

# Australian Hotel Association Disability Inclusion and Access Award

**GSA**  
Get Skilled Access



**“Real life disability experience  
delivered by real-life people  
with disability”**

# Introduction.

Get Skilled Access and Australian Hotels Association (AHA) have partnered to create an opportunity to increase disability access and inclusion across the membership of AHA by way of introducing disability access and inclusion as part of their annual awards. The intent is to educate and encourage members to aspire to increase and develop a better understand of what disability access and inclusion means for their hotels.

The AHA represents more than 5,000 members across Australia serviced by a network of branches based in every state and territory, plus a Canberra-based National Office and is well placed to encourage and inspire their members to self-reflect on how they can enhance their access and inclusion practices.

According to the Understanding the Opportunity for Australia in Accessible Tourism Report it's estimated the Australian accessible tourism industry is worth around 8 billion dollars, and post Covid is expected to grow. Reconnection and unwinding are core needs for all Australian travelers, and this is just as true for travelers with a disability.

Planning is a key part of process for people with disability to ensure their experience is enjoyable and less stressful. For those with limited mobility, it's important to gain as much of and understanding of the environment as possible. Websites and information accessible on the internet is the number one tool used by travelers with and without disability.

## **Award Aim:** (examples only)

- Gain greater understanding access and inclusion need for guests who have disability
- Increase access and disability inclusion across our membership
- Increase the number of guests visiting our members hotels
- Increase the awareness of inclusive travel

## **Disability Overview**

The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) defines disability as 'any impairment, abnormality, or loss of function, of any part of the body or mind'. This includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, learning disability, physical disfigurement, immunological (the presence of organisms causing disease in the body).

## **Demographics**

- More than 4 million Australia have a disability.
- About 1 million are from a non-English speaking background.
- 37% of the national Indigenous population 15 years and older have a reported physical disability or a long-term health condition (102,900).
- At least 80% of disabilities are not visible.
- 15% or 2.1 million Australians of working age (15-64 years) have a disability.
- Mental health problems and mental illness are among the greatest causes of disability.
- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age.
- 40% of people with disability are 65 years or older.
- 2.1 million Australians of working age (15-64 years) have disability.
- 35.9% of Australia's 8.9 million households include a person with disability.

## **Types of disability**

- Only 4.4% of people with disability in Australia are wheelchair users.
- 1 in 6 Australians are affected by hearing loss. There are about 30,000 Deaf AUSLAN users with total hearing loss.
- Vision Australia estimates 357,000 Australians are blind or have low vision, and that this will increase to 564,000 by 2030.
- 45% of Australians aged 16-85 years, experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.

# What we heard.

During our discovery which included a desktop review and consultation with people with lived experience of disability, we heard that there's not a 'one sizes fits all' approach to accessible accommodation and everyone's needs are different. Our participants shared positive stories of their experiences which included:

- Staff asking politely if they needed any assistance
- Staff encouraging to assist throughout the duration of the stay
- Staff listening and accommodating the needs of the guest
- Menus accessible by a screen reader
- One on one descriptive tour of a room for someone who is blind
- Website accessibility, and the experience of booking online
- Layout of the room

There were also experiences shared that told us there are opportunities for growth and were encouraged that this award will bring more awareness to accessible accommodation and more increase hotel and travel experiences for the future.

## Australian Hotel Association Disability Inclusion and Access Award

People with disability want the same thing from a hotel than any other guest, they want to feel like it a home away from home. All of us have different accessibility needs. A truly accessible and inclusive hotel goes above and beyond the built environment such as door width, type of shower and rails, and considers the needs of the varying needs and greater inclusion of people with disability. This award helps the consumer and the AHA member consider criteria that addresses accessibility requirements many people with disability require on a daily basis.

Award Area	Award Criteria	Example of meeting criteria	Opportunities for access and inclusion
<b>Hotel Facilities</b>	<p>In the entrance, foyer and pathways throughout the hotel, were there impeding items such as plants or flower arrangements or other objects (impeding pathways, entrance areas or lobby area)</p> <p>Was the height front desk accessible? Or did the reception staff accommodate your needs whilst checking in?</p> <p>Are the hotel’s additional facilities such as pool, gym, sauna etc accessible?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In house decorative items placed in areas that will be impeding for people with disability including, but not limited to low vision or blind and wheelchair users.</li> <li>- The staff member recognised the barrier and change their approach to suit the situation. Such as move to the front of the desk to greet and welcome the guest</li> <li>- The hotel facilities such as the pool and gym are accessible for people with physical and non-physical disability. Weight of the doors, items unnecessary impeding items in the facility spaces</li> </ul>	

	<p>Was marketing and advertising of the venue accessible? Was it online, TV, print. Were there mediums that catered for a broad range of people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Items such as pool/gym towels placed where they can be easily reached</li> <li>- Where did you find out about the hotel?</li> <li>- Did this influence your reason for booking at the hotel?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Booking and Reservations</b></p>	<p>Were you able to access the website or booking agents website and make the booking you required?</p> <p>Did the reservation process allow you request any access needs, eg could you book an accessible room or room near an entry/lift?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessibility of the website form a screen reader.</li> <li>- Information, including pictures that informed accessibility features of the hotel and the rooms?</li> <li>- Were you able to book an accessible room online?</li> <li>- Options for accessibility or hotel requests</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Staff services</b></p>	<p>Were staff trained to assist people with their access requirements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wheelchair user may need assistance with carparking or luggage.</li> <li>- Use of inclusive language?</li> <li>- Simple communication</li> </ul>	

	<p>Did a staff member assist or offer to assist guest has low vision or is blind to their room and give them a tour?</p> <p>Did staff understand different ways to communicate with people with disability?</p> <p>Did staff greet the person by name?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer to assist or did the guest have to ask?</li>   <li>- Communicate directly to the person with disability and not the interpreter, carer/support person</li>   <li>- This is important particularly for people with low vision or blind. For example “good morning Mrs Smith, its Tom speaking”</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Guest Room Facilities</b></p>	<p>Was the accessibility of the room environment easy to navigate.?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weight of the door</li> <li>- Room amenities easy to access (crockery, towels, tea and coffee facilities, coat hangers spare blankets/pillows, refrigerator, mini bar)</li> <li>- Bed height appropriate for wheelchair transfer</li> <li>- Alexa or Google a featured in the room</li> </ul>	



	<p>Was the layout of the room easy to navigate. No impeding objects, appropriate amount of room along the side of the bed to transfer.</p> <p>Was the heating/cooling controls accessible?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placement of or unnecessary furniture</li> <li>- Rugs</li>   <li>- Digital isn't often the best option for people who are low vision blind,</li> <li>- The control was in easy reach</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Bathrooms</b></p>	<p>Was the bathroom functional and safe to use?</p> <p>Were bathroom amenities such as towels, shower head, soap shampoo etc accessible?</p> <p>Was there incontinence or personal hygiene units available?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rails at the toilet and in the shower</li> <li>- Rails in appropriate locations</li> <li>- Shower seat</li> <li>- No slip surface or non slip bath mats available</li>   <li>- Amenities in easy reach</li>   <li>- Many people with disability require incontinence support. Bins are not a sufficient for disposable option of incontinence and personal hygiene products. It's important to consider this when offering and accessibility in the bathroom.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Food Services</b></p>	<p>Where you able to access the in-house room service menu?</p> <p>Did the staff understand you're access needs when room service was delivered eg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Available in formats that can be translated from a screen reader, a copy in braille, Larger font</li> <li>- QR code option</li> <li>- The phone easy to use to order room service</li>   <li>- When you ordered did they ask if you required any additional needs</li> <li>- Options for where to leave tray.</li> <li>- Understanding your needs when delivering the tray eg. Placement, did they understand how to communicate</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Hotel Safety</b></p>	<p>Upon check-in did the hotel staff explain emergency management process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For wheelchair users in multi-story building do they explain what to do if elevators are out of action.</li> <li>- If required will a staff member escort customers out of the building to safety.</li> <li>- If the fire alarm is activated, how do they inform people who are low hearing or deaf?</li> <li>- For people who have psychosocial disability how is safety communicated?</li> </ul>	

	Is the in-room safety and evacuation information available in accessible formats?	- Safety information available other formats such as braille, large font, can it be accessed by a screen reader	
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