

**Address**  
**Date**

**Dear [insert name],**

**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.**

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. (One of our favourite places to go believe it or not is [Insert name] Nowra). 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 visit your shopping centers there is no change facility/ toilet to change Liam's 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 [Insert name] I had no choice but to change Liam on the floor of the parents room.**

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. [Insert name] is no alone in its total lack of suitable changing facilities for the profoundly disabled.

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. Around 200,000 profoundly disabled children and adults in Australia require assistance to use the toilet and many cannot use public toilets! **As National Community Development Manager for [Insert name] 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 legislative changes but hope that a National Company like [insert name] could start the journey with other National Companies and 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.

No doubt you will be aware of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 passed by the NSW Parliament in August 2014. Local councils, big business and individuals, 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.

[Insert name] is a major developer and manager of shopping centers and is widely known and visible throughout Australia. [Insert name] can have a major impact on the quality of a profoundly disabled person's life and their carer if [Insert name] were agreeable to install one changing places toilet in all of its shopping centers. [Insert name] could start with shopping centers it is about to build and then perhaps do an audit of current facilities to see which shopping centers would be suitable to retro fit changing places toilets.

**Did you know the vast majority of profoundly disabled people are excluded from the joys of experiencing the simple delights of shopping at your shopping centers as there is absolutely nowhere for them to go to be toileted or changed . Profoundly disabled people and their carers 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 a disability. [Insert name] will recognise that better access and inclusion will benefit all members of our communities. [Insert name] can proudly promote its awareness of community needs and commitment to their social responsibility.**

**I ask that all new [Insert name] Shopping Centers have a changing place toilet installed and that an audit of existing [Insert name] Shopping Centers takes place to ascertain which ones are suitable for conversion or upgrading to meet a higher standard.**

**[Insert name] has done a great job building vital infrastructure in our towns and cities throughout Australia which we all benefit from. Now I am asking you and [Insert name]**

**Board 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.**

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.

[Insert name] 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 the Board in the near future to discuss the contents of my letter and how I might help you to achieve a more inclusive business. I am attaching the Builders Kit which has all the design pricing and standards required for a changing places toilet. Less expensive options are also available. 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 phone number

Contact email