

Bellingen Community Markets

Disability Action Plan

For completion by June 2005

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Introduction

There are currently a number of barriers to equal access by people with a disability at events run by Bellinghen Community Markets Association including at Bellinghen Community Markets at Bellinghen Park. Unsafe terrain at Bellinghen Park, with protruding tree roots makes mobility hazardous for many people including children, old people, anyone with a mobility impairment and wheel chair users. Lack of accessible facilities, such as sanitary facilities, at most events, compromise accessibility for people with a disability.

It is illegal in Australia, under the Disability Discrimination Act to discriminate against a person with a disability in the provision of goods and services. It is a requirement that equal and dignified access to all goods and services for people with a disability must be provided. In the case of the BCMA this would involve providing a safe, level, continuous path of travel throughout the Markets with access to all services and facilities including car parking, toilets and information.

In order that access to BCMA run events be equal and dignified for people with a disability it would be necessary to provide parking adjacent to the venue, to provide accessible unisex toilet facilities and a path surface that is traversable by a person with a mobility impairment. At venues outside Bellinghen Park these issues can be resolved with management strategies including layout of stalls and hire of facilities. BCMA would not incur additional costs in these situations as any additional cost would be passed on.

A meeting with Shire Council and Bellinghen Rugby League Football Club (BRLFC) representatives by the BCMA President, Secretary and Treasurer has resulted in an agreement between the BRLFC, BCMA and Bellinghen Shire Council to share the cost of much of the work required by the Disability Action Plan at Bellinghen Park, the venue of the monthly Bellinghen Markets, with the top priority being to repair paths and especially to deal with the problem of exposed tree roots. BCMA has provided \$2,000 to a fund which with other funding and contributions amounts to \$21,000.

Following these meetings a proposal was put to the BCMA Board to prepare a Disability Action Plan created under section 64 of the Disability Discrimination Act, for the Bellinghen Community Markets Association. The Disability Action Plan would be lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and would cover Bellinghen Park as well as any other events run by BCMA.

Overview of the Core Business and Functions of the BCMA

Vision

Bellinghen Community Markets Association (BCMA) is a community based organisation that exists for the benefit of the people of the Bellinghen Shire. We run a monthly market that provides a focal point for the Bellinghen community to meet and buy and sell their products and produce in a vibrant, positive atmosphere. It is a social, creative and interactive place that encourages quality local products including organic produce.

the community by way of donations, public works and contributions to non profit groups. Where it is to the benefit of Bellinghen Shire we will also accept appropriate opportunities to organise markets type events, alone and in conjunction with other organisations

Data Profile

Service Users Profile

BCMA events are attended by up to three hundred stall holders and their staff and up to one thousand five hundred public at a time. In general they represent a wide cross section of the population in terms of age, disability and need for accessible features.

Staff Profile

BCMA employs a Manager who works 50 hours per month and who has responsibility for the day to day operation of the Markets, a Book keeper who works 10 hours a month and 11 staff who work 10 hours on Markets day as well as at events when needed.. Currently none of the staff have mobility impairments although some staff have identified disabilities.

Disability Action Plan Methodology

Policy Review and Recommendations.

A review of all BCMA policy was undertaken. Most policy that is used by the Board and Manager is by verbal agreement. The organisation is actively developing written policies having recently created a vision and mission statement. This Disability Action Plan would itself constitute a BCMA policy about disability access and would also contain a commitment to developing further written policy that ensures provision of accessible premises, facilities and services.

Access Audit of Bellinghen Park and the BCMA Office

An inspection of Bellinghen Park, other venues used by BCMA and the BCMA office was undertaken by a qualified Disability Access Consultant.

Access Audit of Services and Information

An audit of accessibility of the services and information provided by BCMA was undertaken. The Manager was interviewed regarding work practices and methods of providing information were reviewed. Information provided by the BCMA was looked at and such criteria as variety of media used and alternative format for printed information.

Access audit of employment practices

Employment practices used by the BCMA were reviewed. There is no written EEO or affirmative action policy and no deliberate attempt to employ people with a disability. Employment criteria are not excluding of people with a disability and the immediate past Manager was a person with an identified disability.

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Consultation with Stakeholder

A meeting was held with the President of the Bellingen Shire Council Disability Access Committee and the Markets Secretary who is an accredited Disability Access Consultant. The BCMA President, Secretary and Treasurer also met with representatives of the Bellingen RLFC and Bellingen Shire Council. Engineering Department. Several major issues were raised and identified as the major barriers to equal and dignified access by people with a disability.

The staff and stall holders were informed of the Disability Action Plan through the Markets Newsletters and they were given the opportunity to comment on it. A draft copy was made available at the Markets information tent.

Consultation with Local Disability Group

The draft Disability Action Plan was made available to Bellingen Shire Disability Access Advisory Committee and they were given the opportunity to comment on it.

Establish Time Frame for Each Strategy.

After the strategies were put in order a time frame for each strategy was developed. This was partly based on the agreements with the Bellingen Shire Council and Bellingen Rugby League Football Club.

Establish Responsibility for Strategies.

The Manager and the Executive of the Board of the BCMA are responsible for implementing strategies and their performance will be reviewed by the BCMA when the Disability Action Plan is reviewed after the AGM each year.

Establish Performance Indicators for Strategies.

Performance indicators have been established for each strategy to make sure the work has been done properly and the barrier to access has been removed.

Communication of Action Plan

To Staff

Staff will be given access to a copy of the Disability Action Plan and other policies developed by the BCMA and information about the Disability Action Plan will be provided in the Markets Newsletter. The Manager will inform staff about changes to work practice in line with the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.

To the Community

The plan has been sent to the main disability organisations in this area and has been lodged with HREOC It will be available on the HREOC web page