

ACCESS

Providing inclusive and appropriate access to collections, exhibitions and resources is one of the primary goals of a museum or gallery. It is quite common for organisations to focus on the physical aspects of access- getting into and moving around the building and not realise how much broader barriers to access can be. Improving access across a broad range of issues, will create a more welcoming environment and lead to greater and more diverse visitation. Barriers to access can be divided into the following broad categories:

- **Physical and sensory-** Considerations include the needs of those using wheelchairs, parents with prams, elderly and frail. The major sensory issues are those related to visual and hearing impairment and should consider not simply the size of print or the level of sounds but also visual or acoustic “overload”
- **Cultural-** An awareness of the needs and sensitivities of the diverse cultural groups which make up our communities can not only improve the experience of visitors but will lead to more inclusive approaches to collecting and exhibiting
- **Social-** Museums and galleries can become unwelcoming and irrelevant to many groups in the community if they ignore the needs of those outside the financial, educational or age brackets identified as the “typical visitor”. The choice of exhibition topic, the types of items collected and the manner of working is crucial to including all groups as potential visitors.
- **Intellectual-** Complicated language and design used on labels and signage can prevent people with intellectual disabilities from engaging with a museum or gallery. Providing a range of ways that visitors can engage with your exhibitions will satisfy their varied needs.
- **Attitudinal-** Providing a welcoming and safe environment is a key component to developing a continued engagement with the community and should include not only the people and facilities at the reception area and in exhibitions but approaches to donors, researchers and others who engage with your organisation.
- **Financial-** While organisations need an income in order to function, developing mechanisms for equitable charges for entry and program attendance can broaden the type of visitor coming to your organisation.