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**Good access makes good business sense**

One in five people have a disability. If you're a business owner that is 20 percent of potential customers you may be failing to accommodate.

Strathbogie, along with Alpine, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Benalla, Wangaratta, Mitchell, Indigo, Moira, Greater Shepparton and Towong Shire Councils, have partnered with Nexus Primary Health to create the Good Access = Good Business program.

What is good access? It is about removing physical or social barriers that prevent customers from finding your business, moving around easily and receiving good service.

The program takes businesses through a checklist to identify changes that can be made to their facilities to improve accessibility for people living with a disability.

Improving access not only allows businesses to meet their legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), but it makes good business sense.

Dan Capobianco, local photographer and co-owner of Mister+Lady, developed the logo design for the program and has since evaluated his business' accessibility.

"This program isn't about catching you out on what you aren't doing, it's about recognising and celebrating what you are doing and finding out how you can do more," he said.

After completing the accessibility checklist, Dan has arranged to do communication access training to better accommodate customers with communication disabilities.

Dan encourages his fellow business owners to get involved.

"It's about being forward-thinking and considering all people in the community," he explained.

Strathbogie Shire Mayor Amanda McClaren said improving accessibility is beneficial for everyone.

"This program assists all members of the public to be able to access the goods and services they require and supports our local businesses to attract more customers," Cr McClaren explained.

If you are a local business owner and would like to learn more about how you can improve your accessibility, please contact Rural Access Officer Kathryn Foster on 0407 839 323 or email [kathryn.foster@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:kathryn.foster@shepparton.vic.gov.au).

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