



TELSTRA DISCUSSION PAPER  
Payphones Accessibility

HREOC FORUM  
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## **Recommendation 22: Public payphone accessibility**

Telstra welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Forum and to provide some comments on the discussion paper commissioned by HREOC, *When the Tide Comes In: Towards Accessible Telecommunications for People with Disabilities in Australia*, released in July 2003.

Telstra notes the recommendation in the discussion paper that one approach to increase the accessibility of public payphones for users with disabilities might be the development of an Industry Code on Accessible Payphones.

Telstra's payphones meet or exceed the requirements of AS/ACIF S040 "Requirements for general use Customer Equipment for use with the Standard Telephone Service-Features for special needs of persons with disabilities".

These standards include:

- Hearing aid coupling
- Tactile indicators on keypads

In addition, Telstra developed a Payphones Access Policy in 1996 and has further refined it with research, and consultation and feedback from groups representing people with disabilities. This policy covers requirements as to:

- payphone height,
- booth design,
- siting practices,
- access to booths,
- minimum lighting requirements,
- specifications for legibility of instructions and displays, etc.

Telstra agrees that the development of a Code would be beneficial and suggests that its Payphone Access Policy may serve as a basis for developing such a Code.

Telstra also facilitated and funded, in 2001, an extensive "Payphones Physical Access" research study and report of payphones and payphone users with access disabilities. This research was undertaken under the auspices of an independent steering committee. This extensive "Payphones Physical Access" research followed earlier research in 1997, which set the height requirement for the launch in 1997 of the Telstra Smart Payphone. The "Payphones Physical Access" research involved 403 clinic interviews incorporating a series of qualitative discussions. The profile of the 403 research participants included:

- people who use wheelchairs but have full upper limb control and movement (95)
- People who use a wheelchair or other mobility aid from a seated position and have limited upper limb control and movement (140)
- People who use a mobility aid to assist walking (133)
- People of short stature-do not rely on aids for mobility (35)

This research highlighted a number of key outcomes which should be considered in the development of an Accessible Payphone Code.

## DISCUSSION POINT

- ▶ Consider the development of an Industry Code on Accessible Payphones, the role of ACIF in developing such a code and input which could be of assistance.

### **Recommendation 23: Action plan for TTY payphones**

Telstra also notes the suggestion to develop a TTY payphone installation plan to achieve a higher number TTY payphones being installed.

Telstra launched its first Disability Action Plan in 1996. Telstra has continued its commitment to, and improvement of payphone facilities for, people with disabilities. Telstra has made a number of commitments to improve the access of payphones for people with a disability in its third Disability Action Plan (2002-2004). In February 2002 Telstra launched the first online site listing the locations of Telstra TTY payphones in Australia. There has been continued progress in installing additional TTY payphones with almost 190 now in operation. There is also a further range of committed actions, related to assisting people with speech or hearing disabilities, underway as part of Strategy 4.1 in the Disability Action Plan (2002-2004). These include:

- 4.1.3 Review the location of TTY payphones to ensure siting best meets the needs of TTY users:
  - research available data and statistics to map and match potential TTY users to the location of terminals by Post Code or local government area, in consultation with relevant stakeholders
  - determine an appropriate standard location for TTY payphones in major centres
- 4.1.4 Investigate the feasibility of a robust TTY payphone attachment for outdoor locations
- 4.1.5 Continue the project to investigate the feasibility of sending SMS from payphone to mobile

## DISCUSSION POINTS

- ▶ Telstra has been requested by its Disability Forum, comprising representatives of 13 peak disability organisations, to establish a Telstra payphone access working party. Telstra has indicated it is prepared to consider this suggestion and, subject to further consultation, Telstra anticipates that this working party could be established and begin operating in 2004.
- ▶ The working party will be a forum to consult on annual installations of TTY payphones, implementation of Telstra's payphones commitments in its Disability Action Plan, and generally to discuss accessibility issues.