

Better Access Better Business Guide

How to ensure your business
is accessible



City of
STONNINGTON

Mayor's message



Inclusion sits at the heart of our vision for Stonnington as a community that is welcoming and accommodating for all.

I would like to invite all our retailers to consider adopting the practices outlined in this guide to improve the customers' experience.

It is a priority of this Council that all people feel included and respected in our community. Everyone deserves easy access to shop and to do business and for customers to feel valued and enjoy a welcoming experience.

Local government plays a critical role in supporting people living with a disability by providing infrastructure, advocacy, services and information, championing inclusive practices and treating living with a disability fairly, equally and with respect.

This guide will help ensure we all work together towards this common goal.

—

Cr Steve Stefanopoulos
Mayor, City of Stonnington

Foreword



An accessible and inclusive business makes business sense.

Disability affects people of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds and can happen at any time. It takes many forms including mobility, hearing, vision, sensory, intellectual, neurological, psycho-social and behavioural. In 2018 there were 4.4 million Australians who have some form of temporary or permanent disability. That's almost one in five people. One million Victorians experience some sort of mobility, self-care or communication restriction. In Stonnington 3,486 (3.3%) residents need some form of assistance. If you add visitors, friends and family – that's a huge untapped market if your business is not accessible. Economic studies place the potential return on investment for a universally accessible environment as \$13 for every \$1 spent, and a 20-25% increase in retail turnover compared to non-accessible environments.

Whether you are the owner of a small business, a landlord or a tenant, you can make changes that make your business more accessible and inclusive for all your existing and potential

customers. The changes don't have to be expensive or difficult to implement. It could be as easy as having up to date information about access on your website, training staff, removing obstacles for clear access, having clear and bold signage with contrast, reducing noise, having a chair for customers to use, or asking customers how you can assist them when they enter your business.

This guide offers ideas based on the principle of universal design – the design and composition of the environment (building, product or service) so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people who wish to use it.

Congratulations on taking the first step to grow your business by making your Stonnington business as accessible and inclusive as possible. Everyone benefits!

—

Libby Kent,
Stonnington resident, business owner and Access Stonnington Committee member

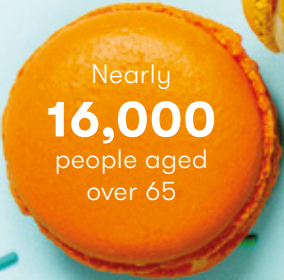
Everyone deserves to feel welcome

Running a retail business is not just about opening your doors and achieving the bottom line. It's also about delivering a great customer experience.

This guide highlights a range of barriers that have an impact on many customers in the retail space and can prevent them from doing business with you.

By taking a moment to understand how people access your premises and by making small changes to the layout, signage and amenities – you will ensure that your business is accessible to everyone.

In Stonnington in 2018 there were:



Nearly
16,000
people aged
over 65



~**3,500**
people living
with a
disability



Over
4,000
children
aged 0-5

Universal design checklist

1. Provide and design for a range of abilities
2. Customer service staff are trained and ready to support
3. Equipment is easy to use and reach
4. Signage is clear and easy to understand
5. Free from trip hazards or obstacles
6. People can move around easily

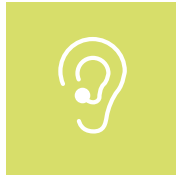
Potential customers include:



People who are blind or low vision



People with learning or intellectual disabilities



People who are deaf or hard of hearing



People with a physical disability who may use a wheelchair or walking frame



People who have arthritis or have reduced hand mobility



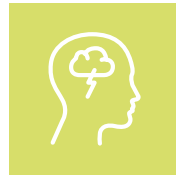
Aged and frail customers



Parents or carers of young children – particularly those with strollers or prams



People experiencing a long-term illness



People with mental health or psychological difficulties



People with an acquired brain injury

Your legal responsibilities

In Australia, it is legislated that customers with disabilities should be able to access your goods or services just like any other customer. If a customer with a disability cannot enter your building or cannot access your goods or services they could make a complaint of discrimination under State anti-discrimination laws, or the Federal Disability Discrimination Act.

Making your business more accessible will make it safer for all your customers and staff and may reduce your public liability and workplace safety exposure.

For more information on your legal obligations see 'Further contacts' at the end of this guide.

How to improve access to your business

These are suggestions to help make your business accessible. Your business will not be able to implement everything, but making the changes that you can will help make sure your doors are open for everyone.



Provide a welcoming and easy entrance

- An open entrance that is easy to move through and ensure wide doorways throughout.
- Eliminate steps or reposition difficult entrances.
- Install a ramp with a handrail if possible.
- Use automatic or light weighted doors with handles that aren't too high.
- Glass doors and clear lines of sight will make it easier to see when someone needs assistance.
- Non-slip entry and secure doormats.
- A doorbell for those who cannot access your premises easily.

Clear signage

- Choose colours that stand out.
- Clearly sign your entrances and exits.

Make browsing, eating, paying and moving around easy

- Easy to read signs and large print menus and pricing – if you're a hospitality business consider offering menus in Braille or in electronic formats.
- Strong lighting, especially around service counters.
- Avoid trip hazards, have fixed displays and open aisles which are at least 1.2m wide.
- Have a mobile EFTPOS machines with larger tactile keys.
- Keep background noise or music to a minimum.
- Consider installing hearing assistance technology for people with hearing aids.
- Have at least one counter at a height for people in wheelchairs (750–800 mm from floor level).
- Position popular products within reach of someone using a wheelchair – if this is not possible, make sure staff are trained to offer assistance.
- Consider waiting or resting chairs.
- Use non-slip surfaces.
- Ensure change rooms are accessible.

Left: The wide entry, minimal styling and chic raised displays of T2 in Malvern Central, make it easy to shop and access their beautiful range of teas and accessories.

Accessible toilets

- Accessible toilets should be provided where possible. If you decide to make your toilet accessible you should get technical advice on how to do so, refer to the list of contacts on page 14.
- If you do not have an accessible toilet then make sure all staff know the location of the nearest accessible toilet and, if necessary, get approval for your customers to use it.

Below: Shy Pony in Hawksburn Village provides a wide entry and a spacious layout that makes the fashion shopping experience both accessible and enjoyable.

Customer service

Train staff on communicating with all customers and giving practical assistance.

This might include:

- Allowing customers to place orders online or over the phone.
- Providing home deliveries or home visits.
- Meeting your customer in an alternative, accessible location either by appointment or on a regular basis.
- Setting up customer profiles so your staff know about the preferences of your customers.
- Letting people know that your business is accessible by making it a focus of your social media and marketing.





Respecting everyone

Treat customers with disabilities with respect:

- Always focus on the person not on the disability – address customers directly, not people who may be with them.
- Ask the customer if they need assistance before stepping in to help.
- Consider positioning yourself to be eye to eye with a customer using a wheelchair if you're having a conversation by bending or sitting down.
- Ask questions about how the customer would like goods and services to be provided.
- Address the customer clearly and directly and check for understanding.
- Allow time for customer service and give your customer time to ask questions and try not to rush them.

- Be concise and try not to overload people with information – reassure that you are there to help if they need additional support.
- Assist people who lip read by always facing the customer and avoid bright lights behind you if possible.
- For customers with interpreters, address the customers rather than the interpreter.
- Have a pen and paper handy to assist communication if required.
- Avoid the word disabled in signs and communication, use accessible to describe the support for all customers.

Always refer to:

- A person with a *disability* rather than a *disabled person*.
- A person who uses a wheelchair rather than someone *confined* or *in one*.
- A person who is blind rather than a person who suffers blindness.



For vision impaired
customers:

Identify yourself by name - if appropriate, ask your customer for their name so that they know you are talking to them and not to someone else.

If a customer asks for assistance to go somewhere, ask which side you should be on and offer your arm so they can hold just above your elbow.

Assistance dogs are permitted in your business - never pat or distract an assistance dog or offer it food while it is in harness.

Thank you for reading!

Left: The perfect place to enjoy a coffee, Abacus Café in South Yarra, has a welcoming open entrance and a layout that is great for mums with prams and those shoppers with mobility aids.

Accessible services

There are a number of services in the City of Stonnington for people with a disability or if you are seeking to make changes to your business to make it more accessible.

Community Transport Service

A safe, accessible and friendly bus service is available to eligible residents in Stonnington who may find accessing public or private transport difficult.

Planning and Building

If you're planning modifications to your premises to improve accessibility, we're here to provide advice on the required process and standards.

Footpath Access

If you notice a cracked footpath which could present as a barrier to someone, report it to our customer services team or use the Snap Send Solve app which is available to download.

For enquires or to find out more about Council services visit stonnington.vic.gov.au or contact:

T 8290 1333

E council@stonnington.vic.gov.au

TTY users call National Relay Service on 133 677 then ask for 03 8290 1333.

Speak and listen users call 1300 555 727 and ask for 8290 1333.

Legal Information

For information relating to legal issues and visit or contact the: Victorian Human Rights Commission:

humanrightsccommission.vic.gov

T 1300 292 153

E legal@veohrc.vic.gov.au

Print Accessibility

To help ensure your printed materials are accessible to everyone, visit or contact Vision Australia:

visionaustralia.org

T 1300 847 466

E info@visionaustralia.org

Easy English

To help your communications are in easy to read English, visit or contact Scope:

scopeaust.org.au

T 1300 4726 73

E contact@scopeaust.org.au

Employment Assistance

Job Access is a national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, and employers:

jobaccess.gov.au

T 1800 464 800

Staff Training and Resources

Australian Network on Disability is membership based organisation that support organisations to welcome people with a disability in all aspects.

and.org.au

T 1300 363 645

E info@and.org.au

Specialist advice

The Access Institute offer support and training and on incorporating universal design.

accessinstitute.com.au

T 9988 1979

E info@accessinstitute.com.au

Acknowledgements

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