

Travability

Making the world accessible to all



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AUSTRALIA MISSES THE PLANE ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

New Zealand holds its Inaugural Access Tourism Conference recognising the significance of the growing accessible tourism market.

Last Monday the Auckland University of Technology held New Zealand's Inaugural Access Tourism Conference. The conference marked a significant shift in thinking acknowledging the economic arguments for Accessible Tourism and moving the focus away from the traditional disability rights of the past. Access Tourism currently represents 11% of the total tourism market and is the most under serviced of the tourism sectors. It is also the fastest growing sector estimated to be worth 22% of total tourism expenditure by 2020 as the cash and time rich Baby Boomers approach their mid 70's and acquire age related disabilities. Travability's founder, Bill Forrester, was one of two Australian Key Presenters at the conference.

In her opening address the Honourable Tariana Turia , New Zealand Minister for Disabilities said: "Access tourism – the development of tourism opportunities for people with disabilities and for the elderly – is the fastest growing sector overseas. Indeed, it is a high growth industry, expanding and exploring the potential of a vast market of tourism products. Access tourism embraces tourism, travel and hospitality. It is also a lucrative market, which can do much to boost our future economic growth. And yet access tourism has been a neglected sector in New Zealand – to our distinct disadvantage."

Australia undertook significant research as part of the CRC on Sustainable Tourism. That research found:

- 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 accessible tourism market does not spend because of economic circumstance and are 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.

Australia has an ageing population that is increasingly affected by disabilities. These people are retiring at a younger age and living longer. Based on general population statistics of age acquired disabilities the total expenditure of this group in the travel sector is likely to exceed 22% in ten years time. Not only is this relevant to Australia's domestic tourism market but the majority of Australia's inbound tourism is sourced from countries with similar age demographics.

Over the last 20 years Australia, like most of the western world, has had building codes and anti discrimination legislation in place that has seen accessible infrastructure built in all locations. Billions of dollars have been spent on the accessible facilities but the tourism industry and key tourism promotion bodies have failed to recognise the value of the market that they have been built for. Bill Forrester said at the conference "Accessible

Tourism facilities are still seen as accommodation for people with a disability, they are not viewed as valuable assets to attract a valuable market segment”

He went on to say that “accessibility should be seen to be about inclusive marketing not viewed as an obstacle to be overcome or a legislative requirement to be complied with.”

Infrastructure is no longer the issue. It is the lack of readily available accessibility information on the mainstream tourism web sites that is holding Australia back in this growing market. It should be being led from the front by Martin Ferguson and Tourism Australia instead of being hidden away on specialist disability travel sites like NICAN, especially when Australia’s tourism industry is struggling to recover from the Global Financial Crisis and a very strong Australian Dollar.

Australia needs to recognise the significance of this growing market sector and show some real leadership, or it runs the risk of being left standing on Tarmac while countries like New Zealand and Canada take the lead and share of the market. People with a disability are now the largest minority group in the world.

Travability was founded in 2007 by Bill Forrester initially as a vehicle to publish accessible travel information. Today, Travability is part of a worldwide group whose mission is to create equality in accessibility in the hospitality and travel industries. Bill Forrester believes that true inclusion should just blend in. It operates through its web site <http://travability.travel>

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If you would like information about this topic or schedule an interview with Bill Forrester please call 0417 690 533 or email bill@travability.info