



3.3 Disabilities Clients Policy

The Healesville Living and Learning Centre abides by the Disability Discrimination Act of March 1993, so that all people from all walks of life and with all levels of ability feel welcome and able to participate in our programs.

Students requiring personal assistance to access or fully participate in the classes must provide their own aides and must not be left unattended by their aide in any class.

The C.E.O., in consultation with both the program coordinator and the tutor, will undertake any assessment regarding the successful integration of participants with special needs into a program.

Structural improvements to the building and surrounding approaches will be documented and taken into account whenever any maintenance or upgrading work is being carried out, or when finance can be made available for improvements.

Notification of special facilities should be clear and well advertised, but people with special needs should be integrated as well as possible without being made to feel "different".

Staff Training

The main way of assisting staff to deal appropriately with the patrons is to receive training and attend information sessions. Some people with disabilities have "hidden" illnesses, so you can't always know. However, what you can be prepared for are unfamiliar behaviours, both physical and verbal.

In addition it is important to understand such things as what a psychiatric condition means, how to communicate with someone who is deaf or has a hearing impairment, and what are the needs of various people with disabilities and what are their capabilities. As everyone is different let them tell you what help they require.

Ultimately, it is important to treat someone appropriately whether or not they have a disability. Audience members with disabilities should not be patronized by being dismissed or over-served. Training gives people information and experience to challenge misconceptions and prejudices.

Special considerations

Examples might be:

- If a public telephone is being considered in the HLLC then this should be touch dial, be near entrance and exits, and be low enough to be operated from a wheelchair;
- Handles on doors, taps etc that are lower levels and are easy for people with arthritis, for example to operate. Lever taps in toilets are ideal.
- Hand rails on all ramps.

Wheelchair places

People in wheelchairs should be able to choose from a variety of places, and be at the same level as other audience members, and be able to sit next to their companion. They should not be placed at the back, at the end of rows, or in aisles.

Seating holds

Consideration should be given to holding seats in the first few rows and as central as possible at Concerts; so that patrons who have some limited sight have the opportunity to view the event from the best position. (Their companion should be able to sit with them.) People with hearing problems should be informed of the hearing loop which may have been installed. It would be more effective

to allow such patrons to take their places earlier than the rest of the audience, especially in the case of general admission events.

Lighting levels

Effectiveness of lighting levels throughout the building should be considered, when any remodelling is done.

Signage & symbols

Having facilities such as toilets, kitchen, Office as well as rows and seats, well indicated by prominent signage and appropriate symbols, will help to over-come the difficulty in communication that may be experienced by patrons and front-of-house staff alike. Well indicated facilities also enable staff to do their work uninterrupted by patrons inquiring where they can find toilets, the kitchen etc.

Taped & Large print information

When printing brochures, programs, exhibition information we should consider producing some large print usually 1.8 - ie 80% of original type is usually sufficient.

Audio Description

Performances of plays and musicals can be audio-described. This is a service which is coordinated by experienced volunteers from the Association for the Blind and could be added to performances.

Parking bays, Drop & Pick-up points

The Centre does not have a designated disabled parking spot however if a disabled person requires easy access to the ramp the designated place is next to the access ramp at the front building. The Centre Manager will request the owner of the car to move their car. Disabled parking positions should be monitored so that they are kept free for disabled patrons. Cars parking in those spots must display disabled permits.

Foyer Seating

When purchasing new seating for the Foyer Reception area seating should be comfortable and easy to get out of; and all seating should have backs, and benches should have arm rests.

Lending scripts

HLLC performers should give the opportunity for people with hearing impairments to read scripts before the performances to enable them to follow the performance more easily.

Flooring / coverings

When recarpeting or replacing flooring at the HLLC the following should be noted "Congested" patterns can be very disorienting and inhibiting, for some people with visual impairments benefit from colour carpet or flooring that leads to all the main facilities.

Procedure

- Staff will notify the Chief Executive Officer or COM of any issues relating to improved access for people with disabilities.
- Improvements will be discussed at COM meetings.
- Students will receive a Student Information Booklet including details of equal access rights.
- Staff will at all times be considerate of members of the public who may require special consideration.

Where a student requires a carer, all effort will be taken to accommodate them.

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Student Grievance Policy.