

## Fact Sheet 5: Being Accessible

To attract customers all of abilities and diversity you can take some simple steps to make your business easier to enter, to get around within and to access your services.

### Making it easy for people to enter your business

In new buildings all customers, including people using wheelchairs, must be able to enter the shop/premises independently. But in many older buildings the main entrance may have one or several steps, or be difficult in other ways.

Here are some ideas on how to make it easy for customers to be able to physically access your business:

#### Provide a level access:

- Ideally, investigate how you can provide a level entry. This may be through the removal of steps, the addition of a ramp or offering an alternative entrance through a side or rear door.
- If you can't provide a level entry, is there opportunity to build an internal ramp.
- If these are not possible for technical or financial reasons, think about ways you and your staff can provide your services to customers with limited mobility.



While many of these ideas are easy to put into practice, some will require technical advice to ensure they are done correctly. If you like to find out where you can seek this technical advice, contact the Shire of Campaspe's Rural Access Project Officer on 5481 2253 or a Building Surveyor via Council's Building Department at Campaspe Shire Council - phone: 1300 666 535

#### Better doors and doorways:

- Reposition the entrance door handles to an easier height.
- Make the door easier to open by making it automatic or lighter.
- Make the doorway wide enough to allow a person with a walking frame or someone who uses a wheelchair to pass through with ease.
- If the door has a lot of reflective glass, attach safety markings so people do not walk into it.



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- Make sure any doormats are secure and only use them if they can be made flush with the surrounding floor.
  - Put in a handrail.

#### Clear sight lines:

- If possible make sure there are clear sight lines between the entry and the counter so that staff are aware when a customer needs assistance to enter the premises or purchase goods.

#### Avoid obstructions

- Ideally, remove dangerous obstacles such as advertising boards, displays or furniture from the entrance so that people who use wheelchairs, older people, or people with a vision impairment don't have to risk falling over them.
- If you are permitted to have advertising boards, display items or furniture outside your business, make sure there is a clear pathway leading to the entrance.

#### Take a look outside:

Car parks: Think about making at least one customer car space wider for a person with a disability to use.

Pathways: Make sure the path from the car park to your entrance is accessible for a person using a wheelchair (e.g. wider and more even) and less slippery for someone older or using walking aids.

Lighting: Would better lighting make car parks and pathways safer?

Hazards: Make sure overhanging trees or signage do not cause hazard to a person who is blind or vision impaired.

Talk to council regarding any of your concerns regarding the surroundings of your business

#### Making it easy for people to move around your business

Ideally, once inside your shop or premises, customers with access issues should be able to find their way to all sales areas, browse and inspect goods, access the cash desk or receive services in the same way as all other customers. The following tips are designed to assist you to better understand and meet the needs of customers with a range of abilities.

Signs: Make sure signs and product pricing labels are clear and use high contrast colours; Ensure overhanging signs do not cause a hazard.

Information: Make board menus in cafes or product information displays easier to read; provide written menus or other product information in large print versions (eg 18 point Arial font) or have staff read information out to customers. Look at the possibility of providing information in alternative forms such



as pictures or Braille.

**Lighting:** Think about clear lighting, especially around service counters.

**Layout:** Avoid having dangerously placed fittings and fixtures that can make independent movement difficult for customers who are blind. Make sure your aisles provide a clear path of travel and do not have displays sticking out into them.

**EFTPOS:** Make sure the electronic payment system and EFTPOS machines have the features that ensure people who are blind can use them. Ensure that electronic payment systems and EFTPOS machines are on a long enough cord to pass over to someone using a wheelchair or other mobility aid.



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**Noise:** Find ways to reduce the amount of background noise and to easily turn down the music when necessary. Look into installing a 'hearing loop' or other system to assist people using hearing aids at counters, especially if there is a screen from the public at the counter.

**Aisles:** Make sure shopping aisles are wide enough (preferably 1.2 metres).

**Counters:** Ensure at least part of your customer service area is at a height that is suitable for people using wheelchairs (750-800mm from floor level). Make sure that at least one of your checkout aisles is wide enough, has a lower checkout counter (750-800mm) and is

always or easily opened.

**Reach:** Try to place goods, particularly the most popular ones, within reach of someone using a wheelchair. If this is not always possible, make sure staff are trained to offer assistance.

**Chairs:** If your customers need to wait, make a chair available for people who are elderly and frail, use crutches or have poor balance.

**Surfaces:** Make sure the floor surface is free from trip hazards and is non-slip.

## Should you be providing accessible toilets?

Where toilets are provided for the public (e.g. in cafes or in other situations where customers may be on the premises for a period of time) an accessible toilet should be provided where possible. Under building laws a unisex accessible toilet counts as a male and a female toilet.

If you have an accessible toilet, keep it clear of boxes and other storage which can make it hard to manoeuvre a wheelchair around.

If you do not have an accessible toilet make sure all staff know the location of the nearest accessible toilet and, if necessary, get approval for your customers to use it.

If you decide to make your toilet accessible you should get technical advice on how to do so by contacting the Shire of Campaspe's Rural Access Project Officer on 5481 2253 who can put you in touch with companies that can assist.

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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.

**Version 1.0 dated January 2016**

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

