

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS

Organisation: Blacktown City Council

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Dr Amanda Cohn MLC
Chair
Public Toilets
Portfolio Committee No.8 - Customer Service
Uploaded via online portal

Dear Dr Cohn

Portfolio Committee No 8 – Customer Service Inquiry into Public Toilets

I am writing on behalf of Council in response to the recent calls for public submissions into your inquiry on public toilets.

We currently manage 218 public toilets throughout the City, with 45 of these open 7 days a week. The remaining 173 are limited to the operating hours of the community sports field hirers, community centres or libraries.

Our annual operational expenditure for the operational cleaning services, consumables, maintenance and sanitary services of the public toilets network is in excess of \$15 million, which includes a full-time team of 6 staff and 3 vehicles to service these facilities daily.

We have been working closely with the NSW Health Western Sydney Local Health District since 2017 in the community response to walkability and reducing the barriers and access to public toilets.

This network has continued with other neighbouring councils, where we have shared emerging trends, challenges and improving community access by updating councils' public toilets on the National Public Toilet Map at www.toiletmap.gov.au

We welcome the opportunity to provide the attached comments for consideration. We also welcome the introduction of legislative change as highlighted in our recommendations as we believe a wholistic approach is required to ensure that community needs and their concerns are addressed.

If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss our response further please contact our Manager Building Construction and Maintenance, Zulfi Khan on

Yours faithfully

Kerry Robinson OAM
Chief Executive Officer

Attachments

1. Blacktown City Council's response Inquiry

Blacktown City Council's response to Portfolio Committee No 8 – Customer Service Inquiry into Public Toilets

| Terms of reference | Our comments and recommendations |
|----------------------------|--|
| a) Accessibility | <p>The main concern relating to public toilets is accessibility issues. This could be a combination of issues regarding its location, hours of operation (limited schedule due to community sporting bodies), or not fully accessible to all people, including those with disabilities, parents with young children or elderly people.</p> <p>We recommend the introduction of minimum planning requirements and design standards to ensure that all members of the public have equal access to public toilets, which are accessible and inclusive to the community's needs.</p> |
| b) Hygiene and cleanliness | <p>There has been increased concern around the standard and design of facilities since recovery from the pandemic. This includes the level and standardisation of cleaning protocols, public toilets design and functionality, fittings and fixtures (modern and touch-free), and the level of service regarding sanitary products including soap/isopropyl alcohol sanitisers.</p> |
| c) Safety | <p>Concerns include poor lighting, security features, poor positioning (limited passive surveillance within the design and the perception of being hidden or within isolated areas), slow maintenance response, and vandalism.</p> <p>We recommend the introduction of minimum safety requirements ensuring a practicable design standard, which includes minimum specifications of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) lighting, CCTV within public space, and consideration of location of such amenities.</p> |
| d) Design standard | <p>Our recent designs at Galungara Reserve have seen Council building towards the future.</p> <p>We have now adopted single unisex cubicles, along with fully accessible amenities. This design ensures we meet the community's expectations regarding accessibility and inclusivity, safety in regards to remote access control and CCTV, which has been received well by the community.</p> <p>We recommend the introduction of minimum standards in ensuring public toilet designs have a focus on environmental sustainability, including the use of construction materials and the ongoing operational energy/water efficiency.</p> |
| e) Operational cost | <p>Like all local governments, we are harmonising community expectations and ensuring adequate service levels across operational budgets (approximately \$100,000 p.a.) and the capital replacement cost of the assets (approximately \$200,000 if including changing places specifications).</p> <p>We recommend the introduction of a funding program to support all councils to upgrade their existing network of public toilets to guarantee they meet the agreed minimum compliance requirements to ensure accessibility and inclusive access to public toilets.</p> <p>This would be a state-based funding framework for public toilets, which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities and assists local councils in the provision of maintenance, and the standardisation of the cleanliness and hygiene service levels across the public toilet network.</p> |