

## Douglas sets sights on inclusive tourism market

A MOVE to tap into a growing multi-billion-dollar domestic visitor market is underway in the Douglas Shire.

Douglas Shire Council and Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD) are partnering to position the region at the forefront of accessible and inclusive tourism ahead of the launch of the Spinal Life Australia app tomorrow.

The app is designed to empower users with a physical disability to make informed choices about where they visit and interact with in their community by easily identifying which destinations and experiences are and are not accessible

TPDD Chief Executive Tara Bennett said Australia's accessible tourism market is worth about \$8 billion, with a forecast 25% growth expected over the next 30 years.

"With spectacular scenery and amazing local businesses, we have a really promising opportunity for our region to become a leader in inclusive and accessible tourism," she said.

"Research shows almost 80% of the 4.2 million Australians with a disability are active travellers who like to have fun and participate in a variety of recreational activities.

"We want to encourage the local tourism industry to check they are on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse and have updated their product information for accessible travel categories so they are visible on the just launched Spinal Life Australia app. This endorsement will encourage travellers to choose accessible experiences when they visit."

About 1 in 3 customers with a disability have ceased a transaction because they are not treated respectfully or fairly.

After struggling to access public spaces and facilities, Port Douglas locals, Frieda and Josephine, have been auditing public facilities for people with limited mobility and have approached Council with recommendations to improve accessibility to public spaces.

Council is currently forming an action group to help Council work alongside the community to improve access, participation and inclusion of seniors and people with a disability.

Douglas Shire Mayor Michael Kerr said improving the region's accessibility would also make it more appealing to the elderly.

"Not only do we have an opportunity to become champions for greater equality, but by improving our accessibility we can also open Douglas Shire up to a wider audience and sustain our economy post-COVID," he said.

“The local action group is a great way for Council staff to work directly with the community and pin-point key areas for improvement.”

If you are interested in being involved in the action group, please forward your details to [enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au)

**ABOUT THE SPINAL LIFE APP:**

The app is designed to empower users with a physical disability to make informed choices about where they visit and interact with in their community by easily identifying which destinations are and are not accessible.

In addition to using existing venue-submitted data from the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, app users can leave their own reviews and share their experiences with other users.

You can use the app to search for different destination types in your region, such as cafes and restaurants, activities, attractions, parks, health facilities, bars and more!

Each listed destination will have an accessibility rating based on self-submitted information from the venue as well as ratings from other app users in the community.

By using the app, users with physical disability can tell at a glance which destinations they can feel confident visiting and which destinations are not as accommodating for visitors with disability.

The app is currently in the beta testing phase and we look forward to providing more information on the app and projected launch dates as it develops – watch this space!

If you have any questions about the app, please contact [accessibleaustralia@spinal.com.au](mailto:accessibleaustralia@spinal.com.au)