

Contacts for more information

For more information on planning issues, building approvals and Warringah Council access requirements:

Warringah Council
Phone: 9942 2111
council@warringah.nsw.gov.au
www.warringah.nsw.gov.au

Ask for assistance from staff in:

- Planning & Assessment
- Compliance
- Disability Services

For more information on design issues, developing alternative access methods or to contact an Access Consultant:

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
Phone: 8270 2000 (to obtain a list of consultants)
www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au

Association of Consultants in Access Australia Inc
Phone: 5221 2820
www.access.asn.au

For more information on legal issues and responsibilities:

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
Phone: 9284 9600
www.hreoc.gov.au

NSW Anti Discrimination Board
Phone: 9268 5544
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb.nsf/pages/index

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Warringah Council appreciates your support in creating an accessible community for all its residents and visitors.

Special thanks to Marrickville Council and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for their assistance in producing this guide.



Missed Bu\$iness?

How to attract more customers by providing better access to your business

A guide for small business-owners

Missed Bu\$iness



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Access and your customers

In Australia 3.9 million people, or 20% of the population have a reported disability. Together with their friends and family, the number of people affected by a disability is bigger still and every one of them is a potential customer.



In Warringah 24,000 people, or 18% of the population, are identified as having a disability. If each of these people is with a friend or family member, this means that every day some 48,000 local people have to consider some level of disability in the way they live, shop and socialise.

Over 50% of people aged 55 years and over have difficulties with mobility, sight and hearing. While they may not consider themselves disabled, easier access would help them.

Good access = good business

Providing good access to your business will benefit people:

- Who are vision impaired
- Who are hearing impaired
- With a physical disability
- With long-term illnesses
- With mental illness or psychological difficulties
- With learning or intellectual disabilities
- With an acquired brain injury.

Good access not only helps customers with a disability, it

also helps parents or carers of young children - particularly those with strollers or prams - older people, delivery people and shoppers with heavy bags. Good access benefits every customer, particularly during busy periods.

As a small business, quality customer service is one of the most important things you can offer. This guide will help improve access to your goods and services for a large section of our community you may be missing out on - customers who have a disability.

Good access makes good business sense. As potential customers, each of these people will make choices about your business based on how easy it is to use.

What you do to improve accessibility doesn't have to be expensive - a combination of providing easier entry and improving staff training will go a long way to making your business more attractive to many customers - including those with a disability.

Why you need access

In Australia, the law says that customers with disabilities should be able to access your goods or services just like any other customer. If a customer with a disability cannot get into your building or cannot access your goods or services they could make a complaint of discrimination under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act or the Federal Disability Discrimination Act.

Making your business more accessible is also likely to make it safer for both customers and staff. It can have a positive effect on your public liability and workplace safety responsibilities.

More contacts for information on your legal obligations are at the end of this guide.

Ways to improve access to your business

I. Make it easy for people to find you

Advertise your advantages

- If your business is accessible, let people know. For example, if you have wheelchair access, include this in your promotions and advertising.

- Put up clear external signs to help people with vision impairments or learning difficulties identify what your shop is selling.

Make the entrance easy to see

- Paint the entrance to your business in a colour that contrasts well with its surroundings. This will make it stand out for people who are vision impaired. Highly contrasting colours not only distinguish an entrance, but also make it easier to tell the difference between the immediate door surrounds and the doorway itself.

- If there are more than one entrance, make sure there are clear directions to where each entrance is.

- Be aware of reflective glass in your shop front. People who are vision impaired often find this to be confusing and unclear. One good solution is to put safety markings on the glass so people don't walk into it. This makes it easier to tell the difference between the window display and the doorway.

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 who are vision impaired don't risk falling over them.

- If you are allowed to have advertising boards or display items outside your business, make sure there is a clear pathway leading to the entrance.

Think about your surroundings

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

- 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.



- Would better lighting make car parks and pathways safer?

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

2. Make it easy for people to get move around your business

Level access

- Ideally, get rid of steps and provide a level entry. If you can't do this, build a ramp. If neither are possible for technical or financial reasons, consider moving the main entrance to another more accessible position.

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.

- 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 sightlines

- 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.



3. Make it easy for people to get served

For people who have vision impairments

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

- Make board menus in cafes or product information displays easier to read. Provide written menus or other product information in large print

versions or have staff read information out to customers. Look at the possibility of providing information such as menus in Braille.

- Think about improving lighting, especially around service counters.

- Make sure your aisles provide a clear path of travel and do not have displays sticking out into them.

- Make sure any electronic payment system such as EFTPOS have features that vision impaired customers can use.

For people who may have difficulty hearing

- Find ways to reduce the amount of background noise and to easily turn down the music if 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.

For people who have mobility impairments

- Make sure shopping aisles are wide enough (preferably 1.2 metres).

- Ensure at least part of your customer service area is at a height that is suitable for people using wheelchairs (750mm-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 open.



- 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.

- If your customers need to wait, make a chair available for someone who may be older and frail, use crutches or have poor balance.

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

- Ensure that electronic payment systems such as EFTPOS have sufficient cord to pass over to someone using a wheelchair.

4. Accessible toilets

- Where toilets are provided for the public (eg. in cafes or other businesses where customers may be on the premises for some time) an accessible toilet should be provided where possible. Under building laws an accessible toilet is both a male and a female toilet.

- If you do not have an accessible toilet make sure all staff know the location of the nearest one 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.

5. Make the most of customer service

Respect

- You and your staff should treat customers with disabilities as you do all customers - with respect.

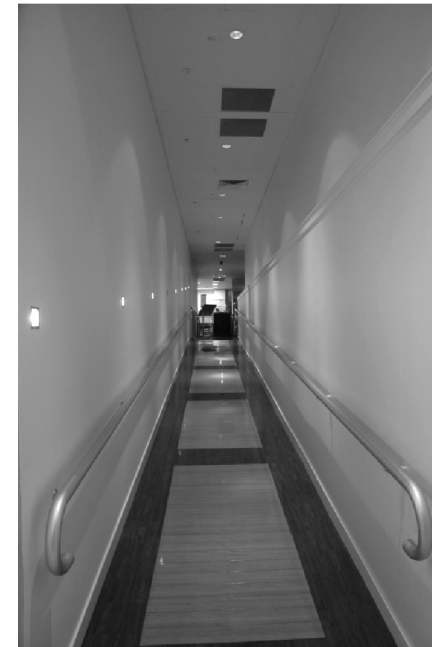
- Treat each customer with a disability as an individual customer with their own likes and dislikes. Always focus on the person, not their disability. Always address the customer directly, not another person who may be with them.

- Always ask the customer first if they want help; do not assume they need assistance. Always accept the answer if the customer declines your help. If you have a conversation that will last more than a few moments with a customer using a wheelchair, bend to eye level or pull up a chair.

- Ask customers with disabilities how they would like goods and services to be provided, particularly where there are barriers to equal access. For example, do you offer a home delivery service?

Communication

- Address the customer directly, listen carefully, speak clearly and check for understanding. Always use clear language without being patronising.
- Allow your customer time to ask questions and try not to rush them. Try not to overload people with an intellectual disability with information.



Reassure your customer you are there to help if they forget the information.

- Always face a hearing impaired customer so they can read your lips. Try to make sure there are no bright lights behind you that may limit their ability to see your lips.

- Use your normal tone of voice and volume. If possible, move out of the way of background noise.

- If your customer is there with a sign language interpreter always address your comments directly to your customer rather than to the interpreter.

- Have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with your customers.

- Always identify yourself by name. If appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly and so that they know you are talking to them and not to someone else.

- If a customer asks for assistance to go somewhere ask which side you should be on and offer your arm so they can hold just above your elbow.

- Never pat or distract a guide dog or offer it food while it is in harness. It is a working animal under the control of its owner.

Alternative ways to provide service

The best way of attracting business and fulfilling your legal responsibilities is to make your business as accessible as



possible. Where it is not possible to provide full access in the short term, you might also consider alternate ways of providing the same service.

Here are some examples:

- A butcher might consider operating a telephone, mail order or local delivery scheme.

- A florist might have a call bell at the entrance and have staff put together an order and bring the goods to the front door or the nearest easy collection point.

- A hairdresser might consider offering home visiting service for a customer with a disability.

- A real estate agent might consider providing their service in an alternative, accessible location either by appointment or on a regular basis.

Alternatives such as these will not provide full equality for people with disabilities, but they will assist in the reducing the chances of a complaint.

What's the best language to use?

If you are making the effort to make your business more accessible it is also important to make sure your staff and the signage you use is part of that effort.

Use signage that identifies:

- 'Accessible Toilet' not 'Disabled Toilet'

- 'Accessible Parking' not 'Disabled Parking'

- 'Accessible Entry' not 'Disabled Entry'

Always refer to a person:

- with a disability rather than a disabled person

- who uses a wheelchair rather than someone confined to one

- who is blind rather than a person who suffers blindness.

Warringah Council would like to acknowledge the following retailers and organisations for their commitment to access:

- David Jones - Warringah Mall
- City Beach - Warringah Mall
- Shop Mobility - Warringah Mall
- Warringah Mall Centre Management
- AAMI - Warringah Mall