



Office for Disability

Access to Buildings

An inaccessible built environment can present a barrier for people with a disability in everyday life, such as entering public buildings, using stairs, opening doors, hearing public announcements and reading signs.

Accessible buildings and facilities enable equal use of the built environment for all people. In particular, accessibility allows dignified and non-discriminatory entry and use of buildings, facilities and services by people with a disability.

The following checklist for access to the built environment, has been drawn from the Australian Human Rights Commission resource titled 'Access to buildings and services: guidelines and information'

<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability%5Frights/buildings/guidelines.htm>

The checklist will help non-building professionals identify elements that affect the access into and through buildings and facilities. It is not a technical checklist for compliance with discrimination law or building law. To inform compliance an access audit of the built environment should be carried out by a building professional (see Further Information).

It should be noted that new **Disability (Access to premises – Buildings) Standards 2010** known as the Premises Standards have been made under the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** and will apply from 1 May 2011. The Premises Standards will apply to every new building project for which an application for a building permit is lodged on or after that date. Future checklist updates will reflect these changes.

The checklist is grouped under the following headings:

- accessible paths of travel to the main door or doors
- lifts and stairs

- car parks
- accessible paths inside the building to all services and facilities
- doorways
- toilets
- goods, services and facilities (including staff training, information and communication).

Accessible paths of travel to the main door or doors

- Is there a clear and **continuous accessible path of travel** with no steps or other barriers (such as steep inclines, bollards, uneven or loose surfaces) from the main points of entry on the buildings boundary or car park to and through the main door or doors used by the public or employees?
- Is the path wide enough for a person using a wheelchair or walking frame to pass by someone else, or are there regular passing spaces along the path?
- Is there good overhead clearance with nothing hanging down, such as tree branches or signs that might be a hazard for people who are blind or vision impaired?
- If the Internal and external path of travel includes a ramp, does it have a gradual slope or incline, handrails, safety kerbs or kerbrails at the floor level, level landings at regular intervals to allow someone to rest, and warning **tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs)** at the top and bottom?
- Is the signage identifying your organisation clear, large enough to be seen at some distance, and of high contrast?
- If there is a car 'drop-off' point at the main entrance, is there a kerb ramp to allow someone using a wheelchair to access the footpath from the road?

Lifts and stairs

- If a lift has been installed, are there handrails and is it large enough to allow someone using a wheelchair or walking frame to enter and turn around to use the lift control panel? Do the lift buttons have raised tactile and Braille information next to them, and are they at a height that can be reached by all? Does the lift provide audible information telling passengers what floor they arrived at?
- If there are any stairs (in addition to the accessible path of travel), do they have continuous handrails, colour-contrasting strips on the leading edge, no open risers and warning TGSIs at the top and bottom?

Car parks

- Is there a wider parking space(s) designated for accessible parking, and is it identified with the **international symbol for access**?
- Is there a clear accessible path of travel with no steps or other barriers such as kerbs from designated accessible parking space(s) to the nearest accessible public entrance?
- Is the designated accessible parking space(s) on a firm and level surface, and as close as possible to an accessible public entrance?
- Is there good overhead clearance from the entrance of an undercover carpark to the accessible parking space(s)?
- Is there good overhead height clearance over the accessible car space(s)?

Accessible paths inside the building to all services and facilities

- Is there a clear accessible path of travel, with no steps or other barriers from each accessible entrance to all areas and facilities used by the public including reception areas, interview rooms, toilets and other facilities?
- Are passageways wide enough for a person using a wheelchair or walking frame to pass by someone else or are there regular passing spaces?
- Are floor coverings slip-resistant, firm and smooth?
- Does signage direct the public from the entrance to a reception desk or facilities, and is it clear, large enough to be seen at some distance and of high contrast?
- Does the design and layout of the public area make it easy for the public to find their way to reception desks or other facilities?
- If any room has fixed seating, are there spaces for people using wheelchairs spread throughout the room?

Doorways

- Is there good circulation space to enable people using mobility aids such as a wheelchair or walking frame to open and go through all doorways?
- Are the doors heavy and difficult to open?
- Are the door handles easy to use such as 'D-shaped' handles, or difficult to manipulate such as round knobs?
- If the doorway and surrounds are glass, is there a clearly distinguishable colour-contrasting strip across the full width so that people with a vision impairment can more easily identify the doorway?

Toilets

- Do all toilets have clear identification signs including raised tactile and Braille information?
- Is there a unisex accessible toilet at or close to the location of other toilet facilities, and does it have the international symbol for access as well as the tactile and Braille signage?
- Do unisex accessible toilets have good circulation space internally, and are they fitted out with grabrails, sinks, mirrors, taps, shelves, coat hooks and towelling at heights and in positions that can be reached by people using wheelchairs?
- Is the door to the toilet easy to open and close with handles and locks that are easy to manipulate?

Goods, services and facilities

General

- Is at least a part of any reception desk area at a height that can be used by a person using a wheelchair or someone of short stature?
- If customers or clients may have to wait in a reception area for some time, is there seating that can be used by people with disabilities such as arthritis?
- If there are any tables, cubicles, water coolers, telephones, computers, ticketing machines, turnstiles or other facilities, is at least one of each kind at a height that would be accessible to people using a wheelchair?

- If there is a system for queuing or notification of service, is it clearly identifiable and accessible to all clients, including people with a hearing or vision impairment and people with a learning disability? For example, a queuing system that simply flashes up a number without an auditory announcement would not be useful for customers who are blind.
- If there is a public announcement system, is it supplemented with visual displays such as captioning or scroll bars of information and **assistive listening systems** such as a hearing loop?
- If there is a hearing loop is there signage in the form of the **International Symbol for Deafness** to inform the public of its availability?
- If there are changing rooms, is at least one large enough to be used by a person using a wheelchair or walking frame?
- Is there good lighting to assist people with a vision impairment to follow the safest pathway and to assist with communication, for example for people who might lip-read?
- If facilities such as telephones, computers or transaction machines are made available to the public, can they be used by all clients including those with a vision or hearing impairment? For example, a person with a hearing impairment may need a volume control on a telephone or a person with a vision impairment may need a large screen on the computer or audio instructions on an ATM.
- Are controls and switches at an accessible and reachable height for everyone, including people using wheelchairs?
- If you provide your services outside your building on the footpath, is there safe passage for pedestrians? Is any street furniture, such as tables and chairs, placed away from the building line?
- Is there an emergency evacuation procedure in place that addresses the needs of people with disability?

Staff training

- Are staff trained to provide assistance and services in a non-discriminatory manner? For example, are they aware of the appropriate way to offer assistance to a blind person or how to best communicate with a Deaf person who may lip read?
- Do staff know when and how to organise a sign language interpreter for clients who communicate using Auslan (Australian Sign Language)?
- Do staff know how to use a **TTY (telephone typewriter)** and the National Relay Service for people who are Deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment?

Information and communication

- Do all your contact details on your website and publications include a TTY or email contact for people who are Deaf or who have a hearing or speech impairment?
- Is information provided to clients available in a range of formats such as electronic, large print or Braille on request, and do staff know how to access alternative formats when required?
- Is public information on your organisation's website accessible to all users, and compliant with web accessibility guidelines?

Further information

See also: Office for Disability fact sheets: 'Access Audits' and 'Improving Access to Buildings'
www.officefordisability@vic.gov.au

If you would like to receive this document in an accessible format, contact the Office for Disability:

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