

Access News

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Access Audits Australia

disability access  advice  training

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Easy Access = Tourism \$\$\$

There are many opportunities for operators in the tourism industry to increase their business, by effectively responding to the travel requirements of older persons and people with disabilities. However, the need to get all the details right cannot be over emphasised.

Unfortunately for many travellers with mobility impairments it is a problem finding accommodation that is not only accessible through the doorway of the unit, but has facilities to enable them to function in an unfamiliar environment.

Whilst accommodation providers try to assist by indicating wheelchair access in brochures and listing facilities for travellers, all too often the tourist with disabilities can experience frustrations.

As seasoned travellers, people with disabilities plan very carefully, researching their trips in detail. They will know which motels advertise accessible accommodation. They will make bookings several weeks in advance. They will ask about the accessible suite, availability of a hand held shower or a shower chair, access to reception or dining facilities.



After all this planning, it can be disappointing for a traveller to arrive to find a beautifully constructed ramp through the tropical garden to their suite, but a step at the door and single beds, when all other suites have double beds. It may sound a little ridiculous but it does happen.

Or again after meticulous planning, the person and family arrive to find their accessible room has just been allocated and the occupants have settled in.

While the manager may, after some discussion, approach the occupants with a request to move to another room, this situation greatly detracts from the anticipated tourism experience.

Therefore, in order to respond appropriately to this target market it is important for tourism operators to understand the range of personal needs of older persons and people with disabilities, who make up this important and expanding market sector.

Access Audits Australia

provides the following range of services to support improved access to the built environment and to the provision of goods and services:

- t Disability access training
- t Community consultation
- t Development and Review of Disability Action Plans, Development Control Plans, policies and procedures
- t Access Audits, Evaluations and Design Advice
- t Advice on improved access to publications, communications and web sites

AAA is pleased to advise or assist you with any access issue. Contact

Access News

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This Access News highlights the benefits of accessible tourism. It is the responsibility of potential users to ascertain if access of facilities mentioned is suitable for their needs.

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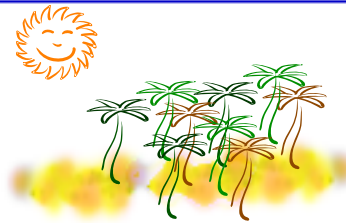
Access All Areas

A number of businesses, local government councils and organisations throughout Australia are actively involved in supporting *access for all* to tourist and holiday areas and features.

Bayside City Council provides free use of a beach wheelchair, on a refundable deposit basis, for use within this Melbourne municipality. Bass Coast Shire Council also have a Beach Wheelchair Pilot Project running at Cowes on Phillip Island.

A number of boardwalks have been constructed alongside beach areas. An installation at Frankston in Victoria not only provides accessible viewing points but also protects sensitive sand dune environments.

Timber track systems are used across sand surfaces at various locations, including along the coast at Warrnambool.



Hervey Bay City Council in Queensland provides use of a Beach Wheelchair free of hire fees from Torquay Beach Hire. Accessible whale watching, parklands and beaches are other attractions in this area.

Accessible fishing platforms have been established within the Macedon Ranges Shire at Kyneton and Hanging Rock. Work was undertaken by local community groups with Council providing ongoing maintenance.

There are many information and accommodation guides available for tourist oriented areas that highlight accessibility for older persons and people with disabilities.

At Newhaven on Phillip Island in Victoria, the Information Centre provides printed details regarding accessible restaurants, tourist venues and accommodation.

A combined publication from Queensland Tourism actively promotes accessible caravan parks and accessible services and public infrastructure throughout the state.

Access the Best - a Guide to the Blue Mountains provides a valuable source of information regarding access to the range of attractions and facilities available in this region.

"Wheelchair Accessible Tracks in the Grampians National Park" will assist all park users, including people with disabilities, wishing to experience the magnificent features provided at this major National Park in Victoria.



Car Parking for People with Disabilities

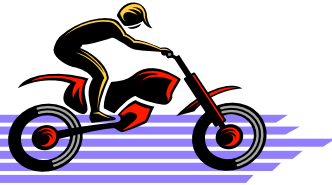
The new Code for the Disabled Persons Parking Scheme in Victoria has recently been released. Many people, including local government staff, have been waiting for some time for the introduction of this revised scheme.



Further consideration is now being given to the contents of relevant brochures and explanations to be provided to participants in the scheme. The phase-in period is broad to enable those communications to take effect. A copy of the new scheme can be obtained from gazette@craftpress.com.au and scroll down to 'government gazette' then to 'previous issues' button. The Victorian Government Gazette containing this release is General Gazette No. 27, Thursday 4 July 2002, from pages 1538-1550.

A draft of a revised Australian Standard 2890.1 - *Parking facilities. Part 1: Off-street parking* is now available for public comment. This includes changes to layouts of designated accessible parking bays for people with disabilities. A copy can be obtained from the Australian Standards web site - www.standards.com.au

One Person's View



One of the side benefits of being a surf lifesaver at Point Leo during the 1960's was the fantastic local skin diving. Mike Letch loved diving around the reef when he wasn't enjoying himself on the beach.

By the time Mike was nineteen years old he had a pilot's licence and was making his living as a professional motor cycle racer, on speedways throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. This life style really suited him, until he had an accident while racing and broke his back. He spent his twenty second birthday in hospital in England and would not walk again.

In coming to terms with his changed circumstances he realised after returning to Australia that he would never be able to get back to the beach. His love of skin diving was suddenly curtailed.

However, Mike was determined to take on new challenges. He subsequently renewed his pilot's licence by becoming one of the first people in Australia licenced to fly using hand controls.

He also became a rehabilitation counsellor working in the spinal unit at the Austin Hospital using his experiences to assist others in coming to terms with their life changes following recent injuries.

During the mid 1980s Mike started exercising by going on local runs in his wheelchair to improve his fitness. This led, not surprisingly, to him taking on some 10 kilometre road races and marathons.

In 1989 he became a professional wheelchair road racer representing Australia in competitions in the USA, Europe and Japan. This continued for some time until when, at fifty two years of age, he decided to retire from active competition after completing his 130th marathon, in front of 2 million people, in Japan.



During his recent work as a disability consultant, including case management with the Transport Accident Commission, Mike has become increasingly aware of the relationship of physical intergration with an individual's self esteem.

While spending a weekend with his wife and friends, on Phillip Island, Mike was carried down eighty steps to Smiths Beach. Being so close to the sea stirred up old memories and before he knew it he was back in the water.

He had not experienced such a sense of physical freedom and total liberation since before his twenty second birthday. The lack of gravitational pull in the water was a joy. Within days he had purchased his own snorkel.

New challenges, new excitement. Mike enrolled in an open water skuba diving course and subsequently became the first person with a physical disability, in Australia, to qualify as a dive master and rescue diver. He is now undertaking an internship to become a dive instructor.

In conjunction with Adrian Kellet, Mike has established the Aquability Group, which is unique as the total focus is to enable people with physical disability to experience skin diving, at all levels, from basic snorkeling to scuba diving instructor.

Aquability will use local waters in Victoria and intends to also organise wheelchair accessible diving trips to other places in Australia, or to selected overseas destinations.

Mike has been used to wheels spinning during his lifetime, but now the wheel has turned full circle with his future again connected to the underwater world he loved as a teenager.



Contact: Aquability Group at 5 Everage Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039 or telephone 0407 353 969.

Did you know ?

- That over a million people with physical disability travel in Australia each year.
- That action has been taken against tourism operators and businesses for not providing appropriate access, for people with disabilities, to facilities, goods and services.
- That designing for good access also responds to a range of occupational health and safety requirements.
- That the Physical Disability Council of Australia has declared 25 September 2002 as a national day of action on the abuse of parking spaces for people with disabilities.
- That effective access to tourist facilities for older persons and people with disabilities, needs to consider the whole range of access issues from car parking through to emergency exits.
- That at the recent European INAS-FID Athletics Championships in Hungary, a team of 8 intellectually disabled track and field athletes from Australia finished third on the medals table with 4 gold, 7 silver and 1 bronze. A total of 22 countries competed. Some athletes and officials then became tourists to experience some of the attractions on offer.

Many tourism based businesses throughout Australia are responding to the requirements of older persons and people with disabilities. Operators providing access options include:



Wheelies Rest at Smiths Beach on Phillip Island in Victoria is an award winning purpose built facility offering a range of holiday accommodation options. It is specifically designed to provide independent holiday accommodation for people with disabilities. The proprietors are also actively involved in campaigning for the provision of appropriate ramp access to Smiths Beach for all users, including people with disabilities.

Contact: 03 9846 6566 or www.users.bigpond.com/wheeliesrest

Byron Bay Rainforest Resort was originally established in 1987 as the Wheel Resort and includes facilities and cottages which are designed for use by people with restricted mobility. The Resort also features extensive walking tracks suitable for people using wheelchairs who wish to experience the sights and sounds of the bush. Cottages are designed with wide doorways, no steps, hand rails in the bathroom and several cottages feature lowered kitchen benches. The salt water pool is equipped with a ramp for easy access.

Contact: www.rainforestresort.com.au

Phillip Island Nature Park in Victoria offers a variety of nature conservation and eco-tourism opportunities to be explored. Features such as the Penguin Parade, Churchill Island, the Koala Conservation Centre, the Knobbies, Swan Lake and Rhyll Inlet provide levels of wheelchair access.

Contact: 03 5951 2800
or www.phillipisland.net.au



Kuranda Homestead is a guesthouse 10 minutes from Kuranda, near the Kennedy Highway between Cairns and Mareeba. It is designed for access for people using wheelchairs and is less than an hours drive to the Great Barrier Reef, tropical rainforests, Cairns and other world-class attractions. Contact: www.kurandahomestay.com

Information contained in **Access News** is intended to highlight the importance of improving access for every person

Disclaimer: Whilst every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication, Access Audits Australia does not accept any responsibility for inaccuracies, omissions, incorrect information or action taken as a result of any advice given or information conveyed in this publication.