

Access News

AAA

Access Audits Australia

disability access  advice  training

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Access for All



Promoting the concept of “access for all” not only increases awareness of access issues, but also encourages change. When providing “access for all” it is important to respond to the needs of people with a range of needs.

While it may be obvious that some people have particular needs, there are many other instances where a disability, particularly a sensory impairment, may not necessarily be readily apparent.

Sensory impairment can cover loss of sight (not corrected by glasses or contact lenses); loss of hearing where communication is restricted, or an aid used; and speech difficulties, including loss or partial loss of speech.

It is not always obvious that some of our current or past world leaders experience disabilities. Many people will be aware that the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, wears spectacles to assist with his vision impairment.

However, it may not be so well known that he and the former United States President, Mr. Bill Clinton, both wear hearing aids.

Advances in technology, medical procedures and attitudinal changes have resulted in a range of benefits for people with sensory impairments.

There are now many aids to assist people with vision impairment, or who are blind. These can range from cornea lens implants to talking alarm clocks and tactile and Braille components in some general signage.

Assistance for people who are Deaf, or experience hearing impairment, can include hearing augmentation in public venues, smoke alarms that alert people with flashing lights and under pillow vibration pads, telephones with volume control and hearing aid couplers, as well as vibrating personal units to indicate that a door bell or telephone is ringing.

Service and accommodation providers, including tourism operators, can gain ongoing benefits for their business by catering to the needs of all potential customers, as well as responding to their legislative responsibilities to ensure “access for all”.

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 and development of accessible publications, communications and web sites

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

Access News

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Blind Actors Perform In The Dark

A troupe of blind actors is performing a new play in a pitch-dark theatre in Buenos Aires.

Their production, *The Desert Island*, is the surprise hit of the season in the Argentine capital. The theatre is based in an unlit basement where the audience have to be led to their seats.

Sound effects and smells are used to help overcome the fact that nobody can see anything.

"Everyone goes out with a different play in mind," director José Menchaca said.

Dual Sensory Loss



Findings from a recent study of Dual Sensory Loss (vision/hearing) undertaken by Lighthouse International's Research Institute included:

- The average onset age of hearing loss among respondents was 65;
- 89% of respondents experienced a gradual loss of hearing;
- More than one-half experienced hearing loss after the onset of vision impairment. Respondents with hearing problems were more likely to report a later onset age of vision impairment than those without;
- The majority of people who rated their hearing as "fair", "poor" or "very poor" had not had a hearing aid prescribed, and 14% had hearing aids prescribed but were not using them;
- Females were significantly more likely to use prescribed hearing aids (79%) than males (37%);
- Males were significantly more likely to report needing help with their hearing than were females;
- Respondents who experienced hearing loss after the onset of vision impairment were significantly less likely to have spoken to their doctor about their hearing (43%) than those who experienced hearing loss before, or at the same time, as vision impairment (61%).

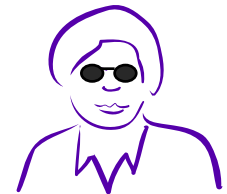
Tips for talking to people who are hard of hearing

- * Face the person directly and whenever possible be at the same eye level.
- * Don't shout — speak normally.
- * Keep your hands away from your face.
- * Reduce background noise — turn off the radio or television.
- * Be sure that light is not shining in their eyes.
- * If you are not making yourself understood, find a different way of saying the same thing.
- * Someone may have difficulty understanding speech even with a hearing aid.



Tips for assisting a person with vision impairment

- * If you are unsure, just ask if, and how, you can help.
- * Asking how much the person can see could be helpful. Very few people with vision impairment are totally blind.
- * If you are acting as a guide, ask the best way to assist.
- * Whilst acting as a guide, remember to give directions and describe the way ahead.
- * If possible, describe the surroundings to the person. Tell them who and what is there.
- * Doors should be left open or closed, never ajar.
- * When the person wants to sit down, guide them to a chair, place their hand on the back of it and mention which way the chair is facing.
- * At meal times, tell the person what food is on the plate and use the clockface method to describe the location of the food and utensils.
- * If the person has a guide dog, do not attempt to pat or feed it.



One Person's View

As a teenager during the 1960's it was not really "cool" to be seen wearing a hearing aid. It was just not accepted, but thankfully attitudes have changed.

Bob Willis was sixteen years old before he was diagnosed as having a hearing impairment, but it is most likely that his hearing had been affected since birth. He pursued his education through primary and high school without any specialised support to assist him.

After leaving school he initially worked as a trainee bank teller, then gained wide experience within the boat building industry. It was not until he was later employed as a technical assistant in the PMG (later Telstra) that he finally accepted the need to permanently use a hearing aid.

Even during his various work activities within Telstra there was no assistance or special

equipment provided for Bob, but he did feel that his hearing impairment did restrict his employment opportunities. This has changed significantly with many accommodations now made for hard of hearing and Deaf staff.

However, his wide employment experience was instrumental in the next stage of his life, after leaving Telstra. While working part time in 1993 with the Victorian School for Deaf Children, Bob established a business known as Word of Mouth Technology, which supplies, installs and maintains technology for people who are Deaf, or have hearing impairment.

Since 1993 Word of Mouth has continued to expand and now provides the broadest range of products in Australia to assist people with hearing impairment.

Products include equipment to improve workplace access, use of



mobile phones, access to TV, to increase safety and security in the home and hearing augmentation systems to enable people wearing hearing aids to understand public address systems. As appropriate new products become available these are incorporated into the range.

Bob is actively involved with a number of organisations for people who are Deaf or hearing impaired. He recently traveled to the World Deaf Games (now Deaflympics) in Rome as a member of the organising committee for the next Deaflympics, to be held in Melbourne in 2005.

During 1999, Bob had a cochlear implant fitted, which has significantly improved his ability to hear speech and other sounds.

*Word of Mouth Technology - telephone: 03 9729 9974
email: bob@wom.com.au or www.wom.com.au*

Celebration of Ability

The International Day of People with a DisAbility is held on 3 December each year. Across Australia, people from a variety of organisations work hard to make their event bigger and better than ever before. For those of you who don't know about the International Day, the aim is to raise community awareness about disability issues - and it's a fantastic excuse for a celebration!

The International Day foundations can be traced back to October 1992, when the United Nations declared 3 December the International Day of Disabled Persons. Five years later, Australian community representatives renamed the event the International Day of People with a DisAbility to emphasise the abilities of people with disabilities, a theme that is further articulated in the catch phrase *Celebration of Ability*.

Australians mark the day with a wide range of events, both large and small. It is a day that encourages people in the community to unite in a celebration of diversity, a Celebration of Ability. For information on how you can join in, contact NICAN on 1800 806 769 or visit the website www.nican.com.au

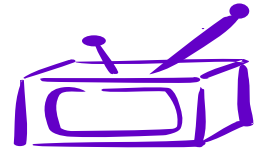


Did you know ?

- That In 1998, around one in five *adults* had a disability (21%). Of these, almost three quarters were restricted by a physical impairment and almost a third by a sensory impairment or speech loss.
- That 95 % of legally blind people have some useful vision, but a person who is totally blind has no vision at all.
- That the much awaited and discussed revision of Australian Standard 1428.4, regarding the installation of tactile ground surface indicators, is expected to be released shortly.
- That there are around 1.9 million people with hearing impairment in Australia.
- That with the ageing of the Australian population, the amount of people with sensory impairment (vision and hearing loss) will increase.
- That men tend to be more at risk of developing industrial deafness than women.
- That some deafblind organisations are now conducting their meetings by email.
- That hearing aids amplify sound but do not always improve its clarity.

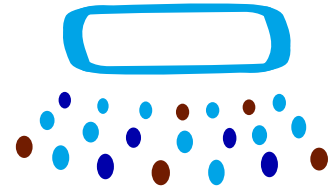
What are Captions?

Captions render the sound track of a TV program, TV commercial, video, DVD or cinema screenings as text, usually at the bottom of the screen. Captions differ from foreign language subtitles in that they are coloured and positioned to show who is speaking, and they provide information on music and sound effects.



Captioned Cinema and Television

Following action by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1.7 million Australians who are Deaf and hearing-impaired are now able to enjoy first release captioned films in many cinemas throughout Australia. Free to air television broadcasters have also proposed significant staged increases in captioning.



Various cinema groups are now regularly scheduling captioned movies in all State capital cities approximately every two or three days at various times. Captioned films will be screened in suburban and regional cinemas in the future as a regional circuit is developed. Entertainment guides in local newspapers or cinema websites advertise exact times when captioned movies are screening.

The Australian Caption Centre's web page at <http://www.auscap.com.au/> has more information on cinema captioning. It also has an up-to-date schedule of films being shown.

AAA Website

Details about services provided by Access Audits Australia can be found on our web site at www.accessauditsaustralia.com.au

Our site is designed to be accessible for all users. It has AAA W3C level compliance and is AAA Bobby approved. Earlier Access News editions can be downloaded and there are also links to other relevant access related web sites.

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

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