

Notes to the hotel to improve their accessibility

I always mentally take notes (I am unable to write notes – my handwriting looks like I have used my left foot!), when I get home I write to the manager and I would have to say that 100% of my letters have been taken in the spirit that they were meant.

One particular hotel in Darwin, I was asked by front desk staff if I had any issues, I said, “how long have you got?”!! So I asked for the manager’s card and wrote a letter. I gave an extensive list to make their accessible room and the hotel generally usable;

- *Could you please get housekeeping to lower the shower rose? It had been pushed up to its highest and even when you are sitting in the shower chair one can’t reach it.*
- *The shelf for toiletries was also too high.*
- *The taps for operating the shower water should be a flick mixer and lower.*
- *The doorways into the bedroom and bathroom need to be wider – a minimum width of 900mm.*
- *The kitchen sink needs a dish draining/drying area.*
- *The air-conditioner had no thermostat or fan control – it was either ON full blast or OFF! It would keep electricity costs down if the air-conditioner could be controlled by a thermostat.*
- *The curtains need long ‘flick sticks’ for ease of opening and closing. The curtain in the living area should be one curtain not two as the curtain on the RHS (facing the window) would continually blow outside and get ruined. Also when one would like to access the outside courtyard the curtain would get caught on the chair and I could envisage the curtain being pulled down.*
- *Could you also ask housekeeping NOT to wind the telephone receiver cable around the telephone – it looks neat and tidy but when one answers it from a wheelchair the telephone ends up on the floor.*
- *The entry door to the room was very heavy – when I unlocked the door to enter the room, the door was so heavy it pushed me*

backwards and locked again! It was equally tricky trying to leave the room. Luckily for me at most times I had somebody with me.

- *The reception counter is too high – I was ignored on more than one occasion (for up to 10 minutes) because staff could not see me. You should have a lower section of reception counter so people like myself can sign any authorisation documents.*
- *The exit doors at the rear of the hotel are extremely awkward to manage even with a second person being there to help. I could envisage the doors breaking when they hit my wheelchair – ideally self opening and closing doors would be ideal.*
- *The hotel could purchase a ‘self propelled’ shower chair for under \$1000 and hire it out per night for people with disability – it would pay for itself in no time and it could be an extra service the hotel could offer.*
- *The print on your business card is too small and faint making it very difficult to read.*

This report was favourably received, the hotel is going to rectify all my suggestions and have invited me back as their guest August 2014 to test drive the changes! This was one of my more successful outcomes.

The room was just manageable if the person with a disability had the company of a second person - which is not ideal when you are encouraging people to be independent.

Since writing that letter I have approached other major chain hotels and have written similar reports with rewarding outcomes. Each hotel I contacted told me that no-one else had ever complained.

Marginalised people don't complain (many are unable to complain) therefore the hotel keeps making the same mistakes! I include people with disability, the aged and parents with young/small children as marginalised people. Being marginalised is not for the faint hearted!

With the amount of travelling I do now (after being told that I would never travel again), I'm almost at the stage where I'll start naming and shaming on such avenues available now like Facebook, Twitter or having a blog.

One would think that managers of accommodation, airlines, eateries etc are aware of these forms of communication and would train their staff accordingly.

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