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Endorsed by LGNSW Board in
December 2022

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Via email: npws.parkspolicy@environment.nsw.gov.au

Draft National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Accessible Parks Policy

As the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general purpose councils and related entities, Local Government NSW (LGNSW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the National Parks and Wildlife Service draft Accessible Parks Policy.

Councils have a keen interest in promoting accessible tourism and destination experiences, and national parks are a key attraction for locals and visitors to NSW. LGNSW has developed a [free, online course for inclusive tourism](#), setting out what the tourism sector – including councils – can do to improve facilities and experiences for customers and visitors.

The draft Accessible Parks Policy is a positive addition to the NPWS provision of inclusive services and facilities to all residents of NSW. LGNSW supports the intent and content of the draft policy which aligns with LGNSW's calls for NSW State Government agencies to adopt universal design principles in their strategies and action plans.

The following points provided below refer to specific items in the draft Policy and are provided for consideration in the development of the final Accessible Parks Policy.

Visitor Facilities

- LGNSW notes that the Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) has a Disability Inclusion Action Plan and that NPWS is engaged in implementing that plan. It is acknowledged that this is a crucial aspect in the development, maintenance and renewal of all national park facilities and that an appropriate level of funding is essential to achieving the outcomes identified in these plans.
- LGNSW commends NPWS for incorporating universal design principles into this Policy and recommends including the application of universal design principles to future planning, design and development of any new facilities, programs or services.

Visitor Experiences

- LGNSW commends the Policy in general with regards to addressing inclusive practices for visitor experiences.
- LGNSW acknowledges councils being included as a potential partner with regards to visitor experiences and encourages consultation with relevant local councils to assist in the development of accessible 'whole of journey' experiences.

Information and Communication

- The draft Policy notes the importance of appropriate forms and technologies to be utilised with regards to access and information around national parks and identifies an appropriate level of systems and processes in this regard.
- LGNSW recommends that information and communication regarding national parks refer not only to people with disability but to all people who may at times require accessibility information and communication regarding national parks. This includes parents with prams and young children, people who require assistance animals for mobility, people who may have non-permanent injuries that restrict movement and older people with limited mobility.

Collaborating and Consulting

- NPWS have indicated a strong level of collaboration and consultation has been undertaken with people with disability, disability organisations and peak bodies, other key stakeholders and community. LGNSW recommends this level of consultation be continued with all relevant parties and stakeholders through any review processes undertaken throughout the life of the Policy.

Improving Decision Making

- LGNSW recommends that NPWS include the application of universal design principles in its review of relevant guidelines for consultation and collaboration processes to ensure that accessibility provisions are included when engaging and consulting with all stakeholders.

Scope and purpose of the Policy

- In general, LGNSW commends NPWS for incorporating universal design principles into this policy and highlights the importance of the application of universal design principles to future planning, design and development of any new facilities, programs or services that ultimately benefit all potential visitors to our national parks.

Guiding Principles

- LGNSW supports the guiding principles listed for this draft policy, including that consideration and planning for accessibility should be 'business as usual' and acknowledges that this can be achieved through the application of universal design principles.

NSW legislation and strategy

- LGNSW notes the reference to the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the relevant requirements applicable to this policy. LGNSW recommends that NPWS review this aspect following the recent review of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, as recently amended by the Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022.

Conclusion

The NPWS is to be commended for the development of this comprehensive Draft Accessible Parks Policy and the level of detail and considerations incorporated into this process. This includes the consultative approach to the development, and subsequent implementation, of this draft Policy which identifies a collaborative approach involving key stakeholders, including relevant local councils. LGNSW would strongly endorse that this collaboration continues with all relevant parties, including councils, as the Policy is implemented and for any future Policy reviews and updates.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the National Parks and Wildlife Draft Accessible Parks Policy. If you would like further information on LGNSW's position, please contact Chris Maclean, Senior Policy Officer, Ageing and Disability on 02 9242 4043 or chris.maclean@lgnsw.org.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Thomas', with a long, wavy horizontal line extending to the right.

Damian Thomas
Director Advocacy