

**SPECIAL
FEATURE**

DISABILITY SPECIAL FEATURE



SUPPLIERS

CONSULTANTS

SUPPLIES



Photo Millenium Arts Precinct (courtesy Bryce Tolliday 2007.)

ACCESS CONSULTANCY ADELAIDE S.A.

By Jill Fowler

Having personal, life-long experience of severe disability, Trevor Harrison (Principal) started HC Harrison Consultants in 1988, long before access consultancy was a recognized part of the design and building industries. Jill Fowler joined the business in 2000.

The greatest opportunity and challenge in the field of Access Consultancy is to influence players in planning, design and construction industries; change the way projects and developments are documented and approved; and improve built environments and wayfinding to create equitable access.

The responsibility for access lies with planners, designers, architects, builders and trades people, linked to the approval process through state and local government and a range of (private) certifiers. The responsibility for accessibility is shared and must be a key feature to benefit all users and business practice. Exclusion from community, employment, services, education, housing, arts, sport and recreation and business has far reaching implications for individuals, their family and in the context of cost to governments and our economy. Governments at all levels need to lead the way.

HC Harrison Consultants conducts state-wide government department Access Reviews, working with Lees Cadman (now trading as Wilde & Woollard) as Cost Managers. The whole-of-government policy, Promoting Independence – Disability Action Plans for SA drives the process and is critical to many services and employment opportunities becoming available to people with disabilities.

Other projects include detailed Access Audits (Adelaide Airport T1 & Botanic Gardens), transport corridors (Bakewell Bridge & South Road Underpass), Streetscape audits (local government) and Access Advice for a wide range of building types.

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ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTANTS IN ACCESS AUSTRALIA

People with disabilities have access needs, they number 20% of the Australian population (ABS 2003) most have disposable incomes (DSC WA 2000) and they spend \$1.5bn annually in the domestic tourism and day trip market (Darcy 1998, 2003). Further, Frisch argues an accessible built environment National Income would increase by \$300 million per year, or \$6 billion over 20 years (Frisch 1998, 2000). In today's competitive economic environment, no new development or redevelopment can afford to provide the barest minimum of access.

The Association of Consultants in Access, Australia (ACAA) is the professional body for those engaged as Access Consultants. It is dedicated to growing the knowledge of its members and ensuring the maintenance of the highest ethical and professional standards. Access Consultants are cognisant of the requirements of relevant laws, regulations and Australian Standards. The ACAA also offers a pathway for those wishing to become Accredited Access Consultants and requires ongoing Continuing Professional Development.

Accredited Access Consultants are educated, experienced professionals committed to enhancing the standard of accessibility within the built environment and are the ones best placed to provide independent access advice, design, planning, auditing and training services to all facets in the development and construction process.

An example of an Accredited Access Consultant's professional input into access provision embracing all dimensions of access (Darcy 1998, 2003): mobility, vision and hearing is the Millenium Arts Precinct in Brisbane which includes raised Tactile Braille Maps, Directional signage and mobility access.



Accredited Access Consultants
in any state or territory can be contacted via the ACAA website ACAA
www.access.asn.au/

AUSTRALIAN DISABLED ACCESS CONSULTANTS

Australian Disabled Access Consultants is an Australian disabled access advisory consultancy formed in 2000 and based in Sydney. The consultancy specializes in providing disabled access design advice, technical assessment reports, building and site audits and support services to private clients (Architects, building designers, project managers, engineers and landscape architects) and all levels Government.

Australian Disabled Access Consultants assists clients and design professionals with new projects, existing premises and sites, change of use applications and building audits by providing technical support services, design advice and assessment reports for disabled access within new property projects, alterations and additions to existing buildings and the auditing of new and existing sites and buildings.

Australian Disabled Access Consultants provides building auditing services and assessing the disabled access aspects of development application plans, construction certification application plans for:

1. Residential housing.
2. Residential hotels and mixed residential/retail hotel projects
3. Licensed hotels, clubs and casinos
4. Retail projects
5. Commercial projects
6. Educational establishments
7. Entertainment venues
8. Industrial projects
9. Medical projects
10. Parking areas and parking stations
11. Tourist resorts
12. Indoor and outdoor recreational projects
13. Public buildings
14. Institutional projects

Australian Disabled Access Consultants provides the following range of services:

1. Design advice
2. Pre-judgement design meetings with clients, design professionals and Councils
3. Disabled access assessment reports
4. Disabled access audits and reports of existing building and site conditions
5. Expert witness testimony
6. Disabled access code design guidelines for government authorities
7. Membership of Government Disabled Access Advisory Committee

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“HI” DEAFNESS FRIENDLY PROGRAM

An initiative of DeafSA

For the past 116 years the DeafSA - SA's second oldest charity, has been providing services to the deaf and hearing impaired communities. The vision of DeafSA is: A deafness friendly South Australia and we now seek your assistance to help achieve this vision.

Background about hearing loss:

Unfortunately, hearing loss has no boundaries and currently there are 3.55million or one in six (6) Australians who have hearing loss and this number is only going to increase with an ageing population. Hearing loss and age go 'hand in hand.'

In fact, it is estimated that in the next forty years one in four (4) of us will experience hearing difficulties. As the oldest demographic audience per capita in Australia, South Australia is no doubt unfortunately leading the way with this statistic.

Hearing Aid usage:

Unfortunately, only 15% of the demographic audience that could, should or would benefit from a hearing aid do so. The other 85% do nothing at all.

Statistics supplied by Access Economics report - The Economic Impact and Cost of Hearing Loss in Australia. Feb 2006.

About hearing aids:

Hearing aids can be fitted with a “T” switch (telecoil) function, for use where ‘audio loops’ are installed. Unfortunately not all hearing aids are fitted with “T” switch function and with a low number of ‘audio loops’ in the community, the “T” switch function has not had great use to date.

Equity of Access and Cost of Hearing Loss:

From a ‘equity of access’ point of view, we are obliged to address all disability issues. However, the hearing impaired problem is just not about providing greater ‘equity of access.’ Highlighted

in the Access Economics report states - hearing loss cost Australia \$11.75 billion or 1.4% of Gross Domestic Product in 2005 year.

Solving the problem?

To address both issues - that is: the hearing impaired person that wears a hearing aid and the non hearing aid user DeafSA's - “hi” deafness friendly program provides a range of products and services and of those products to help overcome the difficulties for the hearing impaired person are:

Personal Hearing System (PHS unit) - which is a portable item for individual usage. Approximate cost is \$900.00

Counter Hearing System (CHS unit) - for use at reception / front customer service counters. Fixed price \$1365.00

Public (FM) Hearing System (PFM unit) - for use at public venues ie: Theatres & Halls etc. Approximate cost \$2700 Note: Both the PFM & PHS units can vary in price due to the size of venue and or additional products purchased.

Audio Loop technology?

Audio loop technology is not new but as stated above this product is used only when a person has a hearing aid and providing the hearing aid is fitted with a telecoil “T” switch function. An audio loop consists of cabling around the desired hearing assistance area (loop cabling) and this loop is then connected to a power amplifier. When the amplifier is “turned on” it produces a magnetic field which in turn collects any audio transmission within that area ie: Radio, Television or Public Address (PA) system signal or sound. This sound is then amplified into the hearing aid and with the “T” switch function turned on, this amplified sound is transmitted into the ear canal. When the “T” switch function is “turned on” the user will not be able to hear other surround sounds ie: the person sitting next to them talking.

Why we recommend a Public (FM) Hearing System (PFM unit)?

The PFM technology is not new - however, the design, development and subsequent implementation is - and the PFM unit is made here in South Australia. To be used with “walkman style” listening device, the PFM unit allows all hearing impaired people the opportunity to listen to the PA (Public Address) sound in a Church, Hall, Club or public venue where the PFM unit is installed. Using a “walkman style” listening device the user has the volume control at their fingertips.

The PFM unit transmits a “FM” signal the (PA) sound collected.

The PFM unit is designed for each building and the same transmitting frequency is predominately used through-out the State. That is: 88.3 on the FM band.

The PFM unit is a very cost effective alternative for the hearing impaired community and the bonus of the PFM product is, that it also has a portable audio loop which sits around the neck, like a tie or scarf and can then be used by the person who has a hearing aid with a “T” switch function fitted. The portable audio loop costs an additional \$99.00.

Therefore, you DO NOT need to install the Audio Loop on its own, if you install the PFM unit.

A PFM unit consists of:

- 1 x FMX 3 Transmitter
 - 1 x Plug Pack
 - 1 x FM Antenna - labour and commissioning.
- Sharing the cost - that is: each client would buy their own “walkman” and portable audio loop.

To eliminate human error we suggest that a “Digital AGC” Automatic Gain Controller / Volume Controller be installed with each PFM unit. The AGC unit has the intelligence to turn the volume controls up or down. If installed at the same time the PFM unit is installed the cost would be an additional \$750.00

All pricing includes training, warranty, installation, commissioning, “hi” deafness friendly signage and registration on our deafness friendly website.

Our objective:

Our objective is install a PFM unit at every Theatre, Church, Aged Care Facility, School, University, Funeral Parlour, Local, State, Federal Government meeting room etc, Airport, Bus & Train station. By doing so, we believe we can help overcome one of the biggest hurdles for the hearing impaired community - isolation.

Rod McInnes - Coordinator
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An initiative of DeafSA

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EQUAL ACCESS

Making a building “accessible” is not simply a matter of installing a disabled ramp out the front and a disabled toilet inside. Principals of “inclusive design” should be employed early in the initial design.

Inclusive design is about making places that everyone can use. The way places are designed affects our ability to move, see, hear and communicate effectively. Inclusive design aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. It enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities.

An inclusive environment is created by architects, planners, engineers, building surveyors, access consultants, and facility managers. Ultimately, though, creating an inclusive place is in the hands of developers, property owners/managers and service providers. It is their responsibility to ensure that their property is designed, built, and operated in line with inclusive principals.

Access needs should be an integral part of what we do every day. We should use our creativity and lateral thinking to find innovative and individual solutions, designing for real people in all their variability.

Making environments easy to use for everyone means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials. Access to buildings isn't

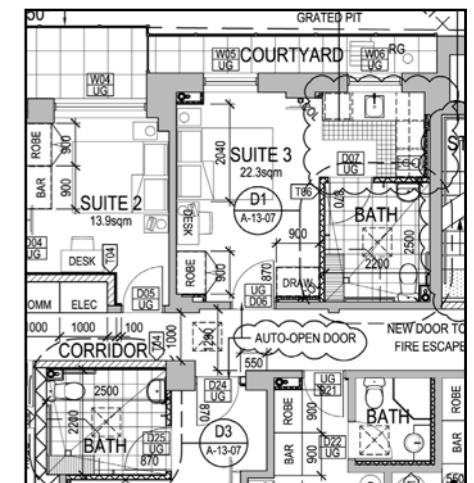
simply a question of their physical layout. It also requires people having sufficient information, often before they leave their house, that makes them feel confident enough to access a building or space. Ensuring their ‘intellectual’ and ‘emotional’ access means considering signage, lighting, visual contrasts and materials.

At the beginning of the design process it is important to analyse the transport patterns to and within a development. Roads, parking, walkways, building entrances and other routes should be considered. Peoples opportunity to use all elements within the site, including the inside of buildings is critical.

Meeting the principals of inclusive design requires an understanding of how the building or space will be used and who will use it. Places need to be designed so that they can adapt to changing uses and demands. Equal Access Pty Ltd Disability Access Consultants provide a specialist consulting service to enhance the built environment and provide “Equal Access” for members of the community with a disability.

Areas to be considered in inclusive design include external environments and approach, doorways, horizontal circulation, vertical circulation, sanitary facilities, fixtures, means of escape, lighting, acoustics, finishes, way finding, information & communication.

The benefits of appointing an access consultant



Above image: A disability friendly floor plan



For information about services and advice provided by Equal Access Pty Ltd Disability Access Consultants, please visit our website at www.equalaccess.com.au

DISABLED ACCESS CONSULTANCY

A welcome trend is developing in Victoria, at least it seems to me, for an increasing number of local councils to include mandatory conditions in building permit applications that require the implementation of relevant enhanced disability access before a building permit can be issued.

This local government requirement is additional to the mandatory requirements imposed by the Building Code of Australia.

The trend is welcome because it demonstrates that local government is becoming increasingly aware of the public good that flows from ensuring, as far as is pragmatically possible, that the built environment is accessible to people with disabilities (PWDs).

The greater involvement of PWDs in community life strengthens local economies, reduces the burden on social services provided by councils, and of course reduces the feelings of frustration and the level of discrimination endured by PWDs, whilst greatly enhancing their feelings of personal worth.

To include or not certain features in a building is often not as straightforward as it may seem. Almost all buildings are unique in design, and an individual approach to each is needed.

I advise building owners, property developers, builders and architects to engage the services of a practising member of the Association of Consultants in Access, Australia at design or

redevelopment stage to assist them in the task of incorporating enhanced disability access features in their designs.

If the trend referred to is real, and continues, I believe this advice is timely.



Bob Kellow
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www.disabledaccess.com.au