

MLAK Frequently Asked Questions



What is the Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) Scheme?

The MLAK is a new and innovative scheme that uses a universal lock and key to allow people with disabilities 24 hours a day access to public facilities, eg. accessible toilets.

Why should we install the Scheme?

Accessible facilities should be open during the day, but it is sometimes necessary to lock them after hours. The MLAK is designed to increase access to these facilities. The MLAK will reduce vandalism, keep facilities clean and at the same time overcome the obstacle of accessible toilets being locked. Easy access to toilets after hours is something that the general public often takes for granted. For people with a disability the issue is never that straightforward. Many people with a physical disability in particular find it difficult to locate an accessible public toilet that is open after hours. The Scheme is therefore extremely important to enable people with a disability to go out in the evening.

How successful is the Scheme?

After a trial period with Pittwater Council in 1994–95 there are now over 230 facilities fitted with MLAK. In Britain, where a similar scheme exists, there are over 4000 accessible facilities fitted with a universal lock.

Where can we use the lock?

MLAK has been fitted to elevators at railway stations, accessible toilets in Council and National Park facilities, and adaptive playground equipment. Please remember to leave the facility open during business hours if possible.

What do Councils or the owner of the facility need to do to participate in the Scheme?

- Contact their local Master Locksmith to confirm that he or she is participating in the Scheme. (The Master Locksmiths Association on 1800 810 698; www.masterlocksmiths.com.au has a list of all its members across Australia.).
- Purchase a lock from the Master Locksmith and have it installed.
- Display a sign informing people that the lock has been installed as part of the Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) system and telling people where they can

obtain the key. The Master Locksmith has MLAK stickers available. Sample signage can be viewed @ www.scia.org.au.

- Provide a privacy latch to prevent someone entering from outside when a toilet is in use.
- Make MLAK keys available for loan in your local area, for overseas visitors and others who don't have their own key.
- Inform SCIA on 02 9661 8855; 1800 819 775 that the lock has been installed. SCIA will place the location of the lock on a database. An updated list will be distributed regularly, and on request, to inform people where the locks are located across Australia. It is also available as a download @ www.scia.org.au.

How much does it cost to purchase/install a MLAK lock?

For a lock already fitted to a door the barrel can be exchanged cheaply. The cost of a new lock depends on the type of lock fitted.

Can a Council or building owner be legally sued if a person with a disability is hurt making use of its facility fitted with a MLAK lock after hours?

Legal advice suggests that the MLAK system neither adds to nor detracts from an owner's responsibilities. Owners are obliged to maintain all their facilities in a safe condition. Facilities are locked after hours to reduce vandalism and hence maintain that safe condition. MLAK gives owners the opportunity to reduce vandalism but still provide access to facilities for people with disabilities.

People with a disability can purchase their own universal key from their local Master Locksmith for approximately \$10.

Availability is restricted to people who have a mobility difficulty OR who have written authority from:

- a doctor,
- a disability organisation,
- a local council or community health centre, or
- the centre management or owner of a building with an accessible toilet on site.

For further information contact Spinal Cord Injuries Australia on 02 9661 8855; 1800 819 775, or download it from www.scia.org.au.