A UTILITY THAT VALUES DISABILITY PROJECT “WIDER WORLD”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SA Water prides itself on the fact that we put customers at the heart of everything we do. Our conversations with customers living with disability have pointed us in directions that will benefit all customers and make us a more valued organisation.

INTRODUCTION
This document explains how SA Water engaged with an often resilient and hidden group that makes up a sizeable amount of our customer base to deliver changes that were needed and truly make a difference in their lives.

YEAR CASE STUDY WAS IMPLEMENTED
2018 to 2019

CASE STUDY DETAIL
SA Water attended a South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS) conference in 2018, where many issues that face our disabled and aging population were highlighted. We realised that there were opportunities to provide a better service, that SA Water had very little intelligence about these customers to work with and no clear way to be able to just make changes happen.

As part of the Determine phase of this project we realised that there were many touchpoints that could benefit from a fresh look at how we did things from an accessibility standpoint. For example; their water use, the bill design, contacting our Customer Care Centre, making applications, finding information and getting help. We realised that we were poorly equipped in understanding how to help these customers in the ways that they needed.

We determined that 21.5% of South Australians live with a disability, with about a 1/3 of these being profound. Another 10% provide informal assistance and 3.4% are primary care-givers (Figure 1).

After determining that our work could benefit a large group of our customers, would support our Disability Action and Inclusion Plan and would be complimentary to our diversity and inclusion values, we were off and running with the full support of the Chief Executive.

SA Water teamed up with the Department of Human Services to access their engagement group – disabled people ready and willing to give their views. We also opened up consultation to our own staff, asking for people to be part of the project who were either disabled themselves or connected to a disabled person in some way though family or as a carer. We were surprised by the volume of people wanting to share their stories, with 50 responses in the first day.

Our Discovery was very much centred around talking to customers. We talked to them in their own homes where the challenges they faced could be seen first hand. These conversations were powerful and humbling as we saw the additional complexities in their lives. Our customers were also grateful that someone was listening – so often not the case – they are a resilient bunch who overcome and get on with life – they are often excluded from society and services often overlook their accessibility considerations. Some needs that
could be applied across all ages and types of disability became apparent very quickly, as did some very disability-specific issues. 

As at September 2018, we are nearing the end of our customer conversations and the plan for the next 6 months is to implement the Design and Deliver phases. 

By building a more human-centred customer narrative for internal staff we will ensure that universal design is applied to the touchpoints in question that will support other teams as they make changes to our systems and processes; we will develop training and materials for the people who may have contact with these customers so that everybody’s experience is enhanced; and also design and deliver tactical changes in our services and products that will benefit these customers in the short and medium term. 

All the needs identified fit within our own existing developed CX principles (Figure 2) which are being used to guide how we work with customers. This shows that their needs are basically no different from any of our able-bodied customers, so the way we work does not have to be different; but how we enact the principles needs to be modified so that they can extract the value out of what we do. 

We have identified that many of the issues are identical to other groups in vulnerable situations but just with different root causes, so by catering for our customers with the most extreme needs will actually benefit the majority of our customers.

> 3 in 10 South Australians live with disability, are primary care givers, or provide some informal assistance for those living with a disability.

*Figure 1: SA Customers living with disability*

*Figure 2: Our CX principles*