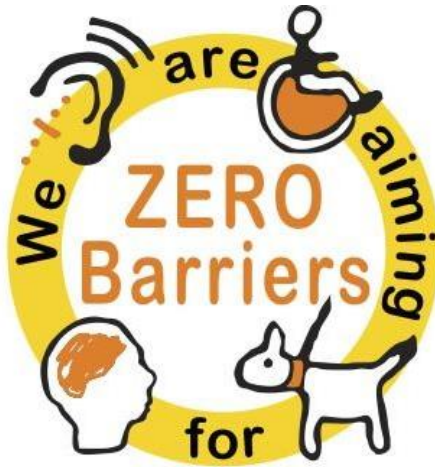


ZERO

Barriers Accessibility Guide

Simple solutions for businesses and services to be disability friendly



A project of:



and



Supported by:



Simple solutions for businesses, services and groups to be disability friendly, gain more customers and grow their business

Ideas and tips to improve accessibility and inclusion

We know why we should be disability friendly. But we also need to know how to ensure that customers with a disability can access your business or use your services. There are many improvements you can do that not only benefit the community but can also have a positive and profitable impact on your business or organisation. The changes will benefit your staff, increase your customer base and the overall growth of your business and reputation in the community.

This guide will provide you with simple and cost-effective solutions to improve customer service and accessibility for people with a range of disabilities.



Increase your business profile in the community, leading to more people shopping with you or more clients using your services as they know you are a business with a conscious and they support your ethical position.

WHAT WE KNOW

DID YOU KNOW THAT 20% OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION HAS SOME KIND OF DISABILITY? That's huge and often this group is what we consider to be the 'Overlooked Consumer'. They have spending power, they have choices and they are vocal when they are happy or not when receiving a service. A lot of businesses rely on word of mouth, so it's important to position your business as a disability friendly one.

THE MULTICULTURAL NETWORK SURVEYED CONSUMERS WITH DISABILITIES ACROSS SOUTH WEST SYDNEY and their biggest concern was "lack of staff awareness". Often they felt unwelcomed or ignored by staff, left without purchasing and did not return. Attitudes in customer service and how staff communicates with a customer with a disability makes a big difference in how the business is seen in the community. People surveyed were telling us they wanted to be acknowledged and feel valued just like any other customer.

IT'S THE LAW We also know it's against the law, under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, to discriminate against people based on a personal characteristic, including disability.

IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS

No matter how small or big your business, service or organisation is, there are always cost-effective ways to improve your customer service to

more than four million Australians with a disability. This is a significant pool of customers that could be spending their money in your business or using your services while also recommending it to other consumers.



TIP FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Act naturally – Just relax and be yourself. There is no need to monitor your every word or action. Greet a person with disabilities just as you would any other



Many countries are now becoming aware of the business economic benefits of becoming more disability friendly. The Canadian Rick Hansen Foundation has shared findings of a recent report which demonstrates that improving accessibility in workplaces and communities for people with disabilities results in a dramatic increase in consumer spending and improvements in the labour market.

The report establishes that:

- Improved accessibility for people with disabilities is not just a question of human rights, but is an economic imperative
- This group represents tremendous spending power and an untapped workforce that can provide economic benefits
- There is market demand currently going unmet because of accessibility barriers. With improved access, people with disabilities will spend a greater share of income in restaurants and grocery stores and on entertainment, recreation and sports. (SOURCE: <http://www.rickhansen.com/>)

Improving accessibility to your business will benefit:

- People who are blind or partially sighted
- People with learning or intellectual disabilities
- People who are deaf or hearing-impaired
- People with a physical disability who may use a wheelchair or walking frame, or have arthritis
- People with long-term illnesses
- People with mental health or psychological difficulties
- People with an acquired brain injury
- Parents or carers of young children – particularly those with strollers or prams
- Frail & elderly people



A small fast-food outlet has a narrow, stepped entrance that cannot be widened or have a ramp fitted. The company fits a low-level bell so that people who can't get into the building, including wheelchair users, can ring for service at the door.

A courier service, when refurbishing its premises, replaces the outward opening doors with automatic sliding ones. These save space, are more secure than the old doors and make access easier for everyone, including its own parcel carrying employees. It fixes bold notices to the doors, at eyelevel, to identify them as possible hazards.

A supermarket develops a website that is accessible to the widest possible range of customers. They want their website to be available to everyone including those with sight, audio and motor impairment restrictions. Therefore, they have used an easy to read font, tagged images, and used consistent navigation. They do not rely on colour as the only way of giving information and avoid using pictures and images of text.



A shop provides a seat near to the register. This allows customers to sit while waiting to be served, or to rest their purchases at a raised level if lifting is difficult for them. This extra seating is appreciated by other visitors as well, especially people with pushchairs.

(Source: Growingyourcustomerbasetoincludedisabledpeople.www.odi.gov.uk)

IMPROVING ACCESSING SERVICES, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Inclusive Service Designs: Inclusion in service design means service users and service providers working together in making decisions, providing support and facilitating active involvement through planning groups. Research shows that social inclusion is stronger in services when users and families are members of active advocacy groups that can provide advice and input. Similarly, where services have inclusive environments using universal design (a service designed to cater for everyone), all service users can access the services and feel welcome.

Some great examples of inclusion:

Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club and the Fremantle Dockers Foundation(WA) runs the Starkick program, an Australian-first program that allows children with disability to play Australian Football League as part of a local community club. Starkick is run by the community and utilises existing community resources to empower children previously unable to participate in mainstream sporting teams with the ability to play with their local community club. Now in its second year, Starkick has more than 50 participants across Perth, including children with autism, cerebral palsy and vision impairment.

V/Line, Victoria's regional public transport operator, is making it easier for customers with disability to use public transport. In 2013, it commenced the journey to become communication accessible and in 2016 became the first public transport operator in the world to be accredited in the Communication Access Symbol. More than 550 frontline staff completed disability awareness and communication training to improve their knowledge and skills. Through a collaborative approach with industry experts, customers and staff, V/Line has introduced innovative and simple solutions to improve the customer experience for people with disability.



V/Line have unveiled the state's first special boarding zones in Geelong to help people needing assistance like Hank Wyllie. Picture: Mitch Bear

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

This guide can help you make small but valuable changes to your business to make it more accessible for people with a range of disabilities.

Communication

- ✓ Talk directly to the person with disability, not the other people who may be with them
- ✓ If a person is deaf or has a hearing impairment: make sure you face the person when you speak. Having a pen and paper handy could help
- ✓ If a person has a vision impairment or is blind: identify yourself by name to them, ask for their name so you can address them directly and that they know you are talking to them
- ✓ When approaching a customer, be polite, introduce yourself, and ask how you can help
- ✓ Be considerate of the extra time, it may take some customers time to do or say some things
- ✓ Don't patronise or talk down to a person with disability, or assume that they won't understand you
- ✓ Don't distract a guide or service dog by patting it or giving it food. Allow the dog to access your premises. The dog is a tool that will help your customer get the product or service they want.
- ✓ Don't shout, use big hand gestures, or speak extra slowly to someone who is hard of hearing or has difficulty understanding - just speak clearly
- ✓ Try and put yourself at eye level with a customer who is a wheelchair user, and speak directly to them
- ✓ Patience, optimism, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools
- ✓ Smile, relax, and keep in mind that people with disabilities want to experience helpful customer service
- ✓ Don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has
- ✓ Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know your customers' needs
- ✓ Be patient. People with a certain kind of disability may take a little longer to understand and respond
- ✓ If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "How may I help you?"

Treat people with disabilities
with respect and consideration

- ✓ If you can't understand what someone is saying, just politely ask again for them to repeat it
 - ✓ Find a good way to communicate. A good start is to listen carefully
- NOTE:** Customers with disabilities have the same preferences, perceptions, attitudes, habits, and needs as customers without disabilities, and they are looking for the same quality of products and services.

Physical Accessibility

(some considerations or adjustments)

- ✓ Step free access
- ✓ Accessible toilet is available
- ✓ Entrance to your business is clear of obstacles
- ✓ Wide opening or easy to open doors
- ✓ Seating available if customers need to wait
- ✓ Low height service or reception areas
- ✓ EFTPOS machines are accessible

Top Tip for Businesses: Seek Feedback –if you notice a customer has a disability, seek feedback and look at ways you can improve how you serve them and what would make it easier for them to access your business and purchase your products. You will be surprised how simple adjustments can make such a big difference and keep them coming back to you.

Accessibility Tips from Customers with a Disability:

12 key things your businesses can do to be more accessible

1) Install tactile buttons at the checkout.

For customers with limited vision, tactile buttons are essential to have. These go in the checkout area and allow people who are blind to enter their pin independently. These buttons aren't too expensive and give people with vision impairment complete independence when shopping.

2) Make aisles wide enough and clutter-free.

New stock might have been just delivered or maybe your store is small and you're struggling to fit everything in. But putting too many items out on the floor and narrowing walk-paths and aisles as a result can make your premises too difficult for us to come in. It is recommended that your shop has a minimum 32-inch-(81.2 cm) wide path or aisles.

3) Offer help.

It can sometimes feel like a catch-22 when a person with a disability comes into the store – do you ask right away if they need help? Or would that be considered rude? If it's a store environment, it's totally ok for employees to approach us and ask if we need help.

4) Teach employees to treat us with respect.

This may be something you already do but making sure your employees are on the same page when it comes to the right way to treat people with a disability. Many people have had no direct experience with someone with a disability before and this could be one of your employees. Stress the importance of treating all customers with the same amount of respect and courtesy as they would to any other customer – this makes for happy customers who will return to your business.

5) We love to spend locally.

Many people with disabilities tend to be loyal to local businesses, especially if they've helped to support a local group. And since many people with a disability don't drive, they tend to shop locally and are very loyal to their local businesses. If you are a local business, displaying the Zero Barriers logo on your shopfront and on your website will let people with a disability and their carers know you are a disability friendly business dedicated to eliminating barriers. This is just one way of letting your local residents know you welcome them.

6) Speak directly to us and make direct eye contact.

If a customer with a disability has a carer or support person with them make sure you and your employees do not speak to the carer or support person who's with them just because it's easier comfort-wise. Making direct eye contact is important with customers with disabilities as well. Simply put – don't ignore customers with disabilities.

7) Ask permission before petting a guide or service dog.

Some people with disabilities may have a guide dog (for visually impaired) or service dog (for people with other disabilities). Please make sure your staff knows that when it comes to interacting with dogs – do not pet them. When they're out in public, they are working and should not be disturbed.

8) Install an automatic door button.

It may be a rather expensive upgrade, but if you can afford installing an automatic push button on the entry door to your store, please consider it.

Doors that are hard to open could prevent customers from accessing your business. You can also opt for a low cost solution by installing a bell so that staff can open the door for clients with a disability when required.

9) Offer specialised help if needed.

If you're a restaurant owner, special requests can sometimes come from customers, such as removing a chair to allow a wheel chair to access the table or cutting up meat. No matter how minor the request, make sure your employees are aware that such requests may come in and if they do, to fulfill them as politely as possible.

10) For customers using communication devices, wait for instruction.

It may be a good idea to keep a note pad and pen at the register to assist with communication if required. Whatever kind of communication device a customer may use, the number one thing to remember is to be patient and wait for our instruction for assistance.

11) Give extra time at checkout.

Remember to be patient. This is important at the bank and drive-thru. Sometimes we can be a bit slower; make sure your employees are patient. Other options could be to provide a lower counter area where we can sign the receipt in comfort, this is something that would be appreciated by those of us who use wheelchairs.

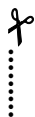
12) Don't pre-judge our abilities.

And perhaps one of the most significant things to teach employees – never pre-judge our abilities. Not every disability is visible, nor is a disability as severe as it can sometimes seem. Bagging our groceries without asking first for example is not recommended. Simply make a point to always ask first in all areas before automatically helping.

SELF ASSESSMENT

How accessible and inclusive is my business?

Would you like to know how your business is performing or what your current situation is when providing services or products to customers with a disability? Take a self- assessment and see how your business scores. The results go to you only and our service, so that we too can see where you are and how we can help.



Checklist to improve accessibility and inclusion

Rights and Responsibilities		
Staff are aware that improving access to your business will increase your compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992)	YES	NOT YET
Making Your Business Welcoming		
Staff have received disability awareness training	YES	NOT YET
Your ZERO BARRIERS sticker has been placed in a visible position	YES	NOT YET
Staff are aware of the rights of customers with guide and service dogs and assistance animals	YES	NOT YET
Staff know the location of the nearest accessible car space	YES	NOT YET
Background noise (e.g., loud music) is kept low	YES	NOT YET
Lighting is bright enough and constant throughout your business	YES	NOT YET
Accessibility of your business is promoted (e.g., online and/or signage)	YES	NOT YET
Signs are clear, easy to read and use high contrast colours	YES	NOT YET
Making Your Business Accessible		
Entrance to your business is clear of obstacles	YES	NOT YET
Furniture and fittings do not prevent access	YES	NOT YET
EFTPOS machines are accessible	YES	NOT YET
Accessible toilet is available	YES	NOT YET
Making your Business Communication Friendly		
Staff are aware of communication strategies	YES	NOT YET
Pen and paper is available for a customer to write something down	YES	NOT YET
Communication board is available	YES	NOT YET
Staff are familiar with the National Relay Service (see website for NRS link, back page)	YES	NOT YET
Making Written Information Easy to Read		
Formatting of documents is in line with written communication guidelines	YES	NOT YET
Alternative formats are available for customers	YES	NOT YET

HOW DID YOU SCORE? IT'S ONE POINT PER YES THAT YOU TICKED. TALLY

HOW MANY YES'S TO SEE HOW YOU SCORED.

YES:

- ✓ **0 – 2 (Yes)** Looks like there are some areas where your business can improve in becoming more accessible and inclusive for people with a disability. Get in touch with our Zero Barriers Project Manager or go to www.zerobarriers.net.au to find out how to make your business, service or group inclusive. Don't be disheartened, we can help you get there. You can still enter the Zero Barriers Business Excellence Awards if you demonstrate a commitment to becoming more inclusive and accessible.
- ✓ **3 – 6 (Yes)** You are on your way to making your business inclusive to people with disability. Get in touch with our Zero Barriers Project Manager or go to www.zerobarriers.net.au to find out how to make your business. Service or group more inclusive. You are almost there and we can work with you to eliminate barriers that prevent customers to tap into the potential your service or business has to offer. We recommend you participate in the Zero Barriers Business Excellence Awards and we can show how to get involved.
- ✓ **7 - 19 (Yes)** Great work! Your business is providing some great ways to making it inclusive to people with disability. Continue this with regular staff training and finding more ways to make improvements. To recognise your efforts and commitment to being a disability friendly business we recommend you self-nominate your business for the Zero Barriers Business Excellence Awards.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION?

Fill in your details and we will contact you to help you achieve your inclusive business goals.

Name of Business:

Business Phone Number:

Person Completing Checklist:

Date Completed:

Please send to:

Zero Barriers Project

Email: zerobarriers@tmn.net.au

Or post to:

PO Box 3164

Bankstown NSW 2200

To find out more about your legal obligations and how to improve communication and accessibility:

www.zerobarriers.net.au