infrastructure in public places will provide support to people with a disability, as access to the community increases as a result of the NDIS, with Changing Places becoming an increasingly important element of public architecture.



## Changing Places Design

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The recommended Changing Places Australian design was developed in conjunction with access consultants, architects and organisations representing carers and people with severe disabilities.

A Changing Places Information Kit provides complete design specification, costings and guidelines providing architects with a quick and simple reference for Changing Places design developments in new projects.

Each Changing Places facility requires special consideration for equipment, space and the environment. In addition to the standard features of an accessible toilet, such as emergency alarm and grab rails, a Changing Places toilet should ideally feature the following specialist equipment:

### Equipment:

- A height adjustable, adult sized changing bed
- A constant charge ceiling hoist or portable hoist if this is not available

### Space:

- Adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers
- A centrally placed toilet with space either side for the carers

### Safe and clean environment:

- Wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench
- A large waste bin for disposable pads
- A non-slip floor



## A Social Responsibility

Changing Places allows people with a severe or profound disability and their carers to enjoy day to day activities many of us take for granted. While there are currently no requirements under Australian Standards, it is considered best practice under the Disabilities Discrimination Act<sup>8</sup> and there is a push for Changing Places to be considered in a review of the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010.

For now the social inclusion of people with disabilities depends on government, the community and industry to decide whether the wider social and physical environment offers support or creates barriers.

Leading change is a social responsibility and the provision of Changing Places facilities is a giant leap towards creating an inclusive built environment for all people with disability.

Architects and designers are entrusted with creating the future of our built environment and hold great influence over community standards now and into the future. The industry, as well as building owners who provide these facilities can proudly promote their awareness of community needs and commitment to social responsibility, while those who overlook their social responsibility will be questioned as to why.



Enware has showcased to the industry the larger idea of embracing change to help disabled people

## Enware Australia

Enware is Australia's primary supplier of specialist Changing Places equipment, and an industry champion of Changing Places Australia. Enware has been a supporter of the concept since its introduction to Australia, and has led the commercial supply of the specialist equipment into the sector.

Enware has showcased to the industry the larger idea of embracing change to help disabled people, and have been pivotal in working with many major commercial names in making the Changing Places concept become reality across Australia.

A Changing Places facility must provide a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench, with Enware's nursing bench ideal to satisfy these requirements.

Enware provide free consultation to architects and project managers to assist with the design and implementation of Changing Places in Australia.



*“Changing places has made a big difference to us.*

*It means we can now walk to the park instead of having to drive two minutes up the road (Ringwood lake) knowing if my daughter needs the bathroom we don’t have to rush home or change her in the back of the car where everyone can see.*

*It means we can finish a shop and have lunch with friends or go see a movie (at Eastland) knowing if a toilet stop is needed we have an option other than the floor.*

*Changing places facilities are making life so much more accessible for families like ours and people with higher support needs.”*

**- Eron and Sarah**

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/individuals-families-and-carers/for-individuals-families-and-carers/recreation-and-leisure-/changing-places/>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.changing-places.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=YEDKVYyX8TE%3D&tabid=61>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-regulations-access-statements-security-changing-places-toilets-and-regulation-7>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/changing-places,-changing-lives2>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/Barnett/2015/12/Changing-Places-network-a-first-for-accessibility.aspx>
- <sup>6</sup> [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/national\\_disability\\_strategy\\_2010\\_2020.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_disability_strategy_2010_2020.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/national\\_disability\\_strategy\\_2010\\_2020.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_disability_strategy_2010_2020.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> <http://changingplaces.org.au/review-of-disability-standards/>