

Six Simple Steps to Accessible and Inclusive Tourism

Easy, low cost changes to add
value to your business and
improve guest experiences

Accessible and Inclusive tourism

Accessible and inclusive tourism is about delivering an exceptional guest experience and supporting guests who may have a:

- hearing impairment
- physical disability
- vision impairment
- perceptual/cognitive disability
- mental health issue.

To offer the best experience for all guests, consider how your business can go one step further and be inclusive by providing support for:

- carers of people with disability
- families with prams/strollers
- people with allergies/food intolerance
- guests from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- guests with English as a second or third language

To reap the rewards for your business, consider how you can promote what you can offer to all guests.

Why it matters

An estimated 20% of Australian adults have a disability or long-term health condition. With an ageing population, the disability sector is expected to grow significantly. By 2050, nearly one-quarter of the population will be aged 65 years or over. Combine this with increased life expectancies and we are likely to see greater demand for accessible and inclusive tourism.

Highlighting this significantly untapped market, Tourism Research Australia recently estimated that 1.3 million Australians with disability have taken at least one domestic day or overnight trip in the previous two years. They alone contributed approximately \$3.2 billion or 4 per cent of the total domestic spend in Australia. Research undertaken by the University of Queensland on behalf of the Office of the Commonwealth Games shows many businesses do not adequately promote the facilities and services they can provide to this market.

Now is the time for you to make simple low-cost changes to your business to become more accessible and inclusive and appeal to guests with accessibility needs.

Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games

This Guide has been inspired by one of the biggest events Australia will host this decade; the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (GC2018), and is delivered under the Embracing 2018 Legacy Program. GC2018 is the Inspiring Games; supporting the Commonwealth Games Federation's Transformation 2022 values of Humanity, Equality and Destiny. GC2018 includes a record number of para-sport events, hosting 300 para-sport athletes and 38 medal events across seven sports. That's 45 per cent more para-athletes and 73 per cent more medals than the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games para-sport competition.

GC2018 tickets are priced to be inclusive, accessible and affordable. More than half of all event tickets were priced \$40 or below. In addition, Festival2018 delivers the biggest free arts and culture event in the history of the Commonwealth Games; allowing everyone to be a part of the events.

It's the Law

Federal legislation, in particular the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), prohibits discrimination against people with disability or their associates, including in transport, education, employment, accommodation and premises used by the public. Disability discrimination is defined as instances when people with disability are treated less fairly than people without disability.

In addition, the *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's impairment in a range of settings, including public venues, shops, and restaurants, and in the provision of accommodation. The use of the word impairment includes a number of human conditions including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, sensory, learning difficulties, epilepsy, autism and intellectual disabilities.

Part 1: Six Simple Steps

This guide provides a step by step toolkit for tourism and hospitality businesses to improve online and face to face guest interactions by making small, low cost changes to be more inclusive and accessible. Sometimes, it is the small changes that can have the most impact.

At the end of this guide are a range of tips for staff when interacting with people with a disability. This can be used as a starting point for staff training, disability awareness and to provide an initial overview of the challenges that people with disability may face when accessing businesses. Please note this information is general in nature. At the end of this guide you will also find a list of organisations who can provide you with more information, resources, and assistance.

Step 1: Improve communication with guests

Knowledge is power, and communicating information about your business is critical. Providing clear and easy to find information about the accessibility and inclusiveness of your business allows potential guests to determine whether your offering suits their needs.

Think about how you can improve communication with potential guests - from a guest's initial research on tourist boards, online review sites and your website, through to the physical and face to face interactions with your guests. Giving an exceptional guest experience allows you to have a point of difference from your competitors and will generate positive word of mouth. This can be the most powerful marketing tool of all.

Communication methods

Guests want easy-to-understand information that is up-to-date and relevant. Some simple tips for communicating information more effectively are outlined below.

- **Web content and design**—ensure your website has a logical layout which can be easily navigated. Your website should provide documents in accessible online formats, be mobile friendly, and compatible with screen readers. Screen readers are software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read text on the computer screen). Include photos that show how your facilities are suitable for those with accessibility needs—for example where there are no stairs or you have lifts or access ramps, the space around the bed, the rails in the bathroom. Ensure there is alternative text for any images you display.
- **Signage**—where possible, signage should be clear, concise and tactile with raised large text lettering and/or include braille for people with vision impairment to use their hands to read the information. Consider signage colour as text using certain colour combinations may be difficult to read.
- **Printed material**—consider the page layout, text alignment, font and colour contrast for written communication such as brochures, price lists and menus. The inclusion of images will help communicate to all guests. If possible, consider having written material printed in large font, in braille, or even in different languages like Chinese or Italian, depending on your market.

Know your neighbours

Consider what information your guests will want to know about your local area. One way you can deliver an exceptional guest experience is to know your neighbouring businesses such as restaurants and cafes that are accessible, and be able provide information and recommendations to your guests. Why not have a list ready to give out of local businesses that are accessible and inclusive. This may also include suggestions for taxi and/or transport services. You could even work with these businesses to do some cross-promotion.

Social media

Post regularly on social media to encourage guests to follow you and share your content. The power of social media is mighty, and you can use it to your advantage to boost awareness of your services and facilities. Where possible, try to create content that is engaging yet informative. Why not share photos of your site's accessible features, share stories of changes you've made to be more inclusive and accessible. 'Share' and 'like' social media content that supports themes of accessibility and inclusion, and become an ambassador for change, acceptance and inclusion.

You can't always control what comments are made about your business online but it's important to consider how you will handle negative feedback. If someone points out flaws in your business in terms of accessibility and inclusion, take this feedback on board. Use this information to inform future changes, and consider acknowledging the comments and provide information on how you are working to improve things for future guests. Show that you are open to feedback and willing to change.

Information online

Check that online information about your business on third party sites is consistent across different platforms. Check the description of your accessible facilities on tourism and booking websites. Update tourist information centres with a list of your accessible facilities and inform them immediately if information published online is incorrect.

Important details about your business that you can include on your website and in promotional material include:

- clear phone number, email address and fax number
- physical address and travel/transport information
- an accessibility guide (see below for more detail)
- clear pictures and details of rooms and facilities
- floor plans and measurements
- offers or discounts which may apply to carers or companions

Accessibility Guide

Create an accessibility guide to provide clear, accurate and honest description of the facilities and services offered at your business, and make this available online and in person at your business. An accessibility guide should enable guests to make an informed decision as to whether your business offering meets their particular needs. An accessibility guide should also be used as a tool during staff induction and be referred to when staff are responding to accessibility questions from guests.

Start by looking at examples of accessibility guides by other businesses, and start to build your own. If you're feeling overwhelmed, the best approach is to start somewhere, and build on it as time goes by.

Step 2: Make enquiries and bookings easier

Providing different options for current and potential guests to make enquiries and/or place bookings is a simple, cost effective and powerful method of improving accessibility and inclusiveness. Where possible, this should include provision for phone, fax, text message, online, email and third-party travel websites.

National Relay Service

Promote the National Relay Service to allow people with speech and/or hearing impairments to contact, enquire and book with your business. Offering this point of difference could be very valuable. The National Relay Service is an Australia-wide telephone access service that relays calls. In most cases, it does not cost more than a standard call. The number is 133 677 (1800 555 677 toll free), and allows your business to call a person or for them to call you.

Accessible websites

Consider having an accessible website that supports common screen reading software and meets W3C web accessibility standards to give you a competitive advantage. This, combined with an accessibility guide outlining your product offering increases your visibility and your chances of securing a booking online.

Staff knowledge and awareness

Ensure that staff have a good level of knowledge and awareness of accessibility and inclusiveness. This will allow staff to feel confident when interacting with people with disability and other accessibility needs, and allow them to deliver an exceptional guest experience.

There are many organisations that can assist in a range of accessibility and disability information including awareness training for your staff and making your website and online content more accessible.

If your staff have been trained, consider testing your reception/information/ticketing desk regularly to ensure they have maintained their knowledge and awareness of potential hazards that may present for guests, and ensure they know the available facilities (such as pool hoists or infrared warning systems), how to use them, and how to inform guests of them. Provide ongoing accessibility training for staff so they are equipped and professional when meeting the needs of guests with disability.

Part 2 of this guide covers some tips for staff when interacting with people with a disability.

Transparent pricing

- Ensure prices are consistent and easy to locate on website and brochures.
- Be clear with all inclusions and exclusions.
- Never charge for extra facilities or services such as a braille menu or an accessible room. This can be considered discrimination under the DDA.
- Contemplate family flexible tickets – for differing numbers of adults, children, grandparents and carers. Carers should go free.
- Flexible cancellation policies in consideration of a person with disability and their carers who may need to change arrangements last minute as a result of illness.

Build excitement

One of the best aspects of travel is the anticipation of going on holiday and thinking about all the fun things you will see and do. In the lead up to a guest's experience with your business, make the effort to communicate with them about their stay, build excitement, and remind them of what your establishment and those near you can offer, both in terms of accessibility and experiences. This could include:

- directions and instructions for arrival
- specific accessible facilities nearby (e.g. wheelchair accessible taxi service, public transport)
- information on surrounding areas, tourist attractions, accessible refreshment stops and events happening in the region.

Step 3: Ensure a stress-free experience

For anyone, travel can be stressful. This is particularly true for guests with disability and families with small children, and the elderly. Assist travellers by making the following small changes:

- provide your full street address with postcode to assist travellers searching online journey planners and satellite navigation/GPS and online map users
- provide distance information and clear directions from car, taxi, bus and rail stations to your establishment
- provide hard copy print outs and online links to public transport timetables, ticketing and major events (e.g. GC2018) information
- assist guests with arrangements for luggage drop-off
- provide information on the closest on and off-street parking, including accessible and disabled parking, and if practical, offer to reserve a park if necessary
- notify guests of any potential hazards or accessibility challenges such as stairs, inclines or gravel paths.

Step 4: Create positive first impressions and experiences

First impressions are important, and when guests enter your business it is essential to deliver on your promise. Ask yourself these easy questions:

- Is the entrance to my business marked and easily located?
- Is the door easy to open and floor easy to walk/manoeuvre on?
- Is there an option for visitors to call ahead and arrange assistance?

Consistent level of service

- Introduce disability awareness training into all staff inductions and training programs.
- Ensure all staff are familiar with potential barriers and facilities.
- Provide all staff with your accessibility guide information and encourage their input.
- Arrange for staff to research and visit accessible local services and attractions so they can recommend them confidently.

The reception environment

- Make certain your reception and entrance are clearly marked and well lit.
- If there is an intercom, provide clear instructions, or a mobile number.
- Provide seating in the reception and fast-track service for people who can't stand for long periods of time.
- Be prepared to write down information and assist with completing forms for certain guests.
- Have alternative check in arrangements for people in a wheelchair if reception desks cannot be lowered.
- Consider purchasing an induction loop to assist the hearing impaired.
- Always welcome visitors accompanied by assistance dogs and suggest the local dog park or off-the leash public space.

Booking information

- Confirm and remind visitors of their travel arrangements/booking.
- Ask all visitors if they have any specific needs or require assistance.
- Integrate accessible information into general guest information and emergency procedures.

Removing barriers

- Introduce pictogram signs (i.e. Icons to represent meal times, amenities), and ensure all writing on signs is large and clear.
- Use safety markings on large glazed areas.
- Ensure all areas have sufficient lighting.
- Use contrasting colours in door frames, door handles, and edges of steps.

Access in bars and eating areas

- Have menus available with larger font, offer to read menus aloud and allow the downloading of menus onto an audio player.
- Provide flexibility in table arrangements to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility assistance.
- Provide quieter areas with no music or background noise for hearing impaired guests.
- Ensure flexible/alternative menu arrangements for allergies.
- Use contrasting colours for tables, crockery and napkins.

Access in accommodation

- Try to use freestanding furniture rather than set furniture to allow removal of items for more space and movement in the rooms.
- Make additional equipment available such as phones with large buttons, vibrating, flashing and talking alarm clocks, vibrating emergency signals and portable hearing loops.
- Provide water bowls for assistance dogs and discuss toilet needs with the owner
- Make closed captions available on TVs.
- Use coloured towels in bathrooms to aid visually impaired.

Step 5: Improve the visitor departure process

To assist visitors on the journey home, just as you did on their journey to your business, consider how you can improve their guest experience upon departure:

- Ask if they require assistance with transport options and information getting to their next destination
- Offer to assist with any luggage.
- If visitors require an early departure, offer a wake-up service, flexible breakfast, or pre-arranged taxi.
- If visitors require a later departure, offer flexible checkout times and luggage storing facility.
- If visitors are travelling to another destination, offer information and public transport timetables.

Step 6: Seek feedback and keep in touch

Feedback is the best opportunity for you to learn more about guests' experiences. Consider:

- Having evaluation forms for visitors to complete, or quicker and easier feedback methods such as postcards or an iPad questionnaire at the reception desk.
- Encouraging staff to ask customers about their visit and to record the responses. Ask their permission to use their testimonials on social media, brochures or other promotional content.
- Reviewing the business complaints process and ensure its accessible and available in different formats if necessary.
- Respond to any online review in a positive manner.
- Offer guests the option of joining your social media network/s and offer the suggestion to add them to your customer relationship management database (CRM) so they can receive information directly about your accessible and inclusive business offerings. Ensure you offer communication in accessible formats. Use these channels to inform guests regularly of your business and include new accessible and inclusive options in your local area.

Part 2: Tips for Staff

Tips for Staff interactions

A common challenge for staff to overcome is the fear of saying or doing something wrong and offending a person with disability. Being equipped with a better understanding of ways to support guests with disability can significantly help with staff confidence, improve their interactions and the guest experience. Here's some quick tips for staff:

Interacting with guests with hearing impairment

- Smile, make eye contact, and be friendly from the first interaction. A positive attitude will facilitate inclusion and a feeling of being welcomed.
- Face your guest front-on and look at your guest directly. Speak clearly, naturally and slowly to allow for guests who can lip-read. If a sign language interpreter is present, continue to interact with your guest.
- Use normal tone and volume, and concise language when speaking. Do not shout as it is unnecessary, uncomfortable and aggressive. If there is background noise, try to move the interaction away from this as it can interfere with hearing aids.
- If you need to get your guest's attention, gently touch the person on the shoulder and try not to startle them. If possible, move into their line of sight first.
- If a person is struggling to understand, use pen and paper to write it down, or a tablet, laptop or smartphone to be quicker.
- If assistive technologies are available on your premises such as an Induction Loop System and Infra-red systems, ensure guests know how to use this technology and provide assistance if they don't.

Interacting with guests with physical or mobility impairments

- Be friendly and welcoming and speak directly to the guest rather than to their carer.
- If you anticipate having a long conversation with a guest in a wheelchair, bend or crouch down to eye level or pull up a chair next to them.
- Offer seating to guests using mobility aids such as crutches, a walking stick or frame, or mobility walker.
- Never lean on a guest's wheelchair or participate in patronising behaviour such as patting a wheelchair user.
- Ensure there is a clear path for guests to enter and leave the premises and be mindful of obstacles and hazards that may be in guest's way.
- Ensure there is space at a table for guests to complete paperwork if required.
- Learn the locations of wheelchair ramps and accessible amenities including parking so you can direct guests as required.
- Offer assistance to guests, but only assist guests if they ask you or if they agree to your help. Never approach someone and assist them without their permission.

Interacting with guests with vision impairment or disability

- Identify yourself clearly with your name and your role at the first interaction. Ask the guest's name and how you can help them.
- If you believe a guest may need additional assistance such as help finding a seat, locating amenities or completing paperwork, offer your assistance and have their agreement before taking any action.
- If a guest welcomes assistance with walking, ask what side is best and offer out your arm.
- Out of courtesy, let your guest know when you are entering and/or exiting a room. Let the guest know what you're doing or what is happening so they can feel comfortable and informed.

- Do not walk away if a guest is talking to you.
- Take note of any surroundings or obstacles in the path of the guest and in dangerous situations respond with “stop” rather than “look out” in dangerous situations.
- When assisting a guest to seating, place their hand on the chair so they can sit down themselves.
- If providing your guest with a beverage, do not fill cups or glasses to the brim.
- When directing guests direct from their left or right, not yours.
- Do not distract, pat or offer an assistance or guide dog food when it is working. Offer the guest some water for the animal and ask if they require information for such as local dog parks.

Interacting with guests with developmental or intellectual disability

- Speak directly to the person and respect their expressed preferences as to choices or decisions.
- For some individuals, if you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.
- Be aware of the possible need to speak to the person in clear and short sentences. Repeat your information and your questions, as needed. Use concrete words and visual aids or colour-based cues.
- It may be helpful to offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions, and provide extra time for decision-making. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not “over-assist” or be patronizing.
- Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and verify that the individual understands you.
- Listen attentively. Keep your manner

encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for the person with disability.

- Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you understand, or incorporate the person’s statements into follow-up questions. The person’s reactions will guide you.
- When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod or a shake of the head.

Language and terminology

It is valuable for staff to understand what language and terminology is appropriate to use when interacting with guests with disability. Disability awareness training can equip staff with a thorough understanding of appropriate language and terminology. The table below provides a quick list of terminology that should and shouldn’t be used.

What to say	What not to say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with disability • Person with cerebral palsy or vision impairment • Person with a physical disability, person who uses wheelchair • Person who is deaf or person with a hearing disability or impairment • Accessible parking, accessible toilets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled person • Deformed, victim, suffers from • Blind, can't see, afflicted with/by • Crippled, confined to wheelchair, incapacitated, wheelchair bound • Deaf, dumb, mute • Disabled toilets, handicapped parking

Where can I find out more?

There are many organisations and many great resources that can assist you to make your business more accessible. Here is a small selection for you to consider. This is in no way an exhaustive list. This internet is one of the best places to read and learn more about accessibility and inclusion.

Braille, Low vision and blindness information and printing services www.visionaustralia.org/
City of Gold Coast cityofgoldcoast.com.au/inclusion
Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland Government www.communities.qld.gov.au/disability/disability-community-care
Department of Innovation and Tourism Industry Development, Queensland Government https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/inclusive-tourism
Be My Guest Online Learning Program www.embracing2018.com/legacy-program/importance-walking-your-guests-shoes
FSG – Freedom, Social Justice, Growth www.fsg.org.au/
Gold Coast Tourism www.destinationgoldcoast.com/travel-information/accessible-gold-coast and https://www.destinationgoldcoast.com/bemyguest/pledge
National Relay Service www.relayservice.com.au
Tourism and Events Queensland https://teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights/economics-and-specialised-reports/accessible-tourism
Tourism Research Australia www.tra.gov.au/research/view-all-publications/all-publications/destination-visitor-survey-results/strategic-regional-research-reports/accessible-tourism-victoria-queensland
TravAbility http://travability.travel/Brochures/industry_guide.html
W3 - Accessible Websites Standards www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php