

Universal Management: A Proposal to Change the Direction of Accessibility
Management in the Australian Tourism Industry to Create Benefits for All Australians
and Visitors to Australia

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Abstract: In order to realise the full benefits of Universal Design (UD) as a valuable new contributor to the management of access for people with disabilities UD concepts and lessons need to be translated into real decision making and action by boards of directors and managers at all levels of organisations across the world.

The development of a concise and clear set of seven principles for UD can be an exciting foundation for management principles applicable to every organisation addressing challenges and changes within our communities in the decade to come. Eleven principles of Universal Management are presented for leaders and thinkers in government, judicial, corporate, administrative and organisational spheres of influence. Every manager is invited to rethink the way in which all products and services are designed, delivered and maintained, translating the excellent tenets of UD into new managerial intentions and action.

Keywords: management, service, tourism

The Opportunity for Change and Improvement

This paper has been prepared to explore the concept of Universal Management and to encourage the development of a multidisciplinary access project within the Australian Tourism Industry. To date Universal Management has attracted some applause but is understandably slow in achieving its primary goal of developing a new approach to the provision of goods and services for people with a disability, older members of the community and those whose capacity to travel is temporarily hampered by any one of a range of circumstances.

A range of government and organisational estimates in Australia indicate that at any one time between 20% and 35% of the Australian population requires some additional consideration in the planning and delivery of facilities and services. This may be a conservative number if it includes people identified as having a disability and those for whom disability is not specifically cited but age or other factors impact upon their choices and access to goods or services. For the purposes of this discussion 20% is certainly sufficient to warrant managerial attention, and 35% of any community is sufficient to warrant significant attention to managerial detail (Briton, Deshon et al. 2001, pp. 5-6).

Australian anti-discrimination laws have now been in place for more than a decade. Australia's federal laws including the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, were followed by the introduction of a range of state legislation in the years following 1992

(Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/legislation/index.htm). Australia's Tourism Industry now needs to critically assess the gains made, some of which are very impressive, and to address management issues which are seriously impeding further improvement. The benefits this legislation promised have not been fully realised and the reasons for that failure deserve urgent managerial attention.

The development and promotion of Universal Design principles is gradually reshaping the way in which the physical environment will be managed for every member of the community. Universal management is about realising the full benefits of those opportunities.

Key Opportunities

- The opportunity exists for considerable improvement in managing disability access issues through the development of guiding principles for Universal Management. This would give managers the practical tools needed to generate significant change and improvement.
- The tourism industry in Australia has the potential to be the pilot sector for a project which would have significant benefits for all Australian businesses, communities and governments.
- The climate exists for a new management model. The world-wide emphasis is shifting to the development of a more inclusive approach by managers while at the same time “delivering the market” to the business community.
- The central concept of Universal Design, “identical whenever possible, equivalent when not,” marks a significant shift in the definition of the Target Market as it is currently understood by the Australian Tourism Industry. A “universal market” is not generally targeted by the tourism sector and the opportunity now exists to reshape some of the foundations of tourism service delivery and marketing.
- Management principles that parallel those of Universal Design would give the Tourism Industry a foundation upon which to develop and adopt an approach based on proactive management rather than anti-discrimination.

As the examples included in this discussion indicate, the Australian Tourism Industry's marketing flagship, the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW), addresses accessibility in a woefully clumsy fashion. It simply highlights the failure of the sector to fully appreciate changes in approach and substance clearly evident in other parts of the world (Tourism Australia, <http://www.tourism.australia.com/Marketing.asp?sub=0292>).

Tourism industry leaders in other nations are acting in a co-operative and supporting manner through the exchange of information and experience. The national and international work and influence of K eroul in Canada, Mobility International USA (MIUSA) and the European Commission Enterprise Directorate-General are worthy examples for further study. Australia it appears is largely left out of that loop (K eroul, 2003; MIUSA, 2005; The European Commission, 2005). In order to address all of the points listed above, the tourism sector in Australia needs to draw on its capacity to create

partnerships. A project of national significance and reach will require a wide range of partners.

It can be argued that there are already too many voices within the Australian tourism industry with forecasting councils, lobby groups, marketing agencies and sectorial representatives from within the industry. Nevertheless, the reach and impact of the industry in terms of employment, property holdings, cooperative business investment and policy development is significant. So much so that a nationally-led project, generously supported with sufficient resources and time, could have a profound impact on the Australian community over the coming decades. The state based structure of the Australian Tourism Industry will present challenges for a national project, but these have been overcome in the past and the benefits would far outweigh the additional effort required to obtain Australia-wide participation.

At the very least a project should generate:

- A “Universal Management Handbook” for all managers and a set of “Guiding Principles” for Boards and Directors.
- A clearinghouse of information regarding trends and developments in thinking, programs, projects and technologies.
- New guiding principles for service provision in Tourism and Hospitality, a new Universal Service Symbol, Agreed Symbol Sets and Brand Champions. The advent of new methods of establishing and communicating services will need the support of key industry leaders acting as Brand Champions to maintain momentum and build acceptance of the concept.
- A Universal Service National Tourism Advisory Forum. This forum should bring together tourism industry and other leaders to ensure tangible advances are made within the tourism sector and partnerships with all other sectors of Australian life and encouraged to contribute to, learn from and follow the tourism example.
- Training for Assessors, Customers, Employees and the Community.
- Accredited courses for delivery by the Australian colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) network and University MBA programs.
- A register of Best Practice examples, a Supplier Register and an Advisory Service to ensure rapid and comprehensive information for a managerial sector seeking timely information.
- A comprehensive and open review of The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW).
- Creative Ideas, Public Awareness, Newsletters and Bulletins and Adapted Principles for other industries.
- Co-operative Projects with international groups and agencies.

Australia Ten Years On

The Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* has been a significant part of the Australian management landscape for over a decade. The act addresses the rights of a subset of our community and is largely targeted at establishing ground rules and addressing complaints and problems as they arise. Its impacts have, therefore been

slight in comparison with other managerial challenges such as the introduction of Goods and Services Tax, labour market reforms and changes to capital gains and company tax rates which reach into the daily decision making processes of every Australian business and household.

This Federal anti-discrimination legislation and its State counterparts have had their greatest impacts in the observance of building codes and standards. There has also been some laudable encouragement of employers to hire greater numbers of people with disabilities. It is best reflected in changes to the wording of job advertisements and the inclusion of ramps and accessible hotel and motel rooms, the provision of accessible toilets and the restructure of car parks to include a number of wider spaces with appropriate signage.

However, in more than ten years there has been no appreciable or demonstrable shift in the basic tenets that apply to managerial thinking within the Australian Tourism Industry. Access for people with a disability remains the province of architects and builders whose primary task is to ensure the minimum standards are met. Adherence to “the standards” is seen as the key to ensuring this subject never arises as a problem for management.

In the Australian tourism sector, few managers, would see the issue as one of importance beyond the need to comply with building codes. This includes owner operators, who traditionally claim a greater emphasis on personalised service. Very few operators would equate anti-discrimination or accessible facilities with a marketing or customer service advantage worth developing. Few would openly accept that an attractive return on investment exists. Few are demonstrating such acceptance through any major focus of managerial time or effort on developing accessibility beyond the levels stipulated in the building codes.

Accessibility remains largely an issue of exposure to risk and the minimum action needed for compliance and risk minimisation. Local Governments are addressing the issue in greater numbers following celebrated court cases concerning difficulties surrounding the redevelopment of a theatre complex in Coffs Harbour. *Cooper v Coffs Harbour City Council* (1988) and the subsequent case *Cooper v Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* (1999) FCA 180 resulted in Councils recognising the need to be diligent in assessing accessibility aspects of work being done in the city or shire. Other legal actions involving the Redland Shire and Hervey Bay Councils in Queensland further highlight the need to be vigilant in matters concerning standards and approvals. Both councils faced legal action over the standard of buildings and amenities within their local government area (http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/decisions/decisions).

A number of Australian Councils have embarked upon Disability Action Plans and many of these are registered with the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/action_plans/Register/register.html#local). As yet however, there is little evidence that the business managers and Boards of Directors that control the development of the greater part of Australia’s tourism assets view the

subject as anything more than a building code compliance issue (Briton, Deshon et al. 2001, pp. 5-6).

In 2001 the Maroochy Shire Council adopted the “Maroochy Shire Council Access Policy and Action Plan” which clearly identified the future challenge faced by one of Queensland’s leading tourism destinations:

“...The Australian Local Government Association estimates that when these people are included the number of people in the community with disabilities stands at 35% of the total population. By this reckoning at any one time Maroochy has in the vicinity of 39,000 residents with disability. They all have families, friends and carers.

It makes sense to think of visitors, too, and not just for reasons of fairness or even customer service. It makes good commercial sense in a shire like Maroochy which aspires to be one of Queensland’s premier tourist destinations. Maroochy receives 683,000 visitors annually contributing \$260 million to the Shire’s economy by spending on average \$98 per person per day yet disproportionately few of these visitors will be people with disability.

Recent research shows that three out of every four people with disability travel less than they’d like to, or don’t bother to travel at all, because they can’t get to where they’d like to go, can’t get out and about if and when they get there, can’t find appropriate accommodation, and can’t even find out with any reliability what services and facilities are available to meet their needs.

Maroochy is no exception. The market foregone includes not only the 20% - 35% of potential tourists who have a disability, but their families and friends with whom they’d take their holidays. The same research suggests that Australians with disability already spend \$472 million annually on trips and \$305 million on day excursions, but this would climb to \$5 billion and more if only tourist destinations and holiday accommodation were accessible” (Briton, Deshon et al. 2001, pp. 5-6).

The Maroochy Shire Council Plan recognises that Local Governments alone cannot address the needs of the entire travelling public. More than a decade after the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation in Australia one leading Council was forced to admit considerable improvements are possible: “if only tourist destinations and holiday accommodation were accessible.”

The calculations and conclusions reached in the Maroochy document can be readily applied to all regions in Australia where tourism is identified as an important part of the community’s future.

Why Universal Management?

It is intended that the term Universal Management will convey a broad approach to managing spaces and services, as well as all people-related and investment-related decisions. No reference to Universal Management has been found elsewhere and the term has been devised to cover a range of decision making processes and considerations. Universal Management draws together concepts that are gaining acceptance throughout the world and establishes a basis upon which managers within the tourism industry can structure decisions regarding their environment, their approach to service and the foundations upon which they conduct business.

Universal Management = Universal Design + Universal Service

Within this framework, accessibility is a fundamental part of the process – not a legislative or social requirement to be given its own section in the business plan or sub-heading in the design brief. While no single tourism organization is currently addressing all of the issues that relate to people with a disability, there is evidence of a clear directional change occurring in the disability sector’s approach to the tourism industry. It is reflected in the energy, time and thought being invested to generate a greater range and number of travel, learning and enjoyment options for people with a disability. This increase in activity on the part of disability service providers represents a real opportunity for the tourism sector to respond and establish the foundation for long term cooperation and expanding returns on investment.

The tourism sector needs to take a positive and optimistic approach to the issue if the benefits are to be realised. To have achieved an ongoing state of Universal Management, the tourism industry will need to be able to show where all elements of its decision-making observe the Universal Design principle, *“Identical wherever possible; equivalent when not.”*

The Advocates Group that compiled the 1997 North Carolina State University *Principles of Universal Design* noted that the principles addressed:

“...Only universally usable design, while the practice of design involves more than consideration for usability. Designers must also incorporate other considerations such as economic, engineering, cultural, gender, and environmental concerns in their design processes.”

These Principles establish usable guidelines for designers seeking to better integrate features that meet the needs of as many users as possible (New York Mayor's Office for People With Disabilities, 2002, p. 1).

The tourism industry is fundamentally concerned with experiences as well as design but to achieve tangible gains a broad spectrum of research and innovation needs to be addressed to make Universal Management a reality. Managers will need to address factors not previously considered of primary importance when framing service, attraction or accommodation offers.

Much of the tourism planning in Australia remains focused on the economic imperative to achieve the greatest and fastest return on investment (Australian Government Tourism White Paper, 2003). Infrastructure and marketing dollars are invested where they can achieve the greatest impact on attractive target markets and where the business case shows that such investment will “make the difference” for a property, attraction or tour operation.

In adopting a broader view of the expectations of monies spent, the tourism sector will need to recognise that some investments need to target longer term benefits for a wider range of potential customers. Addressing access needs with a series of property audits and infrastructure upgrades will not generate the levels of return expected of investments in today’s market. A holistic and universal approach to access and service is needed to provide ongoing and measurable levels of business growth.

This universal approach will also allow the creation of a broad range of “free” benefits that stem from greater attention to detail on the part of all managers and staff. There is considerable additional goodwill generated through the seamless integration of accessibility with the core elements of any business or service.

Universal Design

In recent years considerable work has been done in America and elsewhere to develop and promote the concept of Universal Design. As an architectural and design industry project, Universal Design addresses seven key principles. Within the Australian Tourism Industry these principles can and should be applied to the design process for all infrastructure planning and design projects, and the development of all new products and pathways.

The definitions listed here are a combination of those provided by the NC State University and those used by the New York Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (New York Mayor's Office for People With Disabilities, 2002, pp. 19-25). Each of the seven principles can be utilised as the basis for developing a range of management directions and planning activities within the tourism industry. While it will require additional work to extrapolate all the examples mentioned in this report and to create usable management training and planning tools, the seven principles listed are an excellent framework for discussion and further research.

Universal Service

The concepts of Universal Service will be the most difficult aspects of this equation to establish and maintain. Physical infrastructure can be easily monitored against standards and legislation. Good design is a matter of time and the generation of ideas. The architectural industry is slowly adopting new ideas as they become available, although it is evident that as yet there is insufficient demand on the part of developers and managers to warrant large scale efforts by the architectural community. Universal

Service will require an intense collaboration between marketers, managers, product developers and people with a disability.

Almost all customer service information regarding the best forms of interaction with people with disabilities is presented in a non-permanent format. They include information sheets, booklets, and a range of bio-degradable formats that quickly show their age. Similarly, the subject is often approached in a simplistic format that encourages a general reading rather than a serious absorption of fact and an adoption of new approaches.

University subject offerings in Australia indicate the seriousness with which other customer services and consumer behaviours are taken. Customer Behaviour, E-Marketing and a range of Psychology subjects all focus attention on the decision-making processes of the potential consumer. The desires, needs and habits of people with a disability must be afforded the same levels of academic imaging and attention as is spent on other consumer groups and target markets. Customer service information addressing the desires of people with a disability should not be confined to information sheets and booklets punctuated by stylised cartoons and handy hints. Further, it is not sufficient to give a fact-sheet overview of interaction issues and hints and refer managers and staff to a range of disability organisations for further information.

In a major effort to address access in the tourism sector prior to the 2000 Olympics, the Commonwealth Department of Industry Science Tourism, Office of National Tourism developed and published a kit for tourism operators, *The Tourism Challenge: Access for All* (Office of National Tourism 1997). Within that kit, the section addressing customer service issues provided readers with a range of “do’s and don’ts” and refers readers to no less than **TEN** other sources of further information. When considering changes to services and upgrading their staff training, individual tourism operators are unlikely to seek information from a long list of organisations that includes Australian telecommunications company “Telstra” and the “Office of Disability - Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.”

Universal Service will require a far greater commitment to the development and promotion of service standards. It will require the collaboration of Government, industry and service provider organisations to establish a “Style Manual” for Australian managers.

Universal Service needs to be a level of achievement rather than a matter of non-discrimination. The tourism industry understands the use of service definitions and other standards relating to its products. Star ratings used to denote quality and the use of such terms as *a la carte* dining and *silver service* to segment experiences have a long history in the industry. While it can be argued that the use of these terms says very little about the personal needs of the customer, the same cannot be said about such terms as *disabled access* or *wheelchair friendly*. Universal Service will address this issue. It is a term that will allow the development of a range of services and service standards for which levels of training and qualification may be developed. It is a term that may be promoted and

advertised as a standard that targets all members of the community regardless of age, ability or capacity to pay.

The Climate for a New Management Model

Leading British access consultant Stephen Lloyd, the founder and Head of Diversity Services for The Grass Roots Group, highlighted the major hurdle to be overcome in developing a more inclusive approach from managers within the tourism industry. In an interview conducted by the author in London in June 2002, he stressed the need to develop new approaches while at the same time “delivering the market” to the business community, “Everyone talks the business case, but where is the beef? If it doesn’t affect you then the fact remains that business people will continue to see people with disabilities as poor brave souls but assert they have a business to run and a living to earn” (Rice, 2002, p. 27).

The business case and potential size of the market remain important for a strategy to encourage a Universal Management focus in any corporate or business community. The means of delivering a significant and identifiable portion of the market to the businesses concerned will remain a vital element of the strategy. However, in drawing parallels between Universal Design principles and any concerted Universal Management focus, it is important to place the economic and statistical issues second on a list of priorities. The broader principles and tenets need to be established first. These may then be tested against the potential for business success.

In Australia there is a stated expectation by Government and corporate entities to apply a triple bottom line approach to major decisions. Sustainability and success is measured by economic, social and environmental benefits and all decisions need to generate positive outcomes in all three areas. According to The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia “triple bottom line” refers to the financial, social and environmental performance of an entity:

“There is a distinct trend towards society demanding more information about the totality of companies’ activities. Whilst company reports have in the past been directed to shareholders and primarily focussed on financial information, a wider group of stakeholders (including employees, local communities, NGOs and other specific-interest groups) are now looking to companies to disclose information about the social and environmental impacts of their activities” (Institute of Chartered Accountants, 2003).

While it is not a general expectation, there is some discussion within museum and gallery networks that the triple bottom line should be expanded to separately address cultural benefits. The Queensland Government's public art policy “Art Built-in” came into effect on 1 July 1999. Through the Art Built-in Policy, the Government commits 2% of the building project costs towards the integration of art and design by Queensland artists/artworkers (Queensland Government, 2005). Australian business may be forced

through political or community expectations to further dilute the economic focus of its decision making with a broader mix of outcome priorities.

The managerial skills required to create a completed “corporate team” already extends to environmental and community relations managers as well as the sales, accounts, human resources and strategic planning executives. As any perceived differences between cultural and social benefits become better defined, the need for a manager of a different ilk may become more pronounced in corporate Australia. The time of the Cultural Manager and the Accessibility Manager may have arrived.

A Starting Point

The architectural and design industry has started the process of addressing universal issues at the earliest stages of:

- teaching and developing the concepts upon which their industry is based, and
- training new practitioners and future leaders.

The industry is harnessing the support of disability service providers, the education sector and major community organisations as partners. There are those within the architectural industry with the foresight and the interest to adopt the new wave of thinking. They will continue to generate a movement within the industry that may eventually overtake all outdated and unenlightened thinking.

The task of the new thinkers will be made significantly easier when the business advantages of their research and design become a sought after commodity. The world’s population is getting older. It is not unreasonable to predict that increasing demand for more accessible product will, over the next decade, highlight the work currently being done in Universal Design and place some new and unique demands on managers and corporate planners.

Managerial support will need to be expressed in mission statements, business objectives and position descriptions. Funding and finance organisations will expect any new approach to be clearly articulated and managers will need to utilise “written expressions of intent” to generate cultural and practical change within the workplace.

Developing the Principles

For Australian communities, agencies and industries to fully accept, support and adopt a changed approach to access, long term goals and shorter term benchmarks will need further development. This may need to be done through industry consultation and the encouragement of academic interest and work.



The Universal Design principles provide an excellent starting point for developing management guidelines. The seven principles do not adequately address such management issues and key decision-making processes as:

- Strategic Planning Decisions.
- Balancing Shareholders and Stakeholder Interests.
- Clarity of Decision Making and Reporting.
- Developing an appropriate Organisational Culture.


The seven principles are addressed below and parallel management principles have been developed for each design focus. The four listed above have been added. For change to be accepted and encouraged, businesses of all sizes will need to generate support in the board room and at operational levels.

In Australia there is a need for a “new start” approach to Universal Management. The structures presented here make no comment on the existing high standards of leadership currently being shown from a range of organisations. Nor do they comment on the considerable gains made in physical infrastructure and workplace reforms etc. Rather, the suggested principles seek to be a starting point for all organisations and individuals to further develop the structures and the networks required to address this issue of access. The best research outcomes and project activities currently available across the world should be combined with the best examples of Australian innovation. A program can then be developed that is attractive to Australian Managers and which can be implemented within the Australian business and service environments.

Eleven Principles of Universal Management


<p>1 Equitable Use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. The building is usable by anyone. It does not stigmatise or privilege any group of users. 	
<p>Universal Management Principle 1 The usability of the building, service or facility will take precedence over all other business planning issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No compromise will be made for economic or other reasons. • No single group of people will be excluded from the research and testing stages of the project. • Expert advice and creative thinking will be applied prior to commencement of more process-related planning. 		
<p>2 Flexibility in Use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. 	
<p>Universal Management Principle 2 An active program of testing and improvement will be undertaken involving the widest possible cross section of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decisions will be made that will cause any one person or group to be unable to access the facilities or services being offered - rather the planning will be modified to meet all needs. 		

- Where possible the delivery of the product will be constantly “tested to destruction” by a diverse group of employees and potential customers.

3 Simple and Intuitive Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. 	
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Universal Management Principle 3
 The service or product will be evaluated regularly and performance measured. Secret shoppers and focus groups will gather ongoing performance data.

- Professional and community groups will be invited to test and comment on all aspects of the business, premises, products and service.
- External experts will be invited to examine and comment on plans formulated and the results of implementations programs.

4 Perceptible Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's intellectual or sensory abilities. 	
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Universal Management Principle 4
 All internal and external communications will be undertaken in a way that meets the needs of all customers and users.

- In the targeting of any niche market or customer group, information will be provided in formats that are accessible to anyone who may be part of that niche.

5 Tolerance for Error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental unintended actions. 	
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Universal Management Principle 5
 In all areas of the business, positive provision will be made for a potential user’s lack of experience, knowledge, language skills, or concentration level.

- Difficulties experienced by any individual customer will be recorded and examined for improvement options.

6 Low Physical Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue 	
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Universal Management Principle 6
 Sufficient resources will be made available to ensure availability of appropriate facilities at all times.

- All aspects of the facility or service will be tested for ease of use. Staging of all tasks will become an expectation in planning.

7 Size and Space for Approach and Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility. 	
<p>Universal Management Principle 7 In all decisions regarding resources for staff, customers, visitors or residents, a generous approach to allocations will be expected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of additional resources ensuring full inclusion of all members of the community will encourage returns well beyond any initial outlay. 		

The Four Additional Principles

Strategic Planning Decisions	<p>Universal Management Principle 8 People with disabilities will be actively engaged in the strategic planning processes of the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees of the organisation and members of the community will be invited to participate. 	
Balancing Shareholder and Stakeholder Interests	<p>Universal Management Principle 9 In all communications with Shareholders and Stakeholders the value of Universal Management will be clearly explained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of the program will be placed second only to the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board of Directors in importance and emphasis. 	
Clarity of Decision Making and Reporting	<p>Universal Management Principle 10 The decisions and actions of the organisation will be clearly outlined in all ongoing communications to employees, customers and shareholders. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes to achieve desirable outcomes, • any difficulties encountered and • any limitations to the organisation's capacity to reach full implementation of Universal Management principles. 	
An Appropriate Organisational Culture	<p>Universal Management Principle 11 All aspects of the organisation's day to day operations will be utilised to build the highest levels of understanding and appropriate response to the challenge of Universal Design and Universal Service.</p>	

New Definitions of the Target Market

For many years Australia has maintained intense country-specific marketing programs in the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom and Korea among others. Further research may indicate that the demand for international “Accessible Tourism” experiences is resulting in huge amounts of disposable income being spent in destinations other than Australia. If we accept that our Nation’s marketing is effective and customer awareness of Australia is increasing, then clearly this group is actively choosing other destinations for reasons that need to be addressed.

The potential for growth through a greater focus on people with a disability is gradually becoming clearer. Research being undertaken throughout the world is starting to give an indication of the numbers of people with a disability intending to travel.

In 2001 K eroul undertook a major survey of Canadian residents with restricted physical abilities and published a summary report entitled, “*A Growth Market: Behaviours of Tourists with Restricted Physical Abilities in Canada.*” That report identified that 28% of physically disabled people travel outside Canada. Of those surveyed 15% traveled to the United States and 13% traveled to other international destinations (K eroul, 2001, p. 9).

As yet this research is not of a consistency to compare with other target market data available in Australia on, for example, Scandinavian backpackers, Japanese honeymooners or British family members (Tourism Australia, 2003). Suffice to say the numbers being revealed in research to date run to millions of people with million of dollars of disposable income. The exact scope of the target market needs to be the subject of intensive research which would need to be undertaken in collaboration with overseas tourism partners.

In Australia there is only anecdotal evidence of the extent to which access issues are given any primary consideration in planning and ongoing service development. Managerial effort is largely measured through a stated willingness on the part of all concerned to comply with the current legislation. As in all world tourism markets, the delivery of a satisfactory Australian tourism experience depends heavily upon the consistent supply of high quality products from almost every sector of the business community. Correspondingly, growth in the tourism sector has an almost immediate flow on effect that generates growth in other sectors such as transport, personal services, printing and publishing. The tourism sector traditionally researches and targets market sectors that have the most potential for the greatest return on marketing and infrastructure investment.

As target groups become more minutely defined there is a considerable cross-mixing of target groups and individual travellers fit the format for a number of accepted definitions. The “Empty Nesters” and the “Luxury Group” may have a very high number of members in common. Backpackers, Eco Tourism and Adventure Tourism are all concepts that are marketed with a range of common experiences being offered (Tourism Australia, 2003). Similarly the access and disability markets are not always clearly defined sub-sets of the travelling community and yet the industry continues to define

“disability” as a niche market in its own right with little or no cross over with target markets. In 2003 the Australian Government released a document outlining a medium to long term strategy for tourism.

Some potential niche markets include seniors, defence, culture and the arts, sport, backpacker, health, people with disabilities, caravanning and motor homes, cycling, food and wine and agritourism. This list is not exhaustive (Australian Government Tourism White Paper, p.31). When this *niche market* tag is applied the way is opened for managers to adopt mind-set that would not be applied to other target markets.

The historical or legislated approaches encourage or enforce:

- The adaptation of services and facilities to meet the special needs of people with a disability.
- The outlawing of discrimination against people with a disability and the establishment of tribunals and other authorities to address complaints and transgressions.
- The encouragement of workplaces and other areas of community life to address ways in which people with a disability can be “integrated” into areas of their workplace or operation.
- Carefully worded expectations or requirements that apply only when major refurbishments, changes in purpose or growth thresholds have been reached in business or community establishments.

While there is no doubt that individual managers in Australia’s tourism sector do afford the issue the amount of consideration required under legislation and regulation, the reliance on checklists of building regulations and using an anti-discrimination approach often leads to:

- Consideration of physical and design aspects of construction being left to architects and draftsmen with an expectation that the design will meet current requirements.
- An expectation that staff will have a broader understanding of anti-discrimination than they might in fact have.
- A belief that generic service standards and operational instructions will meet the needs of all customers and that staff experience will make up for any difficulties that arise with individual customers.
- A belief that all accessibility measures are an imposition on the business.
- A belief that accessible facilities and services are for a minority of customers when the business is attempting to maximise its patronage.
- A belief that any retrospective work on accessible facilities and services will be an expensive imposition on the business with little hope of a positive return on investment.
- A perpetuation of the belief that the business needs to make some concessions for people with disabilities, but it is not part of the core business of the organisation and warrants little ongoing time or effort.

Universal Design requires, at a physical level, seamless integration of access into our environment for all members of the community. This concept is new to the architectural and design communities and has the potential to generate considerable discussion and change in managerial and strategic planning spheres in coming years.

The concept of *target markets* within business or community planning is arguably at odds with the principles of Universal Design. The categorisation of people with a disability as a small niche market opens the way for strategic planners and managers make service and product design decisions that heavily favour one sector of the community over another. This needs to be carefully weighed against a broader commitment to social and business equality. Any shift toward Universal Management would mean that segregating one section of a service or facility to meet the needs of “those people” while the rest use “the normal facilities” must become an outdated form of managerial thinking.

In the future, any attempt to create a definitive category of clients having special needs will be fraught with danger. From a business perspective, the development of a “one size fits all” offer or product will surely be flawed if we take out those who fall into one or more of the special needs categories. It may be expected that when the “normal” population becomes the minority, and that case might well be argued at this time, managers who do not embrace some form of Universal approach to the community at large will see their target markets shrinking. The challenge for managers will be to better tailor their product for a major new sector of the community as well as their existing customer base.

This “new majority” in the community will select products and services using a different set of criteria to those of the past. In the initial stages personal preferences relating to choice of colour, peer group pressure, proximity to the beach and a desire to create more leisure time or greater wealth may give way to a significant recognition of being respectful, polite, practical and welcoming.

This does not mean that all facilities will be exactly the same. On the contrary, the broadest range of services delivery and infrastructure related options may be presented within the same space. It does mean, however, that issues of equitable access to all facilities and equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the goods, services and attractions offered needs to become a high priority in any planning and implementation activities. It could reasonably be expected that managers implementing a Universal Management regime within their planning and implementation would initially address the following issues.

The intended business, service or organisation should be equitable with respect to:

1. Services being delivered to all potential clients or users.
2. Physical design elements being incorporated into all spaces utilised.
3. Product and service expectations being generated and communicated to visitors, clients and users.
4. Goodwill and community support being encouraged and fostered.

5. Creativity and research being commissioned or undertaken.
6. Education and training being undertaken with employees, clients and users.
7. Observance of regulatory, due diligence and legislative requirements.
8. Allocation of investment funds and operational spending.
9. Generation of a respectful, dignified ethical culture within organisations, industries and communities.

These nine areas of managerial responsibility will have a significant influence on the basic framework from which the Universal Management principles are developed and implemented. The potential exists to re-examine all supply and demand, human resources, and marketing and investment theories with a view to generating a sustainable approach to access. That re-examination will extend well beyond the anti-discrimination and minimum requirement focus evident in so many businesses around the world today.

At the moment much of the responsibility for delivering respect, politeness, practicality and warm welcomes is left to the front line troops within our business community. Staff members at front counters, telephone operators and delivery personnel are the bearers of much of the goodwill in a business. This may not be enough. Product designers and market researchers may, in coming decades, struggle with the concept that many of their products are being left on the shelf due to the lack of a holistic approach to the community's needs.

This potential shrinkage in future markets for some businesses may be evident no matter how well defined the target market is or how much of that market the business is targeting. A change in social expectations and community norms will generate a negative impact upon a business as surely as any ill-targeted marketing plan.

To achieve the changed approach required under Universal Management, all facilities and services must be developed with a real commitment to ensuring they are accessible to all people. It is not a program of addressing individual problems that already exist. Universal Management requires a complete reengineering of the business ethic and methodology. The SWOT analysis framework goes some of the way toward achieving this with an assertion that managers should ensure their enhanced facilities are utilised to the "benefit of all guests." The process of achieving solutions however, will need to begin well before this point.

A Tourism Insight: The ATDW – Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

While people with a disability remain a remote group of customers, the tourism industry will continue to group this community with other optional market segments. In recent years the Australian Tourism Industry has invested a significant amount of money in the development of the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) (Tourism Australia, 2003). In itself, the ATDW is an ambitious and laudable project addressing the substantial need to gather and disseminate information directly to all levels of the industry and to potential customers. The ATDW data input screens are complex and have

been designed to accept information about the widest range of accommodation, attractions, regions and products.

However, it could be argued that one of the most expensive information tools ever developed for the tourism industry is disappointingly lacking in its capacity to provide information where it is most needed. People with a disability are the group that needs the highest levels of information prior to leaving home and the deficiencies of the ATDW system will soon be judged by the marketplace.

ATDW does provide a clear insight into the difficulty the Australian Tourism Industry has in separating people's needs, responsibilities and expectations. People with a disability as a market segment operators may choose to target or choose to reject. Tourism properties do not tailor their product offerings to attract or repel people with disabilities – or at least they shouldn't. In fact any property that fails to tick the appropriate box should be open to questioning about why they perceive their product is not suitable for all members of the community wishing to visit.

With respect to facilities and infrastructure, a vague two-tiered system with space for notes places the issue of disability in the same category as the BBQ facilities and a bike rack. Yet another area of the ATDW system places the access issue within another well defined area of managerial attention. It is, however, difficult to imagine how an industry which is built upon providing the greatest number of recreational and leisure opportunities for the greatest number of people might place people with a disability, children and pets under a single heading called special needs. Rather than a "special need," it should be a system of services and considerations that ensures there is no discrimination in the delivery of whatever recreational or leisure experiences are being offered.

Tourism as a Catalyst

Suitable industry and community liaison and promotional structures need to be created to engage the wide range of organisations and individuals required to implement a fundamental change in managerial thinking and planning in Australia. "Whole of Government" and "Whole of Community" approaches are needed if significant expansion in the capacities of Australian management and governance is to be achieved. This expansion will need to embrace the concept of Universal Management as an extension of Universal Design and the creation of Universal Service. The tourism sector in Australia is however, uniquely positioned to achieve such a change in thinking and action.

Unlike many of the other recognised industries that form the bulk of the Australian economy, the tourism industry influences and enhances the interests of all sectors of business, community and the environment. It is a loose-knit coalition of small to medium sized businesses along with a small number of major companies. It generally works within a framework of representative organisations and government departments, which gives it the status of a cohesive industry sector. As such the interests and influence of the tourism industry extend to:

- Legislation
- Federal, State and Local Governments
- Building Management and Infrastructure Development
- Roads, Signage and Transport
- Training and Education
- Environmental Management
- Retail and Services
- Agriculture and Regional Business

Very few other industries draw upon the same range of resources and depend upon the professional service standards of such a diverse segment of the business sector.

The Australian Tourism Industry has the capacity to generate a fundamental shift in thinking; however partnerships will need to be developed to achieve this outcome. The relationships tables below indicate the range of synergies that will be needed to fully achieve the gains that are possible within the tourism sector. All groups identified are already engaged in the processes of policy formulation, market forecasting or targeted marketing. The relationships may need to be renegotiated or new social and business contracts established to encompass Universal Management principles.

The tourism industry has generated considerable cooperation and synergy in drawing together varying groups of partners to examine forecasting, employment, sustainability, environment and taxation. As yet this capacity to create partnerships has not been used in any significant way to address the broader issue of access management. All organisations listed below have a role to play.

ACADEMIA - ARTS	GOVERNMENT	INTERNATIONAL
University Research Tertiary Education Decision Makers	Federal, State and Local Governments	International Program Providers
Vocational Training Organisations	Local Government Organisations	International Forum Bodies
Architectural Organisations	Building Code Groups	Non Government Organisations
Artists, Designers and Curators	Recognised Government Advisory Groups	Overseas Tourism Agencies and Organisations

AUSTRALIAN TOURISM	BUSINESS and INDUSTRY	ADVISERS and PARTNERS
ATC, State Tourism Departments and Official Organisations	Building Owners and Managers	Disability Groups and Organisations
Regional Tourism Organisations	Transport Organisations	Media

Tourism Industry Sector Organisations	IT Industry Organisations	Business Management Organisations
Policy and Industry Direction Advisory Organisations	Moteliars and Accommodation Houses, Attractions and Museums	Interested Individuals and Disability Service Professionals
Other National and Sub-National Tourism Bodies	Entertainment and Venue Working Groups	Special Interest Organisations, Churches and Fraternal Groups
		Trade Unions

The capacity of the Tourism industry to engage such a cross section of the Australian community and business sector means a comprehensive framework may be used to establish an industry-specific series of consultations and opportunity identification projects.

Universal Management will require balanced input from leaders with expertise in legal, commercial, investment, consultative and human resource fields. The Universal Management framework seeks to ensure managers understand the social, moral and personal backgrounds to service and infrastructure decisions. It will be imperative that each of the major tenets upon which society is based are represented in the formulation and ongoing development of the Universal Management concepts.

Laws International and Domestic	Regulations Federal, State and Local
Global Expectations and Responsibilities and Domestic Capacities	Policy, Strategic and Community Planning Processes and Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring capacity to participate in global decision making processes. • Ensuring Best Practice implementation within international and domestic business, governance and social structures. • Ensuring ideas and program development maintains pace with international developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring a process of consistent improvement. • Expanding compliance expectations. • Increasing onus upon key decision makers for net positive access outcomes. • Higher levels of targeted and tied allocation of community resources.
Translating to Action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Ideas Generation • International Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instigating Change • Monitoring • Compliance Issues

Codes of Conduct Industry Standards	Moral and Ethical Norms and Expectations
Access Issues, Knowledge and Awareness Targets and Action Plans	Community, Business and Social Research and Monitoring
• Establishing and maintaining customer	• Community and business leadership.

service standards, targets, expectations. • Challenging accepted and traditional directions of architecture and design, business practices, social behaviours.	• Informed and sensitive discussion. • Consistent generation and testing of new concepts and ideas.
Translating To Action	
• Training • Packaging Services • Promotion and Marketing • Professional Development • Market Delivery	• Complaint Response • Professional Engagement • Community Engagement • Monitoring Standards and Codes

Given the range of relationships, responsibilities, interests and investments that impact upon or influence the Australian Tourism Industry, important areas of endeavour can be identified for an immediate start to project development and industry implementation. The industry needs to give detailed consideration to:

- Developing usable managerial training tools.
- Collating the best of the world’s collective knowledge and research.
- Monitoring improvement and advertising advantages of an accessible Australian holiday.
- Engaging and empowering people with a disability.
- Creating improvement that will meet the needs of the industry in coming decades.

A nationally-led project engaging all partners and stakeholders in the tourism industry would provide Australia with a major platform for generating improvements, knowledge and attractive returns on investment.

In Conclusion

The opportunity exists for Managers to create significant improvement at every stage of the planning implementation and delivery of goods and services. If opportunity really is the basis for profitable business, this is a wellspring just waiting to be tapped.

Peter Rice is a tourism and business consultant working out of Toowoomba Australia, His career has taken him from a cadet radio journalist to senior editorial positions in radio and one newspaper and he has worked within the field of television. Over the past decade Peter has taken the Toowoomba and Golden West Regional Tourist Association to a point of national recognition. His team at the Association won the 2000 Australian Prime Minister’s Gold Medal Access Award - Industry Associations and Government for their work with the “Access The Best” tourism product. The ATB project developed highly colourful and attractive disability access information for travellers to two regions in Australia and supported that product with operator training and promotion. He may be contacted at pjrice9@bigpond.net.au.

References
EN.REFLIST

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

(To be filled by hospitality business managers)

The present survey is a research intended to improve hospitality services for people with disabilities. The results of the survey will be presented in a paper at the 9th Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality Conference (Miami, USA. January 12-16, 2005)

Please, Introduce yourself:

Name:

Organization:

Management Position:

Which is the estimated average of check in of people with disabilities in a period of a year? (expressed in percent from the total of guests during the last years)

_____ % estimated average per year.

What kind of services do you offer to people with disabilities according to their needs?

For mobility disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For visual disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For hearing disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For mental disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

What kind of improvement are you planning to implement during the coming year to attend needs of people with disabilities?

For mobility disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For visual disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For hearing disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

For mental disabilities

Please, describe it: _____

Do you consider that your investments improving facilities and services for guests with disabilities should be compensated by an increase of demand from these guests?

Yes, in a near future.

Yes, at a long term.

No

According to your own experience, what kind of troubles has appeared during the reception and accommodation period of guest with disabilities?

Please, describe it: _____

Do you have any suggestion or idea to enhance hospitality services for guest with disabilities?

Please, describe it: _____

