

ACCESSIBLE TOURISM: NEW ZEALAND MOVES THINGS FORWARD



The world today needs more information which is accessible to various people. Regular people have no problem whatsoever as to how they procure information, yet persons with various disabilities do not have those indulgences. It begs to question how information is coming and going for these disabled persons at the same rate as everyone else.

This is where the RNZFB comes into action. The organization stands for the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind. The organization aims to provide persons who have lost sight to regain some sort of traction in getting information. With the vast majority of information ready for people who have sight, the RNZFB ensures that signs have Braille signage or other design updates.

Persons who are blind, partially blind, and deaf-blind are in good hands. The RNZFB have created standard practice guidelines which aim to have more signs and information become accessible to disabled individuals.

The Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind is a large organization mostly comprised of 11,500 members. More and more people who have been inflicted with the loss of sight join. In which the organization gradually increases year round by 1,200 people. New Zealanders become members in hopes that they are updated with the developments of the organization.

The new guidelines for standard practice in signage are located in the organizational website. It can be downloaded at www.rnzfb.org.nz/signage and thus be read for various updates. The guidelines include the standard procedures as well as advice for persons with disabilities. Companies who specialize in making signs can also find technical specifications therein. The instructions on how to include signage which are accessible to blind are also included.

To understand what an accessible sign entails, RNZFB Braille Awareness Consultant, Lisette Wesseling iterated that an accessible sign is one that everyone can read. Those who have sight and those without included. There are 11,500 New Zealanders who do not have sight, and 125,000 more have significant sight loss. That is a lot of responsibility to ensure that these individuals have the same access to information as everyone else.

Information is such a vital aspect of society and accessibility to it is important. Today, every establishment, every square meter of cities and locales are littered with information. Some of them relate to safety, which prevents lawsuits in case a complaint is filed. Signs which have a specific purpose to convey are essential for safety. Fire exits, lifts, exits, stairs, and other useful signs should entail a corresponding Braille signage, or at least a large font print.

Companies are inherently instructed to adhere to the designs of their signs. More user friendly designs are structured to suit the visually impaired. Accessible signs should have high color contrasts with large fonts for the ease of attention. These letters should be emphasized by being raised on the sign plate. The guidelines also mandate that the corresponding Braille letters are also included with more prominent emphasis. The more important signs, particularly relating to safety, should include large, high contrast pictures raised from the sign plate surface.

Pictures are always not enough, letters should always be included. The RNZFB are professionals who work with other professionals, mainly those who specialize in the Braille language. Consumers who provide feedback to these organizations are also employed and highly valued. The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust and the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand and the Guide Dog Society of New Zealand are those who endorse these guidelines. This can go a long way for the benefit of helping those individuals who are visually impaired.

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