



The Hon Ray Williams MP
Minister for Multiculturalism
Minister for Disability Services

EAP18/9419

Ms Liz Reid
President & Director

Mr Simon Burchill
Manager

Physical Disability Australia
PO Box 345
TOOWONG QLD 4066

Dear Ms Reid and Mr Burchill

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 September 2018 alerting me to the issues in relation to the use of Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) locks on accessible toilet facilities in NSW.

MLAK locks were introduced in NSW with the good intention of enabling after hours access to accessible toilet facilities by people with disability. The NSW Government has also conducted substantial work in recent years to deliver the greatest level of access to accessible toilet facilities in this state.

In 2014, the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) commissioned Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) to undertake the *NSW Accessible Toilets Data Expansion Project*. This project was commissioned to support the National Public Toilet Map and greatly improved the quantum and quality of data on accessible toilet facilities in NSW. Much of the data delivered by this project includes the figures on accessible MLAK toilets that your correspondence cited, 547 of the 3700 accessible facilities within NSW.

Additionally, in January 2017, staff from FACS met with the Master Locksmiths Association Chief Executive (MLA), Local Government NSW (LGNSW) and SCIA where guiding principles of access were discussed and agreed. These are that:

- Accessible toilets should be unlocked during daylight hours.
- Accessible toilets should be unlocked when co-located with unlocked general entry toilets.
- The MLAK system is an option to reduce the difficulty faced by people with disability in finding an accessible toilet that is open after hours.

The guiding principles were published at the time on the LGNSW, Master Locksmith Association and Spinal Cord Injury Australia websites. Adhering to these principles of access will ensure that the benefits of MLAK lock installation (principally, access after hours), does not have come at the cost of limiting access to accessible toilet facilities during the day.

I recognise that this is a live issue which may not be quickly resolved until we have new systems for permitting access to those who most benefit from these facilities being kept clean, functional and secure. The intention is never to restrict access to these facilities but rather to ensure that these facilities are available for those who require them.

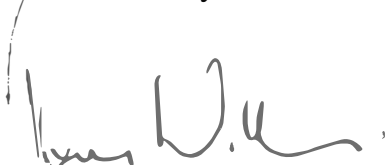
The issue is being raised again in NSW with the introduction of more accessible toilets incorporating hoists and change tables. The balance between access and ensuring the appropriate use and care of the expensive equipment in these facilities has led to the Changing Places guidelines adopting MLAK locking as the security measure of choice.

I am advised that staff from FACS will be working with the MLA and LGNSW to reconfirm and action the principles of access stated above. I understand FACS is also investigating alternate mechanisms such as pass cards or mobile phone activated locks.

If you would like more information or to discuss this matter further, please contact Mr Richard Hawkins, FACS Manager, Disability Inclusion on 02 8753 9333 or email richard.hawkins@facs.nsw.gov.au

Thank you again for bringing this important matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Ray Williams MP

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