

DWE NEWSLETTER

November 2011



Introduction: Hello readers! Welcome to our newsletter. It's almost holiday time! October slipped by without me noticing – so apologies for missing out on an October newsletter. Before you know it, we'll all be off hopefully having a relaxing time over summer (if we ever get one that is!). So the theme for this newsletter is about accessible travel and accessible destinations. Any feedback or contributions are most welcome.

Soapbox:

I received an email from a colleague yesterday asking about accessible motel rooms in Ballarat. I'm still amazed about the lack of progress for universal access provisions for motels and hotels etc. Haven't venues heard about "Good Access is Good Business"?? There are enough workers out there trying to sell the concept, one would think there was great progress somewhere.

Anyhow, whilst I was at the City of Ballarat, I created a web based directory that has accommodation, restaurants, conference facilities shopping centres, disability services and more. There is a brief description of accessibility feature for each venue so that people would not get a nasty surprise when they arrived. There used to be a wheelchair icon in the middle of the home page to direct you straight to the directory. Since I left there has been a redesign of the pages and unfortunately it has lost prominence and is harder to find. I have included a direct link to it below but if you were to go the longer way (or the link doesn't work) you will need to go to the very bottom of the page and find 'directory', click on 'disability access', 'Ballarat directory', 'disability access' again and then click on the topic that is of interest. It was 5 long years in the making and sadly does not have the same visibility or maintenance it once had. No disrespect to the current RuralAccess worker, it wasn't his baby it was mine.

<https://eservices.ballarat.vic.gov.au/webtools/Directory/default.aspx?Parent=110205&Child>

Other accommodation or tourism services include:

'Australia for all' also has accommodation accessibility information for people with a disability: www.australiaforall.com

'Ambleside Tours' is also a great service - check out their website: www.amblesidetours.com

Our news:

DWE is in the process of opening a branch in Western Australia and have found some great resources and initiatives through the market research process - this travel guide was a great find. WA was a leader in disability initiatives in the 90's and the first to make it compulsory for Government bodies to have a Disability Action Plan (they call it Disability Access and Inclusion Plan in their legislation). I remember when we were starting out in the pilot phase of RuralAccess in 2000, scouring WA websites for resources and sources of inspiration – it was a veritable gold mine. Victoria in the meantime, has taken their lead with some great new programs and initiatives and are on their way to creating 'State of the Art' benchmarks for the other states to emulate. We are very much looking forward to having a foot in both states and share the learnings from one side of the country to the other.

By the way, we will be on leave from December 14th til January 3rd so if you would like any services before then, please book us up a.s.a.p.!

Recent media article:

Top trips for people with disabilities October 10, 2011



Wheelchair bungee jumping in Cairns, Queensland.

TOURISM operators worldwide have begun catering for an increasing group of travellers, those with disabilities and the ageing, and many Australians have taken the lead.

There's no denying Australians love to travel but for some it can be more of a challenge than for others.

Tourism facilities for people with disabilities have improved greatly over the past decade or so, but with an ageing population it's becoming more important than ever.

Bruce Cameron, from Easy Access Australia, says people with disabilities can feel enormous anxiety before going on a holiday somewhere new.

"It can be hard to get information and when you do, you don't always know if it's correct," he says.

Tourism researcher Simon Darcy, Associate Professor at UTS Business School, says it is a great opportunity for

Australian tourism operators to position themselves for a competitive advantage.

"If they really want to cater for accessible tourism, they need to design products that are of an equal experience rather than a second-rate experience," he says.

"Sometimes you pay \$500 a night for an accessible room only to look at the back laneway when everyone else is looking at Sydney Harbour. Some hotels complain the accessible rooms don't get used very much but when we look at them we think 'no wonder'."

Here are some destinations that have made steps in the right direction.

1 Port Stephens, NSW

This region, which is about a two-hour drive north of Sydney, has been acclaimed for its attractions and accommodation catering to people with disabilities.

More than half of the guests who stay at O'Carrollyn's Eco Resort, at One Mile Beach, have some kind of disability and 20 per cent are in wheelchairs. The resort offers roll-in access to units, accessible bathrooms, concrete pathways through bush and has a pool with a hoist.

It also has a special "Gator" vehicle which transports wheelchair-using guests to the beach, where wheelchair users can use O'Carrollyn's special, thick-wheeled wheelchairs ideal for all terrain beach wheelchairs.

Port Stephens also has a wheelchair-friendly dolphin watch boat, the Tamboi Queen. Little Beach at Nelson Bay also offers access to the water via a dedicated wheelchair ramp. Ph 1800 808 900 or see www.portstephens.org.au

2 Hawaii

Darcy says Hawaii is a "fantastic" destination for people with disabilities.

Atlantis Cruises has wheelchair-friendly tours on Oahu's Windward Coast, with boarding ramps provided, while non-profit organisation AccesSurf Hawaii helps people with disabilities enjoy the water with tandem surfboards, wave skis and specially designed shoreline flotation equipment.

Travel agency Access Aloha Travel specialises in organising trips for people with disabilities.

All 1021 villas at the Westin Ka'anapali Ocean Resort Villas in Maui are accessible by lift and there are ramps leading from lobby areas to the outdoor pools and beach, and accessible shuttle buses. One of the resort's pools has a special chair to lower guests into it.

See www.accessalohatravel.com

3 Bali, Indonesia

One option for people with disabilities is Villa G at Ellora, which is in a group of 11 villas in a quiet location just off the well-known Danau Tamblingan St. The villa, about 10 minutes from Denpasar and 30 minutes from Kuta, has no steps and the pool has a large pool hoist for guests with limited mobility and a hand rail for those who use the steps.

Two rooms have been adapted for guests in wheelchairs, with 1.8m wide shower entrances.

Bali Access Travel specialises in accessible wheelchair travel in Bali, Java and Lombok, equipment hire, a home care service and airport transfers.

It can also arrange diving and snorkelling for people with disabilities and a three-night accessible safari in East Java and scuba diving in east Bali.

See www.baliaccesstravel.com or www.disabledholidaysbali.com

4 South Pacific cruise

Cruise companies are catering more and more for people with disabilities.

Australian-based P&O Cruises and Princess Cruises ships have several wheelchair accessible cabins, including some wonderful wheelchair accessible suites.

The ships also have ramps and lifts throughout. The Sun Princess and the Dawn Princess have 19 accessible rooms, the Pacific Sun has 14 and the Pacific Dawn has 13.

All Australian-based P&O Cruises and Princess Cruises ships also have special devices to alert and communicate with hearing-impaired passengers.

The Pacific Sun, Sun Princess and Dawn Princess have cabin directories in Braille, which can be obtained from the Purser's Desk upon embarkation, and Braille in elevators.

But Darcy warns that many destinations in the South Pacific may not cater well for people with

disabilities on island visits.

"You might be able to get off at three quarters of the stops in the South Pacific you're getting the cruise experience but not getting the on-shore experience," he says.

5 Cairns, Qld

For those wanting to see the Great Barrier Reef, Quicksilver Cruises offers many services for people with disabilities recently it even took a blind man scuba-diving.

It has a water-powered chair lift at its outer reef platform that can lower people into the water.

The Pullman Reef Hotel Casino has three accessible rooms with prime water views.

Wheelie Easy Pty Ltd (wheelieeasy.com.au), based in the Cairns region, also can help disabled tourists in north Queensland.

Darcy says Cairns and Palm Cove, in particular, have done some fantastic work with the accessibility of their urban environment.

"It's a good quality, accessible tourism precinct," he says.

6 Uluru, NT

All restaurants and bars, hotel reception areas, the town square and shops at Ayers Rock Resort have access for wheelchairs.

Sails in the Desert Hotel has 11 assisted rooms, Desert Gardens Hotel has 10, the Lost Camel Hotel has four and Outback Pioneer Hotel has three.

The Sounds of Silence dinner tour is suitable for people with disabilities, with special transfers arranged to the site with prior notice.

AAT Kings has wheelchair-friendly coaches which can accommodate collapsible wheelchairs.

The base walking tracks at Uluru are also accessible.

Wheelchairs also fit on to the resort shuttle and there is a ramp leading on to it at the front of the bus.

7 Phillip Island, Victoria

This popular tourist destination has several accessible accommodation options and attractions.

The famous Penguin Parade at Ventnor has ramp access and wide manual doors are left open during summer and at viewing time.

Displays are also visible from wheelchair height and a wheelchair is available free of charge for visitors with limited mobility.

For accommodation, Wheelies Rest, at Smiths Beach, is a purpose-built 11-bed house suitable for all wheelchair users. Alvina Holiday Cottage, at Ventnor, has two and three-bedroom self-contained units with lever doorhandles throughout, hi/lo hospital beds, hoists and a beach wheelchair.

More: www.visitphillipisland.com

8 Sydney, NSW

The Harbour City has a dedicated website, sydneyforall.com, for people with disabilities and several tourist attractions have made inroads in the area. BridgeClimb offers services for the vision and hearing-impaired, including Auslan Climbs in which climbers are accompanied by an Australian Sign Language interpreter who interprets the commentary about Sydney and its world-famous Bridge.

The Art Gallery of NSW offers several access programs, including free Auslan-interpreters for groups of visitors who are deaf and who book at least two weeks in advance.

It also has a free program called In Touch at the Gallery which offers guided sensory tours for people who are blind or vision-impaired, allowing them to experience the tactile qualities of bronze and marble.

It can be hard to find accessible rooms with a view, but the Shangri-La and InterContinental hotels and the YHA in The Rocks all offer these.

See www.sydneyforall.com

9. Hong Kong

WITH accessible trains and stations and plenty of accessible rooms, Hong Kong is a popular choice for people with disabilities. Several years ago, its building code was revised to state that for every 100 hotel rooms, two rooms must be accessible for people with disability. Easy Access Travel, a subsidiary of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, provides services through its Rehabus and Easy-Access bus and offers recreational activities for people with disabilities. Novotel New Century and the YHA are both accommodation options worth considering.

See www.easyaccesstravelhk.com

10. London, UK

IN the lead-up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there has been a huge surge in improvements for people with disabilities and new accessible areas such as Southbank in London. The city also has its own accessibility website called Inclusive London which is dedicated to showing all accommodation, attractions and bars and restaurants which are fully accessible.

See www.inclusivelondon.com

Air travel tips make flights easier for people with disability

23 August 2011

People with disability now have access to important information about air travel to help them have a smoother and more pleasurable flight experience.

Believed to be the first of its kind in Australia, the 16-page 'Prepare for take-off - Air Travel Tips for people with disability' was launched today at Perth Airport's International Terminal by Disability Services Minister Helen Morton.

"The information contained in the booklet was compiled from the real-life experiences of air travellers with disability, their families, friends, travelling companions and carers," Mrs Morton said.

The Minister said the booklet contained information encouraging travellers to do their homework before making bookings; what travellers need to tell the airline; travelling with medication; travelling with mobility aids; security screening; check in; and getting on and off the plane.

"The booklet also assists potential travellers by identifying the various procedures of airports and airline staff that they are likely to encounter," she said.

Mrs Morton said access to good information made a big difference when planning flights and navigating airports and airlines.

"Like everyone else, people with disability want to enjoy their journey by air," she said.

"The new guide provides information and advice that will allow people to be better informed and have more control of their air travel experience."

The booklet was produced jointly by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability (MACD), the Disability Services Commission and People With Disabilities (WA) Inc.

To read the publication go to <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au>

New support group:

Do you suffer from Bipolar?

'**MASKS**' is a Bipolar Support Group Run by sufferers, for sufferers.

Masks invite you to join group sessions held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, from 7pm to 8.30pm at Geelong Mood Support 284 La Trobe Tce, Newtown.

For more information email Nicci Wall at forwalls@xi.com.au or mobile 0419 874 350 after 3pm

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