

Universal Access

Well designed and connected communities benefit everyone. An accessible environment is particularly relevant for people with disability but also benefits a broader range of people. More people are encouraged to use alternative modes of transport other than the car more often, resulting in a more sustainable, healthier, safer community with independent travel possible for others such as the elderly, children, families and people with disability.

Currently one in five people in Australia have a disability. Two out of three people over 75 have a disability and the prevalence of disability will increase further with the ageing of the Australian population. It is estimated that the total number of people who identify themselves as having a disability in Western Australia will increase by about 38 per cent to around 632,600 by 2023.

An accessible environment, while particularly relevant for people with disabilities, has benefits for a broader range of people. For example, ramps assist parents pushing baby strollers. Information in plain language helps those with less education or speakers of a second language. Announcements of each stop on public transit may aid travellers unfamiliar with the route as well as those with visual impairments. Moreover, the benefits for many people can help generate widespread support for making changes.

To succeed, accessibility initiatives need to take into account external constraints including affordability, competing priorities, availability of technology and knowledge, and cultural differences. Accessible communities can only be achieved with high-level cooperation, sustained effort and strong commitment from the community, state government agencies, local government, urban designers, planners, architects, developers, street designers and accessible communities experts.

Often, accessibility is more easily achievable incrementally. Initial efforts should aim to build a “culture of accessibility” and focus on removing basic environmental barriers. Once the concept of accessibility has become ingrained and as more resources become available, it becomes easier to raise standards and attain a higher level of universal design. Best practice examples of accessible communities around the world can provide ideas that may be suitable to be implemented locally.

Eventually we hope it will be an enjoyable experience to walk, push your pram or wheel your wheelchair all the way along a route safe in the knowledge that problems with crossing roads, negotiating high kerbs and narrow pavements and finding somewhere easily to have a rest are things of the past.

For more information see:

[Getting in and around the City of Perth](#)

[Accessible Communities study report](#) [Accessible Communities report compendium](#)

