

29 March 2011



Introduction:

Hello readers! Welcome to our newsletter. The theme for this month is 'accessible events'. Last year I gave you '10 top tips' on creating an accessible event and you will be happy to know that DWE is now offering you a 3 hour workshop to help you make your events accessible and equitable for everyone. The other items in the newsletter will update you on the status of captioned movies and the latest technology for that and an late notice for accessible website training!

Soapbox: We have seen summer come and go without raising a sweat! I for one do not mind the cold (that's why we live in Ballarat!) but I am sure others have been pining for those long hot relaxing summer days that end with you crawling into bed with the tiniest bit of sunburn that fills you with a sense of health and wellbeing. Summer has gone, well and truly and so too (bar a few) have most of the big summer events. We have seen the Grand Prix race past, Moomba, Begonia Festival (and other rurally based festivals and events), Harmony Day and the food festival a few weeks back. We are in the midst of the comedy festival and will be soon celebrating Easter – we are all heading indoors as the evening chill creeps back into our lives. Indoors or outdoors – how did the accessibility rate? Could people with a disability have the same access to these events as everyone else?

Having been to several recently, I am still appalled at the lack of consideration for accessibility. At a recent rural film festival, not one film was captioned, not one portable toilet for wheelchairs and no concessions or matting provided over the rough terrain. No free drinkable water, no shaded rest areas and inaccessible buildings. I was amused that there was an accessible parking bay of sorts closer to the venue than the other car park and wondered what they would do once entering the site when everything else was inaccessible. Oh well, I did catch a bit of sunburn on the tip of my nose and recovered from my disappointment by deciding to do 2 things; write a strong letter to the organisers of each event that didn't come up to scratch and suggest that I could give them some access advice for the next time and boycott the others who will not budge their stance. I like to vote with my feet! Am I the only one angry about all this?

Our news: So, end of rant! We are happy to remind you that last year we created an 'accessible events and programs guide' tailored specifically for the City of Whittlesea which has been met with a great deal of interest. As a follow up to the publication of the guide, we have tailored a workshop named 'Creating Accessible Events'. It is for 3 hours, very interactive and investigates the 5WH – the **what, why, who, when, where** and **how** of all things related to accessible events. You would learn about why it is important to have an accessible event, how to choose the right venue (with accessible features) and what to look for in the planning process including transport and parking. Included is a short 'Simple English' and summary of Vision Australia guidelines for print accessibility session for marketing materials and we also talk about catering, technology and equipment. We have included several experiential exercises to break up the session. The workshop is tailored for anyone who organizes or markets events, meetings, festivals, or community gatherings of any sort.

Did you know?

You can travel for free on Victorian trains, trams and buses with the Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass

A new free travel pass called Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass has been introduced.

To be eligible for the Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass the applicant must:

- have a permanent and severe disability (being for the term of their life and not expected to improve)

- depend on the use of a scooter or wheelchair for mobility outside of their home
- be a permanent resident of Victoria.

Applications for the Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass are available from:

- www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au
- The Metlink Central Pass Office

The Scooter and Wheelchair Travel Pass entitles the pass holder to free travel on:

- Melbourne metropolitan trains, trams and buses
- V/Line ticketed services (including V/Line Link services within Victoria)
- Regional town buses
- Regional services that have a contract or service agreement with the Department of Transport.

If you have any further enquiries please call: Gavin Vosti, Manager, Metlink Central Pass Office, Southern Cross Station on **9619 1568**.

News article: New cinema caption eyewear being trialled in the USA, Monday 14 March 2011

Equipment manufacturers in the USA are developing a new caption viewing system to compete in the developing market for closed captions.

The yet-to-be-named system comes as eyewear connected to a small receiver, with the captions appearing on the glasses in sync with the soundtrack. The eyewear is being tested in Regal Cinemas in Seattle.

Regal is also currently testing the CaptiView closed caption system as a pledge to the community, in response to a suit brought against it and other cinemas by Wash-CAP (the Washington State Communication Access Project). This demonstrates that Regal may be willing to display captions with more than one system, providing a choice for consumers and exhibitor management.

The system is in a prototype phase at the moment with transmitters being supplied by American cinema technology company USL.

The initial response from testers of the eyewear has been enthusiastic. The eyewear is reportedly comfortable and big enough to fit over regular glasses. The captions appear on the eyewear in line with the screen and one user said that he could enjoy the emotive aspects of the action as it happened when the lines were spoken.

The eyewear comes with distance settings, dependent on the user's seating choice in the cinema. This allows the user to adjust the text's depth, meaning eye muscles did not have to work at refocussing. There are also two text size settings and language settings, should the movie be available in other languages

And locally: Below is an article by the Age last year that talks about a new deal to increase the number of accessible movie options semi funded by the Government. It mentions that the theatres will be able to provide captioned movies by 2014! Why so long? Anyway, I have included a link to those that currently show captioned movies:

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com.au/find-out-session-times/victoria>

News article: The Age: Disability groups hail film deal - Kylie Northover

TONY Abbott referred to the issue earlier this year as parliamentary "waffle", but for the audience at the opening of Wednesday night's disability-themed Other Film Festival the announcement of a new cinema accessibility deal is hugely significant.

Gino Manuri, general manager of film buying at Village Cinemas Australia, officially announced the deal between Hoyts, Greater Union, Village and Reading cinema chains, and the government. It was brokered last month by parliamentary secretary for disabilities Bill Shorten.

Under the agreement cinemas will provide captions for the deaf and audio descriptions for the vision-impaired on at least one screen in all their complexes by the end of 2014. At present just 0.3 per cent of cinemas screen accessible sessions.

The deal - which involves the government contributing \$470,000 on top of the \$2.3 million project - was made after protests from disability groups when cinemas requested an exemption from caption and audio-description requirements in return for minor upgrades in disabled access.

The Australian Human Rights Commission rejected the request three months ago, leaving the cinemas open to legal action under discrimination laws.

National spokesman for Action on Cinema Access (AOCA) Dean Barton-Smith, who is profoundly deaf, said the announcement made him feel "like less of a second-class citizen".

"It is pleasing to see an industry is starting to treat a person like myself not as being a burden to them but instead being of value," the former Olympic athlete said.

The current cinema set-up means he and his family must travel more than an hour to reach the nearest cinema that shows captioned movies.

"It turns out to be a far more costly affair than [for] other able-bodied movie-goers," he said.

Deaf filmmaker Sarah Tracton was the recipient of a Churchill Fellowship last year to conduct an international study of cinema accessibility for audiences with a disability. Her research took her to Europe, the US and Israel, where she explored cinema access.

Until the deal was announced, Ms Tracton said, Britain was the leader in accessibility. "The UK has about 40 per cent of their cinemas accessible," she said. "But this new deal is very exciting. You can't lip-read a film ... so captions are very important."

The new system will not affect viewing for hearing patrons.

Ms Tracton said the new agreement made good business sense.

"Everyone's struggling for new audiences, so we should be really excited," she said. "It means more audiences and what could be better than that for the cinema industry?"

Training: Accessibility Update for the Australian Government

Register for this free educational session taking place on 6 April

With the endorsement of WCAG 2.0 as the standard to be applied to all government websites, the Australian Government is poised to improve the provision of information and services online.

It is now more important than ever to ensure your Agency's investment in its online presence continues to deliver ongoing value while achieving and maintaining conformance.

Join Gruden and Sitecore on Wednesday 6 April at a special information session for an insight into how your Agency can implement practical and sustainable solutions that ensure you meet your accessibility obligations now and into the future.

Update on the Australian Government's Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy by **Jacqui van Teulingen, Director - Web Policy, AGIMO**

- AusTender Case Study – Ensuring accessibility in a whole-of-government web publishing system by **Peter Howard, Technical Analyst, Gruden**
- Sustainable Conformance – Helping Agencies achieve compliance and build their conformance capability by **Mark Stanton, Technical Director, Gruden**
- Beyond Technical Accessibility – How Sitecore CMS manages author behaviour to enforce accessibility compliance by **Greg Baxter, Product Evangelist, Sitecore**

This session is suitable for anyone who is responsible for the management of an Agency's online presence.

Date: 2pm, Wednesday 6 April 2011

Venue: Conference Room, Fourth Floor, National Library of Australia, Parkes Place, Canberra

RSVP: Register online before **Wednesday 30 March**

Questions? Contact Nicole Stirling, Marketing Manager Australia & New Zealand at nis@sitecore.net or 61 408 862 525

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