



# The WELCOME Framework

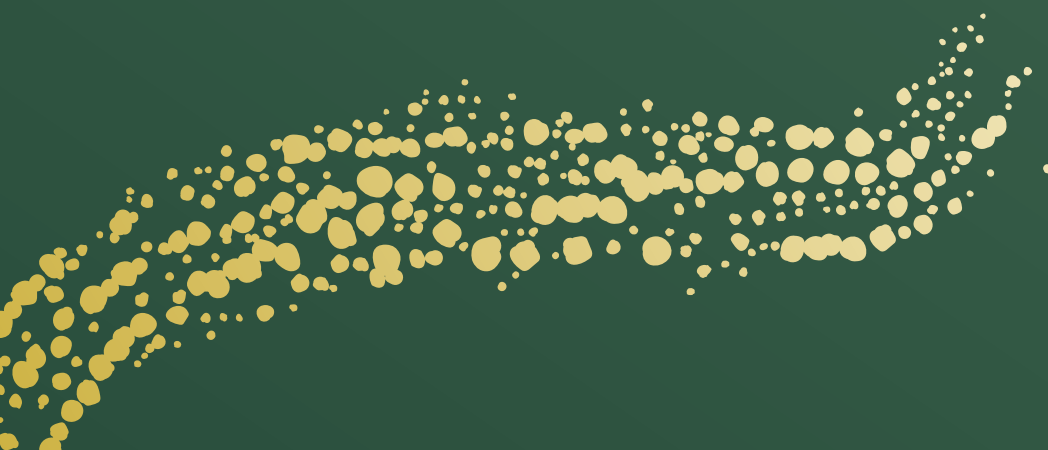
Guidance for accessible and inclusive  
tourism businesses

# Acknowledgements

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## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of lands throughout Australia and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the enduring connection of First Nations people to land, sea and waters, and their deep care for Country over 65,000 years. We honour the enormous contribution First Nations cultures and traditions make to the visitor experience in Australia, and commit to protecting and nurturing these cultures in partnership with First Nations communities.



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- Queensland Department of Tourism and Sport
- South Australian Tourism Commission
- Tourism Northern Territory
- Tourism Tasmania
- Tourism Western Australia
- Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Visit Canberra
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**This guide has practical advice to make your tourism business more accessible and inclusive.**

How can tourism operators attract visitors of all abilities? Our WELCOME Framework sets out easy-to-follow steps for tourism businesses to:

- reduce barriers to participation
- start their accessible tourism journey.

Accessibility is about making sure all people of all abilities have the tools to enjoy the same products and services as everyone else. Inclusion is about ensuring everyone gets a chance to take part. It is focused on cultural practices and shifting social norms, so that everyone can enjoy themselves while participating.

## What the Framework does

The WELCOME Framework encourages tourism operators to view accessibility and inclusivity as a universal approach to business.

The Framework brings together important aspects for tourism operators to consider in making their products and services more accessible. It guides them in understanding the needs of, and promoting their business to, the accessible tourism community.

The Framework covers:

- W for Welcome
- E for Environment
- L for Links
- C for Communication
- O for Operations
- M for Marketing
- E for Experience.



Photo: Flynn Rigby, Travel Blogger with a hidden disability. [everybodydeservesaholiday.com](http://everybodydeservesaholiday.com)

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*'Being a microbusiness, there was this concern that we were going to have to make major changes... we realised we can start small. We can think about how to impact somebody's experience and make it better.'*

**Nerida Hart, Walk Darwin**

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# Welcome

All visitors want to feel welcome and included, starting from the moment they engage with your business online, over the phone or in person.

When visitors research a business, they should be able to find accessibility details easily. When visitors arrive onsite, the built environment needs to be welcoming. Everyone deserves to feel welcomed by quality customer service supported by well-trained staff with inclusive attitudes.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Identify easy or quick wins. This could include updating your website to include clear information on your business's existing accessible features, or improving lighting and clearing pathways of obstructions, or empowering staff to offer a warm welcome to all visitors to your business.
- Update your Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listing with your business's accessible tourism attributes. Accessible Tourism categories on the site include cognitive/autism, allergies and intolerances, limited mobility, low hearing, low vision and/or wheelchairs and scooters.

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*'Travel is for everyone. With not a lot of effort, doors can be opened very easily to be more inclusive right across the board.'*

*Jo Larter, Gorge Scenic Chairlift*

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Photo: Tourism and Events Queensland

# Environment

Members of the accessible tourism community need to be familiar with the physical environment before they go. Information is key to make it easier for visitors to understand how they will experience your business and services including from the point of arrival. This includes clear and accurate descriptions of visitor facilities, from lifts/steps and bathrooms to audio services for tours and overnight accommodation, where applicable.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Where you can't lower a high reception desk, offer alternative check-in locations (such as a lounge area) for guests who are wheelchair users, or others who can't use high surfaces. Consider fast-tracking check-in or booking queues for those who can't stand for a lengthy period.
- Be conscious of ambient noise in reception areas and have a quiet space available for visitors.
- Provide seating close to the reception area/ticket office.
- Think beyond installing ramps or handrails. Such upgrades are important, but the accessible tourism community is diverse and covers many more than those in a wheelchair or with limited mobility. Also consider the needs of travellers with low vision, sensory issues or hidden disabilities.
- Always remove outdated information about your business's features or facilities from your website. Keeping your website up to date will give the best impression of your business and avoid any customer disappointment.



Photo: Tourism Western Australia

# Links

Each business represents one link in the tourism supply chain. It is critical to consider how local services and other nearby operators support a visitor's experience. Visitors will use a mix of public and private amenities when they visit a region. Take the time to find out what is available. Ensure your staff can communicate exactly how local service providers and businesses you work with are accessible and inclusive.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Include information on your website and premises about public and private transport options, including the distance from the nearest town.
- Ask your visitors if they need help making any of their travel plans.
- Use your local knowledge to give advice and clear directions on arrival options. Consider sending an email with more tailored instructions.
- Visit and compile a list of complementary businesses. For example, if you are an accommodation provider that has a list of local restaurants, consider highlighting those with accessibility features.
- Recommend side activities (such as tours and experiences) with options for those with accessibility needs.

# Communication

Everyone engages with businesses differently. Providing multiple points and methods of communication can support visitors through their journey – from research to visitation and onwards to repeat patronage. Review your public content and understand Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), the international standard for online accessibility.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Ensure the information you give is consistent across all your channels and customer service team, including your website and email/phone communication.
  - Include FAQs on your website or provide an option for guests to outline their needs when booking online.
  - Use visitor maps and accessibility apps to assist travellers with hearing, visual or cognitive requirements.
  - Give your visitors every chance to tell you if they have any specific needs.
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- 'It's the little touches that make a big difference, like having quiet spaces or switching to calming music. We can arrange for a second instructor to make sure people feel safe and supported, or let friends and family sit alongside flyers before they enter the wind tunnel if they prefer more personal support. The best part is seeing the huge smiles and hearing the joy when someone accomplishes something they never thought they could.'*
- Lauren Hearn, iFly**
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- Share information about your experience and your local knowledge to make visits easier. Visitors will not necessarily know about your business and/or region.
- Describe your accessible features in detail, rather than using general phrases such as “fully accessible”. This will help the visitor decide if your accessible features meet their needs.



Photo: Tourism and Events Queensland



Photo: Tourism and Events Queensland

## Operations

Exceptional customer service lies in consistency. Internal training is important to ensure your entire team can understand and implement policies and procedures. This includes staff training on allergy management, requirements regarding assistance animals and what to do in emergency situations.

### ✓ Ideas to try

- Ensure staff are aware of the accessible tourism community and are considerate of their needs.
- Ensure your staff can recognise assistance dogs and engage with them appropriately.
- Ensure staff can support neurodiverse customers who may have specific engagement requirements.
- Nominate a staff member as an accessibility champion to mentor and train other staff or answer enquiries about the accessible features of the business.
- Consider the training and support programs offered by other organisations – see the [Austrade website](#).
- Think of accessibility as a major marketing opportunity rather than a compliance activity.
- Stay informed about developments and new business delivery models that accommodate accessibility.



# Marketing

Make promotional information easy to find and absorb. Structure the information well and refer to specific needs. This addresses one of the biggest barriers identified by the accessible tourism community. It places a business in the best position to capitalise on visitation.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Update your website and other booking channels to detail accessible features of your property – ramps, toilets, lighting (for sensory needs), hearing loops, parking and so on.
- Make this information easy to access online for all potential customers, including members of the accessible tourism community.
- Provide photos of your accessible features and facilities.
- Include descriptions of images on your website, and ensure videos have both audio and captions.
- Consider specific apps that address the needs of the accessible tourism community.
- Provide a statement that welcomes feedback on how your operation can support broader participation or make the experience more enjoyable.
- Only promote accessible features of your business that are always available and have been prioritised for the accessible tourism community to use.
- Consider the specific requirements of the accessible tourism community, and how significantly members of that community are affected if a business does not provide services or features it has advertised.



# Experience

Barriers in the physical environment can be challenging and costly to overcome. However by focusing on the customer experience, a business may find creative ways to work around these challenges.

## ✓ Ideas to try

- Take time to get to know and understand the accessible tourism community and their diverse needs.
- If your business offers an experience, let people know what they should bring or even wear. This means they can come prepared and gives them the best chance of having a great experience.
- Ensure there's a way for people to talk to your team to ask questions and confirm what they need, rather than relying on automated booking systems.

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*'Word had clearly spread throughout the community about Monarto Safari Park's increased focus on accessibility. It was rewarding to see an abundance of wheelchairs, mobility aids and requests from accessibility providers to assist with private group tours.'*

**Steve Callery, Monarto Safari Park**

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- Take every opportunity to ask your guests what you did well and what needs improving.
- Always ask people first if they want help. They are the best judge of their own ability and may not need assistance. To protect them and their equipment, always check appropriate handling techniques.



Photo: Destination NSW 2024





Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission

## Learn more

THRIVE 2030 is Australia's strategy for the long-term sustainable growth of the visitor economy. It recognises the importance of improving accessibility.

[austrade.gov.au/accessibletourism](https://austrade.gov.au/accessibletourism)

**THRIVE**  
2030