

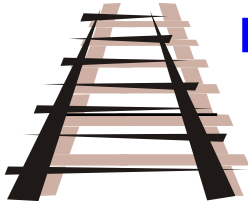
# Access News

## AAA

Access Audits Australia

disability access  advice  training

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## Low Floor Trams A Moving Example Of Access For All

The dream of a totally accessible public transport system may still be a long way off, but some significant steps are about to be taken to achieve this. Both Melbourne's tram companies are planning the introduction of low floor trams shortly.

As a member of a number of government advisory bodies for over a decade, I can truly say that this is welcome news. As a member of a recent delegation to France to see low floor trams in operation, I can assure you, it is a reality.

The major issue to be addressed now is not the trams themselves, but the infrastructure to ensure all passengers have a completely accessible path of travel – that is, from the front door, to their destination and return.

The introduction of low floor trams will be the clearest example ever, of how the whole community benefits when ease of use becomes the priority, in the design of any service offered to the public.

Although it may at first sound strange, I believe having a person who is elderly or has a disability, as a 'model' customer for any service, would ensure that a first class service is offered to all.

Achieving this need not be difficult. For example, the placement of a table and some chairs adjacent to a service counter allows the customer, if they choose, to sit while undertaking their transaction. This can produce a more friendly atmosphere and quite possibly result in increased purchases.

Most business people talk of return business as the best kind. As the old saying goes - *when you find a good thing stick to it* - and good service constantly rates higher than price in any survey of customer wants, particularly if the customer has a disability.

The other aspect of any change in service is how to judge its success. The criteria should not be, but often is, the number of passengers using wheelchairs who travel on the tram or people on crutches who attend to the service counter.

(continued on page 3)

**Access Audits Australia** provides the following range of services to support improved access to the built environment and to the provision of goods and services:

- t Disability access training
- t Access Audits of buildings and facilities
- t Disability Action Plans
- t Access Appraisals of outdoor environments, play spaces, publications and web sites
- t Project development advice

AAA is pleased to advise or assist you with any access issue. Contact

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## Awakenings Performing Arts Festival

The 6th Awakenings Performing Arts Festival will be held between 12 – 21 October 2001 in Horsham, Victoria. This is an inclusive community event held every October committed to improving access to the arts for people of all abilities.



This exciting ten day celebration of ability will take place with a diverse program to stimulate, excite and encourage participants who travel from metropolitan and rural Victoria and other states, as well as from New Zealand.

The performing arts program offers opportunities in dance, drama and music, complemented by a number of workshops in various aspects of performing arts skills. Visual arts and environmental sculpture, outdoor recreation activities, a proposed multimedia electronic arts expo, the Awakenings Ball, an Ecumenical Church service and associated community fringe events add value to the program.

There are also many social activities for participants, group coordinators and carers to network or just have fun. Last year 540 registrations were received with more expected this year. All are welcome, new performers as well as those with experience are encouraged to go and join in the fun!!

Contact: Awakenings Performing Arts Festival  
PO Box 442 Horsham 3402 Phone: 03 5362 4006/ 03 5382 6789  
Email: [wimnet@netconnect.com.au](mailto:wimnet@netconnect.com.au)  
Web page: <http://awakenings.horsham.net.au>

## Hearing aids and mobile phones

Telstra, Optus and Vodafone have each launched innovative new schemes to address problems faced by people who use hearing aids in accessing their mobile phone networks. This follows the successful conciliation of complaints lodged under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Many hearing aid users cannot access GSM mobile phones because of electromagnetic interference between their hearing aid and mobile phones. They have experienced accessibility problems since the closure of the largely accessible analogue network.

The schemes offer free or reduced cost accessories to facilitate access to the GSM mobile network, or the opportunity to swap to the CDMA technology in some circumstances. This is part of the conciliation of complaints lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, by representatives of people with hearing impairment, represented by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

## All About Access

Access Audits Australia is presenting a series of Access Seminars to provide detailed information, on a range of access issues. These will be held at the Veneto Club in Bulleen Road, Bulleen, which can be conveniently accessed from the Eastern Freeway.

<b>Seminar 2</b>	<b>Governance / Local Laws</b>	Friday 6 July 2001	9.30am – 12.00pm
<b>Seminar 3</b>	<b>Communication / Information Services</b>	Friday 3 August 2001	9.30am – 12.00pm
<b>Seminar 4</b>	<b>Assets, Infrastructure and Outdoor Spaces</b>	Friday 14 September 2001	9.30am – 12.00pm
<b>Seminar 5</b>	<b>Physical and Sensory Impairment</b>	Friday 5 October 2001	9.30am – 12.30pm

Contact **Access Audits Australia**

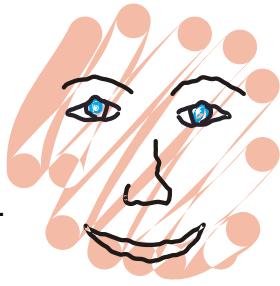
to reserve your place - Telephone 03 9431 3472 Fax 03 9431 3046 or [AAA@hyp.com.au](mailto:AAA@hyp.com.au)

## Watching Words

Jeanette Davide (her name has been changed to protect her) has extraordinary abilities.

Whilst she is totally deaf she can lip-read with amazing accuracy, some say to the point of being near perfect. She can lip read a person from most angles, even if they have a beard, whether they are facing her or even if she can only see the side of their mouth. She has even been known to identify accents through the way a person moves their mouth when pronouncing certain words.

Her skills are eagerly sought after by the police who use her to interpret conversations in surveillance situations. She can work from covertly shot video film or from closed circuit television where no sound track is available. Whilst many of the conversations she interprets are sometimes boring, Jeanette has been a key witness in many court cases involving espionage, drug dealers and people planning murder.



It is thought that her extraordinary skills developed due to the fact that she had already learnt spoken English before she became profoundly deaf, at around the age of four. Her parents encouraged her independence so that she had to rely on being able to lip read to be able to get on with her life. Jeanette was knocked over by a truck when she was 17 years old which then made her completely deaf.

However, she completed her studies, went onto Oxford to read English then worked as a journalist, before gaining qualifications as a social worker.

Jeanette is the only lip-reader accredited as an expert witness in Britain, where her work for the police has helped develop her international reputation. She has subsequently worked in Europe and the United States.

She is highly energetic and enthusiastic and has many legal cases pending, whilst caring for her two children and her six foster children.

## Low Floor Trams

*(continued from page 1)*

It should be the number of people who use the service, the ease of its use by both the staff and the customer and the reduction in the number of complaints made.

Melbourne's Tram Operators have one opportunity to get it right in terms of a more accessible service. If they do, as I am confident they will, it will be a benefit for them as well as all of their customers, including those who have a disability now or in the future.

These very large and constantly moving examples of improved accessibility will hopefully be a catalyst for many other service providers to realise that "good access really is good business".

*Anthony Nichols.*

Cardinia Shire Council is setting its sights on becoming a leader in access by applying a broad organisational approach to disability access issues.



Council's Asset Management and Engineering department recognised the roll-over kerb and channel profile used on residential streets were not 'Access for All' compliant. These potentially created difficulties for residents including parents with prams and people with a disability, in particular those using wheelchairs and residents with vision impairment.

Cardinia stands behind its commitment to the philosophy of 'Access to All' and now requires laybacks in the kerb & channel of all vehicular crossings to ensure access for all provision to all new residential lots.

## Did you know ?

- That the site of the first lawsuit taken for an inaccessible building, under the US ADA legislation, was the Observation Deck of the Empire State Building, in New York.
- That you cannot save your sight, as the brain sees, not the eye which acts like a camera and sends the messages to the brain.
- That Maribyrnong City Council received a \$500 bonus from the Victorian Minister for Community Services, for being the first council to respond to her challenge to use a sign language interpreter at a Council meeting, when recently launching their Disability Action Plan.
- That the US Supreme Court has ruled that Casey Martin, a professional golfer with a disability, has a legal right to ride in a golf buggy between shots at PGA Tour events. This ruling may have implications for other professional sports.
- That Melbourne City Council has recently launched a "Kerbside Cafe Code" to ensure outdoor dining fits in with the look and activities of an area. This code defines a "Continuous Path of Travel" along building lines to assist all users, including people with disabilities.

## Hearing Augmentation Systems

Various types of hearing augmentation systems are now available for use in public venues to assist people with hearing impairments. Choices include Audio Induction Loops, Infra Red transmission systems or FM (wireless) systems.

Each system has certain advantages. The audio-frequency induction loop system can be directly received by people using hearing aids fitted with a magnetic induction coil, ("T" switch), which is standard in many hearing aids and optional in most others.

The audio loop is essentially a loop of wire encircling the seating area with a signal fed into the system from a special loop amplifier, which is in turn connected to the venues PA system. A hearing aid wearer sitting within this loop will pick up the signal from the sound system free of the effects of room acoustics and background noise. The speaker's voice appears right next to that person.

In venues where there are multiple sites, e.g. theatres, council offices, conference rooms, the loop may not be the preferred solution. The walls of the room do not confine the signal from a loop, "overspill" can cause reception problems in adjacent rooms or on adjacent floors and privacy may also be a consideration.



In these cases FM (wireless) or Infra Red systems can be considered. FM is available in several different frequencies (can also be used for foreign language translation) and Infra Red is confined to the room, therefore ensuring privacy. FM and Infra Red are very portable, easy to set up and may cater for several locations within a building, which may otherwise require multiple loop installations.

Information and equipment available from Word of Mouth Technology – Contact Bob Willis  
Telephone 03 9729 9974  
TTY 03 9729 9969  
Fax 03 9729 8863

Information contained in **Access News** is intended to highlight the importance of improving access for every person.

*Disclaimer:* Every effort has been made to ensure information contained in this newsletter is accurate. AAA does not accept any responsibility for action taken as a result of any advice or information contained herein.