Inclusive Tourism is an Economic Imperative
Travability’s Response to:
ISSUES PAPER: AIRLINE TWO WHEELCHAIR POLICY

Australia needs to gear up its Accessible Infrastructure to cater for Inclusive Tourism which will represent 25% of the Tourism Dollar by 2020

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Introduction

Inclusive Tourism is already a major tourism sector with Australian research putting its value at 11% of the total industry market share. With the first of the Baby Boomer generation turning 65 on the first of January this year, the Inclusive Travel sector is estimated to be worth in excess of 25% of the total market by 2020, making it the fastest growing sector in the industry.

Given the importance of the growing Inclusive Tourism sector, Australia must have an air transport infrastructure that is equal to the best in the world in the way its treats travellers with a disability or run the risk at putting itself into a non competitive position as a world tourism destination. Given the significance of tourism as an economic driver to the country’s economy the issue of access to aviation services becomes a far bigger issue than the immediate turnaround cost to any particular airline or any given flight, if such a cost differential actually exists at all.

The blanket two wheelchair policy is out of touch with the policies adopted by our major tourism competitors and further out of touch with the practices of most of the countries of origin for our inbound international visitors. The issue of wheelchair access and disability services is still being viewed as a compliance disability rights issue instead of from an enhance of the visitor experience for a major segment of a valuable export industry.

The following table is an overview of Australian airlines service levels compared to some of the major players in the US.

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<th>Advanced Notice</th>
<th>PWD’s Limit</th>
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<td>Tiger</td>
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The difference is not about the facilities or services offered but in the approach to the customer and the concept of the complete journey experience.
International Framework

The international framework for accessibility has been evolving over a 24 year period with New Zealand being the first country to introduce anti discrimination legislation in regards to people with a disability. On the 13th of December 2006, The United Nations adopted The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Australia signed the convention on the 30th of March 2007 and it was ratified by the Australian Parliament on the 17th of July 2008.

The UN CRPD has as its foundation the concept of equality, with its 8 guiding principles:

**Article 3**

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

General Obligation under Article 4 require:

a) To adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention;
b) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities;
e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability by any person, organization or private enterprise;

**Article 30**

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:
   a. Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.
5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:
   c. To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;

**United States Air Carriers Access Act**

The US ACAA sets equality of access as its primary purpose.

The purpose of this part is to implement the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 (49 U.S.C. 41705), which provides that no air carrier may discriminate against any otherwise qualified individual with a disability, by reason of such disability, in the provision of air transportation.

Further the general provisions absolute equality in availability of services and a requirement not to impose special
arrangements on those travellers with a disability unless requested by the passenger.

§ 382.7 General prohibition of discrimination.
(a) A carrier shall not, directly or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements:
(1) Discriminate against any otherwise qualified individual with a disability, by reason of such disability, in the provision of air transportation;
(2) Require a person with a disability to accept special services (including, but not limited to, preboarding) not requested by the passenger;
(3) Exclude a qualified individual with a disability from or deny the person the benefit of any air transportation or related services that are available to other persons, even if there are separate or different services available for persons with a disability except when specifically permitted by another section of this part;

There can be no limits imposed on the number of passengers with a disability on any particular flight

§ 382.31 Refusal of transportation.
(b) A carrier shall not refuse to provide transportation to a qualified individual with a disability solely because the person’s disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience crewmembers or other passengers.

Advanced notice is only required where special equipment is required

§ 382.33 Advance notice requirements.
(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, a carrier shall not require a qualified individual with a disability to provide advance notice of his or her intention to travel or of his or her disability as a condition of receiving transportation or of receiving services or accommodations required by this part.
(b) A carrier may require up to 48 hours advance notice and one-hour advance check-in concerning a qualified individual with a disability who wishes to receive any of the following services, types of equipment, or accommodations:
(1) Medical oxygen for use on board the aircraft, if this service is available on the flight;
(2) Carriage of an incubator, if this service is available on the flight;
(3) Hook-up for a respirator to the aircraft electrical power supply, if this service is available on the flight;
(4) Accommodation for a passenger who must travel in a stretcher, if this service is available on the flight;
(5) Transportation for an electric wheelchair on a flight scheduled to be made with an aircraft with fewer than 60 seats;
(6) Provision by the carrier of hazardous materials packaging for a battery for a wheelchair or other assistive device;

European Union - EU Regulation 1107/2006

Article 3 ~ Prevention of refusal of carriage
An air carrier or its agent or a tour operator shall not refuse, on the grounds of disability or of reduced mobility:
(a) to accept a reservation for a flight departing from or arriving at an airport to which this Regulation applies;
(b) to embark a disabled person or a person with reduced mobility at such an airport, provided that the person concerned has a valid ticket and reservation.
Article 7 ~ Right to assistance at airports

1. When a disabled person or person with reduced mobility arrives at an airport for travel by air, the managing body of the airport shall be responsible for ensuring the provision of the assistance specified in Annex I in such a way that the person is able to take the flight for which he or she holds a reservation, provided that the notification of the person’s particular needs for such assistance has been made to the air carrier or its agent or the tour operator concerned at least 48 hours before the published time of departure of the flight. This notification shall also cover a return flight, if the outward flight and the return flight have been contracted with the same air carrier.

Europe differs from the US in splitting the responsibilities between the airport operator and airline.

ANNEX I ~ Assistance under the responsibility of the managing bodies of airports

Assistance and arrangements necessary to enable disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility to:

- communicate their arrival at an airport and their request for assistance at the designated points inside and outside terminal buildings mentioned in Article 5,
- move from a designated point to the check-in counter,
- check-in and register baggage,
- proceed from the check-in counter to the aircraft, with completion of emigration, customs and security procedures,
- board the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate,
- proceed from the aircraft door to their seats,
- store and retrieve baggage on the aircraft,
- proceed from their seats to the aircraft door,
- disembark from the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate,
- proceed from the aircraft to the baggage hall and retrieve baggage, with completion of immigration and customs procedures,
- proceed from the baggage hall to a designated point,
- reach connecting flights when in transit, with assistance on the air and land sides and within and between terminals as needed,
- move to the toilet facilities if required.

Where a disabled person or person with reduced mobility is assisted by an accompanying person, this person must, if requested, be allowed to provide the necessary assistance in the airport and with embarking and disembarking.

Ground handling of all necessary mobility equipment, including equipment such as electric wheelchairs subject to warning of 48 hours and to possible limitations of space on board the aircraft, and subject to the application of relevant legislation concerning dangerous goods.

Temporary replacement of damaged or lost mobility equipment, albeit not necessarily on a like-for-like basis.

Ground handling of recognised assistance dogs, when relevant. Communication of information needed to take flights in accessible formats.

Australian Context

Aviation is critical to Australia’s tourism industry and must keep pace with the expectations of international visitors. The two wheelchair policy is only one aspect of a total picture of accessibility needs driven by the growth of Inclusive Tourism. All of Australia’s airlines have a blanket policy that limits the numbers of people with a disability
allowed on any particular flight. It has been argued that Qantas doesn’t restrict the number of passengers with a disability and while that might apply to Qantas flights flown on Qantas metal it doesn’t apply to Qantas flights code-shared with Jetstar and flown on Jetstar metal. The overall effect is that for continuity of flight services Australia’s policy is at odds with the policies in effect with its major sources of international visitors.

To look at the 2 wheelchair policy it is worth noting the critical flight routes from a tourism perspective and analysing whether the costs arguments put up by Jetstar and Virgin hold water across the board and whether a uniform two wheelchair policy is justified as a blanket operating principle.

The following map identifies the key international arrival routes and the key domestic sectors servicing both the inbound and domestic markets

The key entry and exit points for Australia are:
- Sydney
- Melbourne
- Perth
- Brisbane

And the Key domestic trunk routes
- Melbourne - Sydney
- Melbourne - Brisbane
• Melbourne - Cairns
• Melbourne - Adelaide
• Melbourne - Perth
• Melbourne - Alice Springs
• Melbourne - Darwin
• Sydney - Brisbane
• Sydney - Melbourne
• Sydney - Cairns
• Sydney - Adelaide
• Sydney - Perth
• Sydney - Alice Springs
• Sydney - Darwin

All of the above routes are key tourism routes both for domestic and international passengers and connect with the major international arrival points.

It has been argued that Australian Aviation is unique and imposes operating procedures that are not conducive to an open policy when it comes to booking people with a disability. While many regional routes are subject to infrequent schedules and small aircraft, the major trunks listed are very similar to major international domestic operations and on all routes aircraft used are 737-400’s or larger. In reviewing the two wheelchair policy these major routes should be looked at differently than the regional routes.

Codeshare and Interline Issues

Today airlines operate on a system of code share, where flights numbers of airline partners carry onto the metal of the “carrying” partner. Travellers purchase tickets on the airline of their choice, which may be part of a holiday package or multi-leg flight combination. During the course of their travels the actual carrier will vary depending on which airline is physically operating that service. From a travel destination reputation point of view it is critical that Australia has similar rules to its partner codeshare operators to provide a consistent customer experience. Under the current rules it possible to have groups of people split up onto different flights on their arrival into Australia because the partner airline happens to be Jetstar or Virgin. Even within Australia Qantas codeshares with Jetstar and has progressively been using Jetstar to fly traditional Qantas routes or flying the routes at certain times. There is no consistency of expectation for travellers with a disability.

Flights to and from the US (A special Case)

The US Air Carriers Access Act applies to all foreign carriers flying into and out of United States Territory. Both Virgin and Jetstar fly into the US from Australia and on all such flights they fully comply with the legislation, including waiving the pre-booking requirement and the two wheelchair limitation. This would tend to indicate that both airlines have the capacity to cope with greater numbers of disabled travellers when required to do so but chose not to domestically.

International Low Cost Airline Initiatives

Being a discount airline, in itself does not alleviate any airline from its obligations to its market or population. Australian Airlines are required to operate within Australian Law and to service the total market. There is no
provision to be selective about who to carry. All airlines are on a level playing field and therefore their operating models should reflect the cost of doing business in that market place. The major trunk routes in Australia are no different from international air routes where discount airlines thrive against full service carriers while offering travellers with a disability full and unlimited assistance services. In evaluating any argument of undue hardship based on increased turnaround time, the efficiency of the Australian discount airline operations should be compared to international best practice and not to internal airline costs. It is not a valid argument to use undue hardship as a cover for an inefficient operation compared to world’s best practice.

Internationally, discount airlines are recognising the value of the Inclusive Tourism market and are taking steps to attract and service travellers with a disability, while still maintaining their discount cost model.

**Norwegian, Disabled Friendly Low Cost Airline**

Third largest European Low Cost airline, fast growing Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA is building a reputation of disabled friendly airline. In 2012 the airline flew nearly 20 000 customers with special needs. Norwegian imposes few restrictions on passengers with reduced mobility. There is a maximum number of four persons with reduced mobility traveling without a companion per crew member on board any given flight.

**Ryanair Special Assistance Upgrades**

Ryanair has long been regarded as the most cutthroat of all discount airlines but it has recently undertaken major upgrades to its service provision for people with a disability in response to growing market demand. Some of the key initiatives are:

- Waiving the maximum number of passengers with reduced mobility allowed on board, previously set at four per flight, and reserving all seats in row 26 and 27 of the 32 rows on-board Ryanair aircraft for passengers with reduced mobility to prevent any confusion when, for weight and balance reasons, some seat rows cannot be used.
- Availability of isle chairs, commonly known as on board wheelchair, on all aircraft and details of required assistance printed on the boarding pass are other signature features Ryanair offers to passengers who require special assistance.
- Online chat tool that helps passengers get the information they cannot find on their own. The chat facility appears after 15 seconds on the special assistance page during reservation opening hours, subject to agent availability.
- Drop down menu on the special assistance page so that customers can tell the airline the exact type of assistance they will need without having to call. However, those traveling with personal electric wheelchairs will have to call Ryanair to communicate dimensions and weight of their mobility device. Personal electric wheelchairs and scooters up to 200 Kilograms are accepted for transport free of charge.

**Alternative Models**

The US and Europe operate on two different models: The US airlines control their own processes from curbside check-in, boarding, inflight support, deplaning, luggage collection and exit on terminal support, The European model places customer service and disability access support on the airport operator, including the provision of air-side accessible embarkation equipment where aero-bridges are not available.

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*Note: The image contains a logo for an airline that may not be related to the text.*
Airport Owner Model

The airport owner control of the process does allow for greater efficiency as it allows for a single set of support infrastructure and the skills of a specialist team. It may also add to product innovation in terms of disabled travellers needs, for example in the provision of additional facilities and change rooms with adult change tables. This model has been successfully used in Melbourne at both Flinders Street and Southern Cross stations through Travellers Aid. Such a model could be controlled through the airport operators and funded through a mixture of airline charges and direct commercial product sales to disabled customers. It would require a high level of coordination to ensure approach and timely air-side support on customer embarkation and disembarkation and mobility aid loading into the aircraft.

Airline Model

The airport owner model is a one size fits all scenario. While it may lead to the most efficient use of resources it removes the ability for airlines to use Inclusive Tourism and the facilities and services they may provide to disabled passengers as a source of competitive advantage. It also removes the ability to use the latest technology available from aircraft manufacturers to improve boarding and in-flight service. Non aero bridge equipment remains under the control of the airline to facilitate turnaround.

Recommendations

The blanket two wheelchair policy, as applied by Jetstar and Virgin is out of touch with international best practice for the carriage of travellers with a disability. It is creating issues both for domestic passengers, but more importantly for international visitors arriving on flights and transferring to domestic connections.

Further, the current policies and restrictions are not recognising the fundamental aspect of tourism, customers expect to be able to enjoy a seamless and hassle free journey from the arrival at their originating airport through to their final destination. In the case of travellers with a disability that includes the appropriate assistance through all phases of the journey including transfers between carriers. That expectation should not change regardless of the physical carrier.

Since the ratification of the UN CRPD Australia has an obligation to move towards full equality of access to aviation. Both the US and European rules have adopted equality of access as their foundation. Australia’s Disability Discrimination Act requires non discrimination on the basis of disability, but has been circumvented by the use of the undue hardship rule. International experience, and more particularly, recent international discount airline initiatives would tend to indicate that the costs arguments being used by Jetstar and Virgin to justify the continuation of the two wheelchair policy are not reflective of international best practice, at least on the major trunk routes outlined.

The current Disability Access Facilitation Plans, produced as part of the AAWG process, have been done in isolation and appear to have documented the existing facilities rather than look at the entire customer experience for any location. As such there has been no quantum progress to improve the overall customer experience from airport arrival to final destination. The lack of total a customer experience perspective has not led to any analysis of how to improve the process or a benchmarking of how international low costs airlines can operate competitively while providing full services to travellers with a disability.
We recommend

1. The current 2 wheelchair policy be reviewed at least on the trunk routes or where codeshare or interline arrangements are in place. That review should look at adopting world’s best practice and be at least to the standard of the country from which the flights operate.

2. That providing a competitive airline access system to support Australia’s competitive position in the Inclusive Tourism market is a priority over individual airline operations.

3. Non trunk routes be examined and exemptions only applied where a unique costing arrangement is proven to exist outside world’s best practice.

4. That the Disability Facility Action Plans of the airports and airlines be integrated to reflect the expectations of a continuous and homogenous disabled customer experience in line with the expectations of able bodied passengers.

5. The system of disability management be reviewed and either a model of airport owner responsibility with perhaps a third party operator like a Travellers Aid, or a full airline service model be adopted and clearly delineated.

6. That the AAWG be reconstituted into a priority taskforce to assess Inclusive Tourism and Aviation Access as a strategic tourism imperative.
   a. Its membership should include:
      i. Tourism Australia,
      ii. The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse and
      iii. Inclusive Tourism specialists

   b. Aim should be to:
      i. Benchmark Australia’s Access to aviation to world’s best practice
      ii. Develop an integrated product offering for the disabled traveller
      iii. Develop an operating model and responsibility for aviation access
      iv. Educate airlines and airport operators on the customer needs of travellers with a disability
Inclusive Tourism Background

We are at a critical turning point in the future of Inclusive Tourism. Over the past 20 years the advocacy concentration has been on breaking down the physical barriers that were preventing people with a disability the basic right of access to their favourite holiday destinations. While there are still much needed improvements to be made, globally, access has improved to a point where today most people have almost unlimited options of accessible tourist destinations. From India’s newest resort, to Costa Rican surfing, these destinations are being shared and utilized by those seeking a opportunity to participate.

All sorts of terms have been used to describe this growing market from Barrier Free Tourism in the United Kingdom, Accessible Tourism in Australia, Access Tourism in New Zealand. More often than not those expressions also have a narrow interpretation as people think of them applying only to travelers with a mobility related disability. We want to give real value to the meaning of these terms to Tourism operators in Australia.

In defining Inclusive Tourism we are talking about an environment where people of all abilities are made to feel welcome and wanted as guests. More importantly, what we are proposing, is to implement basic cultural change within the Tourism industry, so that it evolves into an “Inclusive” environment where people of all abilities are felt welcome and wanted as customers and guests.

While the emphasis on accessible facilities has seen a major improvement in physical accessibility the basic culture within the travel industry has failed to move beyond compliance. Therefore, even where the facilities are excellent, those facilities are never disclosed, never advertised and never published in a way that the travelers who need those facilities ever get a chance to know that they exist.

For the first time Inclusive Tourism is being regarded as an economic market driven by the retirement of the baby boomer sector and we need to recognize that the way forward is by encouraging its adoption into the mainstream industry.

Two members of the German International Women’s Wheelchair Basketball Team enjoying a world class accessible experience at the Koala Conservation Centre, Phillip Island, Victoria
Improved accessibility – a commercial success for Scandic

Scandic is intensifying its successful focus on improved accessibility. This year, over 100 new rooms for disabled will be added to the portfolio and 2012 there will be even more to meet the large and growing demand. More and more companies and organisations seek rooms and conference facilities that are accessible to all. At the same time the numbers of older, active private travellers who are attracted by improved accessibility are increasing. Improving accessibility has proven to be a commercial success for Scandic, the Nordic region’s leading hotel chain.

Design for All is a key concept in Scandic’s accessibility work. The aim is for the rooms for disabled to be just as well designed as any other room, with practical solutions that go almost unnoticed, except by those who really need them. Hooks, mirrors and keyholes at two heights are appreciated by children, short adults and those who use a wheelchair. Height-adjustable beds and extra spacious bathrooms are popular with all guests. Scandic’s comprehensive 110-point accessibility programme covers everything from team member training to adapted rooms and extensive, detailed accessibility information on every hotel’s website.

“We when take over a hotel, we implement our accessibility programme within three months and, after just one year, we tend to notice more bookings from private guests and from companies and organisations, thanks to our accessibility work. This gives us a clear competitive advantage and, as well as showing our commitment to social responsibility, we see major commercial benefits in being accessible to all,” relates Anders Ehrling, President and CEO of Scandic.

New hotels require smart new solutions

A lowered reception desk for wheelchair users, a guest computer in the lobby at a comfortable height for a wheelchair and an ordinary chair, a hearing loop in conference facilities and reception, and vibrating alarm clocks that also hear the fire alarms are just some examples of smart solutions that ensure a high level of accessibility. Scandic’s accessibility work remains a core focus in its new and refurbished hotels, with numerous examples of best practice:

With Scandic Victoria Tower, the new spectacular 34-floor hotel in Kista, Stockholm, Scandic shows that it is perfectly possible to offer rooms for disabled with fantastic views high up in the building, with the help of fire-safe elevators that allow wheelchair users to evacuate the building easily. The flagship Scandic Grand Central opening soon in central Stockholm (Oct 2011) proves that it is also possible to incorporate accessibility into a 130-year-old property.

This year Scandic Sydhavnen in Copenhagen will become Scandic’s most accessible hotel in Denmark, offering 11 new rooms for disabled and reception, restaurant and conference area all on the entrance level, with easy access from the car park.

“We have worked hard on accessibility for eight years and learned a great deal about these complex issues, but there is of course plenty still to do,” states Magnus Berglund, Disability Ambassador at Scandic. “We have entered an exciting phase, where interest and bookings show our accessibility work is appreciated by many more people than just the guests with a disability.”
Market Statistics

The definitive Australian piece of research was conducted in 1998 for Tourism NSW by Dr Simon Darcy in the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2000, called Anxiety to Access - Tourism patterns and experiences of New South Wales people with a physical disability. That research highlighted the key fact that people with disabilities are not looking for “special” disabled holidays but mainstream experiences to share with their family and friends. A consistent issue highlighted throughout the study was information needs. Information arose as an issue in commentary on all tourism sectors from transport, to accommodation to attractions to hospitality. Simply stated, “Information obtained on accessibility is not always accurate or detailed.” (Questionnaire 1060).

Four main points were raised about information provision. These were:

- Problems with the accuracy of access information provided;
- Level of detail of the information provided;
- Availability of the information; and
- The format in which information was provided.

“..... a lot of areas that have excellent access for wheelchair users do not advertise this aspect. If a company or council expends the additional money to provide access, and no one knows the access exists, then the provision of access is almost a waste of money.”

The 2008 Australian National Visitor Survey estimated the following:

- Some 88% of people with disability take a holiday each year that accounted for some 8.2 million overnight trips.
- The average travel group size for people with a disability is 2.8 people for a domestic overnight trip and 3.4 for a day trip.
- There is a myth that the inclusive tourism market does not spend because of economic circumstance. That is false as it is a significant proportion of each travel market segment.
- They travel on a level comparable with the general population for domestic overnight and day trips.
- The total tourism expenditure attributable to the group is $8bn per year or 11% of overall tourism expenditure.

With greater diversity in employment accessible conference venues are a critical part of Inclusive Travel sector.
The retirement of the Baby Boomer generation will significantly increase the market size of the Inclusive Travel sector through age acquired disabilities.

US statistics showing the growth of the over 65 age group.
Key Baby Boomer Attitudes

US research by McKinsey & Company predicts that by 2015, the baby boomer generation will command almost 60 percent of net U.S. wealth and 40 percent of spending. In many categories, like travel, boomers will represent over 50 percent of consumption.

Of every person who has lived to be 65 from the beginning of recorded history, two-thirds are alive today.

The Baby Boomer generation has the following key traits:

- See travel as a life necessity, not a luxury
- Are well traveled and experienced
- Will not take bus tours
- Want luxury not roughing it
- Believe they are forever young and relate to younger images
- Like to travel in groups but not herds
- Crave immediate gratification
- Want active travel
- Like to experience new things
- Creature comforts
- Feel time pressured
- Prize and will pay for luxury

At the same time the Baby Boomers are redefining language and attitudes towards disability.
Our Team

Since 2007, Travability has been developing accessible information on tourist destinations. We have continually refined our presentation style and level of detail as a result of continual feedback. We are members of SATH (Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality), ENAT (European Network for Accessible Tourism) and Tour Watch the world incubator for Accessible Tourism. We are acknowledged as global thought leaders on inclusive tourism and the economic impact the sector will have on the travel industry over the next ten years.

We have presented at international forums including:

- SATH World Congresses in 2009 and 2011
- Inaugural Access Tourism New Zealand Conference in October 2010
- We were a part of the agenda planning committee for Interdependence 2012 in Vancouver, Canada
- Member of the Scientific Committee for Destinations for all, a Global Summit in Montreal in October 2014

We have developed the Accessible Information Evaluation Model for Parks Victoria and conducted the reviews for 26 major parks.

Bill Forrester

Bill was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia. As a child he was fortunate to travel to many parts of the world and to learn and appreciate cultures other than his own. That passion for learning and understanding has never left him. Bill has a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Melbourne and spent most of his working life in the corporate field in both financial and operation roles. He specialised in corporate and cultural change, and has extensive experience in facility management, major project delivery, stakeholder relations and corporate training programs. He has worked in the private, mutual, and government sectors. Several years ago he left the corporate world and bought three retail travel agencies in Melbourne to pursue his love of travel.

Recognising that there was a lack of information of accessible tourism facilities, three years ago, Bill formed Travability with a mission to change the way the tourist industry viewed travellers with disabilities and the way accessible information was made available.

Deborah Davis

Deborah was born and raised in Maryland and moved to Miami in 1984. She was involved in a car accident at the age of 18 sustaining a C6/7 spinal cord injury resulting in incomplete quadriplegia. Deborah has a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Miami and has had a successful career in the medical sales field and was the Director of Abilities Florida. She has extensive experience in developing and conducting training programs on disability awareness and the seamless inclusion of accessible facilities. She has a wealth of experience in marketing. She is well travelled and enjoys the thrill of discovering new places. As an active and accomplished individual she is passionate about our dream of making the world accessible to all.

Deborah is the founding inspiration and co-owner of Travability.