

“A calm space to reset”: perceptions of sensory rooms in Australian public buildings

Type of Study:

Australian study on
sensory/reset rooms
in public buildings

Participants:

Neurodivergent
people, people with
disabilities, carers,
designers & managers

Study aim:

Understand the use,
influences, outcomes, and
design/management of
sensory rooms in public
buildings

Key demographics:

42% neurodivergent adults;
28% with disability; child
users mostly boys 6–12;
designers/managers mostly
women 30–44

Methods:

A mixed-
methods study
with 57 surveys
and four
interviews



Perspectives of Sensory Rooms in Public Buildings

Figure 1: Predictability and Wayfinding

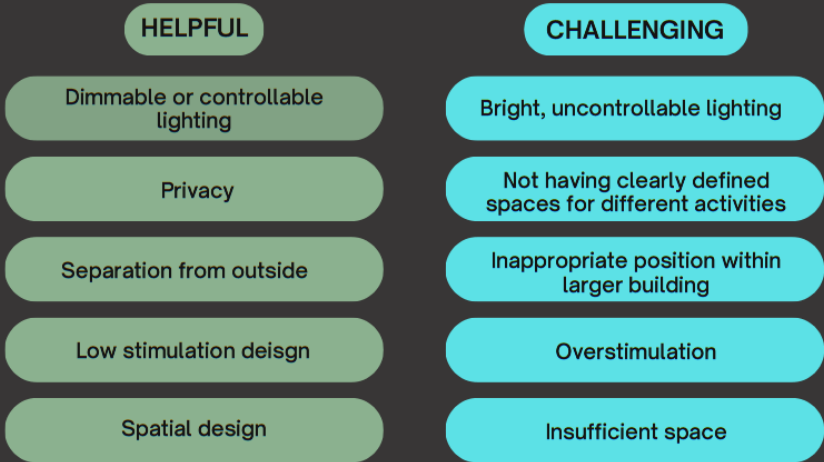


57.14% of respondents who were autistic or carers of autistic people had considered using a public sensory room but reported not doing so due to **difficulty locating the sensory room**

“There was no signage pointing me in the right direction, I had no idea where I was going and trying to keep an eye on my son in a busy stadium and look for a room was difficult”.

Sensory Room Design Features

Figure 2



Impact on Community Participation

“It was good to know that there were others around that required the time out space as well”

76.92% of users reported that using a sensory room extended the period of time they stayed within the building

“I had to make sure my client doesn’t stay in a particular section and engage with particular sensory items for too long in case other children want to explore it too”



The value of an occupational perspective

Perceived outcomes of sensory rooms

- Purposeful, flexible design
- Supports multiple regulation patterns
- Promotes inclusion, autonomy, and meaningful participation

Potential role of OT

- OTs understand how environments impact participation and sensory regulation
- OTs complete task and sensory analysis to ensure one space supports multiple regulation patterns
- OTs translate user diversity into real-life, usable design decisions



Scan to view the Sensory
Room Guidelines



Scan to view the
publication

For more information regarding the study, please
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