

[insert address]

[insert date]

Dear Mayor Moore,

My name is Annette Pham and I am the mother of Liam who is 12 years old and profoundly disabled. I am writing this letter to you to make you aware of a problem you possibly do not know even exists.

I started a petition on change.org in September to change the building code of Australia so all members of our community especially those with a profound disability have access to suitable change and toileting facilities.

Liam has cerebral palsy and other chromosomal abnormalities which leave him severely intellectually and physically disabled. Liam has never walked or talked, is wheelchair bound and is fed via a PEG Tube in his tummy. Regardless of all that Liam has been through he is just like any other boy. He is very sociable and loves meeting people, listening to music, swimming with assistance and using the liberty swing at the park. Despite not talking Liam can communicate, he understands a lot, he gives the best cuddles and has a wicked sense of humour. His laugh is infectious.

Liam is also incontinent and wears nappies. **Our big problem is when we go out into the community there is no change facility/ toilet to change Liams nappy.** There are plenty of accessible disabled toilets but these are only useful to those who are mobile such as an elderly person with a walking frame or someone who is physically strong enough to transfer themselves from a wheelchair to the toilet. Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability or their carers. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as spinal injuries, spina bifida, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or an acquired brain injury, often need extra facilities to allow them to use the toilets comfortably.

Unless you know someone who is profoundly disabled like Liam it would not dawn on you that toileting/ changing facilities are not available to disabled people like Liam. When I ask if change facilities are available for Liam people point to the disabled toilet expecting me to lay him on a dirty floor or use a baby change table suitable for a baby and not a 12 year old boy. Imagine the disgust of people if you told a mother with a new baby to change her baby on the toilet floor. Well this is what I am expected to do with Liam. **I have three choices currently, leave Liam sit in his own urine and faeces till we get home, change him in public on a park bench or put him on the urine stained, dirty floor of the disabled toilet. On my last visit to Sydney I has no choice but to change Liam on the floor of the disabled toilet at the Museum Of Contemporary Arts in the Rocks**

Liam is 12 and weighs 26 kg. I struggle to lift him out of his wheelchair onto the floor of the toilet especially when poo has leaked out of his nappy. Getting him up from the floor is almost impossible. Think when you see the next disabled person like Liam in a wheelchair, how does their carer change them, where can they go? What about the profoundly disabled adults with elderly parents, what hope do they have of changing their child.

According to the National Public Toilet Map there are over 16,000 publicly available toilets across Australia; of these only 6 are suitable to meet the toileting and changing needs of the profoundly disabled person.

Section 23 of the Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability in providing access to or use of premises that the public can enter or use. From 1 May 2011, any new building open to the public, or existing building undergoing significant renovation, is required to comply with the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010. However we openly discriminate against those with profound disabilities when it comes to accessing suitable change and toileting facilities. Toileting and change facilities for the profoundly disabled just do not exist in Australia outside the person's home. There are 200,000 profoundly disabled children and adults in Australia and they have nowhere to go to use a toilet or be changed! **As Mayor of the City Of Sydney this will concern you greatly even though up until now you quiet likely would not have known the problem even exists.**

The building code of Australia has to change, we need proper changing/ toileting facilities to meet the needs everyone in our community not just for those who are mobile and have a voice to complain. I realise that this must come from both federal and state legleslative changes but hope that the great City of Sydney, our Capital City could lead the way by example. **"Changing Places toilets" are different to standard accessible toilets** in that they have extra features and more space to meet these needs. Each Changing Places toilet provides a centrally placed toilet so carers can assist the disabled person use the toilet, a height adjustable change table for an adult and ceiling track hoists to lift the wheelchair bound person on and off the change table. Yes it will be more expensive to install but money should not be an excuse to deny a disabled person a basic human right.

I met with John Ajaka and Shelly Hancock at State Parliament on the 22nd of September. Minister Ajaka was very sincere in his efforts to help make changing places toilets part of a more inclusive society. As an initial step he has requested a changing places toilet be installed in State Parliament so the NSW State Parliament can lead by example. He has promised to work with local governments and state bodies like NSW Health and FACS as disability inclusion policies are the shared responsibility of all government agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Last Tuesday Liam and I met with Bob Baldwin MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry responsible for the Building Code Of Australia. A review of the BCA will occur next year and changing places toilets will form part of the terms of reference. Bromwyn Bishop Speaker of the house will be asked by Bob Baldwin to install a changing places toilet in Federal Parliament so they can lead by example also. We speak with Senator Mitch Fifield Assistant Minister for Social Services on 13th of November with responsibility for disabilities and ageing. Change is inevitable and it will be for the good of all Australians.

No doubt you will be aware of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 passed by the NSW Parliament in August 2014. All councils in NSW are currently drawing up their disability action plans. The Act aims to:

Make it clear that people with disability have the same human rights as other people and promotes the inclusion of people with disability by requiring government departments and local councils to engage in disability inclusion action planning.

I have read councils public toilet strategy 2014. There is no mention in it for toileting and changing facilities for the profoundly disabled. This is not a criticism as you cannot have an awareness of the needs of profoundly disabled people unless you are directly affected. I note you are upgrading Railway Square, Haymarket, Lawson Square, Redfern; Regent Street Waterloo; Erskineville Road, Erskineville; William Street, Darlinghurst; Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross; Oxford Street, Paddington; Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo; King Street Newtown – jointly with Marrickville Council to service the Newtown shopping and entertainment precinct. Sydney Park, Alexandria; Wentworth Park, Glebe; Observatory Hill Park, Millers Point; Victoria Park, Chippendale; Green Park, Darlinghurst; and, The Glebe Foreshore Parks.

You have a great opportunity to do good here, you are upgrading the facilities already, it will not cost you a fortune to include a changing place toilet in each of these facilities.

I am asking you as Mayor of the great City Of Sydney to consider funding at least 8 changing places toilets across your local government area especially the CBD and tourist hot spots. The vast majority of profoundly disabled people are excluded from the joys of experiencing the great sights and facilities of the City Of Sydney as there is absolutely nowhere for them to go to be toileted or changed during an outing to the city. Profoundly disabled people and their carers who live in the city limit the time they can be out to 3 or 4 hours as they have to go home to use toileting and change facilities. Most profoundly disabled people and their carer just don't take the risk and stay home. As a society we are responsible for their exclusion. The provision of Changing Places toilets is a great step towards creating an inclusive built environment for all people with disability. Sydney City Council will recognise that better access and inclusion will benefit all residents and visitors to the city. Sydney City Council can proudly promote its awareness of community needs and commitment to their social responsibility.

I also ask that all new Council buildings have a changing place toilet installed and that an audit of existing public buildings takes place to ascertain which ones are suitable for conversion or upgrading to meet a higher standard.

I ask council to make changing places toilets a condition of DA consent in all new large public building such as Hospital, government buildings, airports, entertainment venues , casinos, shopping centres and recreational facilities. It is not always necessary to have male, female and accessible toilets. There are many incidents when we can all use the same toilet. I have endless ideas that I am happy to share, discuss and develop to ensure change occurs and am relying on Councils awareness of the difficulties faced by profoundly disabled people and their carers to take action.

Mayor Moore, you have done a great job during the time as the city's independent Mayor. You have been responsible for many great changes and improvements to the city's infrastructure which all Australians benefit from. Now I am asking you and the council to provide the most basic of needs for those people who are profoundly disabled and which all the rest of us take for granted; somewhere to go to the toilet.

Melbourne opened its first Changing places toilet last month and the state government has given \$750K to provide 6 more. Brisbane city council has 6 changing places toilets and the rest of the country has none.

Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 reflects the Australian people's commitment to promoting and supporting the equal and active participation by people with disability in economic and social life. Understanding the prevalence of disability in the Australian population, and the socio-economic characteristics and needs and unmet needs of people with disability, is important in informing policies, planning services, and removing barriers to participation.

The Federal and State Governments adoption of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides support to individuals and families but does not include community infrastructure. Despite all the support of the NDIS, many people's lives will remain restricted. Changing Places underpins the goals of the NDIS by removing a considerable barrier to social inclusion and community participation by providing toilet facilities that meet the needs of people with a severe or profound disability. The NDIS will change the lives of people with a disability for the better in many ways **BUT** without

Changing Places toilets people with a severe disability and their carers will not be able to realise these opportunities.

To date 4,300 people have signed my petition, the comments they leave are deserving of your attention and I urge you to read them and share them with your Council colleagues. The City of Sydney has a real chance lead the way and to do good here, please don't miss the opportunity.

To do nothing is not an option for me or the carers of all the profoundly disabled people in our community.

I hope to meet with you and your staff in the near future to discuss the contents of my letter and how I might help you to achieve a more inclusive city. I am attaching the Builders Kit which has all the design pricing and standards required for a changing places toilet. I am also sending you a photo of a changing places toilet and a short 1 minute video to show you why we need changing places toilets. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and look at the attachments.

Kind regards,

Annette Pham

[contact details]