

Management Plan for Access for People with Disability

Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre
Lot 4005, Colonel Rose Dr, Alice Springs NT 0870

Date: 2024 - 2025



This document has been endorsed by Tecon
Australia as the Airport Building Controller for
Alice Springs Airport

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Introduction

Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre have formulated this Management Plan to formally document how the organisation will manage access for users with disability when accessing the buildings and facilities at the Earth Sanctuary site in Alice Springs.

References

This management plan references the following documents:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (the 'DDA')
- *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* (the 'Premises Standards')
- *Building Regulations 1993*
- *Building Code of Australia 2016* (the 'BCA')

Background

Established in 2000, Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre (Earth Sanctuary) has become a Northern Territory leader in the field of eco-tourism by becoming one of Australia's first 100% carbon neutral venues. This milestone sets the benchmark for sustainability in the Australian outback with triple bottom line credentials, including Eco Tourism Australia's Advanced Eco Certification and Eco Tourism Australia's Highly Commended Award for 2014 and winner of the Northern Territory Brolga Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism in 2012 and 2014. Earth Sanctuary's vision is to become a world leader in sustainable tourism and nature conservation to combat the greatest challenge facing humanity, climate change.

Situated 15 minutes south of Alice Springs, on 100 acres of desert wilderness overlooking the spectacular East MacDonnell Ranges, Earth Sanctuary is a proudly independent, family operated business offering award winning day and evening tours to visitors to the central Australian outback. When the Falzon family (brothers Ben, Dan and Tom and father Joe) established Earth Sanctuary 18 years ago, it was with an ambitious dream to create a living, breathing centre that would showcase ecology, culture and sustainability in action.

The Sanctuary provides a unique, nature based venue with award winning group tour offerings to the education, tourism and events market. The guided tours explore sustainability, ecology, culture and astronomy with sky laser shows. The venue has capacity for camping, team building programs, parties and conferences. Buildings and facilities available to the public onsite include:-

- Homestead Building
- Main Dining / Entertainment Area
- Amphitheatres (2)
- Space Observatory (Astro Dome)

- Space Camp (6 domed tents)

The land is leased by Alice Springs Airport of which Earth Sanctuary carries a sublease.

New works are proposed to improve the site facilities including two new ablution blocks with separate male and female shower facilities, an accessible sanitary facility for users with disability and 6 geodesic dome tents that will serve as a bag storage and change area for school groups whilst also serving as an all-weather solution.

Earth Sanctuary are committed to providing equitable access for all users and are adopting a pro-active 'best practice' approach with the development of this voluntary plan in conjunction with a commitment to improving areas of the site in the future that are currently not fully accessible for users with mobility disability.

This plan will be referenced and incorporated into relevant policies and procedures for Earth Sanctuary.

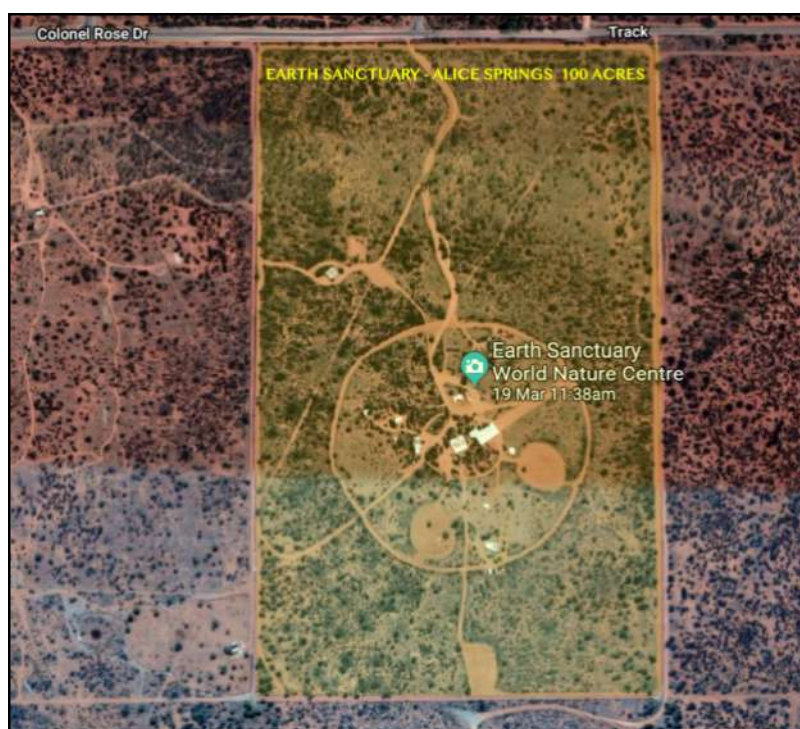


Figure 1: Aerial of Earth Sanctuary site



Legislation & Approach to Compliance

Earth Sanctuary understands that where new facilities are built for members of the public and staff, provisions need to be incorporated for users with disability to ensure equitable and dignified access is provided. We also understand the importance of achieving our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and this plan details the organisations intention to align with the intent of the DDA.

New Buildings

New building works in Australia require compliance with the Building Code of Australia, Premises Standards and relevant referenced Australian Standards.

Proposed works at Earth Sanctuary include standard showering and toileting facilities for users without disability, an accessible sanitary facility for people with mobility disability and 6 tents. The tents are not governed by Building legislation or the Caravan Parks Act 2012 in Northern Territory, however, we understand that access to the tents for users with disability would be covered under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) as it is a service provided.

Earth Sanctuary understand their organisational obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and are committed to including all visitors regardless of ability. Earth Sanctuary intend to install an accessible shower within a 24 month period from the date that the amenities have been constructed to cater for users with mobility disability who stay overnight and require a showering facility.

Existing Buildings

The Building Code of Australia and Premises Standards are not retro-active, therefore, there is no mandatory requirement to continuously upgrade existing buildings to keep up with evolving legislation and standards. The DDA however protects users with disability and their associates with regard to accessing public buildings, facilities and services.

The existing Homestead Building does not provide independent access for users with disability, however, management controls are currently in place to enable users to gain access to the building 'as required' by way of portable ramps stored onsite and staff assistance.



Public Open Spaces

Although public open spaces are not covered under the Building Code of Australia or Premises Standards (because they are not buildings), the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) would cover the provision of access to those areas. These areas at Earth Sanctuary include the pathways throughout the site, tents and the outdoor Amphitheatres.

Where new works are carried out to public open spaces, there is generally an expectation by users that those areas would provide a level of access for users with disability to enable inclusion and participation.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) 1992

DDA Objectives

The objectives of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (the 'DDA') are to make it unlawful to discriminate against persons with a disability in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the management of premises. The legal requirements of the Act affect the majority of existing commercial and public building occupiers.

The DDA provides protection for all people with disabilities across Australia and ensures everyone is treated equally and fairly, including any carers, friends, co-workers or relatives of people with disabilities.

A copy of some key sections of the DDA is provided in Appendix A.

DDA Areas

Areas covered within the DDA include:

- Education
- Access to premises
- Provision of goods, services and access to facilities
- Accommodation
- Purchasing land
- Club & association activities
- Sporting activities
- Government programs
- Disability Standards



The Attorney-General has the power to make Disability Standards under the DDA to specify the rights and responsibilities of people with a disability, and these Standards provide further details on how DDA compliance can be achieved, providing certainty for everyone.

The Standard relevant to Earth Sanctuary under the DDA is:

- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (**Premises Standards**)

Premises Standards

Adoption of Standards

The Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (the 'Premises Standards') are adopted under the DDA.

Objectives

The Premises Standards aim to ensure that dignified, equitable, cost-effective and reasonably achievable access to buildings, facilities and services within buildings, is provided for people with a disability. The trigger for consideration of the Premises Standards is when a building approval is required by State or Territory legislation and in the Northern Territory this is when a building permit is required.

The Premises Standards also provides a level of certainty to property developers, building owners and practitioners that if access is provided in accordance with the Access Code during building works being the subject of a building approval it will not be unlawful under the DDA.

The overall aim of the Premises Standards is twofold:

First, it is to provide the building and design industry with detailed information about how they can design and construct their buildings in a way that meets their responsibilities under the DDA.

Secondly, it is to improve access to buildings for people with a disability to ensure the greatest possible participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the community. This is the primary document that will eventually form the Premises Standards. It consists of two major parts. The first part deals with all the regulation requirements for the Premises Standards, who they apply to, scope, definitions, concessions and a review timetable.

The second part is '*Schedule 1 Access Code for Buildings*'. This is the part that contains all of the requirements for access to buildings. It is written in the style of the access provisions of the BCA and includes all the detail of where and in what buildings access is required.



In general this Access Code tells those responsible for buildings when and where access is required and then refers to technical specification documents such as Australian Standard AS 1428.1–2009 to describe how to design and build in an accessible way.

Operation of Earth Sanctuary Buildings & Facilities

Booking System

Visitors obtain information about site facilities, tours and bookings via the website <https://earth-sanctuary.com.au/> or by calling the office. Groups are required to book in advance which provides Earth Sanctuary with ample notice to tailor and prepare the tour based on the requirements and needs of the users.

Arrival to Site / Vehicle Access

Visitors arrive to site by bus and are dropped off at an area suitable to their needs that have been pre-determined at booking stage. Where there are user groups with disability, they are dropped off at areas that have a hardened surface. Earth Sanctuary also offers site tours by bus with access available by vehicle to all site elements.

Buildings

The buildings onsite include the Homestead Building, Main Entertainment/Dining area, Space Observatory, with bus access provided to each building.

Although the Homestead Building does not provide permanent ramps for independent access, the building is managed by employees with portable ramps laid in position in advance of visitors using the building and assistance provided, where required. The building includes office space and an additional 'spill over' dining area, should the main dining area be at full capacity.

The main entertainment, dining area and kitchen serving areas are open structures with weather protected roofs. Some areas provide mats to allow a firm traversable ground surface for users with mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walking frames, crutches and walking sticks. Earth Sanctuary will endeavour to improve access throughout these areas by laying additional mats to provide an accessible pathway to and through the space for users with additional requirements. Maintenance will also be carried out to ensure the mats remain usable, functional and free from sand.

The Space Observatory is a 4.5m diameter astro dome that rotates internally to provide telescope facilities. Access to this space is difficult to achieve due to the nature, intent and size of the dome, however, Earth Sanctuary have been working toward providing alternative viewing measures for people with mobility disability by providing a telescope outside the Observatory. Earth Sanctuary have been testing this method and are in the process of improving this facility.



Outdoor Facilities

Outdoor public facilities include 2 amphitheatres and camp facilities. Both amphitheatres provide an area where the ground surface is hardened to enable users with mobility aids to sit with family and friends, with bus access to the areas.

The tents by nature do not provide access, however, the bus can gain access to camp location to form part of a site tour. Traditionally all groups sleep outside in a swag under the stars in accordance with extended astronomy tours.

The site provides sand pathways to and through the site elements, with various areas hardened to accommodate wheelchair users.

Amenities

The site provides existing amenities and proposes 2 new amenity blocks with new sanitary and shower facilities in addition to a new unisex accessible sanitary facility for users with mobility limitations. Earth Sanctuary commit to installing an accessible shower within a 24 month period from the date that the amenities have been constructed to further improve the facilities for users with additional needs.



Management Plan Provisions

Earth Sanctuary will manage how a visitor or employee with mobility disability will gain access to the sites buildings and facilities, using the strategies below.

Management Strategy & Procedures

Management of Access to Non-accessible Areas

Booking System

- *Whilst the vast majority of programs on offer at Earth Sanctuary are for the group education, tourism and events market. Earth Sanctuary's astronomy tours are available regularly between April and October each year to the general public who can make their booking online via Eventbrite. Any potential guest with special needs is encouraged to advise Earth Sanctuary of their requirements via the online booking system so that Earth Sanctuary management can take appropriate action if and where needed to accommodate.*

Arrival to Site

- *Designated areas exist at Earth Sanctuary allowing for appropriate drop off and pick up of special needs visitors.*

Buildings & Outdoor Areas

- *The main entertainment area, amphitheatre and observatory are all directly accessible by vehicle and/or by wheelchair with assistance and small electric vehicle. Suitable skid ramps are available at the Earth Sanctuary Homestead should access be required there.*

Amenities

- *Earth Sanctuary offers a fully accessible unisex toilet located immediately adjacent to the arrivals area and able-bodied toilets.*

General

1. Earth Sanctuary is responsible for implementing this management plan.
2. The provisions of this management plan will be implemented if any visitor or employee with mobility disability are unable to independently access the above areas and any other facilities available to the public onsite.
3. Contact with all visitors will be made at the earliest possible time. During the initial contact any additional needs will be identified and if a person presents with or identifies disability (either permanent or temporary), Earth Sanctuary employees will ascertain their mobility needs and advise of access arrangements.



4. All reasonable needs associated with this matter must be addressed to the satisfaction of the relevant person or their carer, but in general terms, identified people who are unable to negotiate the site independently will be accommodated in accessible areas where activities can be conducted.

Staff Training

5. Earth Sanctuary will take reasonable measures to ensure that staff have sufficient information and expertise concerning non-discriminatory methods of service delivery.
6. All staff will be provided access to this management plan to ensure that they are aware of the site's access limitations and can effectively implement this management plan.
7. Earth Sanctuary will provide appropriate training to employees in the management processes in this plan to overcome potential barriers for users with mobility disability.
8. Where an employee has or acquires an injury resulting in mobility disability, access to the sites buildings and facilities will be managed and provisions put in place to accommodate the user.
9. All Earth Sanctuary staff will receive training on:
 - The content of this management plan and policies and procedures associated with the management plan.
 - The importance of identifying if any staff member or visitor, including contractors, to the building will be affected by a lack of accessible features within the site.
 - Relaying information to the relevant people with disability and/or their carer and treating people with disability with dignity and respect.
 - Duty of care in ensuring that the management plan procedures are met.
 - Managing each situation and/or any carers that are employed to assist a staff member or visitor with disability.

Compliant Process

10. Complaint procedures in relation to discrimination have been developed and are in place within Earth Sanctuary.
11. Earth Sanctuary World Nature Centre ensures that complaints are properly and effectively dealt with.



Monitoring

12. Earth Sanctuary also provides internal monitoring through supervisory and management responsibilities.

Responsibilities

Earth Sanctuary management and employees must:

13. Be familiar with the content of this management plan and responsible for all procedures being met.
14. Acknowledge the identified non-compliances.
15. Understand the reasons why current arrangements may present a physical barrier for some users with mobility limitations.
16. Understand the importance of identifying if any person will be affected by the limitations to the site's facilities and buildings.
17. Allocate appropriate staff members to manage each situation and/or any carers/assistants that are employed to assist a person with disability.

Communication

18. Earth Sanctuary has a clear communications strategy to disseminate information to make people aware of the building's access limitations and that an access management plan has been devised to address these shortfalls, as well as any other relevant information. This can be done via websites, telephone enquiries and on any written material.
19. A copy of this management plan should be made available to any potential student, parent or carer of a student enrolled in the school, carer/assistant or other visitor with disability who wishes to use Earth Sanctuary facilities and services.



I/We Tom Falzon hereby agree to the information provided in this plan and undertake to implement the management of the areas highlighted and install an accessible shower to current Australian standards within a 24-month period

Signed:

.....
Name: Tom Falzon

.....
Position: Director

.....
Date: ...30/03/2019

Signed:

.....
Witnessed By:



Appendix A – Extracts from the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

The following are some key sections of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) that relate to the building. For a full copy of the DDA please visit www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2014C00013/Download

Section 3: Objects

The objects of this Act are:

- (a) to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of:
 - i. work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and
 - ii. the provision of goods, facilities, services and land; and
 - iii. existing laws; and
 - iv. the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and
- (b) to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and
- (c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

Section 4: Interpretation

(1) In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears:

Disability, in relation to a person, means:

- (a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:



- (a) presently exists; or
- (b) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- (c) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- (d) is imputed to a person.

To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.

Associate, in relation to a person, includes:

- (a) a spouse of the person; and
- (b) another person who is living with the person on a genuine domestic basis; and
- (c) a relative of the person; and
- (d) a carer of the person; and
- (e) another person who is in a business, sporting or recreational relationship with the person.

Premises, includes:

- (a) a structure, building, aircraft, vehicle or vessel; and
- (b) a place (whether enclosed or built on or not); and
- (c) a part of premises (including premises of a kind referred to in paragraph (a) or (b)).

Section 7: Discrimination in Relation to Associates

- (1) This Act applies in relation to a person who has an associate with a disability in the same way as it applies in relation to a person with the disability.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), but without limiting that subsection, this Act has effect in relation to a person who has an associate with a disability as if:
 - (a) each reference to something being done or needed because of a disability were a reference to the thing being done or needed because of the fact that the person has an associate with the disability; and
 - (b) each other reference to a disability were a reference to the disability of the associate.

- (3) This section does not apply to section 53 or 54 (combat duties and peacekeeping services) or subsection 54A(2) or (3) (assistance animals).

Section 8: Discrimination in Relation to Carers, Assistants, Assistance Animals and Disability Aids

- (1) This Act applies in relation to having a carer, assistant, assistance animal or disability aid in the same way as it applies in relation to having a disability.



- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), but without limiting that subsection, this Act has effect in relation to a person with a disability who has a carer, assistant, assistance animal or disability aid as if:
- (a) each reference to something being done or needed because of a disability were a reference to the thing being done or needed because of the fact that the person has the carer, assistant, animal or aid; and
 - (b) each other reference to a disability were a reference to the carer, assistant, animal or aid.
- (3) This section does not apply to section 48 (infectious diseases) or section 54A (exemptions in relation to assistance animals).

Section 15: Discrimination in employment

- (1) It is unlawful for an employer or a person acting or purporting to act on behalf of an employer to discriminate against a person on the ground of the other person's disability:
- (a) in the arrangements made for the purpose of determining who should be offered employment; or
 - (b) in determining who should be offered employment; or
 - (c) in the terms or conditions on which employment is offered.
- (2) It is unlawful for an employer or a person acting or purporting to act on behalf of an employer to discriminate against an employee on the ground of the employee's disability:
- (a) in the terms or conditions of employment that the employer affords the employee; or
 - (b) by denying the employee access, or limiting the employee's access, to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training, or to any other benefits associated with employment; or
 - (c) by dismissing the employee; or
 - (d) by subjecting the employee to any other detriment.
- (3) Neither paragraph (1)(a) nor (b) renders it unlawful for a person to discriminate against another person, on the ground of the other person's disability, in connection with employment to perform domestic duties on the premises on which the first-mentioned person resides.

Section 23: Access to premises

It is unlawful for a person to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person's disability:

- (a) by refusing to allow the other person access to, or the use of, any premises that the public or a section of the public is entitled or allowed to enter or use (whether for payment or not); or



- (b) in the terms or conditions on which the first mentioned person is prepared to allow the other person access to, or the use of, any such premises; or
- (c) in relation to the provision of means of access to such premises; or
- (d) by refusing to allow the other person the use of any facilities in such premises that the public or a section of the public is entitled or allowed to use (whether for payment or not); or
- (e) in the terms or conditions on which the first mentioned person is prepared to allow the other person the use of any such facilities; or
- (f) by requiring the other person to leave such premises or cease to use such facilities.

Section 24: Goods, services and facilities


It is unlawful for a person who, whether for payment or not, provides goods or services, or makes facilities available, to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person's disability:

- (a) by refusing to provide the other person with those goods or services or to make those facilities available to the other person; or
- (b) in the terms or conditions on which the first mentioned person provides the other person with those goods or services or makes those facilities available to the other person; or
- (c) in the manner in which the first mentioned person provides the other person with those goods or services or makes those facilities available to the other person.

Appendix B – Guide to Improve Accessibility for Users with Mobility Disability

An audit of the site has not been carried out to identify every non-compliance, however Equal Access have reviewed the provisions provided via a desktop review of information and photos provided by Earth Sanctuary. The advice provided may not fully address all potential barriers for users with mobility limitations and Equal Access do not accept responsibility for every barrier that may be presented for users with disability.

Non accessible areas identified	Options available to improve access to non-accessible areas
Homestead Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable ramp ; & • Assisted access managed by staff 'as required'; & • Document management process on the management plan.
Main Dining / Entertainment Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of traversable 'beach type' matting to and through key areas (example shown below) OR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of areas that are non-traversable by transporting visitors and staff to areas by vehicle. • Document management process on the management plan.  <p><i>Example of a beach style mat</i></p>
Amphitheatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an area with a firm and traversable surface that allows a person seated in a wheelchair to join family and friends with minimum dimensions of 1.54m x 2.07m. Refer to example of beach type mat above. • Document management process on the management plan.
Space Observatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an alternative telescope outside the Space Observatory for users who are unable to independently access the dome; & • Install signage at the door of the Observatory identifying the alternative facilities & location. • Document management process on the management plan.
Space Camp (6 domed tents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assisted access into at least one domed tent, with provision of a firm and traversable surface to position and park a wheelchair (minimum 1.54m x 2.07m). • Document management process on the management plan.
Pathways throughout site (sand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All terrain wheelchair; & signage identifying the location of the chair OR • Provision of traversable 'beach type' matting to and through key areas throughout the site OR • Tours by vehicle through the site for users with mobility limitations, with ramp access to and from the vehicle. • Document management process on the management plan.