



NSW Fire Brigades

Disability Action Plan

2001 - 2005

**Developed within the
NSW Government's Disability Policy Framework**

Foreword

The NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) has been serving the community since 1884 and continues to strive to be a world class fire and emergency service providing the community with a service they can trust, rely upon and be proud of now and into the future.

The NSWFB is a major emergency service provider and must ensure that it is equally appropriate, relevant and accessible to all members of the community it serves. To this end, the NSWFB has declared a *Guarantee of Service* to the community which identifies the level of service that the community can consistently expect.

It is in this context that I welcome the opportunity provided by the NSW Government's Disability Policy Framework to review the way in which the NSWFB delivers information and services, to ensure accessibility to all members of the NSW community, and in particular to people with disabilities. About 19% of the total Australian population has a disability and a further 14% are classified as having a handicap. The incidence of disability increases with the ageing of the population with 50% of persons aged 60 years or more having a disability.

In this context, the NSWFB recognises the need to design its service delivery, information, training and processes to provide a capacity to respond effectively to the needs of people with disabilities.

The NSWFB is proud to chair and host an Interdepartmental Committee on Home Safety. The composition of this committee is listed in the disability plan. The focus of the Interdepartmental Committee is to reach community groups including:

- isolated elderly individuals who live alone with no family support;
- people with a disability, including mental illness;
- people from a non-English speaking background;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; and
- carers of the elderly or people with a disability.

In developing the Disability Action Plan, the NSWFB is committed to ensuring that the Plan:

- complies with relevant Commonwealth and State Disability legislation;
- has Brigade management support;
- will be achieved through incorporation in the various planning processes;
- is dynamic and will evolve as a result of consultation.

I am confident that the implementation of this Disability Action Plan by all members of the NSWFB will result in a service that continues to set benchmarks in excellence in all that it does.

I D Mac Dougall AC AFSM
Commissioner

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Our Core Service

The New South Wales Fire Brigades (NSWFB) has legislated responsibility, under the provisions of the *Fire Brigades Act 1989*, to provide fire prevention, mitigation and suppression services to the major metropolitan areas, regional centres and towns in regional New South Wales. Together with rescue responsibilities where accredited and the Statewide management of hazardous material incidents (Hazmat) including inland waters. The NSWFB is also called upon to assist the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) outside Fire Districts. The Fire Services Joint Standing Committee was established in 1998 to plan and implement coordinated urban and rural fire services.

The NSWFB responds to 120,000 emergency calls every year through a network of over 330 fire stations. The NSWFB provides direct fire prevention and protection services to over 90% of the State's population (approximately 5,400,000 people), community infrastructure valued at \$1,200 billion, hazmat services to the entire State and rescue services where accredited by the State Rescue Board. As a Government agency, the NSWFB is the custodian of expensive community resources and therefore has a commitment to ensure these resources are used as efficiently, effectively and equitably as possible.

The NSWFB has over 3,000 full time and over 3,300 retained firefighters and officers who are all trained and equipped to provide rapid response to fires and other emergency situations 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These firefighters and officers are supported by about 280 administrative and support staff.

The purpose of the NSWFB is to enhance community safety, quality of life and confidence by minimising the impact of hazards and emergency incidents on the people, environment and economy of NSW. It achieves its purpose through providing the following services to the community:

- our highly skilled firefighters use their expertise and experience to educate others in preventing or preparing for emergencies;
- our firefighters and support staff provide reliable, rapid help in emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- our firefighters specialise in emergencies involving fire, hazardous materials, motor vehicle accidents, building collapse and other dangerous situations;
- we save lives and reduce the number of injuries caused by these emergencies;
- we minimise damage to the environment, property and the State's economy; and
- in partnership with the community and other emergency services, we plan and train for the emergencies we all hope will never happen.

Our 10 critical capabilities for success are:

- understanding community needs;
- promoting community safety;

- minimising the impact of emergency incidents;
- developing our professional workforce and improving safety;
- working with other organisations as partners;
- managing resources and logistics efficiently and effectively;
- using information to learn and to improve our service;
- making fair, responsible decisions;
- implementing good ideas and better technology; and
- leadership and planning.

Over the next 3 years our strategy is to deliver the best service possible by:

- improving our 10 critical capabilities so we are more professional, flexible and responsive;
- using information and community advice to evaluate and improve our approach so we are doing what works best to build a safer, confident community; and
- demonstrating to the community that we are delivering the best possible service and value.

The NSWFB continues to promote:

- enhanced emphasis on fire and hazard prevention working with industry, local government and the community in fire prevention planning;
- investment in community education;
- better collection and analysis of risk and service data as a sound basis for strategic planning;
- devolution of operational, community development and resource management responsibilities to regions, zones and stations;
- development of the management skills and performance of Chief Superintendents, Superintendents, Inspectors and Station Officers in charge of each station;
- creation of community fire units that empower communities to actively manage bush fire risk at the urban/bush interface;
- investment in modern firefighting technology, communications and materials, infrastructure and systems;

- building partnerships with local government as an important provider of funds for the Brigades and the provider of the rural fire service brigades;
- intensive training of staff including new “hot fire” simulation training to meet or better OH & S standards;
- implementation of competency based training for fire officers, and
- commitment to a guarantee of service.

NSWFB Service Delivery Strategy

In providing its services to the community, the NSWFB Service Delivery Strategy is based on the provision of “skilled and well equipped strategically located resources ready to respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week”.

Specifically, the NSWFB is responsible for:

- controlling and suppressing emergencies,
- assisting the community to prevent emergencies from happening,
- maintaining a state of readiness to deal with incidents and disasters,
- recommending approaches to improve the value of emergency services to the community, and
- working with other emergency agencies to deal with complex incidents and disasters.

Our staff understand these responsibilities and collectively have the skills, policies and systems to contribute to their achievement.

This Disability Action Plan has been developed in the context of the diverse nature of the NSW Fire Brigades services and their impact on the whole community.

Community Profile

The NSWFB provides direct fire protection to over 90% of the State's 6 million population through a network of over 330 fire stations. However, through the provision of Hazmat, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), bushfire rescue and initial medical assistance services to the entire State and assistance to the NSW Rural Fire Services, the whole population of NSW are serviced in some way.

The *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (1993)* produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that 18% of the total Australian population has a disability and a further 14% is classified as having a handicap. More recent ABS figures reveal that the proportion of the population with a disability has increased to 19% [*ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary Tables for NSW (1998)*]. Studies reveal that the incidence of disability increases with the ageing of the population, with the results that 50% of persons aged 60 years or more have a disability.

The NSWFB recognises the need to design its service delivery, information, training and processes to provide a capacity to respond effectively to the needs of people with disabilities. Officers dealing with members of the public need to be aware of the consequences of disabilities such as:

- hearing impairment: may not respond to instructions; could miss warning calls; and
- intellectual impairment: may not be able to understand instructions; may fear unfamiliar circumstances.

Data Collection

The NSWFB's Geographic Information System (GIS) database takes into account fire behaviour, road travel speeds, mobilisation times and the effectiveness of various crew sizes. We are also able to collect information about firefighting and emergency response. In this way the NSWFB can monitor many of the changes in community needs for services.

The application of the GIS enables the area of coverage of a fire station to be analysed against projections of future infrastructure development, hazard level, frequency of emergency incidents and assessed risk.

Data gathered through the GIS is used to make informed predictions of fire service requirements. However, although the GIS does take some demographic information into account, including population growth and age profiles, more disability specific data needs to be incorporated into planning processes. The challenge presented by the NSWFB's disability action planning is to identify the type of data required and how to capture it, if services are to meet the broader needs of the community, including people with a disability.

Organisation Profile

Current Staff Profile

Firefighter numbers are increasing to meet the needs of urban and regional growth.

(a) 10/14 permanent crew (about 100 stations)

The NSWFB has over 3000 permanent full time firefighters and officers who are all trained and equipped to provide rapid response to fires and other emergency situations 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

At this type of station we have a Station Officer and 3 firefighters per platoon with four platoons per station. Permanent firefighters work a 10/14 shift system as follows:

Two-day shifts 0800 to 1800 hours (10 hour shift)
then
two night shifts 1800 to 0800 hours (14 hour shift)
then,
four days off.

This type of station is found in the larger urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

(b) Retained crew station (about 200 stations)

There are also over 3000 part time retained firefighters and officers, who are generally located in rural areas. Retained firefighters are employed part time by the NSWFB and generally have full time primary employment.

At this type of station we normally have a crew of a Captain and eleven retained firefighters. These retained firefighters are permanent part time employees of the NSWFB with their own Consent Award and the normal entitlements, benefits and protection of full time employees, usually on a pro-rata basis.

Retained firefighters are paid a monthly retainer once they join the NSWFB and are paid hourly rates and other allowances for attending emergency calls as required as well as training and other services provided to the community. The wages earned by retained firefighters can vary from a few hundred dollars at small country towns to in excess of \$30,000 per year at very busy stations in major country towns like Orange or in stations on the fringe of major urban areas, where population growth is occurring such as at Campbelltown or the Central Coast. They are required to be available by arrangement for daytime attendance, nighttime attendance and/or weekend attendance at fire and emergencies, and are also required to attend a proportion of drills each year.

(c) Mixed stations (about 30)

There are about 30 mixed stations which use a variety of permanent and retained staff crewing practices to meet local conditions.

(d) Specialist units

The NSWFB also has specialist units providing a range of services to the community including bushfire/rescue, BA/Hazmat, fire safety and fire prevention advice, fire investigation and research and operations research.

In addition to these various categories of employees and staffing arrangements, the NSWFB sponsors over 1,000 Community Fire Unit volunteers. A Community Fire Unit (CFU) is a small team of local residents in a particular street (eg Landy Close, Menai) in urban/bush interface areas. These teams are provided with basic firefighting equipment and training by the NSWFB (on an ongoing basis) to allow them to protect their own homes in support of the NSWFB at times of major bushfires. This community-based program has been a major success and has gained considerable momentum following the January 1994 and 1997 bushfires in Sydney.

The organisation structure for managing the above operational units is as follows: (from top level down to lowest level):

(i) Sydney permanent stations

- day work roles:
Commissioner
Regional Commander
Deputy Regional Commander
Zone Commander (Superintendent)
- then, 10/14 shift roles:
Inspector
Station Officer
Firefighter

(ii) Country retained stations

- day work roles:
Commissioner
Regional Commander
Deputy Regional Commander
Zone Commander (Superintendent)
- then, on call part time roles:
Captain
Deputy Captain
Retained firefighter

Both firefighters and CFU volunteers are supported by over 280 administrative and support staff.

Although staff are employed under a variety of State and Crown Acts and are subject to the relevant regulations and frameworks for employment (including the NSW Government's Disability Policy Framework), for industrial purposes, the employer is the Public Employment Office.

Data included in the NSWFB's draft "Human Resources Strategy" indicates the following trends which contribute to the current staffing profile and therefore impact on the development of strategies in the Disability Action Plan:

- staff turnover is very low (2%);
- the average age of staff and recruits is increasing;
- the average level and diversity of skills of recruits is increasing; and
- there is no longer a mandatory retiring age.

Disabilities among our workforce

The Brigades Annual Report contains detailed statistics on disabilities, along with other EEO groups. The trend may be summarised as follows:

Permanent Brigades EEO statistics

(Figures as at 30 June 1999)

Our EEO statistics reveal that 72 Fire Fighters have indicated that they have a disability while 24 have indicated a disability requiring work adjustment. Most of these employees earn between \$37,000 and \$61,000.

Retained Brigades Staff

(Figures as at 30 June 1999)

Nineteen of the retained Fire Fighters (total 3292) have indicated that they have a disability, while 5 have indicated a disability requiring work adjustment.

Administrative and Support Staff (including trades)

(Figures as at 30 June 1999)

Eight administrative and support staff have indicated that they have a disability while 5 have indicated a disability requiring work adjustment. All of these employees have a salary of less than \$61,900.00.

Rehabilitation policy

There is also an average of 90 employees per month with work related and non work related injury/illness requiring rehabilitation intervention and monitoring to assist them to return to full duties, be permanently redeployed or medically retired. This has major implications for the accessibility of workplaces and review of Human Resource policies and procedures given that many of these people will have temporary disabilities.

The NSWFB is committed to:

- preventing injury and illness and maintaining standards consistent with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983* and the *Injury Management and Workers Compensation Safety Act 1998*;
- ensuring that the occupational rehabilitation process commences as soon as possible after a work related injury, in a manner consistent with medical advice;
- ensuring that return to work as soon as possible after an injury is normal practice and expectation for all employees;
- providing suitable duties, where practicable, for an injured employee, as an integral part of the rehabilitation process;
- consulting with employees and, where requested, their union, to ensure that the rehabilitation process operates effectively;
- ensuring that participation in the return to work program will not, in itself, disadvantage an injured employee;
- co-operating with the injury management plans established by the workers compensation insurer for injured employees; and
- complying with relevant WorkCover Guidelines.

When an injury occurs in the workplace, the Rehabilitation Section contacts employees with significant injuries as soon as practicable to ensure that appropriate medical attention has been received and to prepare the injured employee for a safe and timely return to work consistent with medical advice.

When the employee is capable of returning to the workforce on restricted duties, the Rehabilitation Section consults with the nominated treating doctor and the NSWFB Medical Officer to ensure that individual return to work strategies are developed for the injured employee. Suitable duties for partially incapacitated employees are required to be meaningful, productive and consistent with remaining capabilities.

Reasonable adjustment is made to the workplace to ensure that employees returning to work on restricted duties are able to use services and facilities to the same extent and with the same independence and dignity as other employees.

External environment

The NSW FB recognises some significant factors in the way in which it interacts with the external environment:

- there is increasing competition for resources;
- environmental protection is of increasing importance to the community and Government;
- the ageing population may increase workload and change the nature of risks;
- the increasing diversity of the community will challenge the design and provision of services;
- the trend towards creation of a global village and the merging and pervasiveness of IT/Voice/Data/Visual communication mediums will impact on communication, business processes and customer and staff interfaces;
- the apparent decline in volunteerism (and retained availability), may pose challenges in providing service levels using current staffing models;
- the increasing complexity of emergencies will impact on costs, (the time and resources spent at incidents) staff training and staff welfare;
- keeping pace with technology will challenge service delivery, costs, training and staff;
- satisfying changing and increasing customer needs will challenge the design and delivery of services;
- an increasingly better-educated community will demand greater value for money and changes to service delivery, which will become increasingly transparent;
- if society at large becomes less self-reliant this may challenge the capacity of organisations to meet customer needs;
- increasingly better-educated staff (before and after they become employees) may be more demanding in work environments and careers, and

- increased scrutiny by government which is demanding enhanced outcomes and benefits to the community will mean greater accountability and transparency in the design and delivery of services.

The NSWFB particularly recognises the impacts of an ageing population and a more diverse community which has a greater awareness of the rights of people with disabilities and a greater awareness of community responsibilities to meet those rights. To address these trends and to protect the entire community, the NSWFB has conducted a high profile series of successful smoke alarm campaigns in partnership with the Department of Housing, the NSW Rural Fire Service, local Area Health Services, local government and the insurance industry. As a result of this, the number of homes fitted with smoke alarms has increased from 20 per cent in 1995 to more than 60 per cent at present.

With Government support, the NSWFB has also embarked on the State's first major fire station building program since the 1920's. The \$18 million greater Sydney area Strategic Program will see 12 new fire stations built in Western Sydney to provide improved and equitable urban fire protection. Eight of these stations are already operational (St. Andrews, Blacktown, Kellyville, Rosemeadow, Narellan, Huntingwood, Horningsea Park and Regentville). The remaining stations at Bonnyrigg Heights, Horsley Park, Cranebrook and Schofields will become operational during 2000/01 and 2001/02 and will provide enhanced protection for those diverse and growing communities. Similar programs have commenced in other areas of growing urban communities, such as the Central Coast.

All new stations are designed with disabled access and enhanced environmental features to make them accessible to people with disabilities.

Maintenance strategy

Of all the services the NSWFB provides, fire suppression is the most time critical, and thus the requirement to respond quickly. Accordingly, the NSWFB has developed asset maintenance plans to ensure assets are strategically located and their conditions are maintained to meet the needs of an emergency service organisation that operates on a 24 hours a day all throughout the year.

The NSWFB major assets consist of the following three categories:

- properties (fire stations, training and support facilities),
- appliances, and
- communications.

The vast majority of these were built prior to 1980 and a significant number are the subject of heritage orders.

With buildings in poor condition generally and in many cases lacking the most basic of facilities, the main thrust of activity in the past decade has been to get buildings into a functional state where they at least are able to meet the most fundamental needs of the

users. The NSWFB's maintenance and refurbishment program is, within a restricted budget, progressively addressing the accessibility of older stations to disabled members of the community.

When developing the property annual maintenance forecasts, building condition and functionality, together with operational needs and local community pressure are considered. The extensive list which is contained in the resulting property Asset Maintenance Schedule, is then "re-cast" to fit the expected availability of funds.

All major maintenance work in the schedules is linked to the Capital Works strategic plan and the programs which flow from it. In many cases work funded from both programs is carried out simultaneously in order to avoid reworking, excess overhead costs, etc.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The NSWFB has a commitment to eliminate discrimination and promote equal employment opportunity. *The N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Act: 1977*, rendered discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, sex, marital status, homosexuality, transgender, carers responsibilities, religion, disability or age unlawful.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) is a management policy by which human resources management activities are carried out so as to ensure that for each vacancy, people with equal probability of success have equal probability of being appointed, or promoted to the vacancy. Any characteristic not related to job performance, such as a person's race, sex, marital status, homosexuality, transgender, carers responsibilities, religion, disability or age must not be allowed to impact on the selection process.

EEO refers to the right of each individual to be considered for a job for which that person is skilled and qualified. It means that the best person for the job is employed which increases the efficiency of the NSWFB. The principle of recruitment and promotion on merit is fundamental to EEO.

Officers, managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all staff under their control are aware of the EEO policy. Managers and supervisors are expected to support and facilitate EEO principles and implement the EEO Management Plan. Supervisors must be aware of the specific career needs of individual employees when maintaining an efficient and productive work environment.

The contribution and co-operation of every staff member is essential to ensure equality of employment in the workplace.

Disability Action Plan Methodology

The NSWFB is committed to a full program of objectives, key result areas and performance indicators. In line with this commitment, the following documents were developed and prepared for implementation (some closely aligned to the Disability Policy Framework's Priority Areas for Action):

- NSWFB Corporate Plan 2000 – 2003;
- NSWFB Guarantee of Service;
- NSWFB Draft Human Resources Strategy;
- NSW FB Service Delivery Strategy;
- NSWFB Information Management and Technology Strategy; and
- NSWFB Asset Strategy.

The NSWFB Disability Action Plan not only sets the direction and context for future actions. It also provides the flexibility necessary to allow for change and expansion in response to the consultation outcomes which are vital to the Plan's effectiveness, validity and acceptance. The NSWFB is committed to the Plan being:

- a priority, enjoying the commitment of the NSWFB's executive;
- a 'driver' for the re-prioritisation of 2001/2002 and future programs and allocation of resources;
- incorporated into the NSWFB's 2001/2002 and future strategic, budget and operational planning processes;
- dynamic and able to evolve in response to processes, which are inclusive, accountable and transparent;
- based on the need for effective community consultation and communications strategies for stakeholders, service users, management and staff; and
- cognisant of the diversity of people with disabilities.

Methodology for the initial development of the Disability Action Plan includes:

- the appointment of a Project Coordinator within the Employee Services Branch;
- the appointment of a consultant, skilled in the development of Disability Action Plans, to develop the first draft of the Plan;
- a review of current programs and service delivery to identify barriers to people with disabilities in order to develop the Disability Policy Framework;
- liaison with the Director Human Resources, other key executives and managers;
- an invitation to key stakeholders, appropriate Unions, service users and community representatives to be involved in consultation; and
- consultation with all key stakeholders, service users, staff, in particular those with a disability, and the disability community, through peak disability organisations.

Methodology for the future development of the Disability Action Plan includes:

- the implementation of an ongoing consultation strategy;
- the implementation of a communications strategy to ensure staff, service users and the disability community are kept informed about the Disability Action Plan and its progress;
- a staff questionnaire to establish current status of disability awareness, attitudes and skills in working with, and providing services to people with a disability;
- an audit of training levels and needs in relation to disabilities;
- a review of all NSWFB policies and procedures, with particular attention to the EEO and Human Resource Policies, to ensure they comply with, and are in the spirit of the NSW Government's Disability Policy Framework;
- the development of a strategic approach to Access Audits of NSWFB premises;
- the identification of data needs and data capture opportunities; and

- the Incorporation of detailed strategies to review, monitor, evaluate and modify the Disability Action Plan to ensure its appropriateness to the needs of the community.

The Director Human Resources has responsibility for the Plan and for overseeing its evaluation, review and monitoring. The Director will also monitor the developments being achieved through the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) being chaired and coordinated by the NSWFB – see next section titled *Our Commitment to Community Involvement and Consultation*. It is expected that the IDC will:

- § participate in the monitoring and reviewing the Disability Action Plan; and
- § undertake an annual review of the Disability Action Plan which will be reported to the Commissioner.

Our Commitment to Community Involvement and Consultation

The NSWFB recognises that inclusive, non discriminatory services can only be achieved through effective consultation processes with the disability sector, the disability community and the broader community of carers, family and friends of those people with disabilities.

Effective consultation with all key stakeholders, service users, staff, in particular those with a disability, and the disability community through peak organisations will become an integral part of the way the NSWFB plans, operates and delivers its services. This is being achieved through the development of a Consultation Policy and through the results being achieved through an Interdepartmental Committee being chaired and administered by the NSWFB.

International Year of Older Persons (IYOP) – Formation of Interdepartmental Committee chaired and administered by the NSWFB

Members of the ageing population comprise a high percentage of people with disabilities. Ageing often results in mobility, hearing, vision, and other sensory disabilities. In December 1998, the NSWFB established a partnership with the Ageing and Disability Department (ADD), Home Care Service of NSW (Home Care) and the NSW Police Service to develop and implement programs that meet the needs of the ageing population. These programs are consistent with the NSW Healthy Ageing Framework.

The Interdepartmental Committee which was formed from that partnership first met in December 1998 and met five times during 1999. While initially concerned with home care for the aged, the Committee considered a broad range of issues which impact on all sectors of the community, including people with disabilities and people with language difficulties. Initiatives implemented by the NSWFB during 1999 included:

- a video was produced on maintaining smoke alarms and was distributed to television stations. An earlier video on installing smoke alarms had been translated into three community languages - Cantonese, Arabic and Vietnamese. Sponsorship was gained for an additional video specifically targeting seniors and this was also produced;
- a five minute interview on community safety was conducted on FM radio station 2CBA;
- a check list was developed for Homecare staff to use when checking client accommodation;
- the NSWFB Chaplain, working through the Salvation Army, was able to assist firefighters gaining entry to the homes of the elderly to conduct safety checks; and

- a safety message concerning caravans was printed in the March edition of the NRMA's Open Road.

Evolution of the Interdepartmental Committee during 2000

The work of the Committee has continued to expand and it now comprises representatives from 11 agencies, with other agencies invited to attend as appropriate:

- Ageing and Disability Department;
- Ambulance Service of NSW;
- Carers NSW Inc;
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs;
- Department of Health and Aged Care;
- Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Ethnic Affairs Commission;
- Homecare Service of NSW;
- NSW Department of Health;
- NSW Fire Brigades; and
- NSW Police Service.

The NSWFB continues to chair the Committee and provide administrative and secretarial support.

Given the expanded and varied membership of the Committee, it developed expanded Terms of Reference and examined the potential for initiatives in 2000.

The focus of the expanded Interdepartmental Committee is community groups which are hard to reach, such as:

- isolated elderly individuals who live alone with no family support;
- people with a disability, including mental illness;
- people from a non-English speaking background;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; and
- carers of the elderly or people with a disability.

The Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) is tasked to:

- identify other hard to reach community groups;
- identify appropriate community safety messages;
- identify home safety needs or gaps in current service provision, including falls and accidents prevention, fire safety, personal and home security;
- identify the most appropriate means to access target groups;
- identify the most appropriate medium to access target groups;

- enhance communication on safety issues between Interdepartmental Committee agencies and other agencies; and
- make recommendations on changes or improvements to processes within or through the Interdepartmental Committee member agencies.

The NSWFB is represented on the IDC by:

- Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation (Chair);
- Manager Statistics; and
- Regional Fire Prevention Officers.

Initiatives which are currently under way or under discussion by the IDC include 6 major projects involving the NSWFB:

1. the Smoke Alarm Battery Replacement for the Elderly program (SABRE) is being piloted by 5 fire stations in 4 council areas on the Northern Beaches. The pilot has purposely commenced in a small way involving 200 Meals on Wheels volunteers. The Ageing and Disability Department will assist with the expansion of the program when appropriate. Four hundred surveys were distributed and of the 200 returned, 120 households requested assistance. The 120 households have been allocated to fire stations for action in August 2000;
2. to address concerns that people may not take action despite increased awareness, agencies have identified a number of publications that address aspects of community safety. The NSWFB is receiving and collating messages with a view to integrating them into a single brochure targeted at disabled groups – target date August 2000;
3. the IDC is considering the implications of and possible action arising from a discussion paper “Improving Service Delivery to People of NESB” produced by an officer seconded to the NSWFB under the ODEOPE Migrant Work Experience Opportunities Program. The paper identified that
 - in NSW 16% and in Sydney 22% of the population were born overseas in a NESB country;
 - a total of 241 languages are spoken by people of NESB;
 - 64% of the Fairfield local population are from NESB, 63% of Auburn, 62% of Canterbury, 50% of Burwood, 49% of Botany, 48% of Ashfield, (Marrickville 46%, Strathfield 47%, Rockdale 45%, Bankstown 40%, Liverpool 38%, Concord 36%, and Parramatta 34%);
 - 40% of public housing applicants are from a NESB; and

- a NSW FB survey identified that due to the socio-economic composition of NESB persons, cultural and social practices, and lack of awareness of fire safety, NESB people are a high-risk group;
4. the NSW FB is participating in the ODEOPE Management Development Program for ATSI People. Two participants in the MDPP developed a project:
- to reduce fire incidents and other emergencies in Aboriginal communities;
 - to involve Aboriginal communities in the self-management of fire safety;
 - to identify and develop alliances with keystakeholders;
 - to develop cross cultural awareness in the NSW FB; and
 - to improve decision making in the NSWFB through improved data collections specific to ATSI communities.

As a result of the findings of the project the NSWFB conducted a planning day to identify and address issues related to service delivery to Aboriginal communities. A number of government agencies participated in the planning day including NSW Department of Health, the Aboriginal Housing Office, and the NSW Department of Corrective Services. An action plan was developed to address issues identified and a position of ATSI Liaison Officer has been established by the NSW FB to monitor and implement the action plan and an officer appointed.

5. the IDC is considering the implications of and possible action arising from a draft research paper on analysis for fire injuries. It was noted that the South West Sydney Area Health Service and the Western Sydney Area Health Service have the highest incidents of fire injuries, with the lowest in the Illawarra, Far West and Southern Area Health Services; and
6. the IDC is considering a proposal to provide NSWFB fire safety audiotapes for the blind, which is currently with the Royal Blind Society. Even though in NSW alone approximately 100,000 people suffer blindness or vision impairment, no fire safety information is currently available on audiotape.

Other current joint consultative and management initiatives to all sectors of the community include:

Management Development Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

The NSWFB participated in the 1999 Management Development Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (MDPA). MDPA was developed by the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (ODEOPE) with the support of the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Commonwealth

Department of Employment, Education and Training. A key outcome of the MDPA is to further develop the managerial skills of ATSI people in the public sector.

Bush Fire Management Committees

Arising out of the 1994 bush fires the Brigades established Bush Fire Management Committees in all local government areas where an identified bush fire risk exists. The committees include representatives from local government, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Rural Fire Service and other agencies and groups with an interest in bush fire prevention and suppression and the production of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans.

Working in Partnership with Local Communities

Ninety-nine Community Fire Units were established to enable street based groups of neighbours at the bush/urban interface to actively participate in managing bush fire risk.

Community Consultation

Community consultation takes place at the fire station level with firefighters actively participating in the local community. Over 64,000 people take the opportunity to visit their local fire station during open day each year. Open days are one component of our winter campaign to raise awareness of fire safety and emergency prevention.

During the remainder of the year consultation takes place in the form of fire safety and emergency prevention activities, including supporting local Community Fire Units (CFUs) or, for example in Singleton and Tamworth, membership of the local Chamber of Commerce. A number of fire stations are also establishing individual home pages on the Internet specifically to provide local information about fire and emergency management.

Community Education programs

Public education and community awareness programs are aimed at reducing the number of emergencies. Programs are predominantly delivered to childcare and preschool groups, playgroups and community groups by local fire station staff.

Community Safety Training

Our Community Safety Training Services (ComSafe) Unit located at the State Training College at Alexandria, provides community based prevention activities and also delivers courses on a fee for service basis.

FireEd Program

The new FireEd program for kindergarten children and school staff started in second term 1998. A second module and educational kit for primary schools is currently being evaluated.

Our Communications Strategy for the Disability Action Plan

An integrated communications strategy is being developed to promote and publicise the NSWFB Disability Action Plan to management, staff, stakeholders, service users and, in particular, people with a disability.

Components of the strategy include:

- making copies available in alternative formats, community languages and plain English;
- developing a summary sheet on the Disability Action Plan for wide distribution in the broader community;
- making Disability Action Plan briefing sessions available to all staff and researching the need for community information sessions;
- identifying a methodology for ongoing communications regarding implementation and progress of the Disability Action Plan. This includes ensuring that all subsequent communications are promoted through print and other media. Specific groups will be targeted in both metropolitan and regional areas, and through current NSWFB publications including:
 - § In Orders - presenting formal directives, policy on procedural and administrative issues and personnel matters;
 - § Fire News - an in-house magazine presenting current interest stories and reporting on the NSWFB experience at emergency incidents;
 - § Commish's Corner - an electronic weekly newsletter presenting the views and thoughts of the Commissioner on current events or issues;
 - § What the Blazes - presenting personnel, industrial relations and finance issues from the Resources Division as well as staff contributions;
 - § Public Relations weekly Activity Sheet;
 - § publishing on Intranet and Internet sites; and
 - § producing a comprehensive report on the implementation of the Plan in the NSWFB Annual Report and forwarding a copy of the Annual Report to the Ageing and Disability Department.

Evaluation and Monitoring of the Disability Action Plan

The success of the implementation of the Disability Action Plan will be determined by measuring what has been achieved against the performance indicators that have been identified in each section of priority areas for action.

The Director Human Resources will report regularly to the CEG on reports submitted by the officers primarily responsible for the various strategies, including:

- Manager Public Relations,
- Manager Training,
- Manager Recruitment / EEO, and
- Manager Property.

Responsibility for implementation of specific strategies rests with the officers nominated as responsible for each strategy. Each nominated officer is to report on a monthly basis to the Director Human Resources on progress with implementation.

Consultation will occur with :

- community groups ; and.
- the unions which cover NSWFB employees, primarily the Fire Brigade Employees' Union and the Public Service Association.

Reviewing and Reporting on the Disability Action Plan

The NSWFB will review and report on progress made against the Plan in its Annual Report, a copy of which will be submitted to the Ageing and Disability Department.

As required by the Disability Policy Framework, the NSWFB will submit to the Ageing and Disability Department a further three-year plan in December 2002. The new Plan will build on the achievements and take into account the things learned from the implementation of the current Plan.

Priority Areas for Action

- 1. Physical Access**
- 2. Promoting Positive Community Attitudes**
- 3. Training of Staff**
- 4. Information about Services**
- 5. Employment in the Public Sector**
- 6. Complaints Procedures**
- 7. Communication and Consultation**

Priority Area for Action: 1. Physical Access

The NSWFB provides services through a network of over 330 fire stations, Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Response units, and administrative buildings in Sydney, Alexandria and Greenacre. We exist to provide help to communities, households, businesses and industries to prepare for an emergency. Our aim is to reduce the number of injuries and deaths caused by fire and other emergencies and the best way is via planning and prevention.

Firefighters as an expected part of their duties are often called upon to attend emergency scenes in external premises, often under the extreme of difficult circumstances such as a home or workplace on fire, or a public area where there has been a hazard spill. In these situations, there is often a need to perform emergency rescue operations. In the majority of rescue operations, the victim(s) has been disabled in some form (eg. broken leg, unconscious, suffering severe burns, loss of blood, in trauma). In Nursing Homes and hospital evacuations, many patients may be bedridden.

Training must provide effective procedures and guidelines for dealing with a wide range of emergency situations and emphasise the need for clear communication. As part of their recruit training, firefighters are trained to deal with patients based on an assessment of their condition and state of disability. The primary concern is to save lives where there is an imminent threat. Where a threat is not immediate, greater care can often be taken to treat the disability prior to evacuation.

The modules taught in recruit training specifically relating to the physical welfare of the victim(s) are:

1.16 Casualty Assistance

The purpose of this module is to provide the participant with the knowledge and skills to:

- ensure scene safety;
- apply hygiene precautions in casualty management;
- provide emotional support to casualties;

- assist ambulance officers in providing care; and
- assist in casualty handling and casualties experiencing shock.

1.17 Emergency Care

The purpose of this module is to provide the participant with the knowledge and skills to assist casualties of an accident and to provide initial emergency care in accordance with approved first-aid standards. This provides a Level 1 First Aid Certificate.

These modules include reference to proper carrying methods, including chair lift, blanket drag, fore and aft carrying method, and stokes litter (for wheelchair patients and other non-ambulatory persons).

Community Safety (ComSafe) Training, which provides advanced firefighting training, includes a module on health care fire safety, which instructs in advanced methods for removal of non-ambulatory and semi-ambulatory persons from emergency situations, including patient management, priorities for rapid evacuation, safety in health care facilities and workplace hazards.

We are also conscious of the need to regularly inspect all NSWFB premises and upgrade them where necessary to provide equitable access to services to all members of the workforce and the community. New stations are designed to provide disabled access, and a constant program of station and workplace modification is aimed to rectify occupational health and safety concerns, environmental concerns and disabled access concerns. Due to the large number of premises, it will take more than 3 years to remove the barriers to access in all premises. The establishment of a formal framework (eg. Access Audit Program) is needed to undertake a program of access audits which will extend beyond the time frame of this Plan. The Access Audit Program is linked to an access works program that forms part of the NSWFB's capital works program.

Organisational Goals:

To ensure that wherever possible people with disabilities are able to access and use services to the same extent as other members of the community.

To maximise accessibility for all staff and members of the community, including those with disabilities, to all NSWFB premises where operationally appropriate, and to any other venues used in the provision of services and information.

Gaps and Barriers:

Gaps and barriers will be identified through regular Access Audits of NSWFB premises and in consultation with staff, service users and members of the community, including the disability community. Strategies and performance indicators are developed to meet emerging needs and incorporated into the Disability Action Plan on an ongoing basis.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year			
				2001	2002	2003	ongoing
1.1 Contract Access Auditor	Financial implication - Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Classification of all NSWFB premises including those with heritage value for the purpose of developing Access Audit Checklists (tools) § Production of an Access Audit Checklist for each classification of NSWFB premises § Production of an Access Audit checklist for public venues used by NSWFB eg, "Championships" § Training of key staff in the use of checklists § Premises prioritised for audits as part of an ongoing program <p>Note: Physical access includes signage and communication infrastructure</p>	Director Logistics Support & Manager Property		3		
					3		
					3		
					3		
					3		

1.2	Undertake access audits in order of priority	Financial Implication - Staff	All NSWFB premises audited in order of priority	Director Logistics Support & Manager Property		3	3	3
1.3	Obtain recommendations on solutions to problems identified in access audits	Financial Implication - Consultant	Recommendations received	Director Logistics Support & Manager Property		3	3	3
1.4	Act on access audit recommendations	Financial Implication	Access audit recommendations implemented in order of priority	Director Logistics Support & Manager Property		5%	25%	70%

Priority Area for Action: 2. Promoting Positive Community Attitudes

Organisational Goals:

To foster positive attitudes in the NSWFB, the emergency services sector and the broader community through raising awareness of people with disabilities, including people with disabilities in all publications and promotions, and catering to the needs of people with disabilities as employees and in all community activities and training.

To ensure that wherever possible people with disabilities are able to access and use services to the same extent and with the same independence and dignity as other members of the community.

To ensure that staff with disabilities have the same access to facilities and the same opportunities for employment, career progression and involvement as other employees.

Gaps and Barriers:

Gaps and barriers are identified through Access Audits of NSWFB premises.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year			
				2001	2002	2003	ongoing
2.1 Promote the outcomes and recommendations of the Inter Departmental Committee	Financial Implication - Staff	Information is provided to Manager Public Relations and Manager Corporate Communications	Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation	3	3	3	3
2.2 Review all information, promotional and consultative activities to identify opportunities for people with disabilities to have meaningful representation and input	Staff	Activities reviewed and strategies Incorporated into Disability Action Plan	Assistant Director Corporate Communications and Manager Corporate Communications		3	3	3
.3 Develop a policy that commits the NSWFB to the accessibility standards in the NSW Government Disability Policy Framework's Communications Handbook	Staff	Policy created and Implemented	Assistant Director Corporate Communications and Policy Development Manager		3		

2.4	Initiate the inclusion of disability issues on the agenda of relevant inter-Emergency Services Forums	Staff	Issues related to disability become an agenda item on all relevant inter-Emergency Service forums	Assistant Director Corporate Communications		3	3	3
2.5	Include in corporate documents a commitment to promote positive community attitudes to people with disabilities	Staff	Statement of commitment in corporate documents	Assistant Director Corporate Communications			3	3
2.7	Where possible and appropriate, staff with disabilities to be represented more evenly across salary ranges	Undertaken as part of <i>Employment in the Public Sector</i>	Desired % representation of People with Disabilities at each salary range to be established % Increases achieved	Manager Recruitment/EEO		3		
							3	3
2.8	Include Disability Awareness training as part of staff induction and to all levels of management and staff, including the need to take extra care for people with disabilities	Undertaken as part of <i>Training</i>	Disability Awareness Training module included in Induction procedures Disability Awareness Training available and undertaken by all staff	Manager Training and Manager Recruitment / EEO			3	
							3	3

Priority Area for Action: 3. Training of Staff

Our objective is to develop and empower staff to achieve excellence and professional satisfaction in the delivery of world class services.

We believe that continual improvement in service delivery depends on:

- the skills of our front line and support staff;
- a healthy morale based upon fair recruitment, training and development processes;
- effective occupational health and safety and reasonable adjustment policy and practices; and
- sound communication at all levels of the organisation.

NSWFB training is structured around these objectives and disability awareness training is integrated into each of these categories. Training is critical to the services provided by the NSWFB, especially the need to save lives, the need to raise public awareness of fire safety and prevention throughout the entire community, the need to provide standards of service which cater to the needs of all members of the community. All permanent firefighters receive an initial 16 weeks of recruit training, which includes modules on casualty assistance and emergency care. To progress through the organisation and obtain higher ranks, they receive continual training in advanced techniques. The NSWFB operates its own Training College to provide specialist fire and emergency training, as well as courses in a wide range of skills, including rescue, specialist operational activities, self-development, management and leadership.

Firefighter training and regular drills are provided to retained firefighters, who are encouraged to attend as many as they are able (given that they are part-time employees, many with primary employment) by payment for attendance.

Administrative and support staff are encouraged to apply for training courses through the availability of Training and Development Plans which encourage at least five days attendance each year at training courses to improve their skills.

Departmental Goal:

To support both permanent and retained firefighters and administrative and support staff through disability awareness training to respond effectively to the needs of people with disabilities in every aspect of the NSWFB's operations.

Gaps and Barriers:

Inappropriate response may occur due to lack of understanding of different types of disabilities, or devaluing an individual's input through lack of appreciation of their disability.

The NSWFB needs to recognise staff with disabilities within the organisation, and provide training to enable all employees to respond to their needs.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year 2001 2002 2003 ongoing
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3.1	Develop and deliver staff questionnaire to assess Disability Awareness training needs and establish base line data	Staff	Staff Questionnaire delivered and information collated	Manager Training		3		
3.2	Review all training policies and strategies	Staff	All policies and strategies reviewed	Manager Training		3		
3.3	Formulate revised training policy and strategies in line with review and staff feedback	Staff	Policy signed off	Manager Training			3	
3.4	Incorporate training policy and strategies into corporate planning, human resource and budget processes	Staff	Training incorporated in department activities and budget allocated	Manager Training			3	
3.5	Develop a training module for inclusion in support staff orientation	Financial Implication - Consultant	Module included in staff orientation	Manager Training			3	
3.6	Develop a training module for inclusion in education and information sessions for new recruits	Financial Implication - Consultant	Module included in new recruit education and/or information sessions	Manager Training			3	
3.7	Include Disability	Staff	Accreditation and evaluation	Manager			3	

	Awareness training requirements as part of the registered rescue operators accreditation and evaluation process		processes include Disability Awareness training component	Training				
3.8	Develop an ongoing strategy to ensure staff at all levels have access to and are required to undertake ongoing Disability Awareness Training	Staff	Strategy in place and budget allocated	Manager Training			3	
3.9	Undertake Disability Awareness training at all levels of management and staff	Financial Implication - Consultant	Training delivered to staff	Manager Training		3	3	3
3.10	Provide training to appropriate staff on use of Access Check list for venues and presentation styles	Undertaken as Part of <i>Physical Access</i>	Staff trained and using checklist appropriately	Manager Training		3	3	3

Priority Area for Action: 4. Information about Services

Information is provided to all members of the community promoting fire safety, fire awareness and fire prevention. Specific campaigns are conducted regularly through the mass media to promote the need for fire alarms and various fire prevention strategies.

The NSWFB maintains a website at www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au. This contains several publications including the Corporate Plan and Service Delivery Strategy, which highlight the core functions of the NSWFB, ie, fire, rescue, Hazmat, Natural Hazard Response, prevention (community safety and self-help), Community Safety (Comsafe) Training, fire safety and automatic fire alarm monitoring.

Special attention is given to ensure that firefighters receive specialist training in dealing with disabled patients in vulnerable communities such as nursing homes, hospitals, retirement homes, community housing. Public education programs are also directed towards these vulnerable community groups.

Departmental Goals:

To ensure that:

- we provide all NSWFB information and services in ways that promote in the community a positive image of persons with disabilities;
- we promote in all NSWFB workplaces positive attitudes to people with disabilities through the information, education and training provided to all employees and to the users and potential users of NSWFB services;
- all members of the community, including those with disabilities, have access to information about NSWFB services, programs and activities;
- we deliver information in a timely and appropriate manner and prepare a production, distribution and format strategy each time new material is developed; and

- funding is made available to meet the NSWFB's commitment to providing information in alternative formats, such as audio tape, braille, translated material, etc., and where appropriate, use services such as peak disability organisations and Disability Media to disseminate information.

Gaps and Barriers:

NSWFB employees recognise that people with disabilities, who may be very vulnerable in an emergency situation, may not receive preventative information because of factors such as:

- information is not available in a suitable format, or has not been promoted to peak disability groups;
- the response to a call for assistance by a person with a disability may not be given appropriate urgency because the NSWFB call centre person may not have the skills to provide the information in an appropriate way; and
- vital information in an emergency situation may go unheeded by a person with a disability because the information is not communicated effectively, eg, person with a hearing disability, or supported by an appropriate course of action.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year			
				2001	2002	2003	ongoing
4.1 Undertake consultation to review potential gaps and barriers	Undertaken as part of Promoting Positive Community Attitudes	Consultation outcomes to inform Policy creation	Manager Public Relations, Director Human Resources & Manager Recruitment/EEO		3		
4.2 Create a policy that commits the NSWFB to the accessibility standards in the NSW Government Disability Policy Framework's Communications Handbook	Undertaken as part of Promoting Positive Community Attitudes	Policy created Review current practices in light of policy Policy Implemented And review and evaluation strategies developed	Manager Public Relations, Director Human Resources & Manager Recruitment/EEO		3 3 3		
4.3 Formulate a distribution	Staff	Distribution strategy	Assistant Director		3		

<p>strategy for disseminating information through alternate avenues, including the disability media and disability community</p>		<p>developed Strategy Implemented Strategy reviewed and evaluated</p>	<p>Corporate Communications, Director Human Resources & Manager Recruitment/ EEO</p>		3	3	3
<p>4.4 Provide training to appropriate staff on use of Access Check list for venues to ensure that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings, consultations and promotions are held in accessible venues • Information is presented in accessible formats • the specific needs of people with disabilities are taken into account 	<p>Undertaken as Part of Physical Access</p>	<p>Staff trained and using checklist appropriately</p> <p>Only accessible venues and formats used</p>	<p>Manager Public Relations, Director Human Resources & Manager Recruitment/ EEO</p>	3	3	3	3

<p>4.5 Require, through standard clauses in contracting agreements that any production of printed information, videos and delivery of training and community consultations by third parties will meet Access standards and the standards in the NSW Government Disability Policy Framework's Communications Handbook</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Standard clauses developed</p> <p>Standard clauses included in all contracts</p>	<p>Manager Public Relations, Director Human Resources & Manager Recruitment/ EEO</p>		<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>
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Priority Area for Action: 5. Employment in the Public Sector

We will continue to strive to diversify our workforce through improved recruitment processes.

Departmental Goal:

To ensure that people with Disabilities have, as a right, equal access to appropriate employment and career opportunities in the NSWFB and that the staff profile more closely reflects that of the broader community that we serve.

Gaps and Barriers:

Although some can be identified and addressed in this First Stage, other gaps and barriers will be identified in consultation with staff, service users and the disability community. Strategies and performance indicators will then be developed and incorporated into the Disability Action Plan prior to the 2000/2001 Annual Report.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year
				2001 2002 2003 ongoing

<p>5.1 Conduct a comprehensive workplace survey and develop a base line workforce profile against which progress can be measured</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Workforce survey undertaken</p> <p>Workforce profile and performance indicators, review and evaluation processes established</p> <p>Review and evaluation undertaken</p>	<p>Recruitment/ EEO Manager</p>		<p>3</p> <p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>5.2 Undertake consultation with staff, service users and the disability sector</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Effective consultations undertaken</p> <p>Outcomes incorporated into strategies</p>	<p>Recruitment/ EEO Manager</p>		<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>

<p>5.3 Where possible and appropriate, staff with disabilities to be represented more evenly across salary ranges</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Base line statistics to be established</p> <p>Desired % representation of People with Disabilities at each salary range to be established</p> <p>% Increases achieved</p>	<p>Recruitment/ EEO Manager</p>		<p>3</p> <p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>5.4 To identify and eliminate institutional barriers to employment on merit, review all Human Resource policies including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing of job specifications 2. Advertising of positions 3. Application format and process options 4. Shortlisting procedures 5. Selection panel make-up and training 	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Institutional Barriers to employment on merit identified</p> <p>Policies and procedures amended to reflect equity</p> <p>Review and evaluation criteria and processes identified</p>	<p>Recruitment/ EEO Manager</p>		<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p>		

<p>needs</p> <p>6. Evaluation of pre-employment health screening standards and procedures</p> <p>7. Reasonable adjustment processes</p> <p>8. Access to promotional, 'acting up' opportunities and grievance procedures</p>		<p>Review undertaken and institutional barriers to employment on merit eliminated</p>				3	3
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Priority Area for Action: 6. Complaints Procedures

Departmental Goal:

To maintain an effective and efficient Complaints and Grievance Procedure which:

- § is accessible to all staff and service users, which provide equity, confidentiality and efficient and transparent processes;
- § provides effective and timely outcomes;
- § enables people with disabilities to lodge a complaint or a grievance in a way that suits their needs and obtain a response in the appropriate format;
- § is designed to capture information to assist in shaping the NSWFB's future service delivery strategies; and
- § encompasses the need for alternative formats, communication modes and locations for participating in the complaints process, so that it provides an effective service for all people, including those with disabilities.

Gaps and Barriers:

The NSW Government's Disability Policy Framework places a heavy emphasis on the accessibility of procedures which enable people, including those with disabilities to make complaints about service delivery. The NSWFB's current system is to be reviewed under the Disability Action Plan and re-designed if necessary. This will be done in consultation with staff, service users and the disability community. The current system provides a variety of options to people to make a complaint, but does not specifically target ways to cater for people with disabilities. The review will focus on possible expansion of the options available and the effective of the current procedures.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year			
				2001	2002	2003	ongoing
6.1 Review current complaints procedures and establish limited base line data	Staff	All useful information extracted from current complaints data base	Professional Standards and Conduct Officer, Manager Public Relations		3		
6.2 Review requirements of a complaints procedure	Staff	Consultations outcomes available to inform Complaints Procedure formulation	Professional Standards and Conduct Officer, Manager Public Relations		3		
6.3 Develop revised Complaints and Grievance Procedure	Staff	Effective complaint handling procedure	Professional Standards and Conduct Officer, Manager Public Relations		3		
6.4 Publicise and promote the Complaints Procedure	Financial Implication - Staff	Incorporate into communications strategy	Assistant Director Corporate Communications		3		

<p>6.5 Continually improve service and Complaints Procedure</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>Identify methodology in which service outcomes and Complaints Procedure can be measured and evaluated</p> <p>Review and adjust annually in response to surveys and consultation</p>	<p>Professional Standards and Conduct Officer, Manager Public Relations</p>		<p>3</p> <p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>
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Priority Area for Action: 7. Communication and Consultation

The NSWFB provides protection from fire and emergencies, and provides information on fire safety and fire prevention, to all members of the community. There is considerable contact with members of the disabled community during the provision of these services, particularly in establishments such as retirement homes, nursing homes, hospitals and similar establishments primarily concerned with older, ill or disabled members of the community. To assist firefighters to deal effectively with situations involving these groups of people, and particularly with emergency situations, firefighters are trained during their probationary training how to effectively provide casualty assistance and emergency care in all situations. This disability awareness training enables firefighters to respond effectively to the needs of people with disabilities in every aspect of their operations.

Departmental Goal:

To establish an effective and ongoing consultation process to identify strategies for ensuring that people with disabilities are able to access all services provided by the NSWFB to the same extent as other members of the community, and to communicate this information effectively to people with disabilities.

Gaps and Barriers:

Inappropriate response may occur if there is a lack of understanding of different types of disabilities, or devaluing an individual's input through lack of appreciation of their disability. The NSWFB needs to recognise that consultation with organisations which deal specifically with the disabled community can increase awareness of the difficulties facing people with disabilities.

Strategy	Resources	Performance Indicator	Officer Responsible	Year			
				2001	2002	2003	ongoing
7.1 Establish a consultative committee with representatives of the range of disabilities	Staff	Set a date for meetings during the first year and establish terms of references, strategies and an action plan with target dates	HR Projects Officer and Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation		3		
7.2 Write to or contact all groups which could contribute to the consultative committee's work inviting their involvement.	Staff	All groups are involved actively on the consultative committee or are available to provide input if it is needed	HR Projects Officer and Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation		3		
7.3 Conduct a workshop to draw out the issues specifically affecting the NSWFB	Financial Implication - Staff	Issues are identified affecting all people with disabilities	HR Projects Officer and Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation		3		
7.4 Establish a smaller consultative group to provide for a local consultative mechanism	Staff	Committee examines issues relating to the local community and refers issues of statewide relevance or broad impact to the state-wide committee	HR Projects Officer and Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation			3	