



## **Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism**

**5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference**

**20-22 September 2004  
Perth, Western Australia**

**Report prepared for Nican  
and the Conference Committee by:**

**Centre for Research into Disability and Society  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference**

### **Out of the Blue: Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism**

### **Perth, Western Australia**

### **20-22 September 2004**

Tourism is an important aspect of the recreational lifestyle of all Australians and yet, even in a society that has made many advances in disassembling barriers, there remains both physical and attitudinal resistance to participation and many people with disabilities are excluded from tourism opportunities.

The 2004 Nican Conference – Out of the Blue: Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism – attracted 110 people from all over Australia and overseas. All conference delegates were active advocates for accessible tourism from within the community, government and corporate sectors. Most importantly, thanks to generous funding from Lotterywest, people with disabilities were well represented.

Over the three-day conference, successes, shortcomings, issues, and recommendations were discussed and debated among and between participants, bringing all sectors into the discussion. Conference delegates included tourism association members, tourism operators, disability service providers, academics, representatives from government agencies, individuals with a disability and their families.

The final day focused on the way forward, outlining key issues, making recommendations and identifying those responsible for action. Recommendations focused on improving information quality and dissemination, provision of welcoming facilities and services, encouraging market research and building “accessible pathways”.

#### **Accessible tourism is an untapped, growth market.**

- There are over a billion people with disabilities worldwide and 10% of those (101 million) earn equal to or above the average weekly wage of their country (Mark Bagshaw, IBM Australia)
- The US accessible tourism market is currently worth US\$13.5 billion (Bruce Cameron, Principal, Easy Access Australia)
- The Australian accessible tourism industry is estimated to be currently worth AUS\$1.5 billion (Bruce Cameron)
- The disposable income of people with disabilities in Australia is AUS\$26 billion per annum (Anne O’Brien, Independent Living Centre)
- On average, people with disabilities spend eight (8) nights away from home (longer than other travellers) and travel with 3.4 people (Graeme Innes, HREOC).

The message from participants was clear – there is an urgent need to recognise the viability of the accessible tourism industry. At present, service provision is fragmented and lacks universality, and information is unreliable and inaccurate. As a result, access is not assured and the overall tourism experience for people with disabilities lags far behind that provided to other segments of the population. Recommendations from this conference will set the agenda for the foreseeable future, helping Australia and its states further develop a sustainable, capable, accessible and highly reputable tourism industry.



## Key imperatives for change

In a recent survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, one in five people reported having a disability (ABS 4430.0, 2003).

In a 1998 survey of the Australian travelling public, 11% of respondents identified themselves as having a disability or long-term health problem and reported they had been on holiday in the past month (cited in Darcy 2000, p. 159). One in ten holiday-makers represents a significant share of the overall tourism market – and it is feasible that more people with disabilities would travel regularly if accessible facilities and services were commonplace.

With these findings in mind, financial, human rights and legal imperatives demand the adoption of accessible tourism principles and practices to benefit the whole community.

The Tourism White Paper Implementation Plan 2004 prepared by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources identifies six key areas that require action to ensure we are able “to capture, maintain and grow Australia’s future international and domestic tourism market”. Key strategy areas are:

- Building Reputation (BR)
- Enhancing Research and Statistics (ERS)
- Encouraging Sustainability (ES)
- Lifting Capability (LC)
- Improving Access (IA)
- Increasing Collaboration (IC)

Specific strategies to “capture, maintain and grow” the accessible tourism market are not included in the Implementation Plan. In this report, the links between conference recommendations and specific White Paper strategies are identified by strategy initials (i.e. BR represents Building Reputation) placed after each recommendation. This is done to emphasize that accessible tourism is a legitimate tourism market that must be integrated and developed using the same mechanisms used for building other segments of this strong and vibrant industry. The magnitude of the accessible tourism market makes it part of the mainstream – and as with all markets, has unique characteristics that must be understood before it can be effectively developed and promoted.

## Conference recommendations:

- Actively promote the value of the accessible tourism market to tourism industry to develop support for accessible tourism principles and practices (ES)
- Encourage people with disabilities to become actively involved in advocating for improved services including appraising tourism facilities, conducting access surveys and becoming directly involved in industry training (BR/ES/LC/IC)



## **Information quality and dissemination**

- Improve access to information by assisting government and community organisations to develop quality accessible tourism resources (BR/LC)
- Foster exchange and networking re experiences and practices between intergovernmental agencies (IC)
- Expand the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse to include comprehensive information relating to accessible tourism (BR/IA)
- Improve ease of discovery and access to regularly updated information and fact sheets (including “Travel in Australia for People with Disabilities”) available at Tourism Australia’s website (IA)

## **Provision of facilities and service**

- Mandate universal design concepts in the development of new tourist facilities and provide incentives for tourism operators to provide accessible holiday destinations (LC/IA)
- Ensure National Tourism Accreditation System includes standards relating to accessible tourism that go beyond physical access, including training related to attitudes and quality service for all sectors of the tourism market (ES/IA)
- Improve staff training and education to include attitude, knowledge and skill development required to relate appropriately to people with disabilities (LC)
- Include people with disabilities and related service provider organisations in the development, promotion and monitoring of accessible tourism (LC)

## **Market research**

- Extend mandate of Tourism Cooperative Research Council (CRC) to include accessible tourism (ERS)
- Encourage research specific to the accessible tourism market through established higher education programs (ERS/LC) and research scholarships
- Compile completed research into a single resource and actively promote to tourism associations and tourism industry (BR/ES)

## **Building accessible pathways**

- Promote programs such as the “Beyond Compliance” program and provide further incentives for tourism operators to participate and ensure Australia can be actively promoted as an accessible tourism destination (BR)
- Provide incentives for local government and tourism associations in regional areas to provide accessible facilities and implement accessible tourism practices (LC)
- Provide incentives to government, corporate and community organisations, and private tourism providers to work collaboratively to link and combine accessible pathways (IC)



## The way forward

The Nican conference was successful in bringing together people with disabilities, and the disability and tourism sectors to focus on the rapidly increasing need for more accessible tourism opportunities.

If positive outcomes are to be generated for accessible tourism in Australia, all sectors involved in providing facilities and services for people with disabilities will need to make a proactive commitment to finding the way forward.

The networks established at the conference, as well as the recommendations in this report, provide a solid foundation for future initiatives. Steps that can be taken include:

### Government sector

- Heeding the financial, human rights and legal imperatives identified by conference delegates
- Taking a leadership role in bringing together key local, regional and national stakeholders to address accessible tourism issues
- Providing incentives to assist in the implementation of conference recommendations

### Tourism sector

- Re-evaluating the size of the accessible tourism market
- Developing effective responses and strategies to capture this market
- Cooperating with government and disability sectors to maximise accessible tourism opportunities and realise the potential of this rapidly expanding market

### Disability sector

- Continuing to actively demand that the rights of all people with disabilities be recognised
- Continuing to encourage people with disabilities to travel and support accessible tourism opportunities
- Working in partnership with government and tourism sectors to ensure people with disabilities, their families and carers, have equitable access to tourism opportunities

### University/research sector

- Embarking on quality research and dissemination of information regarding the potential value of this market
- Advocating for the Tourism Cooperative Research Council (CRC) to include accessible tourism in its current research agenda

**Accessible tourism in Australia will only become a mainstream reality with demonstrated commitment and support from all concerned. We must work together to maximise the potential of our accessible tourism industry.**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Nican Board and staff played an integral part in the planning, implementation and success of this conference. Nican is recognised for the foresight of initiating and supporting an event that addresses issues affecting access to community for people with disabilities, specifically tourism.

The conference steering committee – Amanda Hunt and Mallika Macleod – donated time, energy and talent to reach their goal of creating a landmark, memorable and truly inclusive conference. The conference organising and advisory committees ably assisted them in administration, event management and tour coordination.

A number of organisations provided sponsorship and their valuable input is acknowledged. Please refer to Appendix A for the list of committee members, activity coordinators and sponsors.

Many people contributed to this report. Professor Tanya L. Packer and May Carter from the Centre for Research into Disability and Society at Curtin University were primarily responsible for the report's completion. Kerryn Parsons, Sara Wilson, Tegan Muir and Rosalind Forward, students from the Curtin University School of Occupational Therapy, attended the conference and assisted by making observations, taking notes during sessions and panel discussions, and ensuring that details, viewpoints and opinions were captured and represented.

All conference delegates must be thanked for their enthusiastic approach to addressing issues, offering solutions and seeking ways forward to promote the adoption of accessible tourism throughout Australia.





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## BACKGROUND

The Australian Government, Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources White Paper (2004) calls on all stakeholders to “capture, maintain and grow Australia’s future international and domestic tourism market” (p.vi).

Western Australia’s vision is to develop an international reputation as Australia’s best-equipped and most hospitable accessible tourism destination for business and leisure tourists with a disability (Perth Convention Bureau, 2004).

Out of the Blue: Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism, the 5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference, advanced both of these visions by bringing together policy makers, academics, tourism providers and most importantly, the actual market – people with disabilities.

Tourism is an important aspect of the recreational lifestyle of all Australians and yet, even in a society that has made many advances in disassembling barriers, there remains both physical and attitudinal resistance. This conference addressed many of the issues identified as barriers to total participation in tourism for people with a disability.

In opening the conference, Sheila McHale, WA Minister for Community Development; Women’s Interests; Seniors and Youth; Disability Services; Culture and Arts, identified the significant place that people with disabilities, their families and carers hold within our community. She recognised the connection between ageing and increasing numbers of people with disabilities. Ms McHale identified one of her goals, as Minister for Disability Services, is to see Perth become the most accessible city in Australia and Western Australia, the most accessible state.

During her speech, the Minister announced, “The Disability Services Commission and Tourism Western Australia have recently formed a joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group to advise on future initiatives”.

Over the three-day conference, successes, shortcomings, issues, and recommendations were addressed, discussed and debated among and between participants, bringing all sectors into the discussion. The final day focused on the way forward, outlining key issues, making recommendations and identifying those responsible for action.

Bob Kucera, WA Minister for Tourism; Small Business; Sport and Recreation; Peel and the South West, closed the conference on the final day. Mr Kucera encouraged tourism operators to recognise the importance of the accessible tourism market and work with the disability sector to ensure Western Australia becomes the nation’s leading destination for people with disabilities.

The message from participants was clear – there is an urgent need to recognise the viability of the accessible tourism industry. At present, service provision is fragmented and lacks universality, and information is unreliable and inaccurate. As a result, access is not assured and the overall tourism experience for people with disabilities lags far behind that provided to other segments of the population. Recommendations from this



conference will set the agenda for the foreseeable future, helping Australia and its states further develop a sustainable, capable, accessible and highly reputable tourism industry.

This report provides an overview of the conference and summarizes the key issues identified and recommendations made. Presentation of the report has been organised as follows:

- Conference Overview
- Key Imperatives for Change
- Developing Accessible Tourism
- Identifying Current Issues
- Conference Recommendations

Conference recommendations are linked to the six key strategies named in the Australian Government Tourism White Paper Implementation Plan. This is done to emphasize that accessible tourism is a legitimate tourism market that must be integrated and developed using the same mechanisms used for building other segments of this strong and vibrant industry. The magnitude of the accessible tourism market makes it part of the mainstream – and as with all markets, has unique characteristics that must be understood before it can be effectively developed and promoted.

Throughout the report, examples of best practice are included to illustrate what is possible. Negative examples serve to demonstrate the need for change.

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## CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

More than 110 participants from a wide variety of backgrounds attended the three-day conference. Tourism association members, tourism operators, disability service providers, academics, representatives from government agencies, individuals with a disability and their families all came together to discuss a myriad of issues relating to accessible tourism.

Several high profile keynote speakers set the tone for the conference. The first two keynote speakers focused on human rights and individual responsibility. Mark Bagshaw (Manager IBM Australia and NZ Accessibility Centre) outlined a three-pronged vision – empowerment of the individual, provision of infrastructure and a change in social expectations – to ensure that people with disabilities are able to exercise both their rights and their responsibilities. Graeme Innes (Deputy Disability Discrimination Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission) stressed the rights of all people to fair and equitable opportunity and highlighted the power of individual voices through use of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The next three keynote speakers provided positive examples of achievement and talked about opportunities to further develop accessible tourism. Justin Lunn (Operator, All Wheel Adventures) demonstrated what is possible through innovation and ingenuity. Scott Raines (Center for Cultural Studies, UCLA) gave an example of positive inclusive tourism in action and Peter Rice (Principal, Access Management Group Australia) encouraged collaboration, partnership and action.

The first day's proceedings included the launch by Minister for Disability Services, Sheila McHale of a new publication called "GuestAbility – Signposts to accommodating people of all ages and abilities" (ILC, 2004). This resource was developed by Ann O'Brien and Anita Harrop from the WA Independent Living Centre and provides examples, photographs and practical information for accommodation providers. Several other examples of accessible tourism resources were presented during the conference.

Twenty-six presentations were made during the three-day conference. Within the three presentation streams (Good Business; Policy; Individuals and Families), themes that attracted particular focus included:

- Development and promotion of tourism resources
- Findings of current research
- Examples of good practice
- Industry incentives and marketing
- Legal and ethical considerations
- Personal stories.

A brief outline of conference presentations is included as Appendix B.

Delegates were also given the opportunity to personally experience accessible tourism by visiting various venues at the Perth Cultural Centre or by sailing on the Swan River on an accessible yacht.



The conference concluded with two panel discussions. Leah Cianco (Ethnic Disability Advisory Council) and Amanda Hunt (Recreation Network) facilitated the first panel discussion and involved people with disabilities, families, carers and support workers in identifying tourism access issues.

Sheryl Fewster (Director Media and Communication, Tourism WA) chaired the second panel and Bruce Cameron (Principal, Easy Access Australia) facilitated the discussion. Panel members included:

- Sally Hollis, Manager, Tourism Council WA
- Mary Guy, Nican
- Professor Tanya L. Packer, Curtin University
- Scott Campbell, Perth Convention Bureau
- Justin Lunn, All Wheel Adventures
- Jenni Perkins, Director Policy Planning and Information, Disability Services Commission
- Dr. Scott Rains, Center for Cultural Studies, University of California, USA

This session was open to all conference delegates and endeavoured to further identify current issues, examine what approaches were and were not working within the tourism industry, and make recommendations for future action.

To initiate discussion, Tony Norment (Department of Sport and Recreation WA) presented a review of consumer feedback from the Regional Workshop on Tourism and Disability held earlier in the year.

The conference concluded with a final address by Bob Kucera, WA Minister for Tourism; Small Business; Sport and Recreation; Peel and the South West.

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## KEY IMPERATIVES FOR CHANGE

In a recent survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, one in five people reported having a disability (ABS 4430.0, 2003). In this case, disability was defined as any limitation that had lasted, or was expected to last, for at least six months and restricted everyday activities.

In general, the definition of disability includes any physical, sensory (vision or hearing), psychological or intellectual impairment that results in a reduction in normal functional performance. Physical and sensory impairments are most commonly reported and it is expected that most people will be affected by a disability or long term-health condition at some time in their life (ABS 4433.0, 1998).

In a 1998 survey of the Australian travelling public, 11% of respondents identified themselves as having a disability or long-term health problem and reported they had been on holiday in the past month (cited in Darcy 2000, p. 159). One in ten holiday-makers represents a significant share of the overall tourism market – and it is feasible that more people with disabilities would travel regularly if accessible facilities and services were commonplace.

With these findings in mind, financial, human rights and legal imperatives demand the adoption of accessible tourism principles and practices to benefit the whole community. Many conference presenters provided support for these imperatives.

### The Financial Imperative

Accessible tourism is an untapped, growth market. Several conference presenters cited international and local research and discussed the economic significance of this market. The figures are staggering:

- There are over a billion people with disabilities worldwide and 10% of those (101 million) earn equal to or above the average weekly wage of their country (Mark Bagshaw)
- The US accessible tourism market is currently worth US\$13.5 billion (Bruce Cameron, Principal, Easy Access Australia)
- The Australian accessible tourism industry is estimated to be currently worth AUS\$1.5 billion (Bruce Cameron)
- The disposable income of people with disabilities in Australia is AUS\$26 billion per annum (Anne O'Brien)
- On average, people with disabilities spend eight (8) nights away from home (longer than other travellers) and travel with 3.4 people (Graeme Innes).

The financial imperative is clear – but it must also be recognised that the accessible tourism market is not a single market segment. The needs and expectations of travellers with a disability are not homogeneous. Like all travellers, people with disabilities wish to exercise choice of travel, choice of accommodation and choice of attractions.



There was recurrent feedback from conference presenters and delegates regarding the problem of perceived accessible accommodation and facilities. It was stated that some facilities promoted as accessible did not meet the needs of tourists with a disability. It appeared that some tourism operators are unfamiliar with legislative requirements and facility design lacked input from disability advisors. It could not be assumed that a facility was accessible when it was clear that a person with a disability would require assistance or was required to use alternative routes.

It should also be noted that tourism operators have expressed concern that the access requirements included in current building code standards are disjointed; they do not cover the broadest range of disabilities; and they are not sufficiently descriptive enough to ensure the construction of new facilities meets the requirements of the variety of authorities governing facility access.

Provision of accessible accommodation alone does not equal accessible tourism. Local attractions, retail outlets and restaurants can all benefit from a community focused approach to accessible tourism. As with any other market, maximisation of the financial imperative demands concentrated analysis of needs and expectations, informed decision-making and quality service delivery.

## **The Human Rights Imperative**

Adopted in 1993, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities state:

Member States should ensure that disabled persons have the same opportunities for recreational activities as other citizens. This involves the possibility of using restaurants, cinemas, theatres, libraries, etc., as well as holiday resorts, sports arenas, hotels, beaches and other places for recreation. Member States should take action to remove all obstacles to this effect. Tourist authorities, travel agencies, hotels, voluntary organizations and others involved in organizing recreational activities or travel opportunities should offer their services to all and not discriminate against disabled persons. This involves, for instance, incorporating information on accessibility into their regular information to the public (United Nations, 2003).

In his keynote address, Graeme Innes presented a strong case for furthering the rights of people with disabilities. He currently is contributing to an international working party assisting the United Nations to further develop the International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. An example of the articles that are being considered in relation to sports is illustrative:

- the right to participate in sporting and recreational activities at all levels, and as appropriate offer disability specific programming;
- organize and participate in sporting activities and receive the necessary instruction, training and resources; and
- access to sporting recreational and leisure venues.



Federal and State laws in Australia ensure the rights and responsibilities of all citizens including those with a disability. These rights are further strengthened through the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Equal Opportunity Act (EOA).

### **The Legal Imperative**

The international conventions and legislation cited above also provides a legal basis on which the tourism industry is required to provide service to people with disabilities. Because the enforcement of this legislation is often complaints based, many large and small tourism operators are unaware of their legal responsibilities. In today's climate of litigation, the risks are not small. Failure to provide accessible information on fire exits; visual fire alarms; or safe forms of transport are legal responsibilities that need to be considered by all facility managers.

The tourism industry is legally bound to provide equal access to people with disabilities. Only where undue financial hardship can be demonstrated are they exempt from this requirement.

Marc Newhouse, Training and Community Education Officer, Equal Opportunity Commission, strongly advocated for people with disabilities to take action to challenge unlawful disability discrimination and harassment. His presentation explained the legal definitions of discrimination and harassment and identified a range of practical options and strategies to prevent discrimination in the delivery of tourism services.

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## DEVELOPING ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Guiding principles for accessible tourism were developed at the First Asia Pacific Conference on Tourism for People with Disability in Bali in 2000, and were reiterated in the UNESCAP report (Cameron, Darcy & Foggin 2003). They included the following:

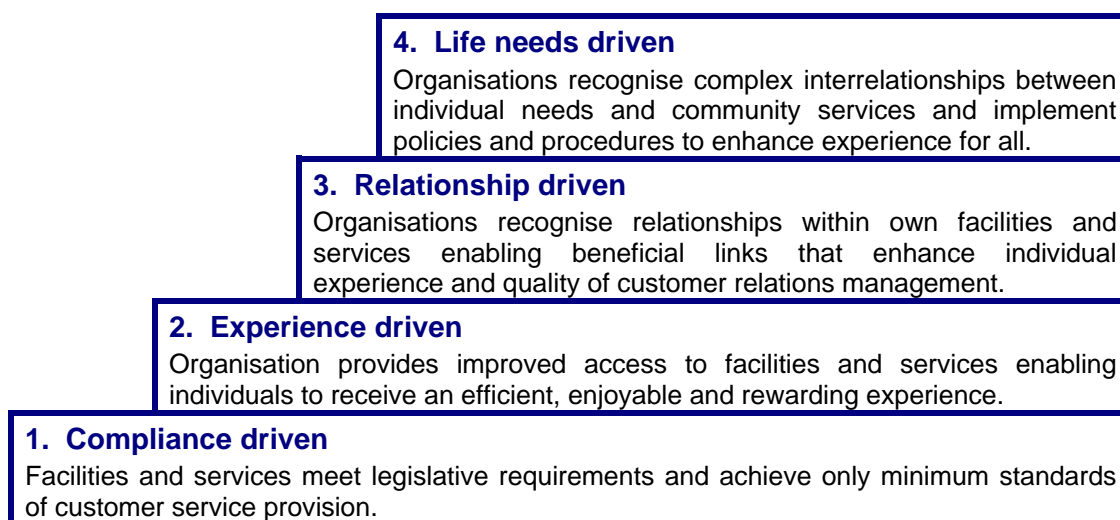
Persons with disabilities have equal rights of access to all tourism infrastructure, products and services, including employment opportunities and benefits that the tourism industry can provide. The tourism industry should provide the same choices for all consumers to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities, and protection of the individual's right to travel with dignity.

Tourism master plans, policies and programmes should incorporate the principle of universal access to tourism infrastructure, products and services (UNESCAP, 2000).

Accessible tourism opportunities do exist in Australia but most are driven by adherence to legal requirements rather than a proactive business decision to adopt accessible tourism principles and practices.

Mark Bagshaw spoke of the potential value to business in incorporating an inclusive model of service provision. He discussed the accessibility framework currently implemented at IBM Australia and related this to tourism. As organisations progress through each level (see Figure 1), they are encouraged to adopt inclusive policies and procedures and the advantages of providing accessible facilities and services are highlighted.

At the lowest level, provision of accessible facilities and services is compliance driven, meets minimum standards only, and does not generate any competitive advantage or commercial benefit.



**Figure 1: Embracing people with disabilities – A 4-step model of inclusion**



It must be noted that, at this time, most tourism providers in Australia operate at the compliance driven level. Legal compliance alone does not build accessible, desirable, or quality facilities and service. Few have chosen to adopt accessible tourism principles or practices and there is little product or service differentiation within the marketplace.

At the second level, organisations move beyond compliance to ensure people with disabilities are able to receive a “rewarding experience” where each individual’s contact with the organisation is efficient and enjoyable. For example, hotel booking information could be accessible through a website designed specifically to cater for the needs of people with a vision impairment, enabling them to interact and book facilities and services independently. Organisations operating at this level can begin to distinguish themselves within the marketplace.

At the relationship driven level, organisations begin to recognise beneficial links within their own facilities and services. For example, the hotel booking system designed to be accessible for a person with a vision impairment (as in example above) has the capacity to recognise them as a repeat client, knows their requirements and alerts staff in relevant areas to be aware of their needs during their stay. As organisations are able to provide a more comprehensive level of customer service, they may choose to commit to providing more opportunities for inclusion and enhance their position within the tourism marketplace.

### **Best practice in accessible tourism: What does it mean?**

Features that consistently define best practice in accessible tourism are:

- Proactive pursuit of the market
- Accessibility that is planned and based on expert opinion (people with disabilities, carers, access consultants)
- Accessibility included in original design concept with visual amenity and appeal, not simply included as an add-on or special provision
- Accurate and available information
- A focus on personal needs and safety
- Knowledgeable employees with positive attitudes of service, respect and dignity toward travellers.
- A focus that goes “Beyond Compliance” with legislative requirements

*Compiled from conference presentations*

At the highest level, facility and service provision is driven by life needs as organisations become conscious of inclusive links beyond their own businesses that meet the needs of individual customers. Not only does this level of inclusion provide a competitive advantage in the tourism market, it can provide lifestyle benefits for all citizens. The implementation of policies and procedures that meet the needs of specific populations, such as people with disabilities, are equally transferable to other identified market sectors. At this level, the decision to provide accessible facilities and services is no longer simply philanthropic – it ensures tangible economic gains for the organisation.

Large corporations are the main providers of hotel accommodation and air travel and as reported by many conference delegates, their services and facilities often reflect only minimum compliance with legislation. Travellers with disabilities are able to move



from place to place, find accessible accommodation, and interact with service providers but repeatedly report exclusion from quality service. Almost every conference delegate with a disability related stories of humiliation, loss of dignity, and bodily harm as a result of their travel experience – many citing major Australian icons as perpetrators.

Many large corporations are privately operated and therefore are less accountable in providing accessible facilities beyond the basic legislative requirements. In addition operators are unwilling or prefer to avoid the financial cost of modifying their premises to suit the needs of people with disabilities. For example, hotel rooms remain of minimal size – even in new facilities – as extending bathrooms and providing room space for wheelchair users alone would affect the overall number of rooms available to produce maximum income. In addition, many well-established hotels would require major overhauls to meet even the most basic standards required for universal access and few are willing to expend capital to meet the needs of a market they perceive to be limited and unviable.

#### **Perth Bureau Wins Global Award**

The Perth Convention Bureau has won the International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) *Best Marketing Award*, presented at ICCA's General Assembly and Congress in Cape Town, South Africa.

Perth's entry featured its '*Beyond Compliance*' initiative, which aims to position Western Australia as the nation's leading disabled friendly destination.

The '*Beyond Compliance*' project is a joint venture with the state's Disability Services Commission and Curtin University's School of Management.

It seeks to bring about social change by rewarding tourism industry operators who are proactive in improving their accessibility and services.

So far less than A\$50,000 had been invested in the '*Beyond Compliance*' programme for a projected return of almost A\$5-million on conventions already secured.

Among events secured, the Disabled Artists International Conference is expected to attract 500 delegates in March, 2005 and the Congress of the International Federation of Disability Sailing an estimated 700 delegates in 2006.

*Sourced from [www.pcb.com.au](http://www.pcb.com.au)*

Large corporations need to take note that many people with disabilities travel on business and require access to the same facilities as other business travellers. Support for developing accommodation and services for conference and business travellers with a disability is being actively generated through initiatives such the "Beyond Compliance" program. Information regarding this program was presented by Scott Campbell from Perth Convention Bureau (PCB) and Ruth Taylor from Curtin University School of Management. "Beyond Compliance" aims at positioning Western Australia as the world's leading destination for people with disabilities and is being run through a partnership between PCB, WA Disability Services Commission and Curtin University.



If service provision is to reach the fourth step of Bagshaw's model, it appears that the most successful developments will occur through local community involvement. Small business entrepreneurs operate 91 per cent of tourism services in Australia (Tourism White Paper 2004). Many are unaware of the needs of travellers with a disability, but are willing, at least, to find temporary solutions when travellers arrive.

Examples of tourism operators who have established disability-friendly holiday/resort destinations and services were discussed during the conference. While these examples are encouraging, the range of disability-friendly facilities throughout Australia remains small and there is limited opportunity for people with disabilities to access mainstream destinations, hotels, scenic venues and services.

Throughout the conference, the same disability-friendly facilities were mentioned on several occasions. A web-based information page for the very popular television travel program "The Great Outdoors" reiterated many of the examples provided by conference delegates. Further information and links to accessible facilities and services in Australia are included as Appendix C.

Several presenters saw developing best practice models as one means to facilitate the development of accessible tourism within Australia (and the means to reach Bagshaw's Step 4).

### **Tasmania to Lead the Nation in 'Barrier-Free Tourism'**

A new tourism venture that will make Tasmania a national and international leader in catering for people with physical disabilities and mobility restrictions was launched in Launceston on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2004.

The Devils Playground will create a 'barrier free' touring circuit of Tasmania providing self-catered accommodation and facilities for a range of visitors, but especially those with a physical disability or mobility restriction.

"The circuit enables guests, and particularly those with access and mobility problems, to tour the entire State with complete confidence that their accommodation needs are going to be fully met wherever they want to travel". Mr Winberg said.

"The 'barrier free' concept is a first for Tasmania and possibly set an international precedent which would open up a huge new tourism market for the State", he said.

"We researched extensively with the help of some of the country's recognised experts in this field and can say with confidence that such a comprehensive touring holiday opportunity for people with access or mobility challenges simply does not exist anywhere else in the country".

"There is a massive group of people whose recreational and holiday needs have, until now, been almost totally ignored".

"Add the two family members and/or support worker that statistics show typically travel with these people and you begin to see just how big this market really is".

*Nican website (now archived) – [www.nican.com.au](http://www.nican.com.au)*

Current examples of best practice in developing and delivering accessible tourism products and services in Australia were presented during the conference. Two forms of best practice examples included individual operators leading the way to community development; and community involvement in the development of Accessible Pathways.



## **Community involvement in the development of Accessible Pathways**

Bruce Cameron presented the example of two individual accommodation operators who extended their service by adding accessibility for people with high support physical disability. Establishment of both venues in NSW, Clark Bay Farm at Narooma and O'Carrolyn's at Port Stephens, have resulted in a “ripple” effect in the local community, increasing not only their own market share but also that of the surrounding tourism providers. The radius of accessibility around the operators has steadily grown and extended, resulting in a win-win-win situation for travellers, the original operator and the local community.

In another example, Mary Guy (Nican Inc) presented on behalf of Kerry and Jane Winberg from The Devil's Playground in Tasmania. This tourism venture provides an accessible, self-catering touring circuit around Tasmania. Designed in conjunction with people with disabilities, the circuit enables travellers with a disability to tour the entire State with confidence that their accommodation needs will be met. A 120-guest facility in Launceston was completely refurbished to serve as the hub for the organisation's statewide tourism activities.

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## IDENTIFYING CURRENT ISSUES

The First Asia Pacific Conference on Tourism for People with Disability held in Bali in 2000 provided a forum for the identification of issues relating to accessible tourism. This forum recognised that the number of people with disabilities, older persons and families with young children were all beginning to travel more and each of these groups had similar needs in relation to accessible tourism. It was further recognised that few tourism service providers understood the economic and social significance of early action to service these emerging markets (UNESCAP, 2000).

Other issues identified in the Bali conference recommendations included the impact of the built environment on tourism experience particularly in relation to safety, convenience, efficiency and enjoyment. It was also stated that there was insufficient integration of the planning and development of tourism development and that there was a need to improve useability of transportation, accommodation, tourism sites, services and programs to meet the full range of individual needs.

A number of similar issues relating to accessible tourism were identified during both panel discussions held during the Out of the Blue conference. These issues included:

- Information quality and dissemination
- Provision of facilities and service
- Market research

Participants in the panel discussions were asked to identify what did and did not work within each of these areas, what the resulting outcome of particular actions and/or inactions and who was responsible for developing strategies and procedures for future action. The following sections present feedback from the panel discussions.

### Information quality and dissemination

Holidays are an institution in Australia – they are one of the most discussed events among families, friends, and colleagues. Travellers with disabilities are no exception – leading to much sharing of information about opportunities and options.

Access to quality information was the single most important issue for conference participants. The single most reliable source of information currently used by people with disabilities is other people with disabilities.

Current rating systems were discussed and generally considered to be inadequate, inaccurate and out-of-date.

#### **Can Australian Tourism Data Warehouse solve information dissemination problems?**

Conference delegates identified the ATDW, managed by Tourism Queensland, as the most viable option to solve information dissemination concerns. At an impromptu meeting called during the conference, the technical changes that would be necessary for the ATDW to include comprehensive data regarding accessible tourism were discussed and delegates determined what further advocacy they could undertake to progress the required changes.



Many are incremental and place primary importance on physical aspects of facility design. In one rating system, for example, if an accommodation venue is not able to provide physical access for people using a wheelchair, it is not included in information listings even though its facilities may be more than adequate for an individual with a sensory impairment such as vision or hearing loss. More serious consequences occur when facilities are advertised as accessible but are not.

It was stated that easy access to reliable and accurate information was essential if accessible tourism products were to be further developed and made sustainable. Suggestions were made regarding the necessity to improve knowledge and understanding of the needs and expectations of people with disabilities through training and including standards for accessible facilities and services in accreditation programs.

In addition, it was suggested that current resources such as the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (currently managed through Tourism Queensland) could provide the means to coordinate information on a national basis. At present the ATDW contains only limited information on accessible facilities and attractions.

## **Provision of facilities and service**

Australian Standards now dictate the level of physical accessibility that must be incorporated into all new built facilities but older buildings and facilities are not subject to the same standards. If universal design is to be included as the norm and not unique it must become accepted practice in the design of all facilities and must become a requirement embedded into Australian building codes and standards.

### **Current OSH regulations impact on accessible tourism.**

Several delegates reported that the level of assistance once provided by domestic airline services has decreased in past years. Wheelchairs are now considered as luggage and are taken from travellers at check in. Without assistance from a travelling companion or carer, people find themselves stranded at airport gate lounges without any means to access toilet, retail or catering facilities prior to boarding. One conference delegate stated that every time he travelled by air he had to endure “having his legs taken away” - a circumstance that would never be expected or acceptable in any other situation.

Several delegates expressed concern that the tourism industry focused on issues relating to physical access and ignored the issue of service provider attitude. A focus on airline and hotel accessibility was also considered a fatal flaw in provision of accessible tourism. Provision of accessible accommodation alone does not ensure an enjoyable travelling experience – all aspects of the expected tourist experience such as access to local transport, restaurants, tourist sites and involvement in local activities need to be considered.

Several participants raised issues relating to service delivery and staff training. It was stated that systemic training does not exist, inappropriate language is often used and the level of service provided does not meet individual expectations or needs. For example, speaking to the consumer –



not the carer or partner, showing positive attitudes when asked for assistance and not using derogatory terminology can have a significant impact on the quality of customer service provided. It was also recognised that other workplace issues such as changes to employee Occupational Safety and Health legislation was impacting on service delivery.

One conference delegate raised the question of how to instigate change. He queried why people with disabilities accept the fact that the tourism industry ignores twenty per cent of its potential market. He further queried why people with disabilities and advocacy groups appear to be doing little to change the current situation. It was strongly suggested that individuals and advocacy groups needed to open honest lines of communication between themselves and the tourism industry. If they don't ask, and keep asking, nothing is likely to change.

It was considered unsatisfactory by many delegates that enforcement of legislation governed by DDA and EOA remained complaints based and extensive action, such as individual or group action described above was required to instigate change. In addition, there was no power to set precedent and clear standards did not exist.

## **Market research**

Recent research (Darcy 2003) suggests that many tourism operators do not perceive active pursuit of the accessible tourism market as a commercially viable option. This perception is founded on unsubstantiated beliefs by the tourism providers, that the accessible tourism market is too small and that it is too expensive for service providers to meet physical and sensory requirements for universal access.

Ongoing tourism research regularly predicts the size and value of the domestic and international tourism market. Population statistics are used in determining the potential scope of the accessible tourism market. However, current tourism research makes little distinction between general statistics and data that specifically includes seniors and people with disabilities. As a result, there is limited quality research that adequately describes the size and characteristics of the international and domestic accessible tourism market.

It was felt by several conference delegates that the lack of quality research and dissemination of information about the potential of this market has contributed to the limited interest shown by tourism operators. This has contributed to the lack of commitment demonstrated by state and federal tourism associations and the tourism industry in servicing the accessible tourism market.

Federal and state tourism agencies were regarded, by delegates, as the organisations primarily responsible for encouraging research institutions to undertake quality research in contemporary areas of interest. However, it was pointed out that organisations such as the Tourism Cooperative Research Council (CRC) do not include, nor consider, accessible tourism in its current research agenda.

In addition, the recent Tourism White Paper Implementation Plan makes no direct reference to the accessible tourism market. It is an unfortunate situation that our major



research organisations and tourism associations appear to be prepared to ignore the needs and expectations of twenty per cent of the general population.

It was proposed that research specific to the accessible tourism market is required. Suggestions included determining the types of holiday experiences desired by people with disabilities and the economic value of accessible tourism in Australia. In addition, it was suggested that research findings needed to be compiled into one resource and actively promoted to tourism operators.

Without ongoing research and access to quality data, few of the identified problems associated with information dissemination and inadequate facilities and services could be solved.

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## CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Emerging research into accessible tourism indicates that should the Australian tourism industry embrace this growing market, it is likely to benefit economically, environmentally and socially (Darcy 2003).

The Tourism White Paper Implementation Plan 2004 prepared by the Australian Government Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources identifies six key areas that require action to ensure we are able “to capture, maintain and grow Australia’s future international and domestic tourism market”.

Strategies for each key area are discussed in the Tourism White Paper though specific strategies to “capture, maintain and grow” the accessible tourism market are not included. Relevant strategies from each key area are presented to indicate the strength of recommendations made during the Out of the Blue conference and their links to the national tourism agenda. The link between conference recommendations and specific White Paper strategies is identified by strategy initials (i.e. BR represents Building Reputation) placed after each recommendation.

### Building Reputation (BR)

- *Develop and maintain collaborative partnerships between government and industry to enhance efforts to market Australia as a unique and unparalleled destination.*
- *Encourage Australians to take holidays in Australia, particularly in regional Australia.*
- *Create opportunities for the development of Australia as a destination for business and major events.*

### Enhancing Research and Statistics (ERS)

- *Enhance Australia’s tourism data and research base to better meet industry and government needs.*

### Encouraging Sustainability (ES)

- *Develop an internationally competitive, ecologically sustainable and socially responsible tourism industry.*

### Lifting Capability (LC)

- *Improve industry standards and professionalism to position Australia as a market leader in tourism quality and value.*
- *Develop a skilled workforce, capable of providing quality service and delivering an experience to visitors that is second to none.*
- *Improve the capacity of local governments to better manage tourism.*

### Improving Access (IA)

- *Assist the development of tourism across Australia..*

### Increasing Collaboration (IC)

- *Increase whole-of-government collaboration on tourism.*
- *Enhance existing Australian inter-governmental partnerships.*
- *Promote and develop international partnerships to support the tourism sector and enhance international perceptions of Australia as a tourist destination.*



Conference recommendations for future action were formed during panel discussions held on the final day of the Out of the Blue conference. The recommendations presented provide general and specific solutions to issues identified during the conference. In addition, they build on previous recommendations made during the First Asia Pacific Conference on Tourism for People with Disability held in Bali in 2000.

### **Out of the Blue Conference recommendations:**

- Actively promote the value of the accessible tourism market to tourism industry to develop support for accessible tourism principles and practices (ES)
- Encourage people with disabilities to become actively involved in advocating for improved services including appraising tourism facilities, conducting access surveys and becoming directly involved in industry training (BR/ES/LC/IC)

### **Information quality and dissemination**

- Improve access to information by assisting government and community organisations to develop quality accessible tourism resources (BR/LC)
- Foster exchange and networking re experiences and practices between intergovernmental agencies (IC)
- Expand the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse to include comprehensive information relating to accessible tourism (BR/IA)
- Improve ease of discovery and access to regularly updated information and fact sheets (including “Travel in Australia for People with Disabilities”) available at Tourism Australia website (IA)

### **Provision of facilities and service**

- Mandate universal design concepts in the development of new tourist facilities and provide incentives for tourism operators to provide accessible holiday destinations (LC/IA)
- Ensure National Tourism Accreditation System includes standards relating to accessible tourism that go beyond physical access, including training related to attitudes and quality service for all sectors of the tourism market (ES/IA)
- Improve staff training and education to include attitude, knowledge and skill development required to relate appropriately to people with disabilities (LC)
- Include people with disabilities and related service provider organisations in the development, promotion and monitoring of accessible tourism (LC)

### **Market research**

- Extend mandate of Tourism Cooperative Research Council (CRC) to include accessible tourism (ERS)



- Encourage research specific to the accessible tourism market through established higher education programs (ERS/LC) and research scholarships
- Compile completed research into a single resource and actively promote to tourism associations and tourism industry (BR/ES)

### **Building accessible pathways**

- Promote programs such as the “Beyond Compliance” program and provide further incentives for tourism operators to participate and ensure Australia can be actively promoted as an accessible tourism destination (BR)
  - Provide incentives for local government and tourism associations in regional areas to provide accessible facilities and implement accessible tourism practices (LC)
  - Provide incentives to government, corporate and community organisations, and private tourism providers to work collaboratively to link and combine accessible pathways (IC)
-



## **THE WAY FORWARD**

The Nican conference was successful in bringing together people with disabilities, and the disability and tourism sectors to focus on the rapidly increasing need for more accessible tourism opportunities.

If positive outcomes are to be generated for accessible tourism in Australia, all sectors involved in providing facilities and services for people with disabilities will need to make a proactive commitment to finding the way forward.

The networks established at the conference, as well as the recommendations in this report, provide a solid foundation for future initiatives. Steps that can be taken include:

### **Government sector**

- Heeding the financial, human rights and legal imperatives identified by conference delegates
- Taking a leadership role in bringing together key local, regional and national stakeholders to address accessible tourism issues
- Providing incentives to assist in the implementation of conference recommendations

### **Tourism sector**

- Re-evaluating the size of the accessible tourism market
- Developing effective responses and strategies to capture this market
- Cooperating with government and disability sectors to maximise accessible tourism opportunities and realise the potential of this rapidly expanding market

### **Disability sector**

- Continuing to actively demand that the rights of all people with disabilities be recognised
- Continuing to encourage people with disabilities to travel and support accessible tourism opportunities
- Working in partnership with government and tourism sectors to ensure people with disabilities, their families and carers, have equitable access to tourism opportunities

### **University/research sector**

- Embarking on quality research and dissemination of information regarding the potential value of this market
- Advocating for the Tourism Cooperative Research Council (CRC) to include accessible tourism in its current research agenda



**Accessible tourism in Australia will only become a mainstream reality with demonstrated commitment and support from all concerned. We must work together to maximise the potential of our accessible tourism industry.**

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Conference committees and sponsors**

**NICAN**

Suzanne Bain-Donohue – Executive Director	Nican Incorporated
Anne Oliver - Conference Coordinator	Contractor: Olive Production & Design
Victoria Wardlaw - Conference Coordinator	Contractor
Lisa Wells - Administration	Nican Incorporated

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

Amanda Hunt - Conference Chair	Recreation Network
Mallika Macleod - Marketing Committee Chair	ACROD WA

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ORGANISING COMMITTEE**

Keith Condor - Social Committee Chair	Sailability
Tony Norment	Dept of Sport and Recreation WA
Scott Campbell	Perth Convention Bureau
Shirley Barnes	Parks and Leisure Australia
Prof. Tanya L. Packer	Curtin University

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Steve Hammond	Lotterywest WA
Pip Daly-Smith	Disability Services Commission
Russell Small	Hills Community Support Group
Richard Lockwood	Ability Solutions
Cathie Gallagher	Dept of Health WA
Jill Bowman	City of Fremantle

**OFF-SITE TOUR COORDINATORS**

Keith Condor	Sailability, Royal Perth Yacht Club
Marty Cunningham	Dept of Culture and the Arts WA

**CONFERENCE SPONSORS**

Tourism Australia	Lotterywest
Tourism Western Australia	Recreation Network
Qantas	ACROD
Perth Convention Bureau	Sailability
Disability Services Commission	Royal Perth Yacht Club
Department of Culture and the Arts WA	Chatsfield Wines
Department of Sport and Recreation WA	
Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services	

<b>Stream</b>	<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Presenter/Author</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Keynote	Marketing and incentives	Whole of government marketing	Mark Bagshaw	IBM Australia & NZ Accessibility Centre
Keynote	Legal/ethical considerations	The right way in tourism	Graeme Innes	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
Keynote	Good practice	Establishing a business incorporating tourism and disability	Justin Lunn	All Wheel Adventures
Keynote	Good practice	Santa Cruz model of accessible destination management	Dr Scott Rains	University of California
Keynote	Research	Access management and tourism	Peter Rice	Access Management Group Australia
Good Business	Marketing and incentives	"Beyond Compliance"	Scott Campbell and Ruth Taylor	Perth Convention Bureau and Curtin University
Good Business	Marketing and incentives	Marketing Australia globally	Rodney Harrex	Australian Tourist Commission
Good Business	Marketing and incentives	Marketing Adelaide as global 'disability culture' capital	Tony Doyle	Tony Doyle Visions
Good Business	Marketing and incentives	Capitalising on emerging markets	Bruce Cameron	Easy Access Australia
Good Business	Research	Creation of a floral garden sensory trail and interpretation in an Australian Bush setting	Katina Devril	Curtin University
Good Business	Research	Hearing their needs: Creating an accessible accommodation industry for consumers who are hearing impaired or deaf	Leah Hobson	WA Deafness Council
Good Business	Resource development	All things being equal	Sally-Anne Wise	Drysdale Institute of TAFE
Good Business	Resource development	GuestAbility – Signposts to accommodate people of all ages and abilities	Ann O'Brien	Independent Living Centre, WA
Good Business	Resource development	Wheelchair accessible guide to Tasmania	Olivia Dewhurst and Kate Peters	ParaQuad Tasmania

**APPENDIX B**  
**Overview of conference presentations**

<b>Stream</b>	<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Presenter/Author</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Policy	Good practice	Culture and arts environments for all – making policy reality	Ellis Griffiths and Pip Daly-Smith	Dept of Culture and Arts WA and Disability Services Commission WA
Policy	Good practice	Providing universal access in natural areas	Alan Sands	Dept of Conservation and Land Management WA
Policy	Good practice	New directions, new recipes	Stuart Sturgess	Office for Recreation and Sport SA
Policy	Legal/ethical considerations	Equal opportunity for all – obligations of tourist operators	Marc Newhouse	Equal Opportunity Commission
Policy	Marketing and incentives	Developing a universally recognised and reliable disability access rating system	Andrew Hurst	People Integration Pty Ltd, Tasmania
Policy	Research	Information needs of people with disabilities travelling for leisure: Designs and findings of a survey	Rosalind Forward	Curtin University
Policy	Research	Barrier free tourism in Asia Pacific region	Bruce Cameron	Easy Access Australia
Policy	Research	Travelling with a disability: The process of becoming travel active	Dr Mathew Yau	Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Policy	Research	Tourism, disability and the environmental/travel context	Prof. Tanya L. Packer	Curtin University
Individuals & Families	Good practice	Devils Playground	Mary Guy (on behalf of Kerry Winberg)	Devil's Playground, Tasmania
Individuals & Families	Legal/ethical considerations	Advocating for tourism opportunities	Marc Newhouse	Equal Opportunity Commission
Individuals & Families	Personal stories	Bali for everyone	Jethro & Jonathon Hepton	Consumer representative
Individuals & Families	Personal stories	Holidaying in a world of stereotypes	Thea Calzoni	Northern Parent Support Program
Individuals & Families	Resource development	Accessible tourism product – the future?	Bruce Cameron	Easy Access Australia
Individuals & Families	Resource development	A tool to assist your tourist opportunities – Nican	Mary Guy/Jo Walters	Nican Incorporated



**Tourism Australia – [www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)**

**Special Travel Needs – Access:**

[http://www.australia.com/plan\\_your\\_trip/Special\\_travel\\_needs/accessible/Special\\_Info\\_STD.aust?l=accessible.xml&L=en&C=AU](http://www.australia.com/plan_your_trip/Special_travel_needs/accessible/Special_Info_STD.aust?l=accessible.xml&L=en&C=AU)

**Fact sheet – Travel in Australia for People with Disabilities:**

[http://www.australia.com/Images\\_RichMedia/PDF-%20Adobe%20Acrobat/Disabled.pdf](http://www.australia.com/Images_RichMedia/PDF-%20Adobe%20Acrobat/Disabled.pdf)

### **Links to Accessible Tourism Facilities and Services in Australia:**

[http://www.links.infoxchange.net.au/group/ixlinks/Disability/Travel\\_and\\_Holiday/](http://www.links.infoxchange.net.au/group/ixlinks/Disability/Travel_and_Holiday/)

**Access Noosa** - Access guide for Noosa and the Sunshine Coast in Queensland

**Ambleside Tours** - Ambleside Tours offer fully escorted and aided theatre parties, day trips and trips within Australia for persons with a wide range of disabilities.

**Amity Bungalows** - Amity Bungalows are situated at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia. 3 Self contained thatched roof bungalows on 2 acres of absolute waterfront with private jetty for fishing and diving and snorkelling, with direct access to the Rainbow Channel. Resort Pool & Spa, children's playground, wheelchair access.

**Byron Bay Rainforest Resort** - Byron Bay Rainforest Resort features extensive walking and bush wheeling tracks, abundant and diverse birdlife, a campfire, edible landscape (bushtucker!) and a salt water pool with ramp for easy access.

**Clark Bay Farm** - Clark Bay Farm is a totally accessible holiday resort at Narooma on the picturesque South Coast of New South Wales in Australia. It features: Heated swimming pool & spa with hoist; Electronic main entrances to all lodges; King size electronically adjustable beds; Bathrooms with hobless showers, 1/4 turn batwing taps, fixed and hand held showers.

**Gold Coast Access** - Provides information about accessible venues, facilities, activities and public places throughout the Gold Coast Region.

**Jan's Special Needs Travel** - I offer holidays for people with special needs on my 100acre farm up here in Bendigo.

**Last Minute Holidays** - You're one click away from Last Minute deals

**Lord Somers Camp and Power House** - Camp Diversity - Twice-yearly community camps, staffed by Lord Somers Camp volunteers, offering a fun-filled weekend of games and activities for young people with special needs such as a chronic illness or disability.

**Merindah Cottages** - Merindah Cottages have been specifically designed for access by everyone - including people travelling with family pets and people in wheelchairs. Spacious and delightfully appointed, the three cottages are situated in "Victoria's Riviera", adjacent to lakes and sea in East Gippsland.

**Mobility Motorhome** - Are you a wheelchair user and would like to experience a real New Zealand travel adventure with complete independence?

**SeeMore Scenic Tours - Australia** - We are licensed and accredited tour operators specialising in providing wheelchair accessible and private travel packages to South East Queensland - Australia. These personalised, slow pace, tours and travel packages are suitable for people with a physical disability or mobility restrictions, including seniors, or those looking for travel at a relaxed pace. We also provide for people with visual or hearing impairment or an intellectual disability. Our services cater for the very fit or adventurous to the very restricted or slow movers. Packages include: tours, transfers, accommodation, activities and vehicle or scooter hire & sales.



A lot of viewers have sent in this question: “Ernie, do you know of any holiday destinations that cater for travellers with disabilities?”

**Ernie says:** “To start, the most accessible holiday resort on the NSW south coast has to be Clark Bay Farm.

For another 100% wheelchair friendly accommodation option head to Wheelies’ Rest at Smiths’ Beach on Phillip Island, Victoria.

Wheelchair cooperative transport can be hard to find but when in Adelaide Les Brazier Special Vehicles is the mob to talk to.

The Cairns Colonial Club Resort in Queensland is another place that caters for people with disabilities.

In Western Australia, Wheel Chair Tours Australia offer a range of ½ day, full day and multi day Perth tours for travellers with disabilities.

These are only some of Australia’s holiday stays that cater for people with disabilities. To find out more get a copy of Easy Access Australia by Bruce Cameron (RRP\$27.45) from any good bookstore.

Alternatively you could contact Nican, a free information service for people with disabilities.

*Sourced from [www.thegreatoutdoors.com.au](http://www.thegreatoutdoors.com.au)*



### Byron Bay Rainforest Resort

Wheelchair and mobility impaired travellers will love Byron Bay Rainforest Resort. Originally established in 1987 as the Wheel Resort, the facilities and cottages are designed for people with restricted mobility or disabilities.

*Sourced from [www.rainforestresort.com.au](http://www.rainforestresort.com.au)*



### O’Carrollyns, Port Stephens

O’Carrollyns is a tranquil boutique resort set in five acres of landscaped melaleuca forest. Like the grounds, each individual villa has been specially designed to be fully accessible for all.

*Sourced from [www.ocarrollyns.com.au](http://www.ocarrollyns.com.au)*

### TRANSPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER

[www.disabilityhire.com.au](http://www.disabilityhire.com.au)

