

Better Access, More Customers



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Join the journey toward
better business access
and inclusion.





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Acknowledgement

Brisbane City Council acknowledges the contribution of Spinal Life Australia to the *Better Access, More Customers* content and case studies.



Simple changes can make a big difference



Brisbane City Council has long been dedicated to supporting access and inclusion. Our *Better Access, More Customers* guide offers a starting point for businesses to enhance access and connect with people of any background, age or ability.

Good access means removing physical and social barriers to your business for all customers.

Physical, sensory, communication and attitudinal barriers can prevent people from accessing products and services. While visible disabilities like those affecting mobility are noticeable, non-visible disabilities affecting hearing, vision, communication, mental health or cognitive functioning, can go unnoticed.

With so much to consider, becoming an accessible and inclusive business can seem overwhelming, but it's a journey we are all on together. It can start with one small, simple change that you build upon over time.

¹ PwC, *The Benefit of Designing for Everyone*, Centre for Inclusive Design, Sydney, 2019.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *People with disability in Australia 2024*, AIHW, Australian Government, 2024.

Better access as a business strategy can open doors to more customers and foster community wellbeing.

With rising consumer demand for social responsibility, allowing the entire community to participate in your business is not only ethical but helps reach an underserved market segment, boost customer loyalty and contribute to local economic growth.

An estimated 5 million Australian seniors and people with disability have a collective disposable income of more than \$40 billion but can't access products and services due to poor design.¹

About 36% of people with disability aged 15-64 are not satisfied with their local community, and 19% experience social isolation compared to 9.5% of people without disability.²

Brisbane businesses that make thoughtful enhancements to encourage social inclusion can benefit greatly in return. According to the Centre for Inclusive Design, offering products and services that are accessible to everyone can grow audiences by 4 times and increase revenue.¹

Even the most accessible businesses started somewhere, and yours can too.

Brisbane is home to approximately 1.26 million people with more than 130,000 small businesses that contribute to our economy and help foster a welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

It is estimated that 1 in 6 (18%) Australians live with a disability and more than half use aids or equipment to improve their independence and participation in the community.³

Australia's population continues to age with people aged 65 years and over accounting for nearly 16% of the population.³

Our *Better Access, More Customers* guide provides simple, achievable, free or low-cost ways to help customers find your business, access your offerings, ask for assistance, and feel included.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, ABS, Canberra, 2018, accessed 4 March 2024.

As a person with a disability, I can't emphasise enough how welcoming it is when a small business prioritises access and inclusion. When I visit a store that has made the effort to accommodate everyone, it's more than just convenience; it's a profound sense of belonging. It feels welcoming, a message that says, "you are valued here." It's not just about the physical setup - it's about the staff's desire to welcome us, and the entire community.

Lindsay Nott

Who needs better access?



Image credit: Credit Newstead Brewing Co.

Easier access to your business will most benefit people with disability, those who are limited, restricted or impaired from participation in everyday activities.³

Better access will especially benefit people who experience:

- restricted mobility, or who use aids for independence, e.g. wheelchair, scooter, crutches, cane
- speech or communication difficulties
- deafness or limited hearing
- blindness or low vision
- learning or intellectual difficulties
- age-related conditions
- mental health illness
- physical injury or illness (long-term or temporary).

Brisbane seniors and residents with disability, injuries or other access considerations like prams, are all potential customers who benefit from better access. When you consider that they will likely be accompanied by one or more people, taking steps to create better access makes sense.

Everyday activities can also present access problems for some people, including:

- pushing a pram
- travelling with young children
- making deliveries
- carrying heavy shopping bags.

Businesses that provide greater access may benefit financially from an enhanced reputation, positive referrals, customer loyalty and increased trade.

“ Making me feel welcome in a small business doesn't have to be hard. It starts with a genuine interest in me, and what I'd like to achieve from your business - same as every other customer. I may sound different from other customers and interact in different ways, but when I feel welcome and respected, I will spend my money with that business and keep coming back and bring my family.”

Finley Coll

“ We are a local bar for all the locals - no exceptions. We built our place to be accessible right from the start and have built a good customer service culture, aiming to serve all our local customers. We have continued to improve our venue with lower tables and more circulation space to enable people with mobility devices to have more enjoyable visits. We'd encourage anyone looking to establish a new facility to do as much as they can with their structure, but never forget your business is about the people and the atmosphere you create - staff training and culture is key to a great customer experience. We'd encourage all business owners to realise that small changes can make a big difference to customers with disability.”

Aidan McGarrity
Owner, Beyond the Pale



Aidan McGarrity, Beyond the Pale.

Start with one easy change

People who have positive customer experiences will likely recommend your business to others.

Becoming a more inclusive, accessible and welcoming business is a journey, not a race.

Start with an easily achievable change that improves access and build on your success over time. Along the way, you will make it easier for people to access your products and services, improve safety for all customers and staff, and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

The changes you make don't have to be expensive. A combination of making it easier to enter and move around independently, staff training and respectful customer service can make your business more attractive to all visitors.

Barrier free environment

Welcome everyone to a clutter-free premises where easy access and safe pathways benefit all staff and customers, including people with access needs.

Old building designs, steps, clutter and small aisles in shops can make it hard for people to enter and experience a business.

Our ageing community and increasingly mobile population of people with disability underscores the importance of physical access.

Top tips

- Clear the entrance of obstacles and trip hazards.
- Provide clear wayfinding and entrance signage in high-contrast tones or colours.
- Provide a chair at the counter for customers who need to sit.

Adapt your customer experience

Accessible premises are important for everyone, but simple customer service adjustments can also improve access to your business. With flexible thinking, it's possible to adapt your customer experience to improve access without needing to make too many floorplan changes.

Top tips

- Introduce staff to customers who are blind or have low vision.
- Provide images or QR codes linked to information to help people who have speech difficulties to communicate.
- Reduce background noise for customers with hearing difficulties or sensory differences.



Update your digital presence

Most people aged over 15 years use online services for purchases, bills, banking and other activities.⁴ To access digital content, some people also use assistive technology, such as screen readers. Businesses can encourage more customers to experience their products and services by offering an accessible digital presence via their website and applications.

Providing information in a range of ways such as online, hard copy, in person and by phone will also ensure people can access your business in their preferred way.

Just as your online presence matters, so does the way you say something. Not everyone can read or understand business terminology, so it's important to use language that is meaningful to your customers.

The [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#) (WAI) provides detailed information and resources for digital accessibility. Many changes are low cost or free, and tools are available to help test your website accessibility level.

Top tips

- Use simple language. Avoid jargon, acronyms and long or complex words.
- Ensure consumers' online goals are easy to achieve, for example, making a purchase or finding your address.
- Add captions and alternative text (alt text) to images and provide transcripts of audio and video content.

Build an accessible digital presence to open your business to more customers.



⁴Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Use of information technology by people with disability, older people and primary carers*, ABS, Canberra, 2020, accessed 20 May 2024.

Train and support staff

Employees are the front line of great customer service. Disability awareness training that challenges stereotypes and provides information about the impact of disability can promote staff understanding and empathy. Fostering an inclusive culture will help your business attract and retain customers with disability and their carers, family and friends. Involving your team in building accessibility will also increase your chances of making positive and lasting improvements.

Aware staff will be more considerate of all customer needs. Encourage and support staff to complete [free disability awareness training online](#).

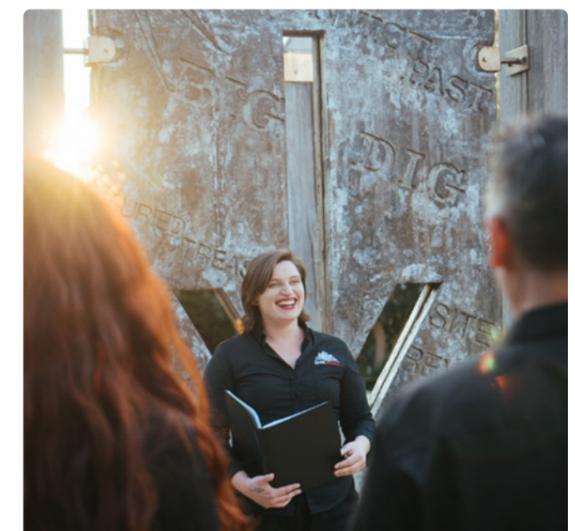
To learn more, the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#) and [Queensland Human Rights Commission](#) offer good information about disability awareness training.



“ We made a conscious decision to ensure our tours were accessible to everyone. We adapt our tours to different routes and customise the content based on the group's needs, whether it's delivering family-friendly versions for young children or accommodating guests with disabilities. Our focus has always been on inclusivity rather than outdoing competitors.

We aim to make all guests, especially those with disability or access needs, feel welcome. The biggest improvement in accessibility has been modifying tour routes to ensure all stories are covered while navigating challenging city streets. All our staff go through a training process, and scenarios involving guests with special needs are included. Our advice to other businesses is to prioritise inclusivity and make everyone feel welcome.

Sara Barlow
Tour Host Manager,
Dark Stories True Crime Tours



Sara Barlow, Dark Stories True Crime Tours.

Foster great people interactions

Staff who demonstrate respect, understanding and good communication can foster great experiences for all customers. It's important for staff to know how to engage people with disability who may communicate differently or use tools to access your business.

Language matters. Always focus on the person first, before their disability. This simple shift can make a significant impact on a person's experience.

Examples of inclusive language.

- 'Person with disability' rather than 'disabled person'.
- 'Accessible entry' rather than 'disabled entry'.
- 'Person who is deaf' not 'a deaf person'.
- 'Person without a disability' not 'normal person'.

The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) provides an explanation and examples of acceptable person-first language.

Top tips

- Speak directly to the person with disability, not their companion or interpreter.
- Use clear language and ask yes/no questions.
- Respect the person's independence. Ask permission before trying to assist a person and respect their decision.



Image credit: Tourism Australia.

Create an inclusive workforce

Businesses that foster an inclusive work culture can boost staff morale and productivity, and demonstrate that they value everyone.

People with disability have unique talents, perspectives, experiences and skills. For example, they often have well-developed problem-solving skills from adapting to challenges. These might be just what is needed to help drive business innovation, process development and improvement.

A range of information and support for [employing people with disability](#) is available.

We will all appreciate better access as we age.



Image credit: Tourism Australia.

When a small business takes the time and effort to be accessible and inclusive, it's not just about complying with laws; it's about creating an environment where everyone can participate fully. My local baker puts out a temporary ramp, helping me to get into their store, just like everyone else. For someone like me with a disability, this is life changing. It means I can engage with businesses, enjoy their products or services, and contribute to the community without barriers. It's a breath of fresh air, a feeling of liberation and a testament to the power of inclusion.

Charmaine Idris



Equal opportunities and the law



Image credit: Kenny Smith

Improving access to premises, products and services can help your business meet its responsibilities. The Queensland Government and Australian Government provide dedicated business information, support and resources. Local chambers of commerce are also good places to share information and build your business support network.

All Queensland businesses must adhere to both federal and state laws regarding disability discrimination and accessibility. Non-compliance can result in legal consequences and harm a business's reputation.

Some key legislation

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*
- *National Construction Code 2022*
- *Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010*

Small businesses should stay up to date on legal changes and seek advice from lawyers or access experts to ensure compliance.

When a small business invests in access and inclusion, it sends a powerful message: they care about every member of their community. As a person with a disability, this gesture of thoughtfulness is deeply appreciated. It means I can engage in everyday activities with fewer challenges. I am able to participate freely in my community and retain my dignity and independence. There should be more of it and less fear from businesses about serving the needs of customers with disability.

Paul Zsep



Making our innovative tourism experiences more accessible is a personal passion of mine. We aim to improve accessibility wherever we can. It makes not only good financial sense, it is the right thing to do morally to include as many people as possible to have joyous experiences as they travel. We look forward to opening up more and more opportunities for all Australians with disability to explore the Brisbane region.

John Sharpe
Co-Founder,
Riverlife, Story Bridge Adventure
Climb, Tangatours, P&O Edge,
Vertigo



Vertigo, New Farm. Image credit: BEDA.

Five steps to better access

Make it easy for everyone to access your business.

Small businesses that are accessible and inclusive help ensure all residents and visitors feel welcome in our city.

Here are 5 steps to support your business journey to better access and inclusion.

1 Commit to change and let your customers know.

- Commit to improve access and inclusion.
- Discuss access and inclusion in your planning and business strategy sessions.
- Make it easy for customers to suggest improvements.
- Promote your commitments in your business communication.

2 Assess your status.

- Use this guide as a starting point.
- Consult local disability organisations or other professionals for advice or a formal assessment.
- Search online for industry-specific accessibility checklists.
- Gather insights from customers and staff about their experiences.

3 Develop an improvement plan.

- Consider inclusion and access in all business decisions.
- Use available tools and frameworks to create an access and inclusion plan, like the [Australian Human Rights Commission guide for creating a Disability Action Plan](#).

4 Engage customers and staff.

- Regularly check with customers and staff to assess your inclusion progress.
- Include access questions in customer surveys or feedback mechanisms.
- Gather input using various methods, such as QR codes or social media polls.
- Consider employing 'mystery shoppers' with disability to test customer services.

5 Review, adapt and keep going.

- Continuously review progress against your plan.
- Update the plan as needed.
- Train your staff and keep asking for feedback.
- Understand that enhancing access is an ongoing journey that benefits your business and the community.

More information

Council is committed to supporting Brisbane businesses and provides a range of resources and opportunities to support growth.

Visit brisbane.qld.gov.au and search 'Business in Brisbane' for the resources listed below and more.

[Doing business in Brisbane](#)

[Business Hotline 133 BNE](#)

[Brisbane Community Profiles](#)

[A City for Everyone: Inclusive Brisbane Plan 2019-2029](#)

Stay updated

Business in Brisbane

Download the latest edition of Business in Brisbane via the website and [subscribe to the e-newsletter](#).

Join us on Facebook

Join our [Business in Brisbane Facebook](#) group to connect with like-minded people and to hear more about Council's business offerings.



Simple steps to better access, more customers

This checklist provides a starting point for your accessibility journey, but is not comprehensive or a compliance checklist. You can decide what is relevant to your business or seek industry-specific checklists.

Barrier-free environment

- Clear indoor and outdoor pathways, e.g. A-frames do not hinder footpath access.
- Easy-to-find entrance with step-free option, e.g. ramp or lift access.
- Clear entrances with no obstacles or trip hazards.
- Clear wayfinding and entrance signs in high-contrast tones or colours.
- Non-trip step edges and handrails.
- Safety marks on glass doors and windows.
- Wide and/or self-opening doors.
- Easy-to-grip lever door handles for people with arthritis or limited mobility.
- Wide, clutter-free aisles.
- Clear, continuous paths of travel through premises, i.e. no blocked passageways.
- Well-lit spaces.
- Entrance bell or QR code to request physical assistance.
- Surfaces and floors are in good condition.
- Items in reach for people who use a wheelchair, e.g. counters, door handles.
- Wheelchair clearance under tables.
- Easy-to-understand menus, signs and information.
- Space for parking mobility devices or prams.
- Staff know the closest accessible toilets and baby change room.

Digital presence

- Simple language (limit jargon, acronyms and complexity).
- Simple fonts and good text spacing for easier reading.
- Customers can achieve goals easily, e.g. find the address or make a purchase.
- Content is organised under properly tagged headings for screen reader navigation.
- Sites are tested for screen reader compatibility.
- High contrast between background and foreground colours for people with low vision.
- Images have captions and alternative text (alt text).
- Audio and video content have transcripts.
- Links, buttons, forms and input fields are labelled.
- Resized text does not affect page functionality.
- Site works across devices, e.g. desktop, smart devices (Android and iOS).

Customer experience

- Disability awareness training for staff.
- Convenient alternative entrances for people with wheelchairs or prams.
- Clear language and visuals in printed materials.
- Information has images or QR codes to support people who have speech difficulties to communicate.
- Pen and paper available to assist communication.
- Payment location option that is wheelchair accessible.
- Reduced background noise options for customers with hearing or sensory differences.
- Hearing loop or hearing aid systems.
- Assistance/guide dogs are welcomed and not treated as pets.
- Wait area seating for people to rest.
- Unobstructed view between entry and counter.

Foster great people interactions

- Greet customers and ask if you can help make their experience easier.
- There are people with disability amongst staff.
- Be patient and treat customers equally.
- Maintain level eye contact.
- Speak directly to the customer, not their companion or interpreter.
- Use clear language and ask yes/no questions.
- Do not patronise people by highlighting their achievement of everyday activities.
- Do not talk about the person as if they cannot hear or understand.
- Respect customers' independence, ask permission before assisting and respect the decision.

Workplace health and safety

- Emergency and safety procedures consider people with access needs, e.g. evacuations, emergency exits are accessible.
- Fire alarms are visible and audible.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

We are on this journey together.

Brisbane City Council
GPO Box 1434, Brisbane Qld 4001

Every effort is made to ensure that
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