



Making Business Better



Being inclusive is good for business

Tablelands Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Tablelands region and recognises their continuing connection to Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.



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Cover photo: Accessible shopping at Phillips Newsagency in Atherton
Photo: Robyn May



Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read Making Business Better: Being inclusive is good for business. This project is an initiative of Tablelands Regional Council's Inclusion Advisory Committee (the Committee).

Tablelands Regional Council (TRC) identified a need for developing economic and social capabilities for people of all abilities, age and background as one of its key priorities. TRC together with the Committee developed the Inclusive Communities Project focusing on better inclusion for older people and people with a disability.

After a successful application for funding from the Australian Government, TRC, the Committee and local consultant Community Bred engaged with the broader Tablelands community in workshops, meetings and surveys to develop this toolkit.

The toolkit provides easy-to-implement ideas, which were locally identified and are specific to our region for how business and services can be more inclusive. It aims to stimulate discussion and ideas, and we hope it supports you to expand inclusion within your organisation.

Cr Peter Hodge (Chair)
TRC Inclusion Advisory Committee



IAC members Councillor Peter Hodge (Chair), TRC Officer Renee King, Tim Pianta, David Jones, Jennie Donald, Carrie De Brueys, and Kirsty Lamperd.

Members not pictured: Louise Anderson-Clemence, Michael Trimble, Peta O'Neill, Laree Verra and Lindy-Ann Sinclair. Photo: Tablelands Regional Council

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About this resource

Being inclusive is good for business

But what does that mean, and how do services and businesses become more inclusive?

This is a question that the Tablelands Regional Council Inclusion Advisory Committee started to ask back in 2020. In doing so, they looked at the good things that are already happening on the Atherton Tablelands and Australia-wide, and asked residents and businesses what they think an inclusive and accessible Tablelands looks like.

Tablelands Regional Council received funding from the Australian Government to develop an inclusion toolkit for businesses, services and the community, focusing on inclusion and accessibility for older people and people with a disability. The toolkit is comprised of this booklet and the Every Body campaign materials—a logo, a poster and a sticker. This booklet provides some tips and best practice ideas on how businesses and services might become more inclusive, and examples of local organisations who are leading the way.

The toolkit was informed through community engagement and research. Meetings were held with key organisations such as disability and community organisations, service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, business peer support groups for disability and older people, lead agencies and more. Workshops were held with the Tablelands Inclusion Advisory Committee, and in Ravenshoe and Atherton to gather content and design ideas. A literature review of national and international work was completed, and an online survey was conducted to gather local input.

Icons within this guide

The following icons can be found within this booklet. They hold additional information to support the content provided.



A case study from the Atherton Tablelands



Additional information



An idea to increase inclusiveness



Using the Every Body Here campaign

How to use this kit

The Every Body campaign aims to identify services and businesses that are inclusion-friendly. Posters and stickers have been produced for display in premises to show that the business or service welcomes diversity – people of all ages and all abilities – and has services in place to support this, or is open to learning and receiving ideas on better service delivery.

Using the kit is simple. The logo, posters, stickers and this guide are available from Tablelands Regional Council, and local Chambers of Commerce. And you can download them from Council's website.

You can use the logo on your publicity to show you are a supporter of the Every Body campaign. Guidelines for how to use the logo are also available from TRC.

To display any of these resources, you absolutely should be a business or service which demonstrates inclusiveness at a small or large scale. Perhaps your shop is designed for easy access for a wheelchair, and your counter is at the right height. Or perhaps you are providing some assisted shopping for your customers. If you are actively welcoming and supporting people of all ages and abilities – you can use the resources in this kit.



Some definitions

The language we use in this booklet

Language can be confusing, and that was clearly identified during the research phase of this project. Some of the key terms that are used in this book include:

Inclusion In this document inclusion refers to embracing the diversity of humanity – abilities, culture, language, age, gender.

Access The terms ‘access’ and ‘accessible’ refer to the ability to have or use facilities, information, services and opportunities in a way that is suited to someone’s needs.

Disability Is the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and barriers in the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment.

Older people In line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition, older people refers generally to people over the age of 65.

We recognise that within our community, multiple layers of disadvantage exist that cause people to feel excluded. While this publication has a focus on older people and people with disabilities, we hope that the ideas within can support our community to become more inclusive for everyone who lives here.

Some additional useful terms

A sensory space is one where people can avoid or recover from sensory overload and/or work through their emotions and reactions to stimuli. Design features might include reduced noise, soft light, and items to stimulate the senses of touch, hearing and smell.

Invisible disabilities are not immediately obvious or apparent. Some invisible disabilities include autism, mental health issues, some visual and auditory disabilities, chronic pain, sleep disorders, acquired brain injuries, intellectual disabilities, and delayed responses because of diabetes or epilepsy.

A Human Library provides opportunities for people to meet and converse with people different to themselves and gain a better understanding of human diversity.

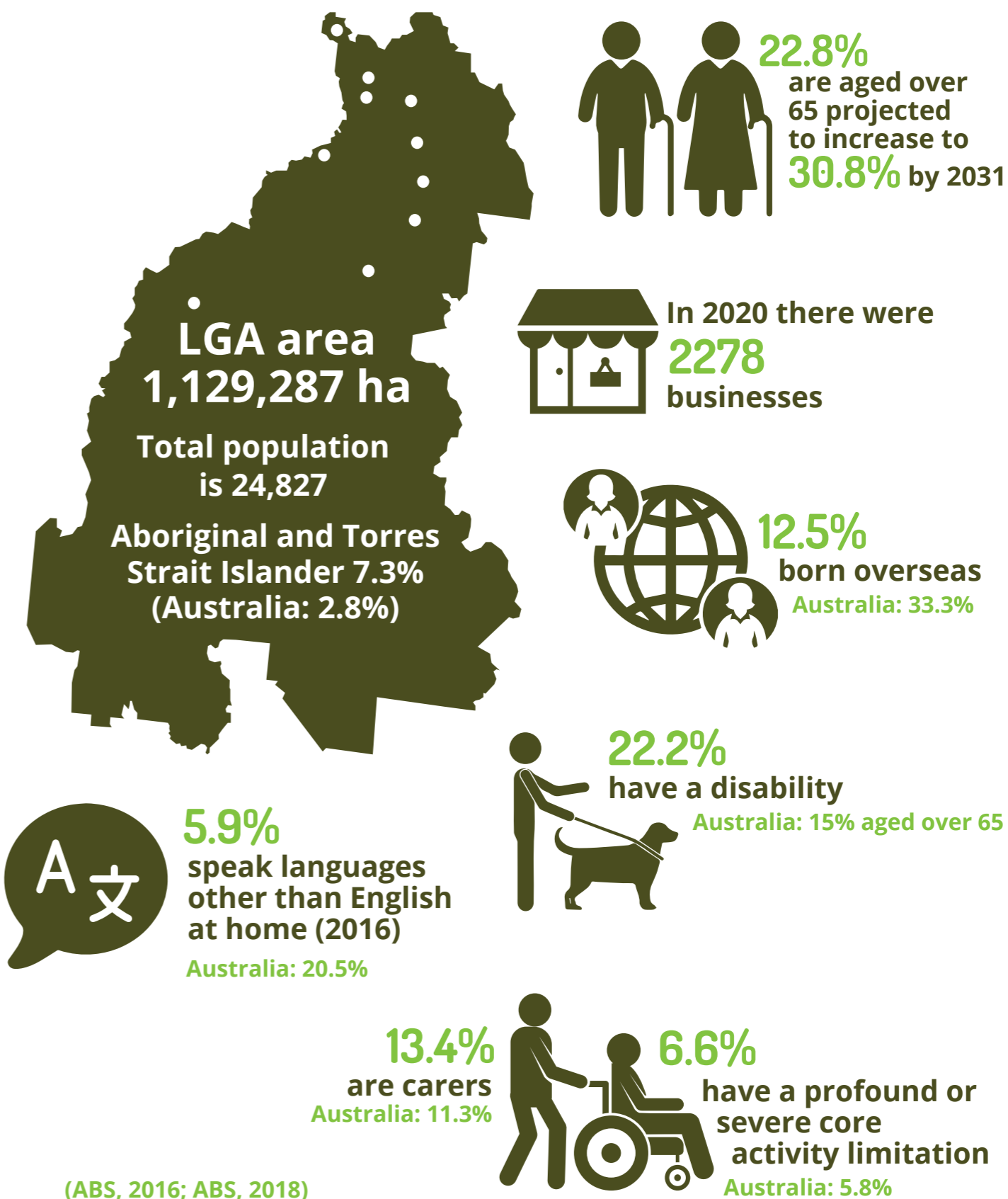
A hearing loop is a special type of sound system for use by people with hearing aids to help people who use hearing aids to pick up speech sounds more clearly. This symbol (below) represents a service or business that has installed a hearing loop.



A quick look at the Atherton Tablelands

What does our population look like?

These statistics provide a snapshot of our population on the Atherton Tablelands, particularly for older people and people with disabilities.



Better Customer Service

Who isn't spending money at your business and why not?

Providing good customer service is key to better business everywhere. There's nothing new there. Still, it comes up time and time again when people are asked how things could be improved. So what does better customer service look like under an inclusive lens?

Customer service is about how we interact with people. The barriers to equitable customer service that Tablelands people identified mostly came down to a lack of knowledge and understanding about diversity.

Top Tips

1. Apply the principles of good customer service to everyone who comes through your door, calls, messages or emails you.
2. Hold respectful conversations – see people as people first. As you don't know the individual circumstances of each of your customers, be open-minded and considerate to their needs.
3. Address the uncomfortable in meeting the needs of people with dementia, acquired brain injuries, and physical disabilities - without assumption.
4. Conversation starters – brainstorm with your team about how you can start up a conversation with your clients or customers, tips for communicating interacting and acknowledging fear.
5. Provide glasses and magnifying glasses on the counter.
6. When customers need to sign in at a venue or shop – are there alternative sign-in options available?
7. Ask what people need – “do you have any access needs?”
8. Inclusion training for staff – learn about disability, brain injury and ageing.
9. Respond to obvious needs, but if you are unsure ask e.g. if a customer cannot reach or physically access the eftpos machine, hold it at a height it can be used.
10. Use multiple channels of communication for promotion so more people can find out about your business, service or event.
11. Embrace our community connectedness to share information about local business championing inclusiveness through social media, community awards and word of mouth.



Photo: Robyn May



An easy fix in an Atherton Newsagency

An older man uses a mobility scooter to access shops in Atherton. He went into an Atherton newsagency to purchase a gift card, but was unable to access the cards at the back of the shop as the scooter couldn't navigate the aisles. The shop assistant noticed and asked what he was looking for. She then gathered a selection of cards so he could make a purchase.

It's not always what it seems

Many people know little about acquired brain injuries (ABI) and might find an ABI hard to recognise in a customer. There are real stories in our community of people with ABIs being asked to leave business premises because it was assumed they were drunk, despite being informed otherwise by the person or their carer. One such experience left the person and their carer feeling unwelcome, embarrassed and upset.

Not all disabilities are apparent, so it is important to remain open-minded to the needs and experiences of your customers.



Assistance dogs

An assistance dog is one specifically trained and registered to support people with disabilities. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 qualified Assistance Dogs are able to accompany their handler into public spaces (some exceptions apply).



Better physical spaces

More than ramps and accessible toilets

Many of the streetscapes and buildings in the region were designed decades ago, and with minimal consideration to access. Because of this, many people are unable to access shops due to steps or narrow entryways. It can also be difficult to move around inside if the shelves are too close together. The distance between accessible parking and your shop may also hinder customers from accessing your services. Lack of access to appropriate toilets and adult changing areas are another reason people might stay away.

Ultimately, improving access for people with disability and older people will make it easier for everyone to visit and do business with you!

Top Tips

1. Don't be scared to start – not all changes are expensive! And small changes could increase your business revenue.
2. Identify accessible toilets, paths, disability parking spaces in your community. Add them (and your welcoming business) to the Spinal Life Accessible Australia mapping app.
3. Ramps can be installed to overcome difficulties with lips, steps and walkways. This will provide easier access for all.
4. Keep footpaths accessible - tables and chairs on footpaths can block movement for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams etc.
5. Provide a variety of seating. Include seats which are not too giving, not too high and have armrests, to cater for diverse needs.
6. Can your business premise be redesigned to enable better access for wheelchairs, visually-impaired people, mobility scooters and prams, e.g. widen and declutter your aisles?
7. Where are the closest accessible toilets? If you have one, could you make it available 'publicly' – let other businesses know?
8. Is your signage and business counter at an accessible height?
9. Know and follow your legal obligations.
10. Join with neighbouring businesses to plan for undertaking larger modifications together and reduce costs.
11. If you can't change the design or layout of your premises: can you offer click and collect, or supported shopping?



Designing accessibly from the beginning at Millstream Caravan Park and Resort

Plans are in development to build an accessible caravan park and resort on the triangular block at the back of the Millstream General Store. Four of the 13 units will be accessible – and the additional rooms will also have some accessible features. This is more than the legal requirement, but according to General Store owner Jenny Bafico, “if everything is accessible, then everything is accessible... Why wouldn't you do it that way?”

The park will be a place for everyone to use – not just mainstream. “Anyone who comes here can use it - whether walking on two legs, wheeling on chairs, or wheelie walkers,” Jenny says.

Jenny has looked at lots of options for accessibility and worked with Tablelands designers to develop her plans, which will include an accessible swimming pool and other accessible resort features.



“More people can stay here if we are accessible, that's good for business”

Jenny Bafico, Millstream General Store

Photo: Lyndal Scobell



Immerse yourself and your team: borrow a wheelchair, some crutches, a pram or cover your eyes and make your way around your shop. Better still, invite someone with a disability to help you identify potential hazards. Together you might come up with some simple solutions.



Better access

How else can someone use your services or buy your product?

Despite having access to advanced technology, it has taken a pandemic and lockdowns for many of us to ramp-up the way we do business and change the way we access services. But while the technology is available, it doesn't work equally everywhere on the Tablelands. We need multiple ways for people to access services and business.

Top Tips

1. Is there an opportunity to expand your business by offering orders online or by phone, click and collect, or home delivery? Can you take your products or services to your customers?
2. Have digital menus instore – use a tablet or a computer or have a digital board so people of all abilities have alternative ways to shop.
3. Learn about, use and share accessibility apps – there are a whole lot available!
4. Provide hearing loops, and magnifiers and reading glasses at the counter.
5. Provide photo menus and / or menus with large text at cafes and restaurants.
6. Provide multiple payment options, e.g. direct deposit and PayPal, as some people may not have a credit card.
7. Keep your non-tech options – accepting cash, phone bookings and physical tickets are such easy options for everyone!
8. Don't just rely on technology. Not everyone has internet access and a computer, and some people are not computer literate.
9. Consider 'sensory spaces' in your business or service.
10. Create an interactive online ordering space so that social interaction can occur - just like the shops.
11. Consider your opening hours – can you have designated opening times for older people, or people with a disability?
12. Transport options – does your service have an accessible bus that is used only at specific times? How else could your bus be used?
13. Work with your community to advocate and improve streetscape accessibility.
14. Work with others to develop and provide town locality access maps – maps which identify the accessible places in your area.
15. Ensure older people and people with disability know about and can access evening social events by thinking about how and where they find things out.
16. Is there an opportunity to teach your clients / customers how to use the technology? You could hold learning opportunities in your quiet times – this would also bring people into your business.
17. Ensure your website is accessible including font size, readability and ease of use.



Responding to local needs, an amazing feeling

Responding to local needs, Emersons Bus Company initially purchased two wheelchair-accessible Mercedes Benz buses equipped with fold-out ramps.

When the need arose for a larger bus for the company, the first specifications were for wheelchair accessibility, preferably automated. They were able to purchase the current 45-seat vehicle that uses a Braun Cassette style system (pictured).



“Seeing groups with all abilities being able to enjoy outings with their peers, and the fact we play a small part in making that a reality, is an amazing feeling”

Kev Emerson

Ben, with Phil from Emerson Bus Company, disembarking from the bus.
Photo: Disability Matters



Inclusive employment

Are your staff reflecting the community?

Did you know employees with disabilities have higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, equivalent productivity levels and better workplace safety records than employees without disability? Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that older people have less absenteeism and higher punctuality.

Yet in Australia, many employers are unwilling to employ people with disability due to negative attitudes and misconceptions about capability, and misconceptions about the cost of modifications and adaptive technology. People with a history of mental illness or intellectual disability are particularly stigmatised. In addition, one in ten businesses will not employ people over the age of 50 years.

Are you missing out on the best staff?

Top Tips

1. Employ people with disability and older people because it's good for business.
2. Check your workplace policy and practices for all abilities recruitment, training and support.
3. Find out more about your legal responsibilities.
4. Educate yourself and your staff about anti-discrimination, disability and ageism.
5. Create a workplace environment where all staff are comfortable to discuss their experiences, and their needs to feel included in the workplace.
6. Normalise diversity in your workplace – everyone is different!
7. Employer incentives – the Australian and Queensland governments provide financial assistance for employment, building modifications and staff training to encourage all-abilities employment in the workplace.
8. People with NDIS plans may get support for employment e.g. a support worker could attend work alongside to support their paid or volunteer role.



Support is available!

Some State and Federal Government programs may provide financial help to eligible people with disabilities and mental health conditions, and employers, to support work-related equipment, modifications, Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services.



Inclusive employment practices at Tablelands Regional Council

TRC is a forward-thinking and inclusive organisation which recognises the importance and value of diversity in the workforce. Employees from diverse perspectives and backgrounds have proven benefits including increased creativity and innovation, better problem solving and decision making, and reduced employee turnover.

TRC supports employees who have identified that they have a physical disability or short-term injury by making reasonable adjustments to the workplace to ensure they can safely undertake their role and responsibilities.

TRC suggests that employers can be more inclusive by:

- reviewing employment practices to ensure that recruitment is truly merit based
- review the way that work is done to identify outdated practices that are preventing more inclusivity in the workforce
- checking the legislation, standards and industry guidelines to learn about the legal responsibilities in equal employment and recruiting.



It's challenging finding work when you are 'older'

An over-60 local woman, highly experienced in the community sector, was made redundant in 2020. In her search for work, she noted she felt disrespected by some younger employment consultants and disillusioned by the comments of some potential employers who inferred they "didn't want to waste time or money training someone over the age of 50".



The most common types of age-related discrimination experienced by over 50% of older Australians are being turned down from a position, being ignored, being treated with disrespect and being subjected to jokes about ageing.



The opportunity of inclusive language

Our words matter

How your business or service communicates through advertising, signage and interacting with people can define how inclusive you are. Language matters and there is evidence to prove it.

The language we use shapes our worldview, and that of those around us. If inclusive language is used in our work and social groups, over time our society will also be more inclusive. Non-inclusive language contributes to and continues stereotyping. By shifting the language we use, we can challenge and change stereotypes and biases – the root cause of exclusion for older people and people with disability.

Top Tips

1. Use inclusive language - every day and in every way! Check the language you use. For example, say “people with disability” “older people” “all people” “people without disability”.
2. Make sure accessible up-to-date relevant information is available in multiple formats.
3. There is great information available for producing written material which is more accessible. For example, good contrast such as dark print on light backgrounds, large, simple font styles and use of upper and lower case (avoiding all capitals).
4. Use fewer words in communication products and use pictures.
5. ‘Human Libraries’, art and cultural projects can change the way people interact, speak and think. Find ways to share experiences with the whole community.
6. See ‘Better customer service’ in this booklet for information on communicating, interactions and acknowledging fear.
7. Use closed captions on any videos you produce for viewing.
8. There are lots of resources available to help you get your language right.
9. Respect the person first – their individuality and their rights.



Did you know....

When you are producing signage or information, there are guidelines available to help make them more readable.

- Colours – dark text (and solid ink) on very light backgrounds is recommended. Contrasting colours are also recommended.
- Use sans serif fonts (ones without the decorative line). Arial, Calibri, Century Gothic, Tahoma, Verdana and Helvetica are examples of sans serif fonts which are widely available, and accessible.
- For documents (e.g. menus or fliers), use a minimum font size of 12 pt for a general audience, but 16 pt is recommended for vision impairment.

What now?

Going ahead and making the change

A booklet like this can sometimes be overwhelming. It can feel like there are now too many things that we need to do to become inclusive. Here’s the thing – one step at a time. Pick something small, inexpensive and simple – and do that!

Be an advocate

1. Use the Every Body campaign material for your business, and share it with your colleagues, family and friends.
2. Make a public statement. Share information publicly about how you are being inclusive (or about this booklet).
3. Lead by example, this means walking the talk. If you say you are being inclusive, you need to act to be inclusive.
4. Join with others, team up with other local businesses and services to learn together and promote inclusion.
5. Join with other local businesses and services to share resources and costs, or access funding to make physical changes to your business.
6. Annual inclusion awards, celebrate local businesses and services improving and leading the way.
7. If someone in the community does a good job at inclusion – tell everyone! Jump on social media, tell your friends and family.
8. Self-advocate as a person with a disability, tell businesses and services what you wish they knew.
9. Approach Council and Chambers of Commerce to gain support for grants to make modifications, and to provide information.
10. Educate designers and builders about accessible building designs and people-centred design (bring in people with disability and older people to advise on design).



Use the Every Body Here logo on drink coasters in cafes, pubs and restaurants to promote inclusion.

Contact a reputable organisation to help get the message and language right.



A word about the law

Businesses and organisations have a legal responsibility to provide equal opportunity and access for all people.

Some relevant Commonwealth and Queensland Acts include but are not limited to:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Queensland Human Rights Act 2019
- Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1987
- Racial Discrimination Act 1984
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

To find out more about your responsibilities under the law visit business.gov.au.



Photo: Lyndal Scobell



Making it easier to get in your door

Many local businesses have installed doorway ramps or threshold ramps, like the one pictured. Ramps can make it easier for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walkers and prams to navigate doorway lips and steps. This is a reasonably low cost modification that can make a huge difference for customers to be able to enter your business.



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Photo: Disability Matters

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Go to www.dss.gov.au for more information.



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