

How to make your business more accessible in Byron Shire



Can you afford to miss out on all this business?



Good Access is Good Business



“We are delighted to be able to offer our facilities to everyone, opening our business up to the entire market, giving us valuable returning customers.”

Byron Bay Rainforest Resort



The Byron Shire Council Access Project Reference Group (PRG) has great pleasure in presenting the *Good Access is Good Business* guide.

This guide will assist small businesses by improving access for all. It is designed to give you information about the benefits of diversifying your customer base. It will provide you with easy to read practical tips and suggestions for improving access for all your customers and will also assist you to meet the mandatory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

NSW Business Chamber supports the initiative of the Byron Shire Council’s *Good Access is Good Business* guide to maximise the potential of your business. People with disabilities, their friends and family, are all potential customers. By ensuring their experience with your business is a positive one, you will be encouraging return business. Increasing your customer base is good business practice - don’t ignore a significant part of your market.

The NSW Business Chamber encourages you to use this Guide to review and improve your business practices and your customers experience.

NSW Business Chamber



Good Access is Good Business

Creative innovation abounds in Byron Shire which is currently home to approximately 3,500 diverse and active businesses. These businesses employ the majority of the Shire's workforce and operate in a variety of sectors, including tourism and hospitality operations, retail, creative industries, health, property, community and business services.

Byron Shire Council is committed to ensuring everyone in our community is able to enjoy the many social, cultural and business benefits of living and working in the Shire. This project is aimed at providing the impetus to maximise business potential.

Providing quality customer care and service are important facets of small business operation and success. Improving access to your goods and services may assist in connecting you to customers who have inadvertently not previously been considered.

Twenty per cent of our population have a temporary or permanent disability and combined with the reality of an ageing population this is a powerful percentage of your potential market. Improving access to your business may provide opportunities for increased customer numbers, sales and subsequent business growth.

Acknowledgements:

Byron Shire Council appreciates your support in creating an accessible community for all its residents and visitors.

Special thanks to Marrickville Council and the Australian Human Rights Commission for their assistance in producing this guide and to Simon Kneebone for his illustration. Reproduction of the text in this guide is permitted and encouraged provided the source is acknowledged.



**Australian
Human Rights
Commission**
everyone, everywhere, everyday



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to Byron Shire Council's *Good Access is Good Business* Guide.

As you are no doubt aware, Byron Shire is a very rich and colourful community with each of the towns and rural villages having their own distinctiveness and mix of cultural values.

Council recognises the important economic and social capital contribution that local businesses make to our region. We also understand that local businesses play a vital role in the growth and development of tourism. Byron Shire Council is strongly committed to fostering an environment for local businesses to thrive and where all members of the community can enjoy the many benefits that flow from a strong business economy.

Many businesses lose valuable clients because their premises are not easily accessible. The *Good Access is Good Business* guide will help all small businesses reach their potential customers, including people with disabilities and parents with prams. This Guide will assist small businesses by encouraging improved access for all.

The Guide is just one way that Council will work in partnership with the business community to continue to develop a vibrant, sustainable and accessible commercial sector in Byron Shire.

Mayor of Byron Shire

Cr Jan Barham

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YOU COULD BE MISSING OUT ON POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

In Australia 3.9 million people, or nearly 20% (or one fifth) of the population, have a disability. By applying this to Byron Shire's population it is estimated that over 5,500 people in Byron Shire have some form of disability*. Together with their friends and families, the number of people affected by a disability is greater still - and every one of them is a potential customer.

The disability may be temporary (eg. sports injury), or permanent. More than half of people aged 55 years and over have difficulties with mobility, sight and hearing. With an ageing population, this is a particularly important consideration. While they may not consider themselves to have a disability, easier access would be a great benefit to them.

There are also other people who may experience occasional mobility difficulties eg. anyone pushing a pram or shopping trolley, or escorting an elderly person or toddler. Even delivery people may have difficulties moving around because of changing levels or blockages on the footpath (eg. A-frame signs, displays of goods, tables, and chairs).

*National Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers by ABS (2003)

Which customers are we talking about?

Providing good access to your business will benefit:

- people who are blind or visually impaired
- people with learning or intellectual disabilities
- people who are Deaf or hearing-impaired
- people with a physical disability who may use a wheelchair or scooter or other aids
- people with hidden disabilities such as arthritis
- people with long-term illnesses
- people with mental health or psychological difficulties
- people with an acquired brain injury

For a small business, quality service is one of the most important things you can offer. This guide aims to help you, the small business owner, understand how to improve access to your goods and services for a large part of our community you may be missing out on - customers who have a disability.

Good access also benefits

- parents or carers of young children – particularly those with strollers or prams
- older people
- delivery people
- shoppers with heavy bags
- every customer – particularly when it's busy



Can you afford to miss out on all this business?

Good access makes good business sense

As potential customers, each of these people will make choices about your business based on how easy it is to access.

If a person uses a wheelchair and there is a step at your front entrance, they and the people who accompany them, will probably go to another business in your area which has a flat entrance or a ramp. If they find your staff unhelpful they probably won't come back to your business.

If you make an effort to provide clear corridors then people will appreciate the ease of shopping at your business.

If you train your staff to be respectful – not patronising – then people with a disability are more likely to become regular customers.

TIP What you do to improve accessibility doesn't have to be extravagantly expensive – a combination of providing easier entry and improving staff training will go a long way towards making your business more attractive to many people including people with a disability.

Meeting your legal responsibilities

Improving access will also assist your business to meet your legal responsibilities.

In Australia, the law stipulates 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 access your building or cannot access your goods or services they could make a complaint of discrimination under either State or Territory anti-discrimination laws, or the Federal Disability Discrimination Act.

By making your business more accessible, it is also likely to make it safer for both customers and staff, and could have an effect on your public liability and workplace safety responsibilities.

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

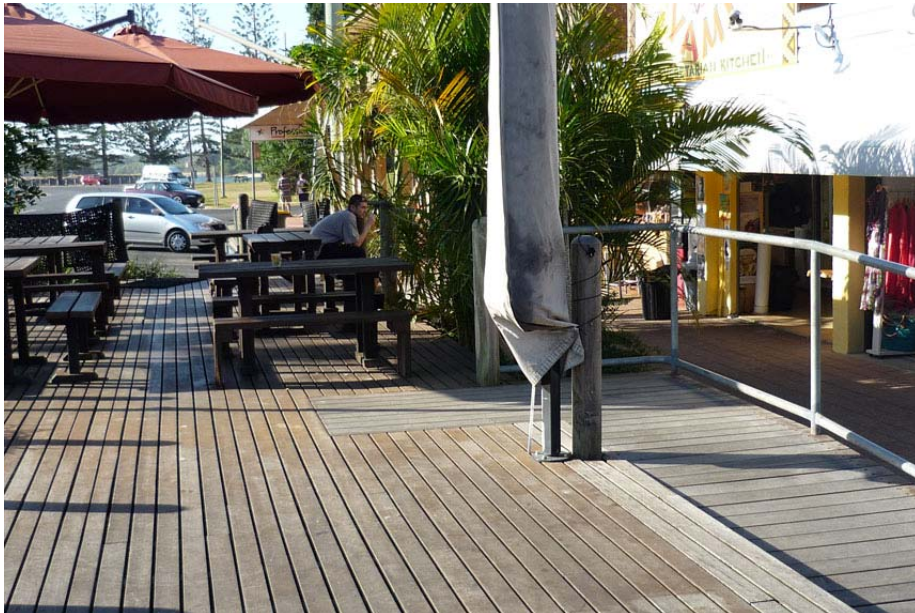
Footpath Trading

In line with these Laws, Council has in place Local Laws regarding the use of footpaths for trading. A clear footpath is important for people with vision impairment who often use the front of buildings as a guide to the passage through shopping precincts.

Ensuring that there are no unexpected obstacles hindering the path of travel and keeping the path clear so that people in wheelchairs or people with other mobility issues have no trouble using the footpath, or gaining entry to your store, will assist you in meeting Council's requirements.

If you use the footpath outside your business for goods, signage or tables and chairs, then a permit is required. Council's Property Department can visit and provide assistance and support to help your business meet the requirements.

If you would like more information, please contact Council's Property Department on 02 6626 7000 or visit www.byron.nsw.gov.au.



Brunswick Heads – Footpath dining with clear wide path and accessible ramp

FOUR WAYS TO IMPROVE ACCESS FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMERS

1 Make it easy for people to find you

To attract customers who have a disability there are some simple steps to make your business easier to locate.

Advertise your advantages

- Let people know your business is accessible.
For example, if you have wheelchair access include this in your promotions and advertisements.
- Display clear external signs to help people with vision impairments or learning difficulties identify your shop.

Make the entrance easy to see

- Paint the entrance to your business in a colour that contrasts well with the surroundings. This will make it stand out for people with a vision impairment. Highly contrasting colours not only distinguish an entrance from the general environment but also make it easier to tell the difference between the immediate door surrounds and the doorway itself.
- If there are multiple entrances, make sure there are clear directions to each entrance.
- Be aware of reflective glass in your shop front. People with vision impairment often find this presents them with a confusing picture of reflections, light and shadows. One good solution is to put safety markings on the glass so people don't walk into it. It is easier to tell the difference between the window display and the doorway.



Safety markings on glass

Avoid obstructions

Remove dangerous obstacles from the entrance eg. advertising boards, displays or furniture, so people who use wheelchairs, older people, or people with a vision impairment are not at risk of falling over them.

If you are permitted to have advertising boards, display items or furniture outside your business, make sure there is a clear accessible pathway along the building line.

Think about your surroundings

It also pays to look at the surroundings of your business. You will probably need to talk to Council about these matters.

Carparks: Think about making at least one customer car space wider for people with a disability to use.

Pathways: Make sure the path from the carpark to your entrance is accessible for a person using a wheelchair (e.g. wider and more even) and less slippery for someone older or using walking aids.

Lighting: Would better lighting make carparks and pathways safer?

Hazards: Make sure overhanging trees or signage do not create a hazard to a person who is blind or vision impaired.



Brunswick Heads Pub – Clear wide entrance

2 Make it easy for people to get in

In new buildings all customers, including people using wheelchairs, must be able to enter the shop independently. But in many older buildings the main entrance may present a barrier to access. Here are some ideas on how to make it easy for customers to get in to your business.

While many of these ideas are easy to put into practice, some may require technical advice to ensure they are done correctly (see 'further contacts' at the end of this guide).

Level access

- Remove steps and provide a level entry.
- If you can't provide a level entry, ramps are an alternative.
- If these are not possible consider moving the main entrance to another more accessible position.



Byron Bay and Bangalow – Access ramp, handrail and tactile surfaces

Better doors and doorways

- Reposition the entrance door handles to an easier height.
- Make the door easier to open by making it automatic or lighter.
- Doorways should be wide enough to allow a person with a walking frame or someone who uses a wheelchair to pass through with ease.
- If the door has a lot of reflective glass attach safety markings so people do not walk into it.
- Make sure any doormats are secure and only use them if they can be made level with the surrounding floor.
- Install handrails.



Mullumbimby Chemist – clear path of travel from outdoor to indoor areas, handrail and tactile surfaces

Clear sight lines

If possible ensure there is a clear line of sight between the entry and the counter so that staff are aware when a customer needs assistance to enter the premises or purchase goods.

"As a health care provider it is essential we cater for all members of our community. In many cases, people with a disability need ease of access to a pharmacy environment, such as we offer in Mullumbimby. Our entry ramp makes it easy for wheelchair access, whereby these customers can feel confidence and dignity in selecting their own health and natural medicine products, choose their own cosmetics, plus go to the rear of the pharmacy where they can have a consultation with the pharmacist, about their medication and receive health advice, while getting their prescription filled."

*Craig Watson
Mullumbimby Health Care Chemist*

3

Make it easy for people to get around

Customers with disabilities should be able to find their way to all sales areas. They should be able to browse and inspect goods, bring them to the cash desk or receive services in the same way as people without a disability.

The following tips are designed to assist you to better understand and meet the needs of customers with a range of disabilities.



Brunswick Heads – clear building line and path of travel

For people who have a vision impairment or are blind

- **Signs:** Make sure signs and product pricing labels are clear and use high contrast colours. Ensure overhanging signs do not cause a hazard.
- **Information:** Make board menus in cafes or product information displays easier to read. Provide written menus or other product information in large print versions (e.g. 18 point Arial) or have staff read information out to customers. Look at the possibility of providing information such as menus in Braille.
- **Lighting:** Think about improving lighting, especially around service counters.
- **Layout:** Avoid having dangerously placed fittings and fixtures that can make independent movement difficult for people with vision impairment. Make sure aisles provide a clear path of travel and good circulation space.
- **EFTPOS:** Electronic payment system and EFTPOS machines should have the features that enable people with vision impairment to use them.

For people who have a hearing impairment or are Deaf

- **Noise:** Find ways to reduce the amount of background noise and to easily turn down the music when necessary.
- **Hearing loop:** Look into installing a 'hearing loop' or other system to assist people using hearing aids at counters, especially if there is a screen from the public at the counter.



The Café Scene Anne Hay

“As a person with hearing impairment, what I am looking for in a café or restaurant is a good listening and conversation environment, as well as good food and coffee. Before patronising an establishment, I *always* check out the level of background noise eg music, location of coffee machines etc. If the noise is overwhelming, I go elsewhere.

Lighting is another important consideration for me, as I need to speech-read to supplement my poor hearing. As well, I find it really helpful to have all menus clearly printed, even the daily specials, as I often miss a purely spoken list.

Outdoor eating is ideal for me, as noise dissipates in the open air, thus making it easier to conduct a conversation. If, however, people around me are obviously smoking, then I walk on by.

I believe an environment with non-intrusive background noise, good lighting, and clear menus, suits not just people with hearing impairment, but those with poor vision or poor mobility as well. In fact, I think the general community would also welcome it.”



For people who have a mobility impairment

- **Aisles:** Make sure shopping aisles are wide enough (preferably 1.2 metres).
- **Counter:** Ensure at least part of your customer service area is at a suitable height for people using wheelchairs (750-800mm from floor level). Make sure that at least one of your checkout aisles is wide enough, has a lower checkout counter (750–800mm) and is always open.



Supermarket Ocean Shores – Wide aisles

- **Reach:** Try to place goods, especially the most popular items within reach of someone using a wheelchair. If this is not always possible, make sure staff are trained to offer assistance.
- **Chairs:** If your customers need to wait, make a chair available for older or frail people, those using crutches or who have poor balance.
- **EFTPOS:** Ensure that electronic payment systems and EFTPOS machines are on a long enough cord to pass over to someone using a wheelchair.
- **Surfaces:** Make sure the floor surface is slip resistant and free from trip hazards.



Access and personal service makes a difference

Craig Scanlan

"Places with a flat, wide carpark close to a shop's entrance are always going to attract me. Bi Lo at Ocean Shores has this.

The Heart & Halo cafe has lots of space around its tables for wheelchairs. The staff have also assisted me into my car and delivered food to a friend who also has a disability, when he was sick. In cafes I'm always looking for tables that I can get my legs right under which enhances the eating experience. The Restaurant at the Byron Golf Club has disabled parking at entrance, lots of space, and good tables.

If I'm too tired to get out of my car I've found that the people in Amcal Pharmacy (Woolworths carpark) and Suffolk Pharmacy will always come out to my car. Byron Library also do this. Byron Dendy Cinema also has nearby parking and excellent access.

It is simple really, if people are friendly and offer you personal service, or they provide good access, you go back. It really makes a difference."

4 Make the most of customer service

When talking about 'improving access' it's easy to think only in terms of installing ramps, toilets and other fixtures. But one of the simplest and cheapest solutions is to change the way you think about customer service for people with disabilities.

Respect

Treat customers with disabilities as you do all customers – with respect.

Focusing on the person: Treat each customer with a disability as an individual customer with their own likes and dislikes. Always focus on the person, not their disability. Always address the customer directly, not other people who may be with them (such as a sign language interpreter).

Giving assistance: Always ask the customer first if they want help; never assume they need assistance and accept the answer if the customer declines help. If you have a conversation lasting more than a few moments with a customer using a wheelchair, pull up a chair.

Asking questions: Remember - ask customers with disabilities how they would like goods and services to be provided, especially where there are barriers to equal access.

Should you be providing accessible toilets?

Where toilets are provided for the public (e.g. in cafes or in other situations where customers may be on the premises for a period of time) an accessible toilet should be provided where possible. Under Planning Laws a unisex accessible toilet counts as a male and a female toilet.

If you do not have an accessible toilet, make sure all staff know the location of the nearest accessible toilet. If necessary, get approval for your customers to use it.

If you decide to make your toilet accessible, you should get technical advice on how to do so.

Communication

For people who may have a learning difficulty, an intellectual disability or acquired brain injury:

Being clear: Address the customer directly, listen carefully, speak clearly and check for understanding. Always use clear language without being patronising.

Allowing time: Allow your customer time to ask questions and try not to rush them. Try not to overload people with information. Reassure your customer you are there to help if they forget the information.

For people who have a hearing impairment or are Deaf:

Speech reading: Always face the customer so they can read your lips. Try to make sure there are no bright lights behind you that may limit their ability to see your lips.

Sound: Use your normal tone of voice and volume. If possible, move out of the way of background noise.

Interpreters: If your customer has a sign language interpreter, always address your comments directly to your customer rather than to the interpreter.

Pen and paper: Have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with your customer.



Access for All: Assistance Animal Welcome stickers and Customer Service Counter cards and stickers are available. Refer to www.accessauditaustralia.com.au

What's the best language to use?

If you are making the effort to improve accessibility to your business, it is also important to make sure your staff and business signage are part of that effort. Use signage that identifies:

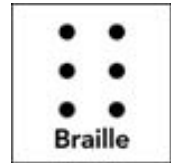
- 'Accessible Toilet' not 'Disabled Toilet'
- 'Accessible Parking' not 'Disabled Parking'
- 'Accessible Entry' not 'Disabled Entry'.

And always refer to:

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

For people who have a vision impairment or are blind:

Using names: Always identify yourself by name. If appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly and so that they know you are talking to them and not to someone else.



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



Guide dogs: Never pat or distract a guide dog or offer it food while it is in harness, as it is a working animal under the control of its owner.



Working guide dog



Following the building line

“When a person with impaired vision is walking down the street, it can be extremely frustrating and dangerous to run into obstructions such as tables, chairs and advertising boards. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT recommends a continuous accessible path should be relatively straight and preferably follow the building line to give easy access to premises and entry points. The pathway should also be at least 1200mm wide and be free of hazards including overhanging obstacles and pedestal obstacles e.g. telephone booths.”

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

Finding alternative ways to provide service

The best way of attracting business and fulfilling your legal responsibilities is to make your business as accessible as possible. When it is not possible to provide full access in the short term, you might also consider alternative ways of providing the same service.

Here are some examples:

- A butcher could consider operating a telephone, mail order or local delivery scheme.
- A florist could have a call bell at the entrance. Staff could put an order together and bring the goods to the front door or the nearest easy collection point.
- A hairdresser might consider a home visiting service for a customer with a disability.
- An estate agent might consider providing their service in an alternative, accessible location either by appointment or on a regular basis.

TIP Alternatives such as these will improve equality for people with disabilities, and assist in reducing the chances of a complaint.

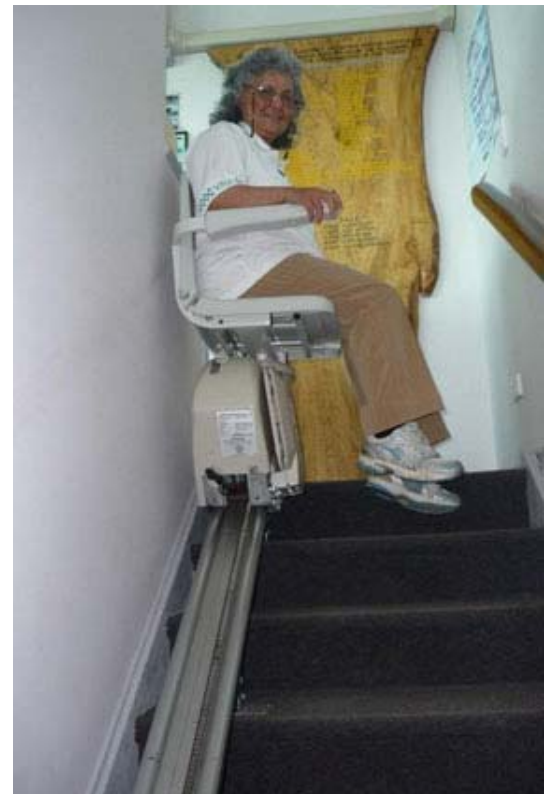
A checklist is provided on the next page as a guide to help improve the accessibility of your retail outlet. This can be used as a guide for planning improvements or selecting new premises.



Byron Shire Resident
Hamish Graham

“Since my accident, I tend to go to shops that I can get in to through the front door. I prefer to support local businesses in my town, but often it's easier to go to a shopping centre because I know I'll be able to get into every shop. Most of the shopkeepers are happy to open a side door or delivery entrance for me, but that highlights my disability so I tend not to go there. It's a shame because I'd like to keep my money local.

Accessibility means more than just getting in the front door, it means being able to move freely inside as well. I'm sure if small businesses understood our needs better, they would be happy to provide for them.”



Stair climber

ACCESS CHECKLIST FOR RETAIL OUTLETS

General access issues to consider

Does your retail outlet have:	YES	NO
Accessible parking close to premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible public transport close to premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear internal and external signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A clear external building line from premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear path of travel from outdoor to indoor areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step free access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear and wide internal walkways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wide self-opening or easy-to-open doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colour contrast door frames	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low height service counters reception counters with a seat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seating available if customers need to wait or queue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brochures/information displays at an accessible height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good lighting for surrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alternatives to visible and audible information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low pile carpet or slip resistant flooring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ramp or lift access to all levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible website with information about services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct access to an accessible toilet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcoming staff, trained in access awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FURTHER CONTACTS

For more information on planning issues, building approvals and local access requirements:

Byron Shire Council

Phone: 02 6626 7000 Fax: 02 6684 3018

Emergency After Hours: 02 6622 7022

www.byron.nsw.gov.au

For more information on legal issues and responsibilities:

Australian Human Rights Commission

Phone: 02 9284 9600

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419

General enquiries & publications: 1300 369 711

TTY: 1800 620 241 Fax: 02 9284 9611

Privacy Hotline: 1300 363 992

www.humanrights.gov.au

Standards Australia

www.standards.org.au

for all publications and sales of Australian Standards go to

www.saiglobal.com

Phone: 131242 Fax: 02 8206 6020

email: sales@sai-global.com

For more information on design ideas and contacting an access consultant:

Association of Consultants in Access Australia Inc

Phone: 03 5221 2820 Fax: 03 5221 2820

Email: ACAA.Secretary@bigpond.com

www.access.asn.au

NSW Anti Discrimination Board

Phone: 02 9268 5555 Fax: 02 9268 5500

General Enquiry & Employers

Advisory Service: 02 9268 5544

TTY: 02 9268 5522

Tollfree: 1800 670 812

(for rural and regional New South Wales only)

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

For more information on disability access and communicating with people with disabilities:

Refer to Byron Shire Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and its Communicating with People with Disabilities guide:

refer to www.byron.nsw.gov.au/publications

Byron Shire Council has a mobility map to assist people in accessing businesses and the foreshore in the Byron Bay CBD.

This **mobility map** is distributed with this guide. To obtain additional copies, please download from Council's website www.byron.nsw.gov.au or phone the Aged and Disability officer on 66267000.



Anna Seymour

I worked at the Beach Hotel in the coffee and juice bar in 2001 for nearly four years while I was studying at university. I am profoundly Deaf. I remember feeling so surprised and touched when Gary (the manager of Beach Hotel at the time) asked if I wanted to work in the juice bar. I was very nervous at first because I had to communicate with the customers taking their orders. A lot of them didn't realise I was Deaf but soon enough most of the locals knew me and were very nice and friendly with me.

Many local Deaf people enjoyed coming for a coffee and having a chat with me. Lots of international Deaf people visit Byron Bay and once they discovered a Deaf person was working at the Beach Hotel, it then became no.1 pub of choice for them! It has shown Beach Hotel as being open to people from diverse backgrounds and different abilities and this has encouraged customers and other staff to adopt the same philosophy about having people with a disability in business and the community.

From all reports Anna's experience was mutually beneficial for Anna and the Beach Hotel. As a result of this positive experience the Beach hotel has continued to successfully employ local members of our community with a disability and would recommend other business operators to do the same.

*Elke Van Haandel, Operations Manager
Beach Hotel, Byron Bay*



Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Council appreciates your support in making Byron Shire an accessible community for all its residents and visitors.

Council encourages you to use the suggestions made in this guide and in doing so increase your business.