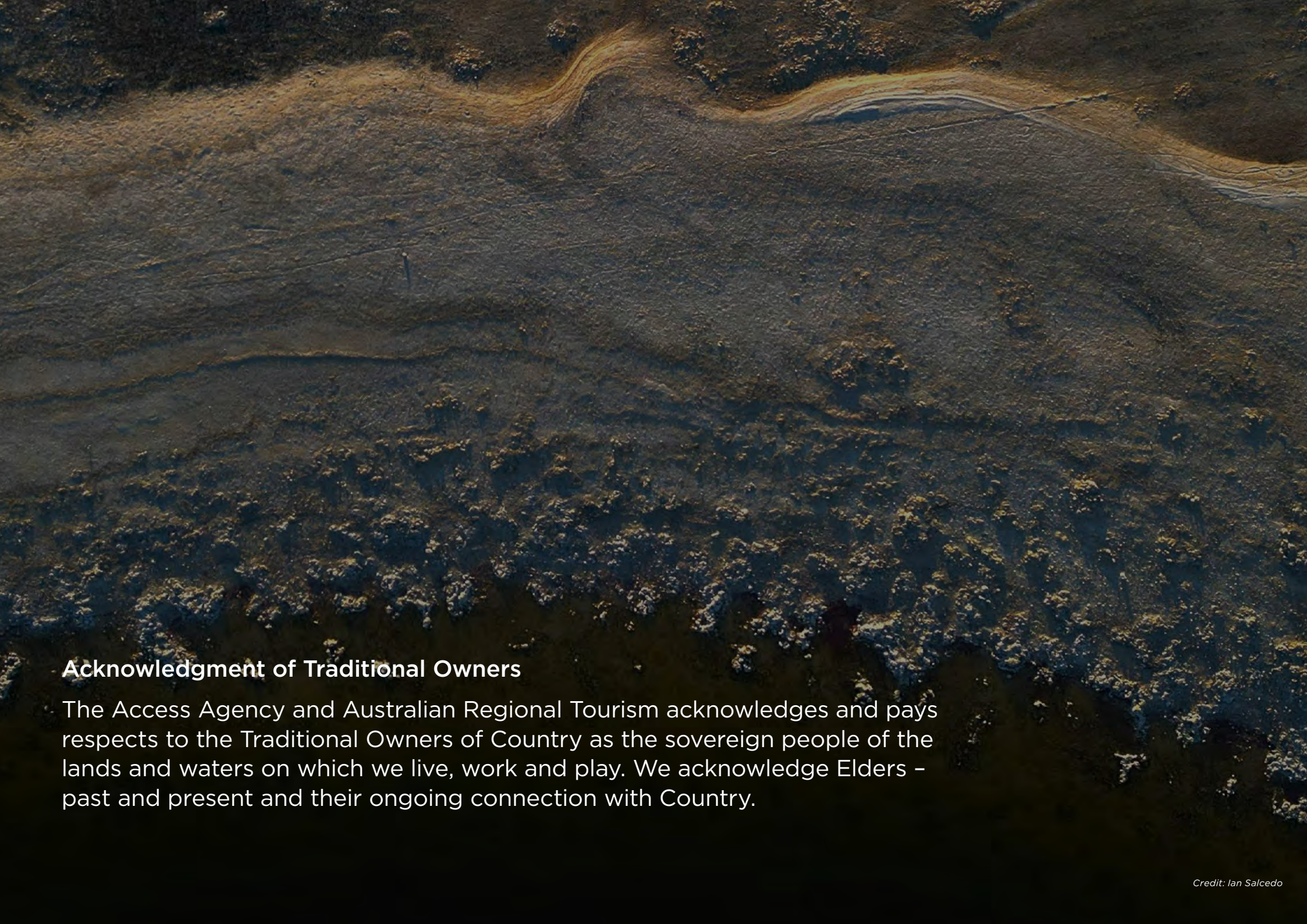


Accessible Tourism Australia 2035

A discussion paper about the future of accessible tourism in Australia.

Written by Ryan Smith of The Access Agency partnering with Australian Regional Tourism



Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

The Access Agency and Australian Regional Tourism acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Owners of Country as the sovereign people of the lands and waters on which we live, work and play. We acknowledge Elders – past and present and their ongoing connection with Country.

Credit: Ian Salcedo

About this paper and the author

This paper was prepared by Ryan Smith of The Access Agency, an accessibility consultancy practicing in solely the visitor economy. They work with councils, regional tourism organisations and operators on accessible tourism planning, access audits and training/advisory services.

The author is a qualified access consultant (Dip CPP5071), a wheelchair user and frequent traveller – he draws on that lived and professional experience throughout.

The paper is offered to stimulate discussion, not to promote any particular product, provider or accreditation scheme. The framework it proposes is intended to be delivered through open, transparent processes, building on the work of many organisations across the sector. Where the author has been directly involved in programs referenced in this paper, this is noted.

This document is available as an accessible MS Word file by emailing ryan@theaccessagency.com.au.

Accessible Tourism Australia 2035

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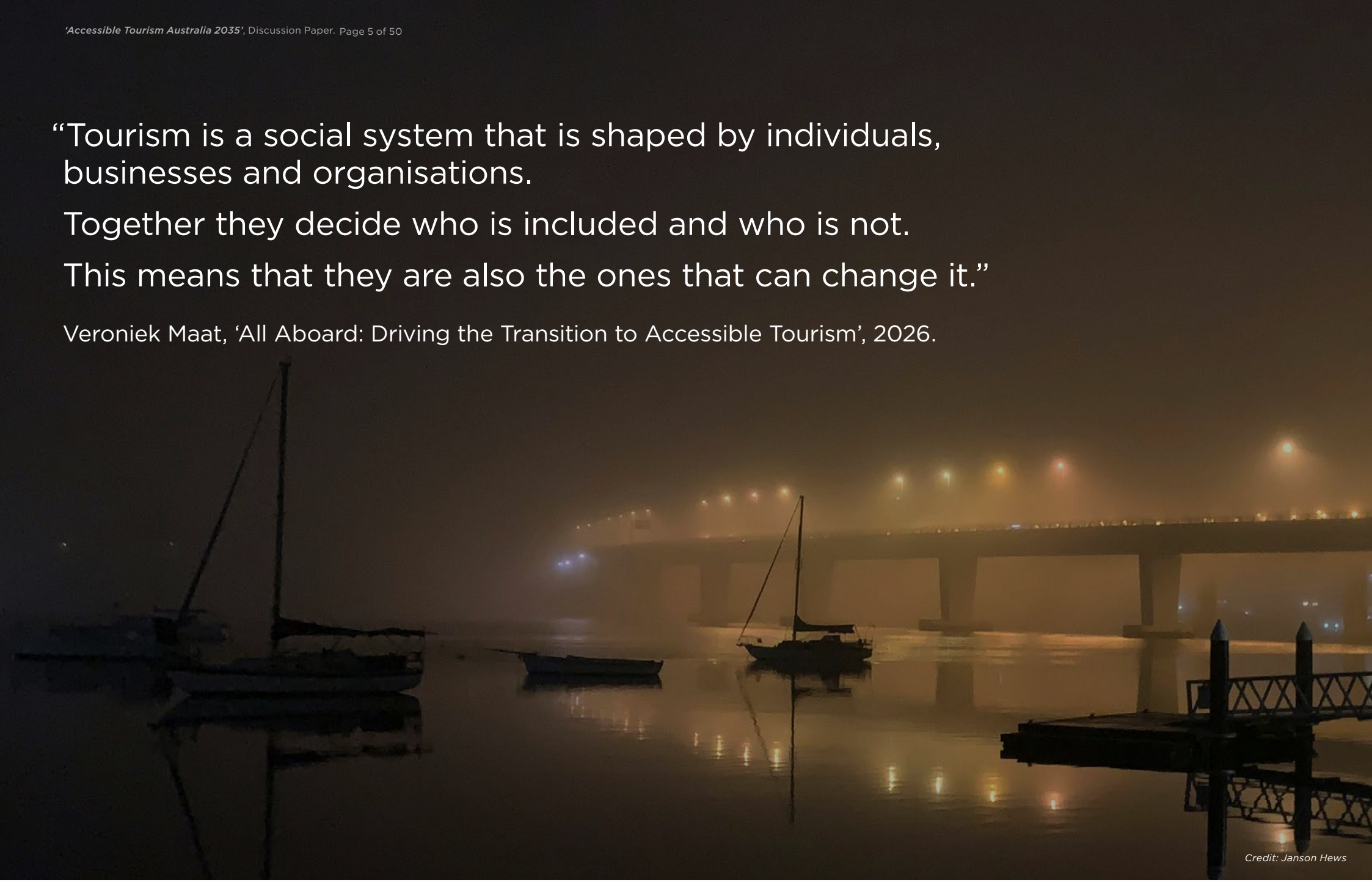
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"Tourism is a social system that is shaped by individuals, businesses and organisations.

Together they decide who is included and who is not.

This means that they are also the ones that can change it."

Veroniek Maat, 'All Aboard: Driving the Transition to Accessible Tourism', 2026.



Credit: Janson Hews

Accessible Tourism

Accessible tourism, as defined by UN Tourism (2025): "Tourism designed for everyone. It means creating experiences, services, and destinations that accommodate all visitors, regardless of their mobility, sensory, or cognitive abilities. This involves not just physical adjustments but a shift in mindset to prioritise inclusivity at every level."

ISO 21902 (the International Standard for Accessible Tourism) frames it further as "a destination-wide policy framework requiring coordinated planning, implementation, monitoring and continuous improvement across all stakeholders in the visitor economy."

Acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
AITCAP	Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Conference (Australia, 2021–24)
API	Application programming interface
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ART	Australian Regional Tourism
ATDW	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse
ATEC	Australian Tourism Export Council
ATIC	Australian Tourism Industry Council
Austrade	Australian Trade and Investment Commission
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
DMO	Destination management organisation
DSAPT	Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
ENAT	European Network for Accessible Tourism
GIS	Geographic information system – digital mapping and spatial data
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LGA	Local government area
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
NCC	National Construction Code
QTF	Quality Tourism Framework (administered by ATIC)
Red DTI	Red de Destinos Turísticos Inteligentes
RTO	Regional tourism organisation
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SEGITTUR	Spain's state-owned tourism innovation and tech. company
STO	State or territory tourism organisation
THRIVE 2030	Australia's national visitor economy strategy
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
WELCOME	Austrade's accessible tourism framework
YOAT	Queensland's Year of Accessible Tourism (2023–24)

Executive summary

Accessible tourism is no longer a niche consideration for the Australian visitor economy – it is a proven, sizeable market.

In 2024, travellers with accessibility needs and their companions made 70.5 million trips and spent $29.2 billion in Australia: 22% of all trips and 17% of all visitor spend, or roughly one dollar in every six[1]. With an ageing global population and the maturing practice of Inclusion, it's a market in the ascent.

Australia is well placed to lead. We have a strong legal framework, internationally recognised expertise and a growing set of tools: Austrade's WELCOME Framework, the Quality Tourism Framework's accessibility accreditation, ATEC's Accessible & Inclusive Host training, ATDW's accessibility attributes, and the most significant reform of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport* since they were introduced, along with new aviation disability standards.

But the effort is not connected. Projects come and go; audits and reports are completed but remain static; training is undertaken but rarely built upon; grant funding is sparse and sporadic. Public spaces are frequently overlooked. An operator wanting to do the right thing could complete four separate national accessibility programs and finish with four unconnected credentials. For visitors, the result is uncertainty – and many decide it's safer not to travel at all.

Brisbane 2032 gives Australia a fixed deadline and a global stage. Tens of thousands of visitors with disability, and their companions, will travel for the Games – placing unprecedented pressure on accessible amenities and infrastructure at a time when the world's eyes are on Australia. With the sector's growth continuing well beyond 2032, it is also a rare opportunity to set the standard for accessible tourism worldwide.

1 Tourism Research Australia, 2024

This paper proposes *Accessible Tourism Australia 2035*: a nationally guided, regionally led framework that connects what already exists rather than adding another layer. It is built on four priorities:

1. **Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups** that bring councils, operators, experts and people with disability to the same table.
2. **State coordination and investment** to sustain progress and level up areas of need.
3. **Trusted, whole-of-region visitor information** – including accessibility maps – on-hand when it's needed.
4. **A single connected pathway** for capability, accreditation and verification that recognises existing schemes and training, and gives industry one clear route to improvement.

Ten years after the UN dedicated World Tourism Day 2016 to 'Promoting Universal Accessibility', it's time to build on our foundations with a committed, cohesive and unifying approach to tourism for all.



Credit: City of Gold Coast

The opportunity and the moment

Considering the accessibility needs of travellers is not a theoretical concept or outlying idea anymore. Australia has a long, proven and proud legacy here: our researchers and practitioners have helped shape global thinking on accessible tourism, and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the standards that followed mean public transport and most new public buildings must be built accessible by law. Australia therefore enters the next phase with strong foundations, extensive expertise and a history of innovation to build on (see Appendix E).

Accessible tourism has been on the agenda for Austrade (Australian Trade and Investment Commission) and Tourism Australia from the outset, and was identified as an opportunity in the early days of *THRIVE 2030* – the long-term national travel and tourism strategy. Tourism Research Australia (TRA) measures the opportunity – its 2025 'Accessible tourism in Australia' report is key to many conversations in the field – and Austrade's WELCOME Framework is widely regarded as a strong starting point for operators and destinations, spelling out the fundamentals. An internal Accessible Tourism Working Group[2] has been established, and the 'National Sustainability Framework for the Visitor Economy' includes reference to accessible tourism. In the same way sustainability and agritourism have been highlighted and source of leadership for industry, so too should accessible tourism.



Credit: Tourism Australia

2 As cited in the *THRIVE 2030 Action Plan Quarterly Report* (4.5), July 2026

There is significant reform underway. The *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (the Transport Standards) are being modernised, with the 2026 amendments the most significant changes since the Standards were introduced. Alongside them, new aviation disability standards are being developed (public consultation recently closed). Together these reforms are likely to bring a growing focus on access to information, improved passenger touch points and, potentially, passenger assistance profiles that travellers can use to make airport journeys smoother. This will have a transformative effect on the way people experience the tourism sector for decades to come.

The legal landscape may also shift. The Australian Government is reviewing the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), including the Royal Commission's recommendation for a 'positive duty' to prevent discrimination rather than respond to complaints. If adopted, operators and destinations would need to show the steps they've taken – and a connected national framework would give them a practical, low-burden way to do so.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is funding improved access to visitor experiences through the Commonwealth Accessible Australia Initiative. The Commonwealth is investing $17.1 million over four years (2024–2028) through this program, in partnership with the states and territories, to improve access at beaches, national parks and playspaces. This will have a direct, material effect on the usability and inclusion of these places for all visitors.



Credit: Tourism Australia

At a state level, Destination NSW has highlighted product development in a strategic pillar ('Focus On Experiences') within its recently released 'NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035'. Accessible tourism has a direct call out in the pillar under the title 'A Welcoming NSW: Open To All, Accessible For All'. While there aren't specific targets, the document recognises accessibility as a strategic growth driver in its ambitions to 2035[3]. The organisation is committed to industry development in the sector too through its NSW First program and a partnership with Get Skilled Access. The strategy embeds accessibility in all product development and service delivery – not positioning accessible experiences as stand-alone products, but integrating universal design.

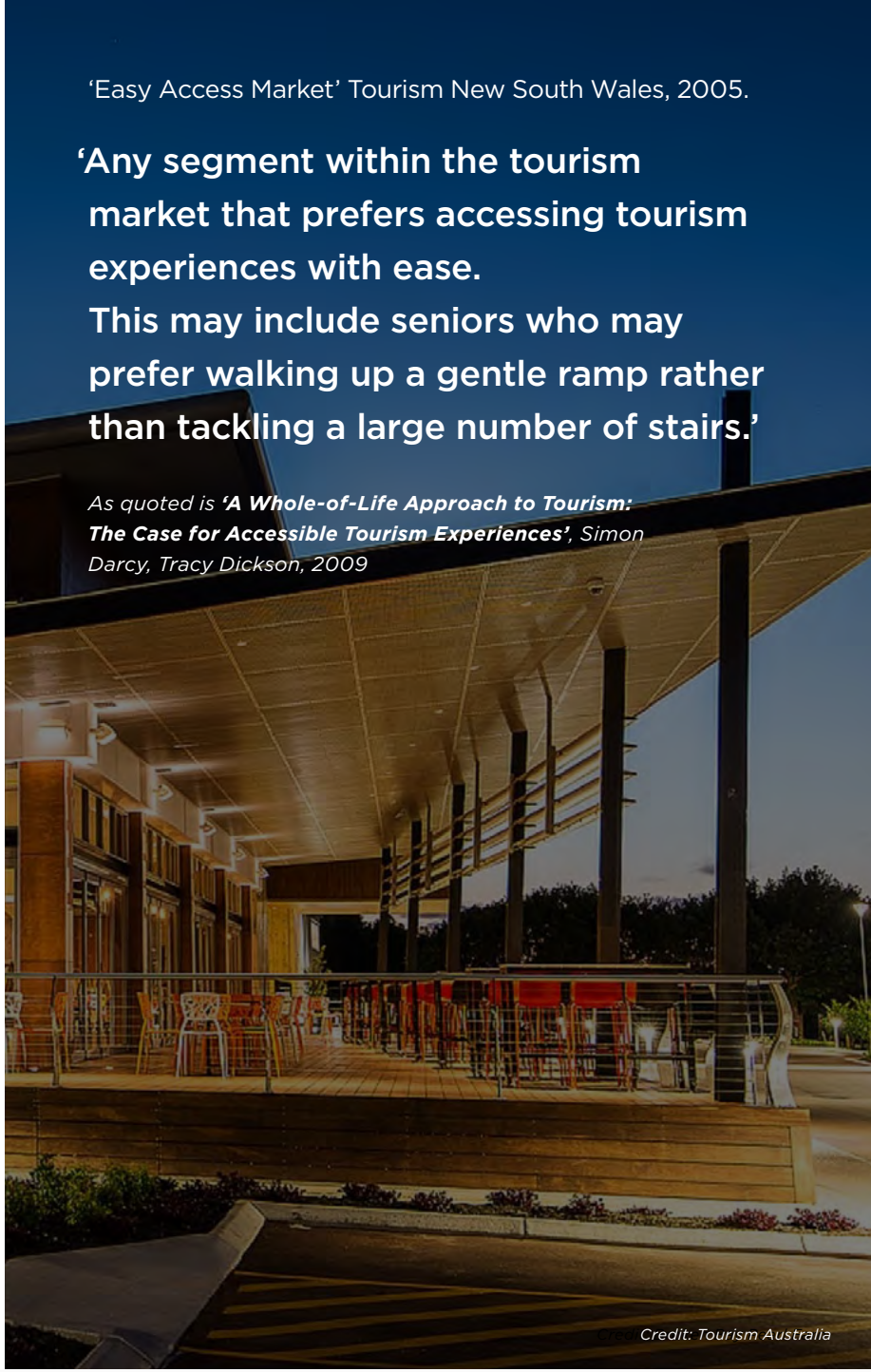
The WELCOME Framework, published by Austrade in 2024 as part of *THRIVE 2030*, sets out overarching guiding principles for accessible tourism. Its value as a set of fundamentals is still valid, but the sector has matured and a stronger, definitive direction is needed - along with the resources to get there. Progress across Australia is being made - but it's not cohesive or holistic.

3 "Ensuring resilience and inclusivity by embedding sustainability, accessibility and innovation across all visitor economy sectors"

'Easy Access Market' Tourism New South Wales, 2005.

'Any segment within the tourism market that prefers accessing tourism experiences with ease.
This may include seniors who may prefer walking up a gentle ramp rather than tackling a large number of stairs.'

*As quoted is **'A Whole-of-Life Approach to Tourism: The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences'**, Simon Darcy, Tracy Dickson, 2009*



Credit: Tourism Australia

Brisbane 2032 adds urgency to the call for more accessible tourism. Modelling for this paper suggests that during the Paralympic Games alone, around 9,500 international and 39,000 domestic visitors with disability could travel to South East Queensland[4], most accompanied by friends, family, workmates, companions, support workers or carers. The pressure on accessible accommodation, transport and amenities will be unprecedented – and so will the opportunity to showcase great access at the world's biggest multisport event.

Events; from regional festivals and agricultural shows to sporting fixtures and business events - are significant activators in the visitor economy. However, they also concentrate demand: visitors arrive at once, often relying on temporary venues, pop-up infrastructure and short-term staff. For visitors with accessibility needs, when not delivered inclusively, these circumstances can present real issues. Lack of adequate accessible parking or drop-off areas, no elevated viewing areas, portable toilets that aren't accessible, and information that lacks relevant details. Business events face similar challenges. Planned well though, events can spotlight a destination's accessibility initiatives and innovations. They can be a learning space too where knowledge is gained and experiences improved beyond the one event.

4 Spectators, athletes, officials and support staff with disability, Paralympic Games period only. Scenario estimates from The Access Agency's Brisbane 2032 visitor model; see Appendix D.



Credit: City of Gold Coast

The problem: lots of effort, little connection

What it's like to travel with a disability

For a traveller with accessibility needs, a trip rarely follows neat boundaries. People with disability may require support workers, assistive technology, medications and a host of other things that affect daily life – and travel adds another layer of complexity. Disabled travellers, such as the author, painstakingly plan travel to reduce the risk of harm, disruption and inconvenience, all while trying to experience as much as possible on a budget. This additional effort is sometimes called the 'Disability Tax'. It's a burden that also affects travellers who don't identify as disabled but have additional needs, such as older travellers, those travelling with young children or larger visitors.

Travellers and their families often find travel experiences over-promise and under-deliver on accessibility – sometimes called 'access washing'. The opposite, 'access hushing', where businesses under-report the access they do offer, is also common. Often we can't participate in the same way as other paying visitors, sometimes getting an inequitable, substandard experience or being excluded entirely. We cannot travel on a whim, and we face physical and attitudinal barriers and sometimes outright discrimination. This can have immediate and long-lasting effects.



Credit: Queensland Country Tourism

"..I want to be honest about what that phrase - 'give up and decide not to go' - actually costs me, because it is easy to say and hard to convey.

Every time I make that decision, I am not just missing an event. I am losing something.
A concert I was looking forward to.
A meal out with my daughter.
A trip to a museum or a gallery.

These are not luxuries - they are the things that give life quality and meaning"

- **Sharon Docherty** *'The State of Disabled Access'*, Euan's Guide, 2025

Many disabled travellers decide not to travel at all through fear of a bad outcome – some deciding it's safer to 'give up and decide not to go'. Other research has found only 13% are confident about visiting new places and less than 1 in 10 find it easy to find disabled access information[5].

But when a destination gets it right, the payoff is real: travellers with accessibility needs and their companions tend to stay longer and spend more, finding somewhere that works is worth returning to – a pattern that reflects in the UK data cited in Appendix C.

Often, the reality is that it's not an impairment that prevents great travel experiences, nor is it conscious exclusion by industry; it's a lack of information, poor understanding of visitor needs and an absence of universal access in tourism product design. Many potential travellers opt out because the risk of a poor outcome is just too high. The role of destinations becomes partly about reducing that uncertainty through reliable information, consistent standards, accessible infrastructure and quality service delivery.

5 *The State of Disabled Access*, Euan's Guide, 2025

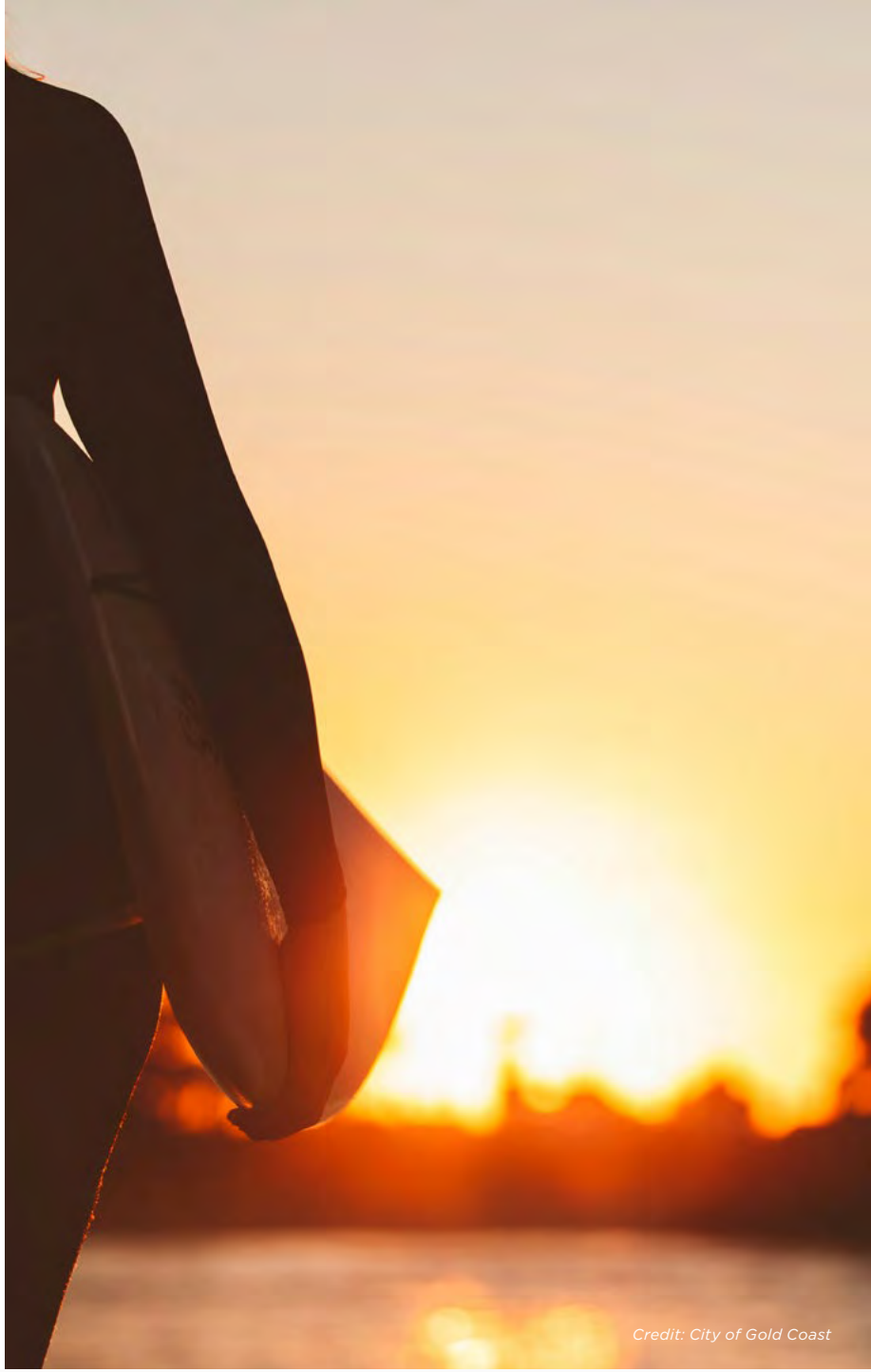


Credit: Tourism Australia

A fragmented landscape

There is a significant amount of resources on accessible and inclusive tourism in Australia, and industry has gone some way to provide guides for both operators and visitors. But these resources are still largely delivered through a project lens rather than an ongoing operational one. They highlight the economic opportunity, provide relevant statistics and cite good-practice examples with good intent – but they don't join the dots, and they don't see destinations through the eyes of the visitor. Appendix B summarises the main national programs and resources.

Take ATEC's Accessible & Inclusive Host training as an example. Its digital badge sits entirely outside the other national systems: it isn't recognised by, or counted toward, ATIC's Quality Tourism Framework Accessibility Accreditation, doesn't feed into ATDW's Accessibility Attributes, and has no stated connection to the WELCOME Framework's seven themes. An operator wanting to build genuine capability could complete all four — ATEC's host training, QTF's accreditation module, WELCOME's guidance, and the accessibility fields on their ATDW listing — and finish with separate, uncoordinated credentials. Internationally, the same pattern repeats: the Global Sustainable Tourism Council runs its own 'Accessible & Inclusive Travel' course, entirely independent of any Australian body, for operators or destinations wanting an internationally-recognised credential.
None of these systems formally recognise, defer to, or build on each other.



Credit: City of Gold Coast

For a region or destination wanting to pursue accessible tourism in practice, it's confusing at best and overwhelming at worst: varying definitions and terminology, resources that are similar but somehow different, differing approaches to 'accreditation' – and no unified voice of authority providing a holistic, proven pathway.

Some destinations — Queensland Country Tourism and the City of Gold Coast[6] among them — have built comprehensive, whole-of-destination accessibility resources that have proven genuinely valuable and are actively maintained. But the visitor information in these resources is typically static, requires ongoing effort to update, and — while deep and detailed — is limited to a single region.

6 The author was involved in the delivery of these resources (The Access Agency & Inclusive Tourism Australia)



Credit: Tourism Australia

Who bears the cost

This inconsistency, and the lack of consolidated or aggregated information, presents a genuine opportunity. The costs of the current approach fall on several groups:



For visitors: reduced confidence due to inconsistent or absent information, leading to a bigger planning burden; exclusion or reduced participation where access isn't provided; incomplete or disrupted journeys caused by 'islands' of access; no single view of a region's accessibility; and accreditation symbols that only build confidence when backed by real information.



For Councils and DMOs: lost economic activity that greater participation would otherwise drive; the risk of negative visitor experiences; no holistic, cross-destination accessibility view; an inability to target infrastructure investment where it matters most; a weaker basis for marketing a destination as genuinely inclusive; no region-wide accessibility benchmark; and reduced capacity for emergency and resilience planning



For state tourism organisations: an inability to measure the true economic value of accessible tourism as a whole; tourism investment that stays project-based and reactive; no way to benchmark maturity or relative performance across regions; missed competitive advantage; and reduced ability to target support to where specific need exists.

Many countries are working on this too (see Appendix C), but we have not identified an international model that brings public infrastructure, tourism businesses, transport, visitor information and destination management together within one coordinated framework.

What's missing in Australia is what's missing across the world: a nationally guided, destination-led strategy on accessible tourism.

The proposal: Accessible Tourism Australia 2035

Accessible Tourism Australia 2035 is a discussion paper for consideration by industry, government and community stakeholders. It sets out a possible direction for a more co-ordinated, ongoing and sustainable approach to accessible tourism in Australia, with a focus on visitor outcomes, organisational partnerships and shared national ambition.

Australia should consider a shared goal: to be recognised as a world-class tourism destination for all. The legacy imperative of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, coupled with growth in the sector, calls for a whole-of-industry response. This is bigger than audits and accreditation — it's a systematic, smart approach to a very human challenge, and one that should build on existing industry knowledge, recognise the work already underway, and identify clearer pathways for integrated coordination.

Accessible tourism is an economic and strategic advantage for regions and for the industry – one that extends well beyond 2032. *Accessible Tourism Australia 2035* can be considered a coordination framework that uses accessibility, verified information and local leadership to improve tourism quality, visitor confidence, regional competitiveness and community outcomes across the entire visitor economy.



Credit: Queensland Country Tourism

Guiding principles

Six principles are proposed as a basis for discussion. The full set, with explanations, is in Appendix A alongside seven potential strategic pillars.

5. **Visitor-centred, whole-of-journey:** plan for the complete trip, not individual businesses or boundaries.
6. **Aggregation, not replication:** connect and strengthen existing programs before creating new ones.
7. **Minimal burden, maximum value:** keep participation proportionate and practical for smaller operators and regions.
8. **Trusted information:** verified, maintained accessibility information is the foundation of visitor confidence.
9. **Consistent nationally, flexible locally:** common standards, with locally chosen pathways.
10. **Co-designed and measurable:** people with disability shape decisions, and progress is measured by outcomes, not activity.



Credit: Parks Victoria

Four priorities

Potential priorities for discussion include:

1. **Functioning Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups.**
2. **State governance and oversight, including funding to level up areas of need.**
3. **Visitor information delivered when it's needed — a whole-of-region accessibility guide and mobility map, drawing on Smart City principles.**
4. **A connected pathway for capability, accreditation and verification that recognises existing schemes and training, reduces duplication, and provides a clear route to improvement.**

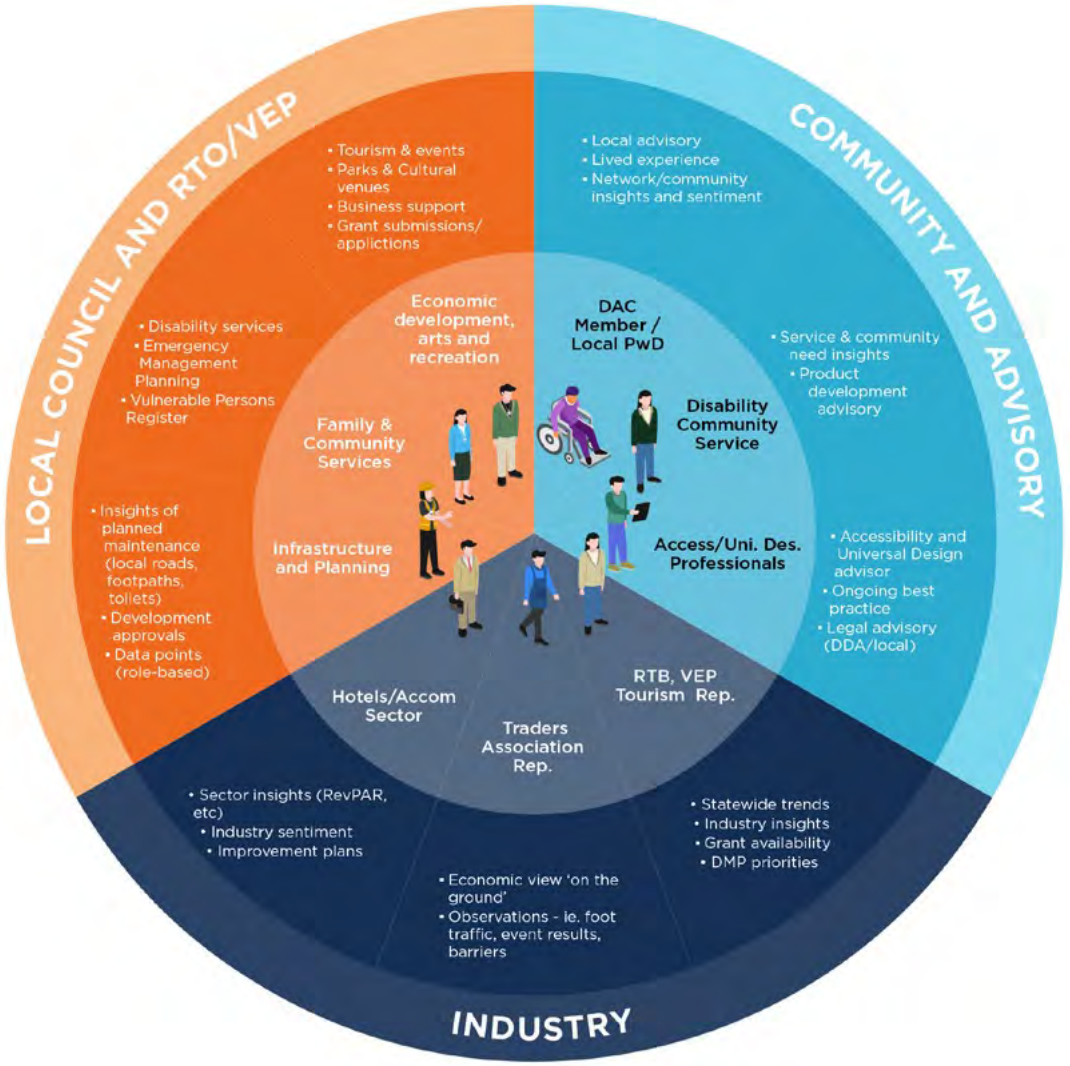


Figure 1: Potential structure of Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups

1/ Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups

Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups could provide a local or regional mechanism for bringing together the people and organisations that influence accessibility on the ground. Membership might include council staff from planning, economic development, tourism, maintenance and infrastructure, emergency management alongside tourism operators, disability advisory representatives, access and universal design specialists, and people with lived experience of disability. Council events and permits teams should also be at the table. Councils approve and often fund local events, and including accessibility in event permit conditions is a low-cost way to positively affect every event.

This cooperative, cross-discipline model is not unique. Through the Age-friendly Communities program, many Australian councils already run working groups that combine staff from several departments with community co-design. Together they assess the local landscape, agree on an action plan and review progress. Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups could follow the same cycle, with operators and people with disability at the table – building on existing age-friendly or disability advisory groups where they exist.

In practice, the leadership group's value is coordination at the point where the work is currently done in isolation — ensuring, for example, when pipes under a footpath need fixing, the footpath is replaced with increased accessibility in mind. Or – as in the case of the Transport for NSW AssetAI system – the council route for rubbish collection is used to identify road potholes (*and* access barriers). The value here is in the diversity of individual roles around the table and the influence they can have as a whole on accessibility.

1.

2/ State governance and oversight

States and territories would benefit from a broader view of accessibility across their visitor economies — supporting more targeted investment, better benchmarking, and stronger alignment between local delivery, state priorities and any future national direction. Queensland's Year of Accessible Tourism is a useful reference point for what this can look like in practice: a $12 million investment that funded more than 52 organisations, with people with disabilities included in the grant approval process. The question for state governance is less about the case for investment, and more about sustaining it: moving state-wide accessibility from 'project to practice' – one that can target specific deficiencies and provide an ongoing, consistent vision while measuring alignment. State tourism and events bodies could require integrated inclusion planning, and reporting on outcomes, as a condition of events they fund.

3/ Visitor information: delivering what's needed, when it's needed

Confidence for visitors with accessibility needs comes from certainty and the tools to make informed decisions. Seamless, whole-of-region accessibility guides — including a mobility map — are central to this. By combining 'live' accessibility information about public and private spaces, transport, emergency information and destination busyness, visitors enjoy centralised delivery of the information they need, exactly when they need it.

The most valuable versions of this kind of guide – and there are many – are live rather than static; reflecting real-time factors like transport disruptions, event-driven crowding, or temporary access closures. That relies on data feeds from local government, transport operators and destination managers being connected rather than siloed. Open and licensed APIs (Application Programming Interface) – effectively live data sources – and machine learning can play a big part here – taking the 'Smart City' model to regions. Events should also have specific information; accessible paths of travel, viewing areas, toilets, quiet spaces and transport arrangements should be available well before event activation.

2, 3.

4/ A connected pathway for capability, accreditation and verification

As noted, accreditation and verification are widespread and varied in substance. There are multiple systems and processes across the public and private sectors, many of which don't truly reflect the needs of the end user. Accreditation or verification that has already been completed could be aggregated, using AI to identify common attributes, to provide a full criteria set for industry.

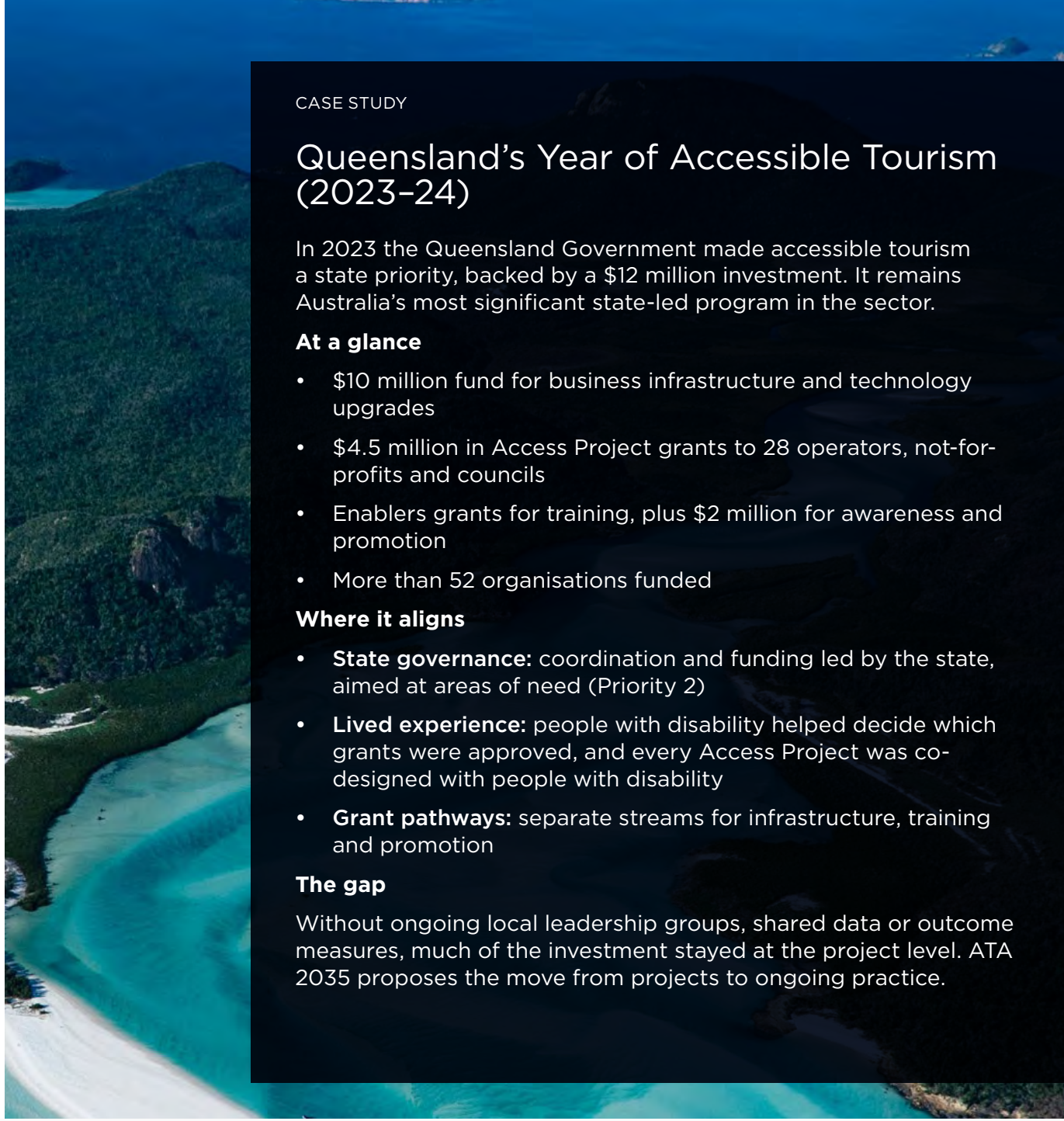
An aggregation and improvement system would recognise existing schemes and use digital tools to consolidate accessibility information at a property or destination level. Existing accreditation and verification efforts are fragmented, with information held across PDF reports, ATDW, ATIC's Quality Tourism Framework, national parks websites and third-party platforms. Aggregating, verifying and harmonising this information would improve visitor confidence and provide clearer improvement pathways for industry.





4.

Training should sit on the same pathway rather than alongside it. Recognised training – whether ATEC's Accessible & Inclusive Host program, WELCOME-aligned guidance or training led by people with lived experience – should count toward accreditation, so operators build one connected record of capability instead of collecting separate credentials. Given high staff turnover across tourism and hospitality, training also needs to be built into induction and refreshed over time rather than delivered once. And it should extend beyond operators to the council, transport and visitor-servicing staff whose decisions shape the visitor experience just as much. Brisbane 2032's workforce and volunteer program offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build this capability at scale – and leave it in place long after the Games. This philosophy applies to every event: organisers, production suppliers, staff and volunteers should be able to join the same capability pathway.



CASE STUDY

Queensland's Year of Accessible Tourism (2023–24)

In 2023 the Queensland Government made accessible tourism a state priority, backed by a $12 million investment. It remains Australia's most significant state-led program in the sector.

At a glance

- $10 million fund for business infrastructure and technology upgrades
- $4.5 million in Access Project grants to 28 operators, not-for-profits and councils
- Enablers grants for training, plus $2 million for awareness and promotion
- More than 52 organisations funded

Where it aligns

- **State governance:** coordination and funding led by the state, aimed at areas of need (Priority 2)
- **Lived experience:** people with disability helped decide which grants were approved, and every Access Project was co-designed with people with disability
- **Grant pathways:** separate streams for infrastructure, training and promotion

The gap

Without ongoing local leadership groups, shared data or outcome measures, much of the investment stayed at the project level. ATA 2035 proposes the move from projects to ongoing practice.

Connecting the whole journey

Visitors don't see administrative boundaries; they experience a trip as a continuous journey. The accessible tourism chain runs from planning and booking, through to getting there and getting around, to where people stay, what they do, and the feedback they give once they're home. A break at any point can undo good work everywhere else – an accessible hotel is of little value if there's no accessible transfer from the airport, or the surrounding footpaths aren't accessible.

Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups are well placed to address the in-destination links: public spaces, local transport, operators and visitor information. But some links can't be solved at the experience level. Intrastate and airport transport, booking platforms, accommodation supply, digital accessibility, and support services need national and state leadership, working with the transport, aviation and events sectors.

Events add a temporary layer to the journey – pop-up venues, event shuttles, road closures and overflow parking. These need similar accessibility planning to permanent infrastructure; and a future framework should make clear who is responsible for each.

This framework should give each link in the chain a clear owner, so no part of the journey falls through the gaps.



Credit: Tourism Australia

Measuring success

Success would mean accessibility information, infrastructure, industry practice, government planning and visitor experience are connected in a way that gives people and groups with accessibility needs greater confidence to travel — while giving industry and government clearer evidence for decision-making. Success would be visible at different levels.

For visitors

- Access to trusted, current and accurate accessibility information before travelling.
- The ability to plan complete journeys across accommodation, attractions, transport, public spaces, amenities and support services. And across regions.

For industry and destinations

- Accessibility becoming part of standard destination management, product development, marketing, workforce development and visitor servicing.
- Regions being able to identify where accessibility strengths exist, where gaps remain, and what capability needs to be built over time. And what opportunities exist for ongoing long term improvements.
- Accessibility planning and information included as standard in council-permitted and state-funded events, including business events.

For government and national coordination

- A consistent way to benchmark destination accessibility capability across regions, states and territories.
- Investment decisions informed by evidence about visitor needs, economic opportunity, information gaps and destination readiness.

Why this matters

Accessible Tourism Australia 2035 is designed to work *with* existing organisations, not around them.

Stakeholder	What this offers
Austrade	A strong cohesive vision and roadmap for industry, integrated into existing *THRIVE 2030* ambitions and targets.
Tourism Australia	Stronger global positioning, a Brisbane 2032 legacy story, and improved destination competitiveness in key inbound markets.
State governments	Measurable outcomes, tourism growth, and alignment with existing disability and tourism strategies.
Regional Tourism Organisations	A genuine point of differentiation, and a practical product RTOs can deliver to their members with co-ordinated improvements and shared responsibility.
Councils	Clearer infrastructure investment priorities, access to cross-region benchmarking, and benefits that flow to residents as well as visitors.
Industry	National recognition, new business opportunity, practical guidance, a straightforward way to demonstrate 'reasonable steps' – and, critically, no duplication of existing audits or accreditation work.
Event organisers and business events	Larger and more diverse audiences, clearer expectations, consistent guidance across councils, and a competitive advantage when bidding for events.

This paper is an opportunity to lead a region-led, national roadmap towards better outcomes for their communities and businesses. RTOs operate where accessibility actually succeeds or fails for a visitor — across councils, businesses and public infrastructure that no single organisation controls alone. A national approach built on Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups gives RTOs a natural coordinating role, and a shared national framework (Appendix A) means individual regions are not left to build accessibility information systems, data standards or accreditation pathways on their own.

Recommendations: next steps

This paper is offered as a starting point for discussion, not a finished strategy. To move from discussion paper to national foundation, the suggested next steps are to:

- Circulate and test this paper with regional tourism organisations, to confirm the priorities and principles reflect what regions are actually experiencing on the ground.
- Convene a National Accessible Tourism Working Group (Appendix A), bringing together regional tourism organisations, Austrade, Tourism Australia, state tourism organisations and disability sector representatives to own the next stage of design.
- Commission the next-stage program design — a proposed governance structure, delivery timeline to and beyond Brisbane 2032, and a verification and accreditation approach explicitly designed to complement, not compete with, existing schemes. Further detail is available to support this step once there is appetite to progress it.
- Identify a small number of pilot regions to test Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups and a whole-of-region accessibility guide, ahead of any national rollout.
- Secure a funding pathway, whether through existing grant programs, a dedicated Brisbane 2032 legacy allocation, or a co-investment model across the stakeholders identified above.
- Develop national accessible event guidelines, building on existing council and industry guides, that can be referenced in event permits and state event funding.

Summary

Australia has many of the building blocks required to become a global leader in accessible tourism. Existing programs, accreditation systems, destination initiatives and accessibility information resources demonstrate substantial effort across the sector. The opportunity now is to better connect these efforts, establish common goals, and explore how accessibility can become part of mainstream destination management — measuring capability and outcomes, not just activity. This paper is intended to support that conversation.

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Appendix A: Guiding principles and strategic pillars

Guiding principles

Potential guiding principles for a future framework may include the following themes, offered as a basis for discussion rather than as fixed commitments.

Visitor-centred and whole-of-journey

Consider how every part of a the framework could support visitor confidence, choice and a seamless, accessible point-to-point experience.

Visitors experience destinations as connected, not as separate businesses, properties or council boundaries. Accessibility should be considered from inspiration and planning through booking, travel, accommodation, transport, public spaces, experiences and visitor services.

Holistic and collaborative

Explore how accessible tourism can be treated as a shared destination responsibility rather than the task of a single organisation, and as an ongoing process rather than a short-term project.

Australian, state and local governments, destination organisations, tourism operators, transport and infrastructure providers, community organisations and people with disability must work together to improve the combination of spaces, services and information encountered by visitors.

Aggregation, not replication

Bring together and strengthen existing work before creating new initiatives.

The framework should recognise established programs, resources, expertise, accreditation systems and accessibility information, then address the gaps. The objective is a connected national system that draws on existing effort and works toward a shared goal of consistent, detailed and accurate information. Data must be secure, and transparent.

Minimal burden, maximum value

Make participation proportionate, practical and worthwhile for operators.

Most Australian tourism operators are small businesses, so requirements should use short, clearly defined tasks, simple instructions and reusable evidence. Where possible, digital technology – including AI and machine learning – can reduce burden and provide tailored support. Every request for information or action should produce visible value for the business, destination or visitor.

Simple and supported destination delivery

Give destinations tailored, appropriately-scaled resources to progress with minimal burden.

A national framework should provide common tools, templates, measures and technical guidance, with clear responsibilities supported by state coordination and a manageable local leadership group. Delivery should be nationally enabled, state supported and regionally led to recognised unique assets and ambitions.

Continuous improvement

Reward progress and capability-building.

Destinations and businesses begin at different levels of maturity. The framework should establish a baseline, identify achievable priorities, recognise improvement and encourage ongoing investment through a cycle of measure, improve, verify, publish, monitor and reinvest.

Trusted information and meaningful accreditation

Use accreditation to build visitor confidence, not simply to award a badge.

Criteria should be nationally consistent and supported by verified, measured and regularly maintained 'live' accessibility information. The evidence gathered should be purposefully syndicated in visitor-facing resources so people can make informed choices based on their individual requirements.

Consistent nationally, flexible locally

Maintain a common national standard while allowing destinations to choose locally relevant pathways.

Terminology, data standards, assessment methods, verification and reporting should be consistent across Australia, while implementation stays flexible enough to reflect local geography, visitor markets, assets, infrastructure, community needs, resources and priorities.

Co-design and lived experience

Combine lived experience with technical expertise and professional judgement throughout the framework.

People with disability should have meaningful roles in governance, program design, assessment criteria, verification, testing, visitor feedback and continuous improvement – shaping decisions, not just being consulted after they're made.

Evidence-based and measurable

Direct effort and investment towards outcomes that can be demonstrated.

Decision-making should draw on verified accessibility data, visitor feedback, operator participation, destination capability measures, identified gaps, and economic and social outcomes. Reporting should show improvement in visitor experience and destination capability, not merely count completed projects.

Accessibility as economic development

Position accessible tourism as a driver of destination quality, competitiveness and resilience.

Better accessibility and trusted information can grow visitor markets, increase confidence, support longer stays and expenditure, strengthen local businesses, and improve places for residents as well as visitors – moving the conversation beyond compliance toward shared economic and community value.

Governance for long-term delivery

Embed accessibility in business-as-usual planning, investment and accountability.

Governance should establish the national direction, enable state coordination and reporting, and support regional implementation. It should clarify responsibilities, and include industry and lived-experience representation. Investment should be linked to measurable priorities so rather than disconnected short-term projects the framework builds permanent, evergreen capability.

Potential strategic pillars

Potential elements of a future framework include the following strategic pillars, intended to provide a practical structure for discussion. The intent is to explore how accessibility could be integrated into mainstream destination management, planning and industry development.

Pillar 1: Destination leadership and governance

To genuinely embed accessible tourism, co-ordinated action is needed across operators, councils, transport providers, DMOs and the disability community – because on the ground, visitors experience the combined output of many organisations and sectors. This pillar explores governance structures that can support long-term coordination and accountability.

Potential actions for consideration include exploring Local Accessible Tourism Leadership Groups across regions; considering state-level teams to support coordination, benchmarking and investment; considering a National Accessible Tourism Working Group responsible for strategy, standards, reporting and national alignment; advocating for ongoing accessibility objectives within destination management plans, economic development plans and tourism strategies; building accessibility considerations into infrastructure planning, asset management, procurement and grant programs; and ensuring meaningful participation by people with disability and accessibility specialists in decision-making. It could also include building accessibility into event permits, event funding criteria and event management plans.

Success could be demonstrated where accessibility becomes part of business-as-usual destination planning and investment, rather than a standalone project or compliance exercise.

Pillar 2: Destination capability and continuous improvement

Most destinations currently measure activities – audits completed, businesses trained, infrastructure delivered — rather than whether outcomes have actually improved for visitors. Destination capability refers to a region's ability to plan, deliver, maintain, monitor and improve accessible visitor experiences across the tourism value chain.

A future framework may wish to assess regional capability across: leadership and governance (coordinating accessibility across organisations and embedding it into decision-making); visitor information (accurate, current, trusted accessibility information before and during travel); public infrastructure (accessibility of publicly-owned facilities, spaces and infrastructure supporting tourism); industry (tourism businesses' ability to meet the needs of visitors with accessibility needs); the connected visitor journey (whether visitors can move through a destination without encountering physical access barriers); data and intelligence (collecting, maintaining and using [accessibility] data to guide decisions); community participation (incorporating lived experience and community input into planning and delivery); and continuous improvement (systematically improving accessibility over time).

Destinations could be benchmarked against an appropriately scaled, capability maturity model that recognises progress over time.

Pillar 3: Trusted accessibility information

Visitors need reliable accessibility information to make informed travel decisions. Substantial – though somewhat generic - information already exists across operator websites, accreditation programs, accessibility audits, destination guides, councils, transport providers and ATDW – but it is fragmented, inconsistent and difficult to compare. Connecting and improving existing information is more powerful than creating an entirely new reporting obligation.

Key actions include aggregating accessibility information from existing systems and recognised sources; establishing consistent national data standards and terminology; identifying and filling in gaps rather than duplicating existing data collection; tailoring information requirements for operators based on their specific offering; enabling information sharing across tourism, local government and destination management platforms; recognising existing accreditation, assessment and verification programs; and maintaining information through regular – ideally live – updates and targeted verification.

Success could be measured through improved accessibility information coverage across the visitor journey, increased operator participation, and improved visitor confidence when planning travel. The objective is a connected national accessibility information ecosystem that reuses existing information wherever possible, requests only what is missing, and gives visitors trusted, practical information while minimising burden on operators and destinations.

Pillar 4: National accessibility data and mapping infrastructure

Accessibility information exists across councils, tourism operators, transport providers, parks agencies and private platforms – but is rarely connected or available in a format that supports destination-wide planning. This pillar establishes a shared national data infrastructure.

Potential actions for consideration include developing a national accessibility data model; creating interoperability standards across data systems; supporting regional accessibility datasets and asset registers; using APIs to aggregate live data; integrating public and private accessibility information; developing GIS-based mapping resources; supporting real-time and dynamic information where available; and enabling benchmarking and reporting across destinations. Potential data sources include national and state datasets, tourism operators, local government assets, public transport systems, national parks access information, accessibility assessments, visitor feedback, accreditation systems and 'Smart City' infrastructure.

The objective is to move from static accessibility guides toward more dynamic destination information that supports both visitors and destination management decisions.

Pillar 5: Industry capability and workforce development

A future national approach depends on operators, destination managers and government having the knowledge and resources required to deliver accessible experiences – in both physical service delivery and staff training.

Potential actions for consideration include supporting nationally recognised accessibility training pathways; recognising existing training and accreditation programs; developing communities of practice; supporting local government employees involved in tourism, maintenance and infrastructure planning; and building specialist capability in accessibility assessment and destination planning. Training should focus on practical implementation, visitor experience, information quality and service delivery, with the objective of building long-term, ongoing capability rather than one-off sessions. This should extend to event organisers, suppliers, event staff and volunteers.

Pillar 6: National verification and accreditation framework

Australia currently has multiple accessibility programs, accreditation systems and assessment approaches. While valuable, they operate largely independently and often require operators to duplicate effort. One possible approach is a coordinated national framework that recognises existing systems while improving consistency. Another is supporting and further extending ATDW to become the national default system for accessibility accreditation.

Potential actions for consideration include developing nationally consistent verification methods; recognising existing accreditation and quality assurance programs; reducing duplication of assessment activity; reusing verified accessibility information across multiple systems; aligning accreditation outcomes with visitor-facing information; and introducing pathways that recognise continuous improvement. Verification should support both public and private sector assets and provide practical guidance for improvement. The primary purpose of accreditation should be to improve information quality and visitor confidence, and to give industry a clear pathway for improvement – not simply to award a badge or rating.

Pillar 7: Research, measurement and economic development

Accessible tourism can be measured as a destination capability and economic development activity that contributes to stronger regions, visitor satisfaction and destination accessibility. Establishing an evidence base to support investment decisions and demonstrate outcomes will support sustained improvement and investment.

Key actions include developing a national accessible tourism scorecard; determining destination capability and maturity; measuring economic contribution and tourism expenditure; tracking visitor participation; monitoring visitor confidence; measuring accessibility information coverage; assessing industry participation; and reporting on outcomes for regions and states. A future framework could support fair benchmarking between destinations while identifying specific categories requiring investment and support.

Appendix B: Programs and resources in Australia

There is a range of resources available on accessible and inclusive tourism in Australia. Industry has recognised the inherent barriers and gone some way to provide resources and guides for both industry and visitors. But these resources are still largely delivered through a project lens, rather than an ongoing operational one.

Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Conference (2021–24)

The Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Conference (AITCAP) was Australia's first (and only) dedicated accessible tourism conference and became the country's leading forum for accessibility and inclusion in tourism. Founded by the now-defunct GetAboutAble in 2021, it brought together industry, government, researchers and travellers with disability to share knowledge and build capability. AITCAP helped elevate accessible tourism as a recognised visitor economy opportunity. Importantly, no equivalent national forum has emerged to replace it, leaving a noticeable gap in industry leadership, collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Queensland's 'Year of Accessible Tourism' (2023–24)

Over the course of 2023–24, Queensland's 'Year of Accessible Tourism' invested $12 million and funded at least 52 organisations through accessible tourism grants covering infrastructure upgrades, visitor experience improvements, industry capability building and accessibility resources. It proved a coordinated approach to building capability and developing product can be undertaken at a state level in a broad, sustainable way. While this is a substantial investment, some evidence suggests the Year of Accessible Tourism was much stronger at the project level than at the integrated, destination-wide transformation level.

Austrade and the WELCOME framework (2024)[1]

The WELCOME Framework, launched by Austrade (the Australian Trade and Investment Commission) and state and territory tourism organisations in May 2024, was developed as a *THRIVE 2030* action to help tourism businesses improve accessibility and inclusion. Structured around seven themes — Welcome, Environment, Links, Communication, Operations, Marketing and Experience — it provides practical guidance for operators but does not function as an accreditation, verification or destination benchmarking framework.

The Framework grew out of a mentoring program delivered by Push Adventures from 2021, which involved more than 100 businesses across Australia with the aim of helping them improve the inclusive service delivery of their products. The follow-up site visits gave operators a 'walk and talk' review. From there, the seven areas of the framework were expanded to cover Welcome, Environment, Links, Communication, Operations, Marketing and Experience.

THRIVE 2030 contains two action items on accessibility: to develop assets, infrastructure and experiences that are accessible to all visitors regardless of physical impairments, disability or age; and to improve promotion, marketing and provision of information about accessible infrastructure at destinations, accommodation, venues and experiences.

In the *THRIVE 2030* action plan to 2030, accessible tourism is no longer a standalone priority – it has been integrated into a combined 'sustainable and accessible' focus area.

1 The author was involved in the development of the Victorian component of this program in 2021.

Tourism Australia and accessible tourism

Tourism Australia, the government body responsible for inbound tourism, has recognised accessible tourism as a growing market opportunity and has supported a range of initiatives, including industry research, advocacy, conference presentations and partner programs. Its role has largely focused on awareness, promotion and market development rather than leading a coordinated national accessibility program.

Tourism Australia's *Future of Demand* research, released in 2022, was a major international consumer study examining future tourism demand across Australia's key visitor markets. It included a dedicated accessible travel stream and found that around 24% of international travellers considering Australia had an accessibility need, while 86% said accessibility influenced destination choice – helping position accessible tourism as a significant market opportunity, though the research focused on demand insights rather than implementation, accreditation or destination-wide development frameworks.

Accessibility featured as a stand-alone topic at Tourism Australia's national Destination Australia conference in 2023 and 2024, though it has not featured since. Accessible tourism remains an acknowledged priority at Tourism Australia – but at the regional level, the topic has slipped from many conference programs and destination management plans in recent years.

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW)

ATDW was established in 2001 by Tourism Australia (then the Australian Tourist Commission) and Australia's state and territory tourism organisations as a national tourism information platform. It enables operators to maintain a single digital listing distributed across hundreds of tourism websites and channels, and now represents more than 50,000 tourism businesses.

Since 2018, operators have been able to add 'Accessibility Attributes' to their listings – a step forward in the influential and recognised system. A partnership with The Accessible Group (June 2026) begins to address gaps in the self-assessment accessibility component by linking some of their accessibility profiles into ATDW search results — a step forward. Opportunity existing to extend the system for greater detail but it's currently limited to businesses already holding that specific verification, in a phased rollout that leaves the broader base of self-reported, unverified listings untouched. ATDW currently does not allow for some crucial visitor economy assets to be listed – for example, airports and national parks are excluded from the system.

Accreditation and recognition, Quality Tourism Framework

Accreditation and certification is available in Australia through both government and private bodies. Australia's first accessibility accreditation pathway within mainstream tourism quality assurance was introduced in September 2021, when ATIC (the Australian Tourism Industry Council) launched the Accessibility Accreditation Module as part of the Quality Tourism Framework.

National recognition matured in 2023 with the introduction of ATIC's Excellence in Accessible Tourism category at the Australian Tourism Awards – Australia's first dedicated national tourism award recognising excellence in accessibility and inclusion (it had existed in the Victorian state awards earlier). The two initiatives are directly linked: entrants must hold at least one of the Quality Tourism Framework's five Accessible Tourism badges to be eligible, so the award functions as a showcase layer on top of the accreditation pathway rather than a separate recognition system.

Australian Tourism Export Council, 'Accessible & Inclusive Host Training'

The Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) launched ATEC Accessible & Inclusive Host training — delivered online and, at times, in person — in late 2022. The self-paced course runs three 45-minute modules (Culture Ready, Product Ready, Service Ready), costs $300 per person ($150 for ATEC members), and awards graduates a digital 'Accessible & Inclusive Host' badge on completion.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 'Tourism Access and Inclusion: Best Practice Guidelines for Tourism MSMEs in APEC'

The APEC best-practice manual, *Tourism Access and Inclusion: Best Practice Guidelines for Tourism MSMEs in APEC*, was launched in April 2022 and features examples and case studies of good practice for small and medium tourism enterprises across the region. The 43-page manual was developed by Australia, under APEC's Tourism Working Group (part of the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation), through a series of three online workshops — making it, in effect, Australian-authored guidance exported to the whole Asia-Pacific region.

It is explicitly a voluntary practical guide rather than a standard, accreditation scheme or binding requirement – there's no certification attached, no compliance mechanism, and no stated link to Australia's own domestic systems. Australia had the expertise and standing to write the best-practice guide for accessible tourism MSMEs across an entire economic region, but that same expertise was never looped back into a connected domestic framework – reinforcing this paper's broader observation that Australia has genuine legacy and leadership in this space, without the coordination to match it.

Appendix C: International developments

Many countries are working to improve accessibility within tourism through accreditation programs, destination initiatives, accessibility information systems and national frameworks. Examples include Portugal (Tur4All), Germany (Reisen Für Alle), Spain (Spain For All), Flanders (AccessibleFlanders) and the United Kingdom (Visit Britain, Accessible Tourism, supported by England's Inclusive Tourism Action Group, active since 2015) — each of which has taken a different approach to leadership, accreditation, visitor information and industry development.

Portugal is the most notable recent mover, having adopted the relatively new International Standard in Accessible Tourism (ISO 21902:2022) as the basis for its accreditation system and broader strategy, with certifications due to begin in 2027. It remains to be seen how national building standards will sit alongside the ISO standard, and how a generalised international standard can be answered with the specificity genuine accreditation requires.

Spain's Smart Tourism Destinations Network (RED DTI), coordinated nationally by SEGITTUR, assesses more than 500 member destinations against a common set of indicators – with accessibility one of five core areas – then supports an action plan and renews each destination's status every two years.

It is a working example of a nationally guided, locally delivered model.

Several common themes are emerging across these international models:

- Accessibility is increasingly viewed as a destination-wide issue rather than the responsibility of individual operators.
- Consistent, trusted accessibility information is a priority.
- Accreditation and verification systems are being developed to improve visitor confidence.
- Governments are seeking to embed accessibility into mainstream tourism planning rather than standalone projects.
- Accessibility is increasingly linked to economic development, competitiveness and visitor experience.

Many countries frame this as more than a tourism issue. As the United Nations puts it, tourism should "contribute to an implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that is inclusive of persons with disabilities," with the tourism sector expected to "promote opportunities for persons with disabilities."[1] The European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), the EU and national programs are moving toward safer, more inclusive tourism offerings through improved accessibility, and most countries now include accessible tourism ambitions in their national tourism strategy — though rarely with meaningful or measurable pathways to get there.

The framing has always been the 'carrot and the stick'. The carrot being the value of the market, the stick; the legal, discriminatory repercussions.

1 United Nations, 2020.

Private operators are increasingly stepping into the market – clearly seeing the commercial carrot. Wheel The World, a US-based commercial enterprise, lists destinations and regions it has commercially 'verified' as accessible, in Holland GrootTravel have a graded verification system for accessible tourism, Canadian tourism businesses can be verified by The Rick Hansen Foundation and in Australia tourism businesses can opt for graded 'verification' via Accessible Group. Other private international training programs and concepts are in place.

We have not yet identified an international model that specifically addresses accessibility across public infrastructure, tourism businesses, transport networks, visitor information and destination management within one coordinated framework — or that takes a genuine whole-of-sector approach.

Most focus on improving delivery within the private sector, which can produce exceptional results in individual product development (zip lines, kayaking, ballooning, etc) without the surrounding scaffolding: individual offerings that are not well connected to the pathways, parking, amenities or nearby experiences around them.

Appendix D: The evidence base

Tourism Research Australia (TRA): 'Accessible tourism in Australia, 2024'

Measure (2024)	Value
Total trips	70.5M
Total tourism expenditure	$29.2B
% of all visitor spend in Australia	17%
Share of all trips in Australia	22%
Domestic overnight spend	$21.5B
Domestic day trip spend	$6.6B
International visitor spend	$1.1B

These figures include travellers who identified as having a disability or long-term health condition, plus people travelling with them. In short: accessible tourism generated $29.2 billion in visitor expenditure and 70.5 million trips in Australia during 2024 — 17% of all tourism spend and 22% of all trips, or roughly one dollar in every six spent by visitors.

The statistics reflect internationally as well. In the EU, almost a quarter of adults report a disability, and almost half of travellers with accessibility needs take one or more international leisure trips a year (Eurostat, 2025; MMGY, 2025). In England, inbound visitors with impairments and their travel companions stayed an average of 11.6 nights, compared to 7.3 nights for visitors without impairments (Visit Britain, 2023) — a pattern consistent with the 'stay longer, spend more' behaviour described earlier in this paper.

Two cautions from the research are worth holding onto: "accessibility is not a quick-fix service that rapidly generates high margins; it requires careful attention to the dimensions of disability, socioeconomic circumstances, and the support needs of travellers with dis/abilities" — and the risk of "a narrow focus on financial revenue or box-ticking, with little attention to personal considerations and quality" (both cited in *'All Aboard: Driving the Transition to Accessible Tourism, 2026'*, Veroniek Maat).

Accessible tourism as a driver of social inclusion

The economic case is not the only one. More disabled visitors in a destination supports the broader normalisation of disability in public life, and better accessibility for visitors tends to mean better accessibility for residents — infrastructure built for one group serves both. One open challenge worth flagging for any future accreditation or assistance system: how to handle proof-of-disability requirements at the point of booking or assistance request, without creating a new barrier in the process of removing one.

Brisbane 2032: estimated visitors with disability and accessibility needs

The Access Agency has developed a simple scenario model to estimate how many people with disability may travel to South East Queensland for the Brisbane 2032 Paralympic Games (24 August – 5 September 2032). It draws on Paris 2024 and London 2012 ticketing benchmarks, Australian and global disability prevalence, and assumptions about ticket share, tickets per visitor and travel companions. The figures are illustrative scenarios, not forecasts.

Estimates number of visitors with a disability

- **International:** about 9,500 visitors with disability in the central case (range 6,000 - 16,500), including around 4,200 para athletes, plus about 3,500 companions or support people.
- **Domestic:** about 39,400 visitors with disability in the central case (range 16,000 - 78,000), plus about 27,500 companions or support people.
- **Total:** about 49,000 people with disabilities (combined international and domestic) in the central case (range 22,000–94,000), plus about 31,000 companions or support people. That equates to roughly 80,000 – not counting family and travel companions.

Estimates number of visitors with a accessibility needs

- **International:** about 14,000 visitors with accessibility needs in the central case (range 7,700 - 25,900), including around 4,200 para athletes, plus about 1,920 companions or support people.
- **Domestic:** about 73,800 visitors with accessibility needs in the central case (range 32,000 - 138,000), plus about 14,700 companions or support people.
- **Total:** about 87,7400 people with accessibility needs (combined international and domestic) in the central case (range 41,000–212,000), plus about 16,000 companions or support people. That equates to roughly 104,000 – not counting family and travel companions.

The biggest data gaps are the share of Paralympic spectators with disability, Brisbane 2032 ticketing targets and the supply of accessible rooms in South East Queensland. The model is available on request.

Mapping and GIS references

The following resources are useful reference points for the accessibility data and mapping infrastructure discussed in Pillar 4:

- Access Map (USA)
- City of Melbourne accessibility information (Australia)
- City of Melbourne accessibility map (ArcGIS) (Australia)
- Briometrix and Footpath.ai — walkability and accessibility partnership
- EnAccess Maps (Australia)
- Accessible Australia app by Spinal Life Australia (Australia)
- WheelMap by German group Sozialheld*innen (Germany)
- GoAble (New Zealand)
- Pavely (Australia)

Appendix E: Australia's legacy in accessible tourism

From research to implementing law around equity in tourism, Australia has played a key role in advancing accessible tourism over the decades.

Some of the world's leading thinkers, researchers and academics on accessible and inclusive tourism are Australian: Simon Darcy (UTS), Martin Heng (formerly Lonely Planet), Bill Forrester (Travability) and Carolyn Childs (formerly Travel Research Centre and IATA).

Through their work, Simon Darcy and Dimitrios Buhalis established key definitions, pioneering the 'whole-of-life approach' (2010) that identifies the wide range of people in society who benefit when accessibility improves. Their work led into the contemporary idea of the Accessible Tourism Chain — the network of organisations, infrastructure and services, regardless of ownership, that must work together to deliver an accessible experience.

Australia also has a solid legal framework formalising the rights of travellers. After Australia's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was legislated in 1992, the rights of people with disability extended to services including accommodation, transport and tourism products. The resulting Disability (Access to Premises) Standards 2010, National Construction Code (NCC) and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (2002) have a strong accessibility component, meaning public transport and most new public buildings and amenities — from the local bus network to luxury beachside hotels to national park toilet blocks — are required to be built accessible for people with disabilities, by law.

As a result, Australia enters the next phase of accessible tourism development with strong foundations, extensive expertise and a history of innovation to build on.

The Access Agency

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