A Solution to the Problems of Public Restroom Design

Landmark
open space structures & solutions

Introduction

Public restrooms can bring relief to a community in more ways than one. They enable greater use of public areas, increase foot traffic in commercial areas which boosts local economies, they support recreation and meet basic human rights requirements for sanitation.

But while the benefits of a clean, serviceable and well-placed public restroom are many, these benefits can be negated when vandalism, anti-social behaviour and poor hygiene makes the restrooms unusable[2].

The Problems of Public Restroom Projects

Public restrooms need to be clean and free from vandalism in order to be used confidently by the public; a public restroom that is not well maintained will be used less frequently or avoided entirely[3].

Management processes of public restrooms to ensure continued high volume and satisfactory use include: risk management, arranging opening and closure times, access management, security measures, cleaning, maintenance, graffiti management, reporting of critical incidents and information/communication[4].

Daily maintenance of a public restroom can be cost-prohibitive and a facility that minimises the requirement for maintenance is a greater asset to a community than a facility that requires more maintenance due to its susceptibility to vandalism.

These management and design processes for public restrooms are inter-related; and the initial design of the restroom goes a long way in determining whether or not the restroom will be a benefit to the community – a facility the public can use regularly and that reduces maintenance costs.

The Implications of Vandalism

Restrooms can be closed or unavailable due to high maintenance, vandalism and anti-social behaviours. A vandalised public restroom creates hygiene concerns for the public, as bitter experience has shown, where there are no useable facilities people will use the public realm as a public convenience[5].

In extreme cases, vandalism renders a facility unusable by the public, inconveniencing the public and imposing a cost to the facility owner. The increased cost of maintenance to restore vandalised restrooms can divert community funding away from other projects, reducing effective public spending[6].

Closed restrooms do not provide a service to the community and can create a negative public image[7]. A public restroom unable to be used looks bad for the community/owner who can be perceived as unable to look after community assets, and by extension, the community itself[8].

Designing the Solution

Public restrooms that are designed using the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) can be an effective way to meet community needs by deterring vandalism and inappropriate behaviour. This will lead to reduced maintenance costs and increased usability by the public.

CPTED principles provide detailed examples of design solutions to minimise crime and maximise safety. White lighting at entry/exit points and external pathways; internal natural lighting including use of skylights; flush or hidden fixing; non-flammable, robust and counter-graffiti materials; easily replaceable components – these are all CPTED principles and when utilised in product design, can produce a public restroom that requires minimal maintenance for a longer project cycle able to better meet public needs.

Landmark's Mettros is an anti-vandal restroom that meets all of these CPTED principles. Constructed from non-flammable, impact resistant materials, the Mettros' unique structural posts allow for concealment of all anchors, roofing tie-downs and wall panel fastenings, in addition to the ducting of utility services, where they cannot be vandalised or tampered with. Flush or hidden fixings, mountings and components, an impervious proprietary basin design, counter-graffiti materials and individually replaceable wall panels/ components combine to make the Mettros a durable and cost-effective solution to the various problems of public restroom design and maintenance.

The Mettros restroom is a low maintenance facility, using appropriate and reliable automation and hygienic, easy-to-clean materials and surfaces. The restroom also features a programmable curfew lockout for added after-hours security.

Upgraded anti-vandal signage means that the impaired and blind can use these services more easily as standard signage is often more susceptible to damage. The mirror is polished stainless steel ensuring the lowest vandal opportunity and the low-contrast stainless steel surface finish provides disincentive for graffiti.

Designed and manufactured in Australia from locally sourced components and materials from a reputable and accountable manufacturer, ensuring that should damage occur replacement parts and components are readily available.

The Mettros restroom has been designed in consultation with Local Government Authorities and Disability Access Consultants. Universal design principles have been used, including automated hygiene options and an intuitive and cohesive user operating systems. The Mettros meets and exceeds national codes, Australian standards and is manufactured to internationally recognised ISO quality management systems.

The environmentally sustainable design includes a half-flush option, an optimum use of natural light and ventilation, a minimised lifecycle carbon footprint and a high material recycle value.

Landmark Mettros restrooms provide solutions for safety, durability, ease of maintenance and environmental sustainability. Quality materials and anti-vandal design ensure the highest possible design-life while limiting the possibility of misuse. Mettros restrooms minimise operating and maintenance costs. They are an anti-vandal, high volume, low maintenance restroom with access for varying accessibility requirements that provide owners a low-cost ownership for the life of the facility while providing the community a safe, hygienic restroom which stays in continual use.

[1] O'Meara Mary-Rain, Public Restrooms and Community Need, December 2008, PHLUSH, Concepts of Community Development
[2] Colin Cockfield, Kate Moss , (2002) "Sex, drugs and broken bowls: Dealing with problems of crime reduction in public conveniences", Safer Communities, Vol. 1 Iss: 2, pp37-43
[3] Adelaide City Council , Public Toilet Operating Guidelines, 05 March 2013
[4] Rebecca Roebuck & Phillipa Dwyer , City of Melbourne's Approaches to Addressing Safety Issues in Public Toilets, Melbourne City Council, Paper presented at the Crime Prevention Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Crime Prevention Branch, Commonwealth Attorney-general's Department and held in Sydney, 12-13 September 2002
[5] Adelaide City Council , Public Toilet Operating Guidelines, 05 March 2013
[6] Rebecca Roebuck & Phillipa Dwyer , City of Melbourne's Approaches to Addressing Safety Issues in Public Toilets, Melbourne City Council, Paper presented at the Crime Prevention Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Crime Prevention Branch, Commonwealth Attorney-general's Department and held in Sydney, 12-13 September 2002
[7] Adelaide City Council , Public Toilet Operating Guidelines, 05 March 2013
[8] Colin Cockfield, Kate Moss , (2002) "Sex, drugs and broken bowls: Dealing with problems of crime reduction in public conveniences", Safer Communities, Vol. 1 Iss: 2, pp37-43 (Website: http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/17578043200200017)
[9] Adelaide City Council , Public Toilet Operating Guidelines, 05 March 2013
[10] Susan Geason, Preventing Graffiti and Vandalism, First City Communications
Paper presented at Designing Out Crime: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology and NRMA Insurance and held at the Hilton Hotel, Sydney, 16 June 1989 (Website: http://192.190.66.70/media_library/conferences/cpted/geason.pdf)
[11] Australian Standards 1428.1 (2001) for access and mobility

park shelters   restrooms   pedestrian bridges   access structures   street furniture   custom products

landmarkpro.com.au | 1300 768 230
brisbane | sydney | melbourne | adelaide | perth | auckland

Landmark