

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS

Organisation: Lake Macquarie City Council

Date Received: 31 October 2024



30 October 2024

Dr Amanda Cohn MLC
Chair
Portfolio Committee No.8 – Customer Service

Submitted via online form

Dear Committee

Subject: Lake Macquarie City Council Staff Submission - Inquiry into Public Toilets

Lake Macquarie City Council staff welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Public Toilets.

Lake Macquarie City Council is the largest local government area (LGA) by population in the Hunter region. Home to more than 220,000 people, Lake Macquarie is a geographically dispersed city and currently manages 110 public toilet blocks across the LGA.

Council staff have provided six considerations to address emerging concerns relating to the use, accessibility and sustainability of public toilets in New South Wales which are outlined below:

1. **Accessibility:** Current standards may need updating to ensure public toilets are fully accessible to all people, including those with disabilities, parents with young children, and the elderly. Accessible facilities should comply with updated best practices, such as those recommended by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and more recent innovations in universal design.
2. **Safety:** Ensuring safety in public toilets is crucial, particularly for vulnerable populations. Measures such as improved lighting, security features (e.g. CCTV in public spaces), and design considerations that prevent hidden or isolated areas can improve safety.
3. **Hygiene and Cleanliness:** Public health standards related to sanitation are particularly important in the context of COVID-19 and other transmissible diseases. Enhanced cleaning protocols, touch-free fixtures, and improved ventilation are areas where updated guidelines could be warranted.
4. **Inclusivity:** There is growing recognition of the need for public toilets to cater to diverse gender identities. Introducing more inclusive, gender-neutral facilities would help make public spaces more welcoming for transgender and non-binary individuals.

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5. **Environmental Sustainability:** As sustainability becomes a larger focus, updating guidelines around water efficiency, energy use, and the use of eco-friendly materials in public toilets could align with NSW's environmental goals. This might include introducing more waterless toilets, better waste management systems, or green building materials.
6. **Cultural Considerations:** Public toilets should also be designed with respect to cultural diversity, such as accommodating traditional hygiene practices or providing spaces for religious washing requirements.

Council staff believe new or revised legislation and guidelines may indeed be warranted to address these emerging concerns and align public toilet facilities with modern standards of safety, accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. The funding model to implement such changes should involve further consideration and discussion.

Should you require further information or wish to follow up on any matters within this submission, please contact Karen Partington, Manager Asset Management on

Yours faithfully,

David Hughes
Director Built and Natural Assets