

POSITION STATEMENT

TITLE: COMMUNICATION ACCESS – INFORMATION – TRANSPORT, SHOPS, OFFICES & SIMILAR FACILITIES

ISSUE:

Most transport conveyances and terminals and similar facilities, including shopping centres and offices, provide oral information to patrons. This may be by means of a sound amplification system or it may not be amplified at all.

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it clear that all people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment have the same right to access information as do people with hearing. Therefore, if a facility provides arrangements to amplify speech (such as enquiry counters or the like, and/or meeting rooms) and those arrangements use sounds to alert users to anything, then the facility should provide parallel arrangements that enable Deaf and hearing impaired people to receive the sounds and information. Failure to provide equitable access to such facilities means the person who is Deaf or has a hearing impairment is discriminated against. It is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of their hearing/deafness disability. If there are legislative provisions to provide particular information or sounds, such as fire alarms or emergency warnings/instructions, then that information/sounds must be accessible to all. The Building Code of Australia and various Australian Standards indicate the specific obligations in respect of various types of buildings and transport systems. Where there are no specific other legislative provisions, the DDA still applies and makes it illegal to discriminate against people with hearing/deafness disabilities on the basis of that disability.

It is possible to provide communication access through the provision of the right equipment. For example, it is possible to purchase teletext-enabled TV sets so that captions may be displayed and it is possible to purchase or hire hearing augmentation systems that parallel the functions of public address systems. Loops can be installed at counters and other places where no PA exists. It is possible to purchase smoke alarms and a range of other devices that attract attention via flashing lights or vibrations rather than via sounds. A range of affordable solutions exists. There is no valid reason why building operators cannot provide adequate communication access for all users who need it.

POSITION

That, regardless of whether or not there are particular legislative requirements:

1. All transport conveyances and terminals, shops, offices and other similar facilities should provide communication access facilities where necessary to ensure that all Deaf or hearing impaired users will be alerted to information or danger and to any



evacuation drill or system test within the premises at the same time as all other venue uses. Appropriate means for danger might be alarms with flashing lights and portable vibration pagers in offices. Portable vibration pagers should be used to call waiting clients/customers who are deaf or hearing-impaired.

2. All places should provide:

- Access to captioning on all television or video display sets.
- Functioning assistive listening systems (ALS), such as Induction loop (IL), Frequency Modulated (FM), or Infrared (IR) systems, to enable all participants who need ALS to clearly hear the information without reverberation or background noise, regardless of whether or not the source is amplified speech/sound, including at counters, in meeting rooms and auditoria, on televisions, etc.
- Real time captioning systems to enable all users who need such systems to follow what information is being provided.
- Visual warning indicators in all toilet areas and in common areas to supplement the emergency horns/speakers.

3. All building owners and operators should implement:

- Ongoing maintenance and checking of all communication access equipment and procedures.
- Ongoing training of staff about the facilities available, such that users can be correctly informed.
- Promote (including signage) the existence of installed communication access facilities to all users by website information, venue directory listings (and, ideally, other forms of promotion such as advertising, etc).
- Use the International Symbols for Deafness to identify:
 - The existence of hearing (communication) access.
 - The type of system available.
 - The areas covered by the system.

4. Whenever flashing lights are used to alert people, they must be visible from all parts of a venue.

COSTS OF POSITION

The cost of implementing this Position Statement is considered to be small.

RESEARCH BASIS

The availability of the range of communication access facilities referred to in the position statement is known.

APPROVED: Board - 14 September 2004.



REVIEWED: CEO – November 2004, Board - March 2005.

DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: No further review yet scheduled.