

the place to live



Good Access Is Good Business

How to provide better access to

# Offices and professional services

Series 1, Handbook 2 Second edition Includes checklist

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How to Provide Better Access to Offices and Professional Services

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P.O. Box 255 North Melbourne Victoria 3051, Australia ABN 17 080 605 750 First Published 2003 Second Edition 2012 ISBN 978-1-922049-01-8 Author: Ms. Joe Manton, Director © 2012 To order more copies please contact Access Institute Tel: (03) 9988 1979 Email: **info@accessinstitute.com.au** or visit **www.accessinstitute.com.au** 

### Contents

Why good access is good for your business	2
It makes good business sense to provide access for all	3
Legal Requirements	4
Issues to consider in improving access to your Office or Professional Service	7
Access Checklist for Offices and Professional Services	11
Access Action Plan	15
Where to Get Help	17
List of Access Standards	18
Key Access Dimensions	20
Access Institute - Training	22
Access Institute - Publications	24
Contact details	25

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### Why good access is good for your business

Our population is made up of a diverse range of people, all with a variety of access requirements. For example, millions of Australians experience disability which can limit their mobility, hearing or vision and many more people are ageing at a rapid rate.

Our access requirements increase significantly with age, as we try to remain independent.

Similar to families with young children, using prams and strollers, mobility aids are very popular with the older community who need good access. More grandparents are assisting with looking after grandchildren, so good access to buildings, facilities, playgrounds and other services is critical.

It is therefore not surprising that ease of access is an important consideration when we are deciding where we can and will spend our money.

Offices and Professional Services that understand that

*Good Access is Good Business,* will reap significant benefits and opportunities by providing accessible buildings, services, and facilities for everyone.

Some of these benefits include:

- 𝒞 elimination of discrimination in a proactive way
- 𝒞 opening up new markets to new customers

- 𝒞 allowing for planned change in business and services

Australia's ageing population will continue to place further requirements for accessible environments on all businesses, particularly offices and professional services, as older adults have more time and money to spend on travel, holidays and enjoying retirement.



### It makes good business sense to provide access for all

- People with access challenges are an important client base and compare in economic impact to the young singles, young couples with children and retiree markets
- People with disabilities will often work with other people who will also require access to offices and professional services.
- People with access challenges are loyal customers to business and professional services who cater for their needs, which results in more return visits and additional business through word of mouth promotion
- People with a variety of access needs will benefit from good access including parents with prams and strollers, older adults, delivery personnel, staff and customers with disabilities.



### **Legal Requirements**

### Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) is Commonwealth legislation that provides uniform protection against unfair and unfavourable treatment for all people with a disability in Australia.

The definition of 'disability' in the DDA is very broad and includes:

- physical
- intellectual
- psychiatric
- sensory
- neurological
- learning disabilities
- physical disfigurement and
- the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms

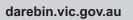
Disability discrimination happens when a person with a disability is treated less fairly than someone without a disability. The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability.

When a person with a disability wants to use cafés, restaurants, other shops or places of business, then equitable, dignified access must be provided.

The DDA applies to existing premises, which include outdoor spaces, buildings and facilities, as well as those under construction. It is important to ensure that any modifications provide appropriate access for all.

A complaint can be made against you under the DDA if you do not provide access. This can be very expensive if you are found to be at fault.





#### Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010

The *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* were introduced alongside an updated Building Code of Australia (BCA) on 1<sub>st</sub> May 2011. These are now legislated as the minimum access requirements for new buildings and buildings undergoing significant upgrade in Australia.

The Guidelines on the Application of the Premises Standards, produced by the Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011, states:

"The purpose of the Premises Standards is to both:

- a) provide for equitable and dignified access to new buildings and those areas of existing buildings that undergo renovation or upgrade that requires a building approval, and
- b) provide greater certainty to those involved in the design, construction, certification and management of buildings in relation to the level of access required in the buildings covered by the Premises Standards.

The Premises Standards (in the Access Code at Schedule 1) specify a nationally applicable set of Performance Requirements in providing non-discriminatory access to, and use of, those buildings and areas of buildings to which they apply and provide technical Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions for these Performance Requirements."

The Premises Standards generally align with the Building code of Australia (BCA) and reference a range of Australian Standards relating to access and other associated matters. The *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010,* aim to provide certainty for the building industry in relation to meeting the requirements for access in new and upgraded building - (regarding the elements covered by the Premises Standards. Other elements in buildings are still subject to the provisions of the DDA.)

The scope of premises under the DDA, extends much further than that of the Premises Standards or the BCA and therefore not all elements and components within all buildings and premises are covered by the Premises Standards.

#### **General Application of the Premises Standards**

According to the Guideline on the Application of the Premises Standards: "Commencing on 1 May, 2011, the Premises Standards will apply to all new buildings of the specified classes identified in section 2.1 of the Premises Standards. In addition, after 1 May, 2011 where new work that requires building or construction approval is undertaken on an existing building, such as an extension or renovation, identified persons will be responsible for ensuring that the new or modified part of the building complies with the Premises Standards.

In most circumstances it will also be necessary to provide an accessible path of travel from the principal public entrance to the new or modified part of an existing building. This is referred to in the Premises Standards as the 'affected part' of a building.

### **Building Code of Australia (BCA)**

The BCA applies to new buildings and buildings undergoing significant refurbishment or alteration. Sections of the BCA require compliance with a range of access provisions. The BCA outlines a variety of building classifications and the requirements for access to buildings within each classification.

### Australian Standard (AS 1428) - Design for Access and Mobility

AS 1428 prescribes the dimensional requirements for access to buildings and facilities which should be considered in the planning, development and construction of all new buildings and facilities.

Given the comprehensive definitions and requirements of the DDA, the *Disability Access to Premises - Buildings Standards 2010,* BCA and AS 1428, as well as other relevant regulations relating to specific types of buildings, it is important to ensure that these Australian Standards are considered in any refurbishment, development or changes to any premises.

The main Australian Standards that relate to the provision of disability access is the Australian Standard Suite AS1428.

#### Building improvement and upgrade

Any improvements or upgrades to buildings may require approval from your local Council, other organisations or building certifiers. You may require a planning permit, building approval or consent to undertake works on particular premises e.g. heritage buildings. Other conditions may also apply prior to upgrade.

For further details see 'Where to get help' and the 'List of Access Standards' in this handbook.



# Issues for you to consider in improving access to your Office or Professional Service

#### Asking your clients for feedback

When establishing, renovating or reviewing how your office or professional service operates, it is useful to talk with clients with disabilities or access challenges. Clients will often know the most accessible way to provide a particular service. Finding out about your clients' needs will enhance your services and assist in attracting more business.

#### Locating your office or professional service

Signage that is clear, concise and uncluttered makes identification of your premises easier for everyone to find and access. Signs that incorporate large print and symbols help people with vision impairment or learning difficulties identify your office or professional service. Braille or tactile signage can also be helpful.

#### Entering your office or professional service

All clients should be able to enter your premises through the principal entry (front door). Avoid special entries for people with disabilities. This does not provide equitable, dignified access.

Ensure that the footpath and doorway are clear of 'clutter' so that access is invited and there is level access through a wide, easy to open door. Self-opening doors are preferred. Clear opening internal and external doorways should allow easy access for parents with prams / strollers, people using walking frames, wheelchairs or other mobility aids.

There may be access challenges in some buildings where space is limited or the layout or location of the site or premises restricts easy movement. If this is the case it is important to consider improvements that will assist clients and staff gain independent access.

7

Relatively low cost improvements that could be considered include:

- ✓ installing a handrail at the entry

#### Moving around easily in your office or professional service

All clients should be able to move around your premises easily. They should be able to identify reception and waiting areas and move to them without encountering barriers such as steps or furniture that restrict access.

Easy access will be required to areas such as self serve vending machines, magazines and brochures in waiting areas and payment points as well as toilets and emergency exits.

Clear, concise, internal signage and large print directory boards, brochures and fee schedules will assist all clients.

Ensuring that furniture and fittings do not obstruct walkways and that space is available between furniture for people to move around easily will entice clients to use your services, particularly older adults, people with prams and those using a wheelchair or other mobility aids.

Improved accessibility throughout your office or professional service creates a safer environment for all staff and clients, as well as reducing your exposure to potential liability claims.

Friendly staff who can provide assistance to clients when required, will ensure return business for your service. This will form the basis of positive 'word of mouth' advertising to family and friends of satisfied clients and expand your business potential.



#### Toilets and other facilities

Offices and professional services often provide toilets for clients. These should include provision for all clients, including those with disabilities.

You must consider accessibility for all people - both getting to and using the facilities. Are toilets available that are big enough for a person using a wheelchair or a parent with a baby who may need to use a change table? Is there a toilet suitable for use by a person using crutches?

If there is an area available where a toilet can be provided or modified to meet these needs it can be used by everyone. Provision of an accessible toilet as well as advertising its availability on your promotional material and website, will assist in attracting more clients. It will also assist in protecting you from a complaint under the DDA.

If you have other facilities such as special meeting rooms, is access available to all?

#### Hearing people and participating in conversations

Background noise levels can create difficulties for staff and clients with hearing impairment. Communication with staff and clients can be enhanced if background noise is reduced. Is it necessary to have a radio or other music playing loudly? Are your reception counters and payment points within 'quiet zones'? Can carpet and noise reducing materials be installed to assist with providing an improved acoustic environment for everyone?

#### Reception and payment areas and systems

A low height counter suitable for a person using a wheelchair or a person of small stature is important for effective communication. A person using a wheelchair or someone who may need to sit whilst signing forms or credit cards will need space under the counter for their legs.

Providing a lower section of counter or making the whole counter an accessible height for everyone will ensure ease of use.

Having some large, easy grip pens available will also assist clients who may have difficulties using their hands. Looking directly at clients whilst talking to them can assist a person with a hearing impairment.

### Other ways to improve access

There are many ways that improved access can be provided, often at little cost:

- advertising the National Relay Service (NRS) on promotional material means that a person with hearing or speech impairment can make enquiries or appointments easily
- information and forms in large print and online in text versions encourages people with vision impairment to use your service as they can do so more independently
- Aving a powerpoint available where people using an electric wheelchair or scooter can recharge their battery whilst they visit your facility will assist many clients

#### Staff training in access awareness issues

Are your staff members aware of the basic needs of people with a range of disabilities, who may wish to use your office or professional service?

Do they know the laws about entry of guide dogs, hearing dogs or other assistance animals?

Do they know the best way to communicate with a person who has a hearing or speech impairment?

Do they know how to assist someone with a vision impairment?

Do they know how to assist an older person without being patronising?

Investing in access awareness training for staff is an investment in your business. Don't ask yourself if you can afford it.....ask yourself if you can afford not to have access aware staff.





### **Access Checklist for Offices and Professional Services**

Complete the following checklist to provide a guide to how accessible your office or professional service is. This can also be used as a guide when planning improvements or when selecting premises to establish a new office or professional service.

### **General Access Issues to Consider**

Doe	s your office or professional service have:	Yes	No
		$\checkmark$	X
•	accessible parking close by for people with disabilities		
•	accessible public transport close by		
•	accessible parking for motorised scooters and wheelchairs		
•	clear external and internal directional signage including symbols		
•	step free access		
•	wide, self opening or easy to open doors		
•	D or D style lever door handles at an accessible height		
•	appropriate safety markings across glass doors and		
	adjacent panels		
•	colour contrasting door frames/trims		
•	a handrail from the entrance to reception counters		
•	low height, 'clutter free' reception counters with a seat		
•	an accessible buzzer on reception counters		
•	seating with backs and armrests		
•	seating with colour contrast with walls and floors		
•	an Access Institute Good Access Counter Card at		
	reception counters		

consistent and even lighting throughout

darebin.vic.gov.au



		Yes	No
		$\checkmark$	X
•	wide, clear internal walkways		
•	clear space between furniture for a person to manoeuvre a		
	mobility aid (e.g. wheelchair, scooter, walking frame, stick, crutches)		
•	"recharge point" for people to charge electric wheelchairs		
	and scooters		
•	low pile carpet or slip resistant floor surfaces		
•	visible and audible fire alarms		
•	accessible emergency exits		
•	ramp or lift access to all levels		
•	information about services for people with disabilities e.g.		
	- lift		
	- accessible toilet		
	- emergency procedures		
•	a taped telephone message while on hold about services		
	and facilities		
•	an accessible public telephone		
•	an accessible website with information about services		
•	accessible payment options		
•	online form retrieval and lodgment service		
•	seating and numbering system for people in queues		
•	easy grip pens at service counters		
•	direct access to an accessible toilet with an 'access sign'		
•	an accessible baby change area		
•	friendly, helpful staff trained in access awareness		
•	discounts for pensioners		

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	Specific	Access	Issues	to	Consider
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Moving /	Around
----------	--------

- an area to sit and wait
- an area to sit and write
- accessible payment options e.g. internet, telephone banking
- an accessible meeting area •
- movable and adjustable furniture in meeting areas
- · access to tea, coffee and water facilities
- easy to open self-serve tea, coffee etc.
- remote controls for television in any waiting area
- rounded edges on furniture
- accessible storage area for mobility aids •
- coat hanging hooks that can be reached from a wheelchair
- accessible furniture e.g. tables, chairs
- access to any self serve computer facilities
- access to any vending machines
- access to any ATM

### Vision

- clear, large print name tags on staff
- large print suite numbers in contrast to wall colour
- colour contrasting doors or door frames / trims
- large print, raised tactile and Braille signage
- Access Institute 'assistance animals welcome' sticker at reception entry (e.g. guide or hearing dog)
- information in large print and Braille
- business cards in large print and Braille
- staff available to read information to customers if required
- magnifying glass for 'fine print' documents
- large print books and magazines in waiting areas
- large print clock in waiting area



Yes

 $\checkmark$ 

No

Х

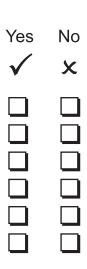
# Vision (cont.)

- alternatives to visual displays e.g. announcements
- effective lighting throughout facilities
- raised tactile and Braille markings on any lift buttons
- audible information in any lifts
- handrails and contrasting edges on any steps
- tactile tiles prior to steps and ramps

# Hearing

- staff with basic sign language skills
- sign language interpreter if required
- staff who look at the customers when talking (for easy lip reading)
- effective glare free lighting at reception counters
- staff who speak clearly to customers
- pen and paper for exchanging information
- appropriate acoustic environments to reduce background noise
- hearing loops at reception counters and in any meeting areas
- hearing loops at any screened or glass covered service areas
- alternatives to any audible announcements e.g. visible display
- access to the National Relay Service (NRS)
- a caption decoder on any television
- availability of an SMS phone number







### **Access Action Plan**

Now you have completed the access checklist, you will have identified a number of areas where you are providing good access. You will also have identified areas that require access improvement.

You can now use the following page of this Handbook to begin to develop an Access Action Plan for your offices and professional services, based on the answers you marked 'NO' in the Checklist.

Start by grouping access action you need to take, into the following areas:

- ✓ action you can take now for little or no cost
- action you can take in the medium term that doesn't require renovation to your premises
- action you will need to take during a refurbishment or redevelopment of your premises to provide access for all

It is important to provide access for people with disabilities in any renovation or redevelopment project in order to ensure that you are not vulnerable to complaint

under the DDA. If you don't own your premises, you can also start to talk to your landlord about the legal requirements of providing access for all, as they are also responsible under the DDA.





### **Access Action Plan**

### **Short-term Action**

### **Medium-term Action**

### **Long-term Action**



### Where to Get Help

Australian Human Rights Commission can provide you with further information in relation to your responsibilities under the DDA.

Local Councils will also be able to provide you with information, including specific guidance relating to local laws relevant to your facilities. For example, do you need to keep the property line at the front of your premises clear to allow a continuous path of travel for all footpath users, particularly people with disabilities?

For design guidance including ramps, doors, circulation spaces, signs and toilets, see the current Australian Standards for Access and Mobility published by Standards Australia. Many of these are the **minimum** standards for access in Australia.

The Access Institute, Accredited and Qualified Access Consultants and Trainers, can assist in all areas of information, access awareness training, design guidance and access auditing.

Access Institute www.accessinstitute.com.au or info@accessinstitute.com.au

Building Code of Australia Australian Building Codes Board **www.abcb.gov.au** 

Disability Discrimination Act Government of Australia www.ag.gov.au/premisesstandards

Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 Government of Australia www.ag.gov.au/premisesstandards

Guideline on the Application of The Premises Standards - Australian Human Rights Commission humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/ guidelines-application-premises-standards

Australian Standards www.saiglobal.com





### **List of Access Standards**

The following Australian Standards are referenced by the *Disability Access to Premises - Buildings Standards 2010* and should be referred to for the requirements for access in planning, designing and developing new buildings as well as buildings undergoing upgrade works that are subject to a building approval.

AS 1428.1: 2001 and 2009	<b>Design for access and mobility</b> General requirements for access - New building work
AS 1428.1: 1993 (Supplement 1)	General requirements for access - Buildings - Commentary
AS 1428.2: 1992	Enhanced and additional requirements - Buildings and facilities
AS 1428.4: 1992	Tactile ground surface indicators for the orientation of people with vision impairment
AS/NZS 1428.4.1: 2009	<b>Design for access and mobility</b> Means to assist the orientation of people with vision impairment - Tactile ground surface indicators
AS 1735.1: 2003	Lifts, escalators and moving walks (SAA Lift Code) Lifts, escalators and moving walks
AS 1735.1: 2003 AS 1735.2: 2001	(SAA Lift Code)
	(SAA Lift Code) Lifts, escalators and moving walks
AS 1735.2: 2001	(SAA Lift Code) Lifts, escalators and moving walks Passenger and goods lifts - electric
AS 1735.2: 2001 AS1735.3: 2002	(SAA Lift Code) Lifts, escalators and moving walks Passenger and goods lifts - electric Passenger and goods lifts - electrohydraulic
AS 1735.2: 2001 AS1735.3: 2002 AS1735.7: 1998	(SAA Lift Code) Lifts, escalators and moving walks Passenger and goods lifts - electric Passenger and goods lifts - electrohydraulic Stairway lifts



AS1735.15: 2002	Lifts for people with limited mobility - restricted use - Non-automatically controlled
AS1735.16: 1993	Lifts for people with limited mobility - restricted use - automatically controlled
AS/NZS2890.6: 2009	<b>Parking facilities</b> Off-street parking for people with disabilities





### **Key Access Dimensions**

The following list of minimum key access dimensions from the relevant Australian Standards for access and mobility is provided as a guide. It is not a comprehensive list of all of the Australian Standards. Access Institute recommends that reference is made to the relevant Standards in all new buildings and building upgrades.

#### Accessible car parking

- Parallel bay minimum 3200mm wide
- On site angled bay minimum 2400mm wide and 5400mm long, with a minimum 2400mm wide adjoining shared area at one side (at grade) and 2400mm x 2400mm shared area at front or rear (at grade)
- Overhead clearance at bay 2500mm

#### Pedestrian accessways and doors

- Call buttons at entrances 900mm 1200mm high
- Pathways minimum 1000mm wide x 2000mm clear height
- Solid non transparent strip across glass doors and walls at 75mm wide, with lower edge installed at 900mm 1000mm high
- Door handles and locks between 900mm 1100mm high
- Door opening force (other than fire and smoke doors) 20 N
- Door opening width minimum of 850mm
- Internal walkway minimum 1000mm wide
- Passing spaces (maximum 20m apart) 1800mm wide x 2000mm long

#### Ramps

- **Ramps** greater than 1900mm in length require a maximum gradient of 1:14
- Handrails on both sides of ramp with a minimum of 1000mm in between
- Handrail extension 300mm past top and bottom of ramp
- Ramps must be setback from the transverse path of travel (*property boundary*) by minimum 900mm
- Landings on ramps at a minimum every 9 metres
- Step ramp gradient maximum 1:10
- Threshold ramp gradient maximum 1:8
- Kerb ramp gradient maximum 1:8



#### **Stairs**

- Handrails on both sides of stairs with a minimum of 1000mm in between
- Handrail extension 300mm at top past last step and 300mm plus one tread width at bottom
- Stairs must be setback from the transverse path of travel (property boundary) by minimum 900mm and set back form any internal corridor minimum 300mm plus one tread width

#### Passenger lifts

- Door opening minimum width 900mm
- Floor size for new lifts minimum 1400mm x 1600mm
- Handrail on inside of lift 600mm long x 850mm 950mm high
- Keypad located between 900mm 1100mm high
- Visual and tactile buttons located between 900mm 1200mm high

#### Worktops and tables

- Tables or worktop between 730mm 770mm high
- Knee height clearance beneath tables and desks minimum 720mm
- Counters between 830mm 870mm high
- Counter knee height clearance between 800mm 840mm for a minimum of 900mm in length
- Power points located between 600mm 1100mm high

#### Signage

- Braille and tactile signs horizontal word height 1200mm 1600mm
- International symbol of access and deafness symbols are white on blue background
- Tactile ground surface indicators see AS/NZS 1428.4.1 for specific details

#### Unisex accessible toilets

• New unisex accessible toilet - pan circulation space minimum 1900mm x 2300mm to a height of 2000mm



### **Institute of Access Training Australia - Training**

The Access Institute is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and offers a range of training programs including the nationally recognised



- Certificate IV in Access Consulting
- Conduct a Building Access Audit
- Conduct a Playground and Outdoor Recreation Access Audit
- Conduct an Education Facility Access Audit
- Conduct a Streetscape and Activity Centre Access Audit
- Conduct a Transport Infrastructure and Conveyance Access Audit
- Interpreting Access Legislation and Standards
- Read, Interpret and Assess Plans for Access

As well as other individual units of competency from the Property Services Training Package relating to access to the built environment.

In addition seminars are also provided covering the following topics:

- General Disability Access Awareness for All
- Addressing Access in the Built Environment
- Addressing Access in Parks and Outdoor Spaces
- Developing a Disability Action Plan
- Introduction to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Disability Access Awareness
- Access Awareness for Technical Staff
- Access Awareness for Architects, Designers and Builders
- Understanding Universal Access
- Understanding Universal Access for Statutory Planners and Building Certifiers
- Improving Access in Playgrounds, Parks and Outdoor Areas
- 'Joining the Dots' Understanding Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs)
- Improving Access in Pedestrian Areas, Streetscapes and Footpaths



- Understanding Access for Management and Maintenance staff a practical approach
- From 'Disabled to Accessible' Car Parking compliance and common issues
- Footpath and Street Trading Policies Developing, Consulting, Implementing
- Footpath and Street Trading Policies Information Session for Traders
- Scooter Etiquette
- Improving Access to Children's Services
- Universal Access Awareness for Home Care Staff
- Universal Access in Libraries
- Improving Access to Functions, Festivals and Fun Activities
- Access Action in Customer Services
- Trams, Trains and Automobiles Access for All
- Including Children with Additional Needs in Children Services Settings
- Addressing Universal Access Issues in Local Communities
- Improving Access to Publications and Communications
- Access Tours

Access Institute can also create tailor made training programs or presentations to meet your specific requirements.

Go to our website for further details and our Training and Publications Guide at **www.accessinstitute.com.au** 

Book online or email us at info@accessinstitute.com.au





### **Access Institute - Publications**

#### How to provide better access to

- Cafes and Restaurants
- Offices and Professional Services
- Retail Outlets
- Tourist Facilities, Services and Venues
- Tourist Accommodation Services
- Sporting Clubs and Recreation Facilities
- Festivals and Outdoor Events
- Buildings

#### Understanding access obligations for:

- Councillors, CEOs and Directors
- Council Managers
- Developers and Certifiers

#### How to develop more accessible:

- Websites
- Publications
- Presentations
- Communications
- Consultations
- Customer Services

#### How to develop an: Housing:

- Access Guide
- TALKING MY LANGUAGE!

- Theatres and Cultural Venues
- Pre Schools and Childcare Centres
- Maternal and Child Health Centres
- Neighbourhood Houses
- Libraries
- Health Services
- Education Services
- · Asset Managers and Staff
- Committees of Management
- Boards of Directors
- Signage
- Streetscapes and Activity Centres
- Parks and Outdoor Recreation Areas
- Playgrounds
- Aquatic Areas and Facilities
- Barrier Free Housing for Lifetime Living



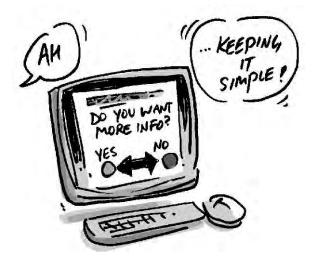
### **Access Institute Contact details**

To order any of the Access Institute publications, book training programs or presentations please contact us.

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