

AUSTRALIA: THE POTENTIAL OF ACCESSIBLE TOURISM



Accessible tourism is the ability of tourists with disabilities who decide to travel, to do so in the knowledge that the accommodation they wish to stay in and the tourism venues they wish to visit are accessible.

World-wide 600 million people have a disability. 127 million of these are in Europe and 4 million in Australia. It is known that each person with a disability generally travels with a carer or other family members. This market is expanding rapidly. According to 1997 ABS figures the domestic overnight market for visitors with disabilities generated expenditure of approximately \$472 million Australia-wide. The latest figures available indicate that travel expenditure in Australia by people with disabilities, together with their carers and family members, added \$4.8 billion to the Australian economy.

The accessible tourism market is not confined to people with disabilities. Elderly travellers, although not having a specific disability, appreciate the fixture and fittings found in a facility for people with disabilities, to aid their balance.

Accessible accommodation and tourism venues are in very short supply in Australia. There are a number of examples where establishments have made their entire facility fully accessible, not just concentrating on one room or unit, but ensuring a step-less environment throughout. The result has been that these tourism providers have found accessible tourism not only pays economically but that they have increased their individual market share. Their accessible facilities have also seen an increase in older travellers and families with young children. All these various tourists enjoy the convenience provided by accessible facilities. In addition those who have made the commitment to make their facilities accessible have reported a flow-on-effect from returning tourists and an increase in patronage of those tourists who rely on the word of mouth about the accessibility of any facility.

Many more tourism operators should realize the significant economic value that servicing the emerging 'disability' market brings.

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