

Access Guide for Festivals and Events

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended as a guide only. This publication should not be substituted for professional advice on laws and regulations in individual cases. If readers still have doubts, they should consult the appropriate legislation or seek professional advice. In addition to the information contained in this document, event organisers must exercise skill, care and sound judgement in event planning. Although the information contained in this publication has been researched, the Nillumbik Shire Council accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions that may have occurred within the publication.

Introduction

Various festivals, events and community celebrations are held throughout Nillumbik every year. It is important for everyone to have the opportunity to participate and be included in these community events just as it is important to understand the diverse needs of all participants.

This guide is provided by Nillumbik Shire Council to assist festival and event organisers with practical information, recommendations and ideas to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to participate.

This guide does not attempt to detail everything that may be required for every event. Rather, it is intended to outline the principles of access and inclusion and encourage you to:

- think about access and participation for all when planning your event
- recognise your responsibilities for providing accessible activities
- identify potential access barriers
- incorporate access responsive features.

This guide looks at the **Why**, **Where** and **How** of creating accessible festivals and events within the Shire of Nillumbik and also gives you a contact point should you need **Help!**

Terminology

Appropriate language relating to people with disabilities should be included in all promotional materials, signage, websites, site maps, displays, on-site announcements and in conversations.

The preferred terminology is to use “people first” language, which emphasises the person first, rather than the disability. For example, use “people with disabilities” rather than “the disabled” and “people with vision impairment” rather than “the blind”. Similarly, when describing or identifying facilities, it is preferable to use “accessible toilet” and “accessible parking” rather than “disabled toilet” and “disabled parking”.



It is therefore suggested that this approach be used for any publicity material or signage for your festival or event and that the International Symbol of Access (as pictured) be used to designate accessible services and facilities.

Why

Almost 20 per cent of the Australian population has a disability of some description¹, which means that by making your festival accessible to all you will help ensure that your festival enjoys maximum attendance and participation.

Making your events accessible is also a legal requirement under federal and state laws such as the federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), which provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability.

Disability discrimination occurs when people with a disability are treated less fairly than people without a disability or when a requirement, condition or practice does or is likely to disadvantage a person with disability. Anti-discrimination laws also extend to cover relatives, friends, carers, co-workers or associates of a person with a disability. The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of a disability and for public places to be inaccessible to people with a disability.

The definition of “disability” in the DDA is very broad and includes (but is not limited to) physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, and learning disabilities. Across the Shire of Nillumbik, many residents experience some form of disability and as disability is more prevalent in older age groups, the number of people with a disability in Nillumbik will increase significantly as our population ages.

Every person seeking information benefits from clear details with appropriate access design elements on websites, flyers, site maps, printed brochures and signs. Improved physical access for people using mobility aids (wheelchairs, scooters, wheeled walkers, crutches etc.) also means improved access for anyone with young children, prams, strollers, delivery trolleys and even those handling staging equipment ... a big win for everyone!

Hint: Festivals and events that are planned to meet the needs of everyone in our community will be the most successful in terms of participation and positive public response.

¹ Source: ABS Media Release, *Percentage of Australians disabled due to physical health conditions decreased*, 16 December 2010

Where

Integrating access and participation into every planning and implementation stage of your event will achieve the best access outcome. In taking this approach, the decision about where to hold a festival or event is often the most critical one to achieve improved accessibility. For example, a steep sloping site will have more access challenges than an open area that is near level or with gentle gradients. A building with a ramped entry and unisex accessible toilets offers immediate benefits compared to a building without such supports.

It is important to plan the layout of the venue or site so that it actively supports accessibility. Australian Standards relating to access and mobility should be referred to when implementing access enhancements (for example, *AS/NZS 1428.4:2009 – Design for access and mobility*) or selecting hired services such as temporary toilets or stages.

When thinking about venues consider those that allow people to enter, move around and exit with ease, that offer accessible facilities and ideally enable your event to take place on one level only. Also consider how people will get there: is there accessible public transport available close by and is sufficient car parking available?

Every person attending will benefit from improvements to the overall accessibility of your site or venue.

<p>Hint: Have you thought about whether there is a school or sporting ground nearby that has toilet facilities and established pathways and ramps?</p>

How

Access Resource Kit

Nillumbik Shire Council has an Access Resource Kit (ARK) available to organising committees, Council staff and other volunteers to ensure festivals and events are more accessible and inclusive of people with a disability. At this stage the ARK is a limited kit and further pieces of equipment may be required to further expand the range of resources available.

The kit comprises of:

- Portapath (temporary portable path system)
- Temporary signage

Portapath

The Portapath paving is a rugged mobile anti-slip surface that can be used to provide a temporary accessible path over surfaces such as grass or gravel. It can be used for general access, including by people with mobility aids, prams, strollers or delivery trolleys.

Made from high impact UV-protected polypropylene, it is an all-weather, all-year-round surface providing an innovative path system with a unique design that allows installation to be customised for each occasion.

- The layout can be readily changed by unclipping and reconnecting the individual panels that incorporate drainage and ventilation slots to prevent damage to grass surfaces.
- The panels available through Nillumbik Shire Council are generally 900mm wide x 1200mm in length and are stored on pallets, but could be individually moved, transported and subsequently installed on-site by one or two people. With 10 pallets available, the Portapath can create close to 640m of pathway.
- While the Portapath system should be laid on a relatively firm surface it can be used for a range of applications to provide improved access and clearways for everyone attending outdoor festivals and events.

Please note that when borrowing the Portapath it is a requirement that you borrow and strictly adhere to the accompanying instructions.

Temporary Signage

This is a collection of ARK sign panels, used to identify the location of accessible facilities including parking, toilets, information provision, reserved seating and paths of travel. These signs are 30cm x 45cm, printed on one side with fixing holes, and are stored in large plastic containers that you can transport to your event site.

Examples of signs include:



Accessible Paths of Travel

One of the most important aspects of festivals and events is being able to get to and around the venue to enjoy the activities on offer. As there are often many components within festivals and events, it is important to ensure that there are accessible paths throughout the site that link all the attractions and essential services wherever possible.

An accessible path of travel should:

- be at least 1m wide
- have 2m of vertical clearance
- have sections 2m long x 1.8m wide approximately every 10m to allow for passing space for people using wheelchairs, etc.
- have a consistent, firm, trip-free surface
- be free of any barriers to access
- be maintained to this standard throughout the festival.

Using the ARK Portapath system is one option for providing a continuous accessible path of travel across uneven ground or loose surfaces. It is also a great way to increase accessibility across grassed areas and provide respite from a slippery surface in bad weather.

It is important to clearly indicate where the accessible paths of travel are. By doing this, those attending festivals and events can clearly identify the most accessible path of travel for them.

Hint: When setting up your Portapath it's a good idea to make sure that stalls, food vendors, toilet facilities etc. are set back from the path of travel so that people queuing do not create a barrier on the pathway.

Unisex Accessible Toilet Facilities

There are two main ways to ensure that unisex accessible toilet facilities are provided during your festival or event. You can:

- hire temporary unisex accessible toilets
- use unisex accessible toilets within nearby buildings.

Important aspects to consider with providing temporary unisex accessible toilets include:

- appropriate signage including the International Symbol of Access (white wheelchair on a blue background)
- level or near level entry access
- appropriate ramped access, if a level entry cannot be achieved
- a door opening at least 80cm wide
- a lever or D shaped door handle
- appropriate internal circulation space
- sufficient space beside the toilet pan to allow for a wheelchair or mobility aid
- handrails at an appropriate height beside and behind the toilet pan
- an appropriate basin and taps that can be reached and operated by a person sitting in a wheelchair.

It is important to have a unisex accessible toilet located with standard temporary toilets. As hiring temporary unisex accessible toilets will add to the overall cost of your festival or event another feasible option is to use unisex accessible toilets that are located within buildings, near to where the festival or event is being held.

Whichever of the two options is used it is important that the locations of the unisex accessible toilets are known by all festival and event staff or volunteers and that signage is used throughout the venue to indicate the location of these facilities.

There are many variables that impact on the number of toilets required at an event including the number of women and men attending and whether or not alcohol is being served. As a rule of thumb you should aim to provide one step-free accessible toilet for every 500 attendees and these toilets should be well sign posted and include a baby change table.

<p>Hint: Be aware that while temporary unisex accessible toilets can be hired from most companies that hire temporary standard toilets, these may not comply with the requirements of the relevant Australian Standards.</p>

Accessible Parking Bays

Like most of us, many people with a disability will come and go from a festival or event in vehicles. This means sufficient accessible parking bays need to be provided.

An accessible parking bay must:

- have a dedicated (non-shared) space 2.4m wide x 5.4m long
- have a shared area on one side of the dedicated space 2.4m wide x 5.4m long
- have a shared area 2.4m long x 2.4m wide at one end of the dedicated space
- have markings and signage identifying it as an accessible parking bay
- be located near the entrance of the festival or event
- have an accessible connection to a continuous path of travel to the nearest entry point.

The exact number of accessible parking bays required can be difficult to predict. As a general rule of thumb 5 per cent of the total number of parking bays should be accessible parking bays. These should be spread out so that each parking area has accessible parking bays. If possible, the surface of the accessible parking bays should be firm and level. These bays should always be available and not used for any other purpose, including storage of materials.

Parking areas should also include drop off points to enable people with disabilities to be able to safely transfer from vehicles, close to an accessible path of travel to an entry point.

Hint: When considering your drop off points don't forget that people travelling in a wheel chair often require some additional space at the rear of their vehicle in order to alight.

Stage and Performing Space Access

If the festival or event has a stage it is a good idea to have a ramp that provides access for people who use mobility devices such as a wheelchair or walking frame.

Having a ramp up to the stage not only assists individuals with mobility devices, it also helps when moving large objects such as band equipment onto the stage. Ramps that lead up onto stages should be no steeper than 1 in 14 gradient and handrails should be provided on both sides of the ramp.

It is important to maintain a clear circulation space on stage level at the top of the ramp to enable a person using a mobility aid space to manoeuvre once on stage. Most companies that hire out stages for temporary festivals and events should also be able to provide ramps onto stages.

<p>Hint: Try to provide time for a rehearsal or visit to the performance space to give people an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the set-up.</p>
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Food and Beverage Services

Food and beverage services should be easily accessible at a festival or event, including via an accessible path of travel. When considering what types of services will be available consider how people with a disability will be able to order food and beverages.

Consider the following:

- Will food and beverage services be provided at a height appropriate for a person in a wheelchair to access?
- Will assisted listening technology be appropriate to assist a person with a hearing impairment?
- Is the walkway to food and beverages accessible and clear of obstacles? (This will benefit people with disabilities, older people and families with prams).

The ARK Portapath system is also an excellent way to gain access to these services particularly when located on grassed areas as some access barriers can be experienced when food and beverage services are provided by operators using mobile vans or trailers.

Seating

Effective seating around a festival or event venue is a valuable access support for people with disabilities, older people and those with children. Seats with backs and arms will assist all users, particularly older adults and people who require upper body support when seated.

Reserved Seating

Wherever seating is provided it is important to reserve seating for community members with a disability. The reserved seating area needs to include seats as well as spaces next to seats for storing mobility devices. In outdoor venues, consider establishing a reserved area to enable people with disabilities to have clear sight lines to performances on the main or side stages.

People don't often attend festivals by themselves so consider adequate seating for friends, family and carers. By providing adequate seating for people with a disability and their supporters you avoid separating festival goers from one another.

Shade, Rain and Wind Protection

Exposure to rain, wind and sometimes sun can be an unpleasant experience for most of us and for people with disabilities this is no different. Some people with disabilities are at particular risk from the elements so the use of open or closed sided marquees could be considered to provide general weather protection around an outdoor venue, particularly in relation to the reserved area, for use by people with disabilities.

Effective information and direction signage, site maps and clear wayfinding information will benefit all people attending your festival or event. Signage is one of the simplest and most effective elements that enhance accessibility. Simple, clear and well-located signage not only benefits people with a disability, it helps everyone attending, as well as assisting with the flow of people moving through an event area.

Use of a clear, easy to read site map near each entry point also supports everyone visiting your festival or event, while the subsequent placement of ARK temporary sign panels, or similar, can assist people to find the various facilities available. Directional signs are best located at decision-making points along pathways. Post or high mounted signs can still be seen in crowds, whereas low or A-frame signs can sometimes be difficult to see.

Quiet Spaces

It is a good idea to provide a quiet room or space for rest, especially if your event is going to be long and crowded. Some people with mental health issues or fatigue, and nursing mothers will particularly welcome this.

Other Access Supports

There are other access and safety supports you should consider to make sure you provide dignified and equitable access for all people attending a festival or event.

You should consider providing:

- assistive listening devices for stages
- a recharge point for electric wheelchairs and scooters
- step-free accessible drinking water units for people and assistance animals
- volunteer support to assist people with disabilities attending the festival or event
- emergency procedures that meet the access needs of all users
- effective lighting of pathways and facilities after dark
- a storage area for mobility aids not required once a person is on-site.

Hint: When organising your event consider providing interpreters to aid festival goers with a hearing impairment. When providing interpreters be sure to book early and if your event is long consider booking a number of interpreters.

Emergency Management

When planning your festival it is important that the emergency procedures in place assist people with a disability or older festival goers. You should ensure that:

- assembly points and exits are clearly marked and accessible
- there is sufficient staff available to ensure additional assistance can be provided if required for people with disabilities
- information is provided to all carers, AUSLAN interpreters and the Access Coordinator prior to the event with regards to their obligations in case of an emergency
- flashing lights are provided at all activities and stages to alert people who are deaf or hard of hearing of emergency situations.

Help!

For assistance with access requirements outside of this guide please contact the Community Inclusion Unit who may be able to offer advice or direct you to an appropriate consultant to assist. Please note this is a recommendation only and any charges incurred as a result of the use of a consultant are at the expense of festival and event organisers.

Contact Us

If you require more information about access and inclusion or advice on how to make your festival or event accessible to all please contact Nillumbik Shire Council's Community Inclusion Unit on 9433 3355 or email

Metro.Access@nillumbik.vic.gov.au.

Nillumbik Shire Council actively encourages you to plan and implement actions to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to participate in a festival or event.

Nillumbik Shire Council is National Relay Service (NRS) friendly. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment you can access the following services through NRS.

TTY Users: 133 677

Internet Relay Users: www.relayservice.com.au

Telephone: 1300 555 727 (if you use a regular handset but sometimes find it difficult for others to understand).

Once connected to the NRS, ask to be transferred to the Community Inclusion Unit on (03) 9433 3355.

Festival Checklist

Although not a complete list, this checklist will assist you in getting your planning underway and to ensure your event is accessible to all:

Is there a site map providing details of all accessible facilities including parking, food stalls, toilets and public transport options?

Does promotional material note the event is accessible?

Is there accessible and clearly marked parking close to the event entrance?

Is there a drop off point for people with disabilities?

Are there clear paths of travel around the festival site?

Is there signage including large print and tactile surfaces that is easy to locate?

Have accessible toilets been provided?

Is there a rest area with suitable protection from the elements?

Is there ramp access to the stage?

If the event is running during the evening has appropriate lighting be provided on walkways and at toilets?

Are there services such as food, barbeques, water and public telephones at wheelchair height?