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.

Cover photo: Accessible shopping at Phillips Newsagency in Atherton
© 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.

Contents

About this resource

Being inclusive is good for business

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

This is a question that Tablelands Regional Council's (TRC) 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 thought an inclusive and accessible Tablelands should look like.

TRC 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 Welcome Here campaign materials — a logo, a poster and a sticker. This booklet provides tips and best practice ideas on how businesses and services can 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 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 Welcome Here campaign

How to use this kit

The Every Body Welcome Here 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 trc.qld.gov.au

You can use the logo on your publicity to show you are a supporter of the Every Body Welcome Here campaign. Some ideas on how to use the logo are also available throughout this toolkit.

To display these resources, you should be a business or service that demonstrates inclusiveness at any scale. Perhaps your shop is designed for easy access for wheelchairs, and your counter is at the right height. Or perhaps you are providing 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.

TABLELANDS
REGION

EVERY
BODY
WELCOME
HERE

Being inclusive is good for business

Tablelands Regional Council

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 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, and gender.

Access 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.

Additional useful terms

A sensory space is where people can avoid or recover from sensory overload and/or work through their emotions and reactions to stimuli. Design features 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.
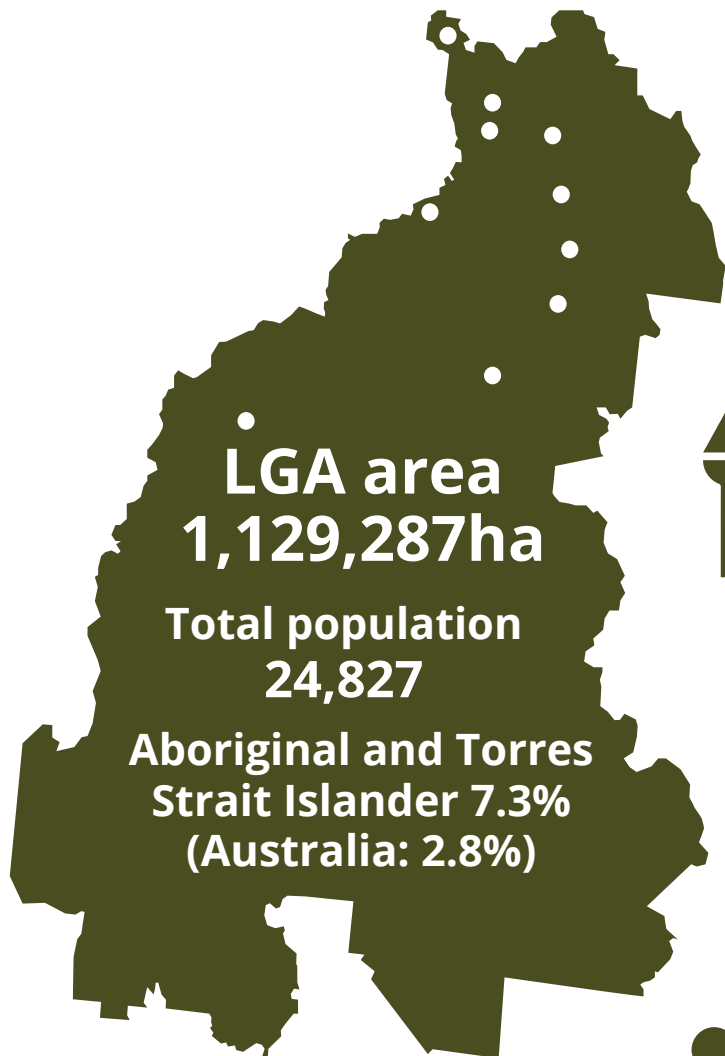
A hearing loop is a special type of sound system for people with hearing aids to help pick up speech sounds more clearly. This symbol (below) represents a service or business that has installed a hearing loop.

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.

LGA area 1,129,287ha

Total population 24,827

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 7.3% (Australia: 2.8%)

22.8% are aged over 65 projected to increase to **30.8%** by 2031

In 2020 there were **2278** businesses
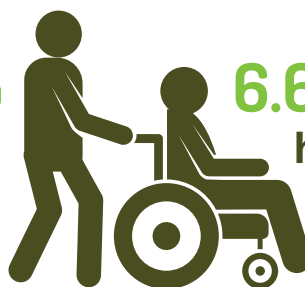
12.5% born overseas
Australia: 33.3%

22.2% have a disability
Australia: 15% aged over 65

5.9% speak languages other than English at home
Australia: 20.5%

13.4% are carers
Australia: 11.3%

6.6% have a profound or severe core activity limitation
Australia: 5.8%

(ABS, 2016; ABS, 2018)

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

Providing good customer service is key to better business everywhere. 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 were 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.

2. Hold respectful conversations — see people as people first. You don't know the individual circumstances of each customer so be open-minded and considerate of their needs.

3. Address the needs of people with dementia, acquired brain injuries, and physical disabilities without assumption.

4. Brainstorm with your team about how you can start a conversation with your clients or customers and tips for communicating, interacting and acknowledging fear.

5. Provide glasses and magnifying glasses on the counter.

6. Ask if people have access needs.

7. Hold inclusion training for staff – to learn about disability, brain injury and ageing.

8. Respond to obvious needs e.g. if a customer cannot reach or physically access the eftpos machine, hold it at a height it can be used.

9. Use multiple channels of communication for promotion so more people can find out about your business, service or event.

10. Embrace our community connectedness to share information about local business championing inclusiveness through social media, community awards and word of mouth.

LOCAL STORY

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

Acquired brain injuries (ABI) are hard to recognise. There are real stories in our community of people with ABIs being asked to leave a premise 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.

INFORMATON

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. Lack of access to appropriate toilets and adult changing areas are another reason people might stay away.

Improving access for people with disability and older people will make it easier for everyone to use your business.

Top Tips

1. Not all changes are expensive and small changes could increase your business revenue.

2. Identify accessible toilets, paths, parking spaces in your community. Add them (and your welcoming business) to the Spinal Life Accessible Australia mapping app.

3. Seek council's advice for ramps to be installed for lips, steps and walkways to provide easier access to your business.

4. Keep pedestrian walkways clear for movement of wheelchairs and mobility scooters as per TRC Local Laws.

5. Provide a variety of seating. Include seats that are firm, not too high and have armrests to cater for diverse needs.

6. Can your business premise widen and declutter aisles to enable better access for wheelchairs, visually-impaired people, mobility scooters and prams?

7. Where are the closest accessible toilets? If you have one, could you make it available 'publicly' and let other businesses know?

8. Make sure your signs and counter are an accessible height.

9. Know and follow your legal obligations.

10. Join with neighbouring businesses to plan for larger modifications to reduce costs.

11. If you can't change the design or layout of your premises 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 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?'

"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-based 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

© 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 identify potential hazards. Together you might come up with some simple solutions.

Better access

How else can someone use your services and 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. Consider a digital menu so customers can use their phone or tablet to order and pay.

3. Learn about, use and share accessibility apps.

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 like direct deposit and PayPal.

7. Keep your non tech options. Not everyone has internet access or a computer. Accepting cash, phone bookings, and physical tickets are easy options for everyone.

8. Consider 'sensory spaces' in your business or service.

9. Create an interactive online ordering space so social interaction can occur just like in the shops.

10. Consider having designated opening times for older people and people with a disability.

11. Does your service have an accessible bus that is used only at specific times? How else could your bus be used?

12. Work with your community to advocate and improve streetscape accessibility.

13. Work with others to develop and provide town locality access maps that identify the accessible places in your area.

14. Ensure older people and people with disability know about and can find out about social events. Print posters for a mail out, or advertise your event in the local newspaper.

15. 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.

16. Ensure your website is accessible including font size, readability and ease of use.

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.
© 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? There is also evidence that older people have less absenteeism and higher punctuality.

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. 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 what they need to feel included in the workplace.

6. Normalise diversity in your workplace — everyone is different!

7. Australian and Queensland governments provide financial incentives for employment, building modifications and staff training to encourage all-abilities employment.

8. People with NDIS plans may get support for employment e.g. a support worker could attend work to support their paid or volunteer role.

Support is available!

Some Australian and Queensland 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

LOCAL STORY

TRC is a forward-thinking and inclusive organisation that 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.

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 recruitment is truly merit-based
- Reviewing the way work is done to identify outdated practices that are preventing more inclusivity in the workforce
- Checking 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

LOCAL STORY

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

INFORMATON

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.

The language we use shapes our worldview, and that of those around us. If inclusive language is used in our work and social groups, our society will become more inclusive. Non-inclusive language contributes to and continues stereotyping. By shifting the language 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 and 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 and more pictures.

5. Human Libraries and 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 when you produce a video.

8. There are lots of resources available to help you get your language right.

9. Respect the person, their individuality and their rights.

Did you know?

When you are producing signs and information there are guidelines available to help make them more readable.

- Dark text (and solid ink) on very light backgrounds and contrasting colours.
- Use sans serif fonts (ones without the decorative line) like Opens Sans, Arial, Calibri, Century Gothic, Tahoma, Verdana and Helvetica.
- For documents use a minimum font size of 12pt for a general audience, and 16 for vision impairment.

What now?

Going ahead and making the change

A booklet like this can be overwhelming. It can feel like there are too many things that need doing to become inclusive. Take one step at a time. Start with something small, inexpensive and simple.

Be an advocate

1. Use the Every Body Welcome Here campaign material for your business, and share it with your colleagues, family and friends.

2. Make a public statement. Share information about how you are being inclusive (and about this toolkit).

3. Lead by example, this means walking the talk. If you say you are being inclusive, you need to act inclusive.

4. 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, and access funding to make physical changes to your business.

6. Nominate for inclusion awards to celebrate local businesses and services who are improving and leading the way.

7. If someone does a good job at inclusion, tell everyone! Jump on social media, and tell your friends and family.

8. Self-advocate as a person with a disability. Tell businesses and services what you wish they knew.

9. Apply 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.

Our community focus group suggested businesses use the Every Body Welcome Here logo on their shop front window, by the counter, on drink coasters and menu's, or on their website to promote inclusion.

A word about the law

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

Some relevant Australian and Queensland acts include:

- 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

Visit business.gov.au to find out more about your responsibilities under the law.

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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. Contact TRC to see what approvals are needed to install a ramp or lip cover for access in to your business.

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