

# Access All Areas : Accessible Tourism

## Strategic Directions Plan for Western Australia



## Message from the Hon Sheila M<sup>c</sup>Hale MLA Minister for Disability Services; Tourism

Providing the highest possible standards of service to customers is a hallmark of Western Australian business – indeed the business sector stands or falls on its ability to meet the needs of all of its customers. This is especially true of the tourism industry which is competing in an international, as well as a national market.

Access All Areas will significantly increase tourism opportunities throughout Western Australia for people with disabilities, their families, carers and friends.

Disability touches the lives of around half a million Western Australians – either directly or as a family carer. This is a substantial proportion of our community and as such, is a significant, relatively untapped market. The number of people with disabilities throughout the State is increasing rapidly as our Western Australian community ages. This trend is also occurring nationally and internationally due to the strong linkage between age and the likelihood of a person having a disability.

Currently people with disabilities, as well as their families, friends and carers, consistently report that they experience barriers that significantly limit their tourism opportunities. Out of the Blue: Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism was the theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference held in Perth in September 2004 and it was at this conference that I announced the formation of the joint Disability Services Commission and Tourism Western Australia Accessible Tourism Reference Group.

The Strategic Directions Plan has been developed by the Accessible Tourism Reference Group to identify ways to expand tourism options for people of all ages and abilities and increase the customer base for tourism operators.

Western Australia is uniquely placed to take full advantage of the rapidly emerging disability market due to a unique variety of factors. These factors include our relatively flat terrain, competitive pricing and enviable climate.

**Access All Areas informs and invites tourism operators to broaden their customer base to include people of all ages and abilities – with everyone benefiting.**

The Strategic Directions Plan also builds on the numerous access improvements occurring statewide as, in a national first, over 200 Western Australian Government agencies and Local Government Authorities implement their Disability Access and Inclusion Plans as required by the Disability Services Act 1993.

Access All Areas informs and invites tourism operators to broaden their customer base to include people of all ages and abilities – with everyone benefiting.

Hon Sheila M<sup>c</sup>Hale MLA  
Minister for Disability Services; Tourism

## Background

Ageing communities in Australia and throughout the world are creating new demands for tourism opportunities that can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone regardless of their age and ability.

Currently one in five people in Australia has a disability. Together with their families, friends and carers, they form a significant section of the community. Also there is a strong linkage between age and the likelihood of having a disability, with 50 per cent of people aged 60 years or more having a disability.

Due to the ageing population, the Disability Services Commission anticipates the number of people with disabilities in Western Australia will increase by 48 per cent between 2001 and 2021, significantly higher than the 29 per cent increase anticipated for the general population.

**This universal design approach to tourism is taking off globally and is an ideal way for tourism operators within Western Australia to maximise their business potential.**

Tourism operators can tap into this rapidly expanding market by:

- ensuring staff can meet any specific access requirements of their customers with disabilities;
- creating attractive buildings and facilities that cater for the access requirements of customers with a range of physical and sensory abilities; and
- providing accurate information about the accessibility of their services to potential customers of all ages and abilities.

The key to tapping into this expanding customer base is to provide mainstream services that are attractive and accessible to all.

This integrated approach is more successful than catering to a “disability only market” as experience shows that most people with disabilities travel with family or friends. This universal design approach to tourism is taking off globally and is an ideal way for tourism operators within Western Australia to maximise their business potential.

## Snapshot of the Disability Sector

- Disability currently affects the lives of more than half a million Western Australians (one in every three people).
- One in every five Western Australians has a disability.
- One in every 10 Western Australians is a carer of a person with a disability.
- 95 per cent of Western Australians with disabilities live in the community either independently or with friends.
- There is a strong linkage between age and the likelihood of having a disability. Someone under the age of five years, for example, has less than a five per cent chance of having a disability while this rises to 50 per cent for people aged over 60 years.
- Because of the ageing Western Australian population the number of people with disabilities will continue to significantly increase.

## Developing the Strategic Directions Plan

People with disabilities have consistently reported that they experience difficulty accessing Western Australian tourism opportunities.

While the specific difficulties experienced vary, the two major concerns identified are the lack of accessible tourism facilities and the difficulties experienced gaining accurate information about those that are accessible.

Members of the tourism sector have also indicated that they want more information about how best to meet the needs of the increasing number of tourists with disabilities.

**People with disabilities have consistently reported that they experience difficulty accessing Western Australian tourism opportunities.**

To progress these issues, in September 2004, at the 5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference, the Minister for Disability Services and the then Minister for Tourism announced the formation of a Disability Services Commission and Tourism Western Australia Joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group.

The key stakeholder organisations represented on the joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group are:

- AAA Tourism
- Australian Hotels Association (Western Australia)
- Bus and Coach Association of Western Australia (a division of the Motor Trade Association of Western Australia)

- Caravan Industry Association Western Australia
- City of Perth
- Curtin University of Technology, School of Occupational Therapy
- Curtin University of Technology, School of Management (Tourism Management)
- Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability
- National Disability Services Western Australia (formerly ACROD WA)
- Nican WA
- People With Disabilities (WA) Incorporated
- Perth Convention Bureau
- Recreation and Sport Network
- Visitor Centre Association of Western Australia
- Tourism Council Western Australia
- Town and Country Accommodation WA Inc; (formerly Bed and Breakfast and Farmstay Association)
- Western Australian Local Government Association

## Why have a Strategic Directions Plan?

The Accessible Tourism Reference Group members met during 2005 and 2006 and reviewed existing information and resources, including the report from the 5<sup>th</sup> National Nican Conference, "Out of the Blue: Valuing the Disability Market in Tourism".

The Group also identified key issues and strategies to overcome them and expand accessible tourism opportunities to better meet current and future demand.

Towards the end of this process the Accessible Tourism Reference Group members decided to produce a Western Australian Accessible Tourism Strategic Directions Plan to record its key findings and to provide leadership to the tourism industry by clearly identifying the actions required to make Western Australia an accessible tourism destination.

The Strategic Directions Plan provides a practical framework to expand accessible tourism opportunities and is highly relevant to many sections of the tourism industry, including:

- Tourism Operators keen to improve their product so it suits a wider customer base;
- Key Western Australian Government agencies responsible for developing policies and programs;
- Local Government Authorities seeking to support accessible tourism opportunities within their local community;
- Regional Tourism Organisations, that have a major role in marketing tourism opportunities regionally; and
- Visitor and Information Centre management and staff.

## The Way Forward

A consistent and coordinated approach is required to achieve the Plan's strategic objectives. The strategic directions outlined in this plan are supported through two major related initiatives of the Accessible Tourism Reference Group members - the You're Welcome WA Access Initiative and the Beyond Compliance project.

An overview of both these initiatives, as well as a case study involving a tourism operator, is included in this plan to illustrate the potential that exists.

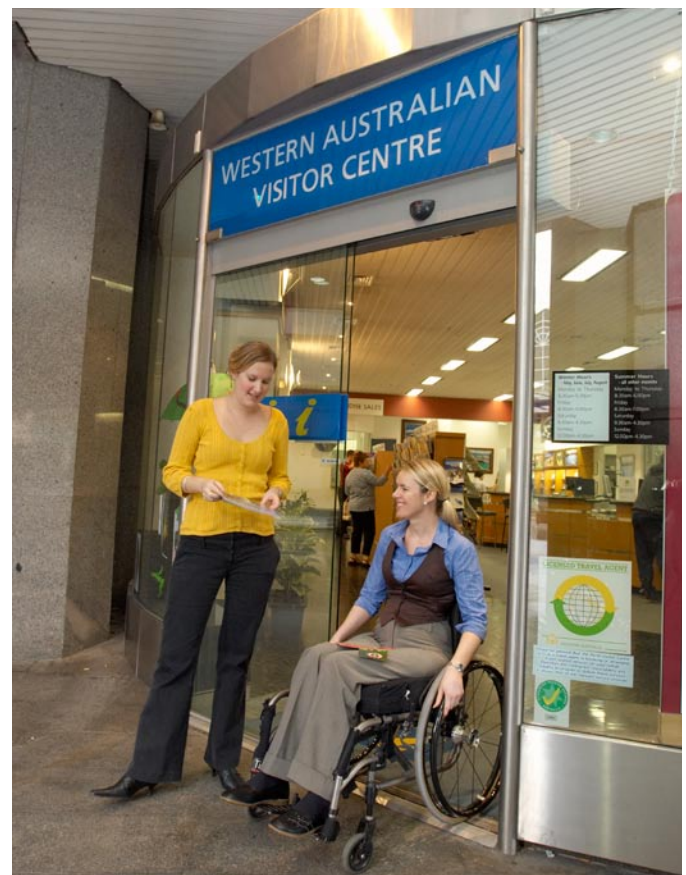
The Accessible Tourism Reference Group members have also identified many practical initiatives in the Strategic Directions Plan (see Page 7).

These initiatives provide a clear focus for action and leadership to achieve:

- better use of current resources and information by working in partnership;
- better use of existing tourism product by providing accurate accessibility information through partner networks; and
- development of long-term strategic partnerships to facilitate inclusion of disability awareness and access information in all levels of tourism industry training.

## Monitoring Progress

The joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group will meet regularly to monitor progress and update the plan as required.



# Accessible Tourism Industry Development

## Strategic Directions for Tourism Industry Development

### Challenges Facing the Tourism Sector

Major challenges facing the tourism sector include how best to:

- ensure staff are aware of how to meet the needs of tourists with disabilities;
- utilise existing tourism product that meets the access requirements of tourists with disabilities;
- provide accurate access information for potential customers with disabilities, particularly with high tourism staff turnover;
- increase the availability of stylish tourism product that is both accessible to people with disabilities and appealing to other potential tourists; and
- market accessible tourism opportunities to successfully target the expanding national and international tourism markets due to ageing global communities.

Utilise existing tourism product that meets the access requirements of tourists with disabilities

It was agreed that both people with disabilities and the tourism sector would significantly benefit through the expansion of tourism opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

### Framework for Action

#### Our Vision

Western Australia is Australia's leading accessible tourism destination for people of all ages and abilities.

#### Our Goals

Our goals are:

- to enable tourists with disabilities to have the same opportunities as other tourists to access and enjoy Western Australia; and
- to facilitate new partnerships and strategies that will assist tourism operators to successfully tap into the expanding local and international accessible tourism market.

#### Our Priorities for Action

Three key strategic directions guide our future actions:

- excellent customer service - tourism operators need to know how to best meet any specific requirements of their customers with disabilities;
- building business capacity and product – industry support and development is required to meet tourism market demands so all benefit; and
- providing accurate access information – easy-to-obtain reliable access information about accommodation and attractions is a high priority for both people with disabilities and tourist operators.



## Excellent Customer Service

### Objective

**Increasing appropriate services for people with specific access requirements**

### Strategies

- Integrate awareness training for customers with disabilities into tourism education and training programs;
- Provide disability customer awareness information to tourism operators; and
- Recognise excellence in service to customers with disabilities through industry awards.

## Building Business Capacity and Product

### Objective

**Increasing awareness by tourism operators of the potential disability market**

### Strategies

- Promote disability market opportunities through tourism industry networks and training programs;
- Demonstrate through research the benefits of servicing the disability market;
- Promote more universally designed accessible tourism facilities and product;
- Expand the accessibility market by attracting conventions and meetings to WA; and
- Encourage access requirements in the accreditation of accommodation.

### Objective

**Better use of existing business capacity and product through promotion to the disability market**

### Strategies

- Encourage tourism operators to market their accessible accommodation, venues and attractions across tourism, community and disability information systems;
- Research design options to maximise benefits to both tourism operators and tourists with disabilities; and
- Promote accessibility as a factor to be included in the judging criteria of tourism industry awards.

### Objective

**Building additional capacity to meet disability market demands so all benefit**

### Strategies

- Encourage innovative partnerships and strategies to create WA as a world leader in tourism for people of all ages and abilities;
- Raise accessible tourism on the industry agenda through networking and training;
- Promote universal access design in the built environment best practice to assist WA to become a leader in tourism for people of all ages and abilities; and
- Encourage accessibility requirements in the accreditation of tourism operators.

## Providing Accurate Access Information

### Objective

#### Providing accurate access information: customers with disabilities

### Strategies

- Publicise current disability access information sources;
- Research information provision for tourists with various disabilities;
- Provide additional disability access information;
- Include access information in mainstream tourism information systems;
- Tourism operators to include access information on mainstream and disability-specific tourism data systems; and
- Accreditation of Visitor Centres to include accessibility.

#### Research information provision for tourists with various disabilities

### Objective

#### Providing accurate access information: tourism operators

### Strategies

- Publicise existing accessibility information sources to tourism operators;
- Support tourism industry members to develop accurate access information; and
- Include access information on mainstream and disability-specific data systems.

## Our Current Initiatives

### Beyond Compliance

- Beyond Compliance is a marketing initiative commenced by the Perth Convention Bureau in 2003.
- Beyond Compliance has three objectives:
  - 1 To promote Western Australia as a leading regional tourism destination for people with disabilities;
  - 2 To improve the accessibility and facilities within the tourism industry; and
  - 3 To make Western Australia a leading destination for meetings and conferences within the disability sector.
- The Perth Convention Bureau was joined by tourism industry partners EventEdge International Management, the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Staging Connections and Curtin University of Technology to become actively involved in supporting and promoting the Beyond Compliance initiative.
- The Perth Convention Bureau and partners actively identify and engage key local organisations in the disability sector to advise them of Beyond Compliance activities and encourage where opportunities exist, to bid for national or international conferences.



- The Perth Convention Bureau and partners undertook an international awareness campaign in 2004 to international disability sectors in France and the United Kingdom to promote Beyond Compliance and encourage international conference organisers in the disability sector to consider Western Australia as a conference destination.
- The Beyond Compliance initiative has led to 18 national or international conferences being confirmed for Western Australia since 2003. This translates to 10,385 delegates coming to the State for the purpose of a disability related conference with an expected expenditure of nearly \$20 million.
- The You're Welcome WA Access Initiative aims to create inclusive accessible communities through three key strategies:
  - Collecting accurate access information so that people with disabilities know how to access local business and community attractions, services and facilities.
  - Developing and maintaining easy-to-obtain online access information to publicise community business and attractions.
  - Providing practical information to assist business and community groups expand their customer base by making their services more access friendly.

**Beyond Compliance aims to make Western Australia a leading destination for meetings and conferences within the disability sector**

### **You're Welcome WA Access Initiative**

- The You're Welcome WA Access Initiative provides Local Government Authorities and local communities with an opportunity to provide clear access information about their local facilities and amenities to people of all ages and abilities living in or visiting their locality.
  - The initiative addresses a major need identified by people with disabilities and was developed by the Disability Services Commission in collaboration with the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference, City of Perth, National Disability Services Western Australian (formerly ACROD WA), Nican Western Australia, People with Disabilities Western Australia Incorporated, Tourism Western Australia and the Western Australian Local Government Association.
  - The Disability Services Commission has formed a partnership with the Western Australian Local Government Association to fund and support Local Government Authorities to implement the You're Welcome WA Access Initiative locally.
- Local Government Authorities implementing the You're Welcome WA Access Initiative include Augusta-Margaret River, Bassendean, Beverley, Brookton, Broome, Busselton, Cottesloe, Cunderdin, Denmark, Joondalup, Koorda, Mandurah, Mundaring, Narrogin, Northam, Perth, Quairading, Rockingham, Stirling, Subiaco, Swan, Vincent, Wanneroo, Wyndham/East Kimberley and York.
- Other You're Welcome WA Access Initiative partners include the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Rottnest Island Authority.

**You're Welcome WA Access Initiative aims to create inclusive accessible communities while promoting tourism opportunities**

## Our Future Initiatives

### Excellent Customer Service

#### Objective 1: Increasing appropriate service for people with specific access requirements

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Integrate awareness training for customers with disabilities into tourism education and training programs so that tourism operators are confident meeting the access requirements of customers with disabilities.	All Access Tourism Reference Group members. Tourism industry education and training providers.
Provide disability awareness and access information to tourism product developers and operators including through use of websites.	All*
Recognise excellence in service to customers with disabilities through industry awards programs.	All*

### Building Business Capacity and Product

#### Objective 2: Increasing awareness by tourism operators of the potential disability market

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Raise tourism industry awareness of increasing disability markets using industry networks, training programs and information systems, including websites.	All* Tourism organisations that conduct training.
Research maximising benefits for both operators and tourists with disabilities and publicise findings.	All* Tertiary and research organisations. Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre.
Promote more universally designed accessible tourism facilities and product.	All* Tourism organisations that provide information or training to tourism operators.
Expand the accessibility market by attracting conventions and meetings to Western Australia.	Perth Convention Bureau and Beyond Compliance Project Partners.
Encourage access requirements in the accreditation of accommodation tourism operators.	Tourism Council Western Australia.

\* All members of the joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group.

### Objective 3: Better use of existing business capacity and product through promotion to the disability market

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Encourage tourism operators to market their accessible accommodation, venues and attractions across tourism, community and disability information systems.	All*
Research ways to maximise benefits to both tourism operators and tourists with disabilities.	All* Tertiary education institutions and research organisations. Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre.
Encourage accessibility as a factor to be included in the judging criteria of tourism industry awards.	All* Tourism Council Western Australia. Visitor Centre Association of Western Australia.

### Objective 4: To build additional capacity to meet disability market demands so all benefit

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Encourage innovative partnerships and strategies to create WA as a world leader in tourism for people of all ages and abilities.	All*
Raise accessible tourism on the tourism industry agenda through networking and training.	All*
Promote universal access design in the built environment best practice to assist WA to become a leader in tourism for people of all ages and abilities.	All*
Encourage accessibility requirements in the accreditation of tourism operators.	Tourism Council Western Australia.

\* All members of the joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group.

## Providing Accurate Access Information

### Objective 5: To provide accurate access information: customers with disabilities

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Publicise current disability access information sources.	All*
Research information provision for tourists with various disabilities.	All* Tertiary education institutions and research organisations. Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre.
Provide additional disability access information.	All* Information providers.
Advocate and/or facilitate mainstream tourism information systems to include access information.	All* Tourism Western Australia.
Include accessibility as part of Visitor Centre accreditation.	Tourism Council Western Australia.

### Objective 6: To provide accurate access information: tourism operators

Strategies	Key Stakeholders
Publicise existing accessibility information sources to tourism operators.	All*
Support tourism industry members to develop accurate access information.	All*
Promote inclusion of access information on mainstream and disability-specific data systems.	All*

\* All members of the joint Accessible Tourism Reference Group.

## Western Australian Tourism Operator Experiences

### Norman House Bed and Breakfast , Albany WA

Mr Wayne and Mrs Pam Stockley, award winning proprietors of the Norman House Bed and Breakfast in Albany, WA share their experiences in relation to accessible tourism.

“We operate a six room bed and breakfast in a two storey heritage listed house. It was not purpose built to cater for people with disabilities. With some simple modifications, such as rails and stools in the bathrooms, a ramp for easy access and clear markings to note changes in floor heights, the house now caters for people with many types of disabilities.

We have found that just as important as the physical environment is our attitude to our customers. Each guest is treated as a unique individual and to ensure that their needs are met they are provided with accurate and specific information when a booking enquiry is made.

Seniors, people with disabilities, people with special dietary needs and even people with young families all benefit from this approach.

As an operator we have benefited from increased customer satisfaction, repeat business and excellent and free word of mouth advertising from these loyal customers.

I strongly recommend all tourism operators to find out more about how you can tap into this growing market; you will reap the benefits, not just from this market segment but all your other guests who will appreciate these changes as well.”

### Customer Comments

“Little things such as the rails in the bathroom make such a difference to me. It was one less thing to worry about and I could just relax and enjoy my holiday without worrying about getting off the toilet or falling in the shower.”

#### Senior guest with some mobility impairments

“Accurate information about the space and facilities in the bathroom was really important to me and it meant that I could come here knowing that I could access the bathroom independently.”

#### Guest with paraplegia travelling independently for work.

“It means a lot for my wife and I to have a holiday together without me having to do a lot more work. The bathroom set up and helpful attitude of the hosts means that we both enjoyed our holiday.”

#### Husband of a lady with multiple sclerosis who had significant mobility and vision impairments.

## Complementary Initiatives

The accessibility of information, services and facilities is also being improved throughout Western Australia as Local Government Authorities and Western Australian government agencies, including the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department of Culture and the Arts, The Perth Zoo, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority and Rottnest Island Authority, develop and implement their Disability Access and Inclusion Plans.

## Resources and Information

### Resources and information available to assist tourism operators

More information is available from:

#### Tourism Western Australia

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