

## Fact Sheet 1: Getting Started

One of the goals of the Welcoming Business Program is to encourage businesses to think about how being inclusive and giving good customer service to ALL PEOPLE in our community will not only enhance business profit but also help our community.

Here are some simple ways to make your business more accessible and welcoming for everyone. These tips can be implemented immediately, with no financial outlay or with only a small investment.

### Attitude and Communication

Think about **customer service** for people with varying needs or requirements.

Train your staff to be respectful and understanding of diversity. If your attitude is positive, people will come to your business even if your venue is not perfect for physical access. They are more likely to be returning customers.

The most effective strategy is to treat all people as you would wish to be treated yourself – with respect, politeness and consideration.

When meeting and speaking with anyone, put everyone at ease by:

- Look and speak directly with the person, even if they have a support person with them.
- Treat adults as adults. Don't patronise or speak down to people on the basis of disability, diversity or difference.
- If you know the person's name, address the person by their name.
- Ask the person what is the best way to communicate with them if you are unsure.
- Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but don't assume that the person needs or wants it. Wait for them to accept your offer or instruct you before proceeding.

### Physical Access

Customers will appreciate your efforts and will make choices about your business based on how accessible it is for them.

If you are a retailer and make an effort to provide corridors that are clear of stock items, (at least one metre between aisles), this is good for parents with prams, delivery people, people with visual impairments, elderly people and people using wheelchairs.



If possible, make sure there are clear sight lines around the premises so that staff can see when a customer may need assistance to enter, access or purchase goods.

EFTPOS: Ensure that electronic payment systems and EFTPOS machines are on a cord long enough to pass over to someone using a wheelchair, or use a wireless machine.

### **Advertise your advantages**

Make it easy for new customers to find you. Advertising your accessibility in your normal marketing strategies will attract new customers.

If your business is accessible, let people know. For example, if you have wheelchair access, include the internationally recognised 'blue wheelchair' symbol in your promotions and advertisements.

Place a rainbow sticker or Aboriginal flag sticker in your window if you are genuinely welcoming of people from the Lesbian and Gay community and the Aboriginal Community respectively. This makes a statement that you are truly inclusive. Make sure your staff are aware of the significance of these symbols and what they represent. If a minority group has a bad experience this could affect your business's reputation.

Promote alternative contact methods other than a telephone number, such as email, text messaging (SMS) or via social media (Facebook, twitter).

Have you considered whether your website is accessible for people with vision impairment or communication difficulties? There are computer programs that enable websites to talk to people. Contact the Shire of Campaspe – Rural Access Project Officer for more information on 5481 2253.



### **Lighting**

Increase your lighting to assist not only people who have vision impairment but also those who are deaf or who use lip reading.

## Visibility

Paint the entrance in a colour that contrasts well with the surroundings. This will make it stand out for people with vision impairment. Highly contrasting colours not only distinguish an entrance from the general environment but also makes it easier to tell the difference between the immediate door surrounds and the doorway itself.

Be aware that eight percent of males and small percentage of females are colour blind and so avoid using red and green together in promotional materials, unless the information does not need differentiation.

If there are multiple entrances, make sure there are clear directions to find the entrance/exit. Put up external signs which have strong contrast and incorporate recognizable symbols or pictures to help people with vision impairment or learning difficulties to identify what services you provide.

Be aware of reflective glass in your shop front. People with vision impairment often find this presents them with confusing reflections, lights and shadows. A solution is to put safety markings on the glass so people do not walk into it and can see it.

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Campaspe Murray Welcoming Business Program is an initiative of the Community Building Program (Shire of Campaspe Rural Access) and the Socially Inclusive Communities Project (Campaspe Primary Care Partnership). These initiatives are funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services.

Go to [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) or [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au) for more information.

This factsheet is based on materials developed by Marrickville Council, the City of Kingston and the Australian Human Rights Commission. We acknowledge and thank them for granting permission to adapt them for the Campaspe Murray Welcoming Business Program.

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***The welcoming business program has been developed and endorsed by these organisations:***



Community Living  
& Respite Services Inc.