



Good Access is Good Business

A guide for business and retailers.

Mayor's Welcome



Welcome to Mackay Regional Council's *Good Access is Good Business* Guide.

Our community is changing and we need businesses to ensure all residents can access their buildings, stock and services.

Council has worked with key organisations and community groups to ensure that this guide will be useful in assisting you to provide the best customer service for everyone.

Council is committed to ensuring its own community facilities are accessible to all and we encourage businesses and other organisations to do the same.

I hope you find this guide useful and informative.

Mayor Cr Deirdre Comerford

Are you missing out on potential customers?

As a business, quality service is one of the most important things you can offer. This guide aims to help you, the business owner, understand how to improve customer service and access to your goods and services for the large part of our community you may be missing out on.

What customers are we talking about?



In 2009, 10.5% of our population were seniors (65+). This is expected to increase to 15% over the next 15 years. As the seniors population swells, so does the feasibility of running a business that meets the needs and expectations of senior customers.

Many people over the age of 65 may begin to have difficulty with mobility, sight or hearing and, although they may not identify as having a disability, an accessible business with understanding staff will benefit them greatly and potentially result in loyal customers.

You may not be aware that, currently, nearly 20% of our population has a permanent disability of some kind.





Together with their friends, families and carers the number of people affected by a disability is bigger still. Add to this, people with a temporary disability or a medical condition and the number continues to rise.

Good access, together with understanding and respectful staff, are extremely significant to these residents. Remember, everyone in this group is a potential customer.

Currently, there are 8500 families living in our area with very young children (under 4 years) with a considerable proportion of them pushing prams or strollers. Once again, good access is important to them.

So it is fair to say that good access, benefits:

- Parents or carers of young children, particularly those with strollers/prams
- Older people
- People with a disability
- Delivery people
- Shoppers with heavy bags
- Every customer, particularly when it's busy.

It is important to realise that many of the groups above will make choices on where to shop or socialise based on how accessible and accommodating a place is.



Can you afford to miss out on this business?



Meeting your legal responsibilities

Improving access will also help your business to meet its legal responsibilities. Better accessibility can also translate into a safer shopping and work environment and could have a beneficial effect on your public liability and workplace safety responsibilities.

It would also provide some protection should a complaint be filed against you through either Federal or State Disability Discrimination Acts.



4 ways
to improve
access for
ALL of your
customers



1 Make it easier for people to find you

To attract seniors, frail aged and people with a disability you can take simple steps to make your business easier to find and to access.

Start by advertising your advantages, for example:

- If your business is accessible, let people know. If you have wheelchair access, include this in your promotions and advertisements.
- If your business accepts Seniors Discount Cards, the Carer Discount Card, in fact, any concession card, promote it.
- If you provide a home delivery service or an online shopping service, promote this as well.

Make your business entrance easy to see:

- By choosing a colour to distinguish the entrance of your business that contrasts well with the general environment. This will make it stand out for people with a vision disability. Highly contrasting colours also make it easier to tell the difference between the immediate door surrounds and the doorway itself.
- Ensuring external signs are clear and well positioned to help people with vision impairments or learning difficulties identify your business.
- If there is more than one entrance, making sure there are clear directions to where each entrance is.



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Make it easier for people to enter your building

In new buildings all customers, including people using wheelchairs, must be able to enter the business independently. In older buildings the front entrance may have one or two steps or be difficult in other ways.

Steps create a problem for people using wheelchairs and walking frames, you might want to think about providing a ramp.

It is often possible to build a ramp into the building rather than constructing a ramp of the correct gradient outside the building to get people to the front door. Technical advice will be required to see that this is done correctly if you choose this option. If a ramp is not possible, consider moving the main entrance to another more accessible position.

If neither of these options are possible, **consider a handrail for the steps to assist some seniors and frail aged residents.** A handrail is also helpful if there is a level change. Steps edged with a contrasting colour are also helpful.

Maintain a clear sight line between the entry and the counter, so that staff are made aware when a customer needs assistance to enter the building or purchase goods.



Make sure your front door is easy to open (if not automatic).

The handle needs to be easy to reach and the door light to push. It also needs to be wide enough for someone using a wheelchair to pass through without difficulty.

Ideally, remove obstacles such as advertising boards and displays from the entrance

so that people in wheelchairs, older people, or people with a vision disability aren't at risk of falling over them.

If both your window display and your door are made of glass, put safety markings on the glass to reduce any reflective confusion for people with vision disability.



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Make it easy for people to get around

Once inside your business, everyone needs to be able to find their way to all sales areas, browse and inspect goods and bring them to the cash desk/checkout with ease. This includes all customers with mobility restrictions, hearing and sight disability. Ideas to consider include:

Making sure you provide aisles and pathways that aren't cluttered with displays - create a clear path of travel.

Making sure your pricing labels are clear and well positioned and high contrast colours have been used.



Placing goods, particularly the most popular ones, within reach of someone using a wheelchair.

If this is not always possible, making sure staff are trained to offer assistance.

Avoiding dangerously placed fittings and fixtures that can cause difficulties for customers with a vision disability.

If your business is large, providing seating for people who are older, frail, on crutches etc. in areas where they have to wait.

Providing a shop map if your retail business has a large floorspace or more than one floor level.



Make it easy for people to get around

Ideas to consider include:

Ensuring that at least part of your customer services area is at a height suitable for people using wheelchairs (750 – 800 mm from floor level).

Also, making sure that at least one of your checkouts aisles is wide enough, has a lower checkout counter and is always open.

Reducing the volume of background music and/or background noise to assist people with hearing difficulties.

Making sure the floor surface is non-slip and free from trip hazards.





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Making the most of customer service

One of the simplest and cheapest solutions when talking about 'improving access' is to change the way you think about customer service for seniors, the aged and frail and people with a disability.

It's not difficult to train your staff on how to communicate effectively with all your customers and how to give practical assistance when it's needed.

For support and advice on communication phone Mackay Regional Council's Disability Officer on:
1300 MACKAY (1300 622 529).



Remember:

Not all of the suggestions mentioned in this guide will be possible or even feasible for your specific business. Nor is the list of suggestions exhaustive.

The improvements that you do, don't have to be extravagantly expensive. A combination of providing easier entry and manoeuvrability and some staff training will go a long way to making your business more attractive to many people.

As a starting point, scan your business premises with seniors, frail aged and people with a disability in mind.



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Further information

For information on changing your access, building approvals, etc. contact any private Building Certifier (details can be found in the yellow pages).

For design ideas and technical requirements contact an Access Consultant at the Association of Consultants in Access Australia Inc.
www.access.asn.au

For information on legal issues and responsibilities contact the:
Human Right and Equal Opportunity Commission
Ph: (02) 9284 9600 or
1300 369 711 (toll free)
www.hreoc.gov.au

For copies of the relevant standards contact:
Standards Australia
Phone: 1300 654 646
www.standards.com

