Universal Design Position Statement:

Plain English Version

What do we want?
We want everyone to take a universal design approach to their projects, policies, services and communications. We want everyone to feel included.

What is universal design?
Everything should be designed so that as many people as possible can use it. It means the design is inclusive, healthy and safe for everyone.

Designers have to carefully think about all the different people in our communities when they are designing. Involving lots of different people to help with the design is a good way of getting it right.

Universal design isn't always perfect but it's the best that can be done at the time. It builds on the learning of past designs and improves on future designs.

How did it begin?
Universal design began as barrier-free design in the 1960s. Some wheelchair users wanted the freedom to get out and about like everyone else. They got together and lobbied the government to change things for the better.

They soon realised that designs for wheelchair users are good for everyone – it's universal. That is how the term "universal design" was born.

Today, universal design is about including people from all walks of life, not just people with disability. Universal design is a design thinking process involving users in the design process. It is a way of ensuring that everyone can participate in everyday life.

Other names for universal design
Universal design is known by other names: inclusive design, co-design, human-centred design and user-centred design. It is about designing for all people no matter where they come from or what they do.

What universal design is not
Universal design is not the same thing as access standards. It is not a special design for a few people. It is not "disabled design" or one-size fits all. It is not ugly design.

What does it cover?
All projects, services, policies, websites and communications. It's called taking a universal design approach. It is best done at the beginning of any project when users can be involved in the design process.

Government policies and laws
Each state and territory has polices that include universal design. They also have laws about discrimination. This can be age, disability, gender, race or religion. A universal design approach makes sure designs don't discriminate against anyone.