

**DESIGN STANDARDS**  
**for**  
**URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**18 PUBLIC TOILETS**



## **18 PUBLIC TOILETS**

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## 18.1 Provision policy

In new commercial developments, or as commercial areas are redeveloped, it is a development condition that public-access toilets be provided and maintained by the body corporate managers of the centre. Public toilets will not be retrofitted by the ACT Government to shopping centres where they have not been provided by the developer.

The current policy is that the ACT Government only constructs new toilet facilities in district parks. However, public toilets exist and are maintained by Canberra Urban Parks and Places at some older neighbourhood shopping centres. These toilets will be maintained unless they are no longer needed.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Discrimination Act 1991* make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability in providing access to or use of premises that the public can enter or use. Public toilet facilities must be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. Designs for public toilets are expected to comply with Australian Standards AS 1428.1 and AS 1428.2.

The following guide to the number of toilets required should be regarded as a minimum.

- One unisex toilet cubicle per 100 users average daily usage.
- Where two adjacent cubicles are needed, one of the cubicles must be accessible to people with disabilities.

Additional cubicles may be required in locations where persistent queues of people waiting to use the facility are evident during peak periods.

## 18.2 Related codes of practice and guidelines

### 18.2.1 Legislation

*Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth)

*Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT)

### 18.2.2 Industry standards

*AS 1428.1 Design for Access and Mobility. Part 1: General Requirements for Access – New Building Work*, Standards Australia.

*AS 1428.2 Design for Access and Mobility Part 2: Enhanced and Additional Requirements – Buildings and Facilities*, Standards Australia.

*AS 4031 Non-reusable Containers for the Collection of Sharp Medical Items Used in Health Care Areas*, Standards Australia.

*AS/NZS 1680.0 Interior Lighting – Safe Movement*, Standards Australia.

### 18.2.3 Policy and guidelines

*ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual*, Planning and Land Management, ACT Department of Urban Services, Canberra, 2000.

*Sharps Policy*, Canberra Urban Parks and Places, available online:  
<http://www.parksandplaces.act.gov.au>

## 18.3 Public toilet design

### 18.3.1 General design principles

Public toilets should be designed to provide maximum visibility while maintaining privacy. They should have clear exterior signage compliant with Australian Standard AS 1428.1.

Public toilets should be located in places that are easily accessible by the general public and are near carparks. They should be located on a continuous accessible path of travel from other accessible facilities in the area such as car parks, picnic areas and shops. The location and appearance of the toilets should be sympathetic to the surroundings. The toilets should provide for the needs of people with disabilities and other special needs. Access for the disabled and wheelchairs needs to be considered. The toilets should be designed to allow caregivers, including those providing assistance to members of the opposite sex, to provide assistance and supervision.

Toilets can be purpose-built or prebuilt units. To improve ease of access, toilet units (one or two cubicles) should be dispersed throughout an area rather than concentrated into a centralised toilet facility.

For economic reasons toilets should be designed and sited to avoid the need for a rising sewer main. Use of non-sewered toilet systems can be explored where appropriate.

### 18.3.2 Safety

The following design features are intended to create a safe environment in and around public toilets to make potential users feel comfortable

- single cubicle unisex toilets
- self-contained cubicles with hand washing facilities
- cubicles accessible directly from public space (no common foyer or handwashing area)
- clear sightlines to toilet entry
- toilets visible from public space (not shielded from public view)
- cubicles on single frontage if there is more than one cubicle
- adequate lighting in and around the toilet cubicles (Australian Standard AS/NZS 1680.0 covers interior lighting for access and mobility)
- low slip surfaces on floors.

The *ACT Crime Prevention and Urban Design Resource Manual* provides further information about designing for community safety and crime prevention.

### 18.3.3 Sharps

Sharps disposal containers are to be provided in all public toilets in urban open space. These containers must conform to Australian Standard AS 4031.

The *Sharps Policy* available from the Canberra Urban Parks and Places website contains further policy information.

### 18.3.4 Sanitary napkin disposal units

Sanitary napkin disposal units are to be provided in cubicles of all female and unisex toilets.

### **18.3.5 Vandalism**

Vandalism of public toilets is more likely to occur when the toilets are located in remote sites, located in places hidden from public view or have a low average usage. The siting of toilets in places of maximum visibility is therefore of primary importance to protect them from vandalism. Aesthetic considerations may lead to compromises in the location of toilets but toilets should not be placed in sites shielded from view by heavy and low foliage and must have adequate lighting.

Toilets should be sited to face passing traffic. Where possible toilet cubicles should also be designed so that the cubicle door is kept open when the toilet is unoccupied since this helps to keep the toilet drier and more odour-free as well as less prone to vandalism.

Other design features that may help combat vandalism are:

- robust door buttons
- non-flammable fittings particularly toilet paper dispensers, soap dispensers, coat hooks and toilet seats
- toilet paper dispensers designed to reduce fire spreading into the container if the exposed toilet paper is ignited
- durable external signage and instruction panels
- graffiti-proofed walls.

### **18.3.6 Maintenance considerations**

All public toilets should be designed to minimise maintenance and cleaning. However, some maintenance will be required and it is desirable to design the area outside the toilet cubicles to provide easy access for maintenance vehicles and staff.

## **18.4 Further reading**

*Advisory Notes on Access to Premises*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, available online: <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>