

Information Paper

Understanding Neurodivergence and the Experience of Neurodivergent Travellers

Neurodivergent people bring individual strengths, qualities, and expertise to the community around them. They often experience difficulties and barriers in their everyday lives, particularly if they are not understood or respected, or if the right supports and environments are not available to them.

Terminology

Neurodiversity: The natural variation and differences in human brains. Neurodiversity recognises that there is no one "right" or "normal" way to think, learn, or experience the world.

Neurodivergent: An umbrella term that refers to people who think, learn, process information, or experience the world in different ways. Autism is one example of neurodivergence.

Neurotypical: People who have a brain or cognitive style (i.e. how they think, learn, etc.) that is consistent with the societal majority.

To achieve genuine inclusion, we must adopt an inclusive design approach that embraces and accommodates the diversity of human experiences.

Inclusive design recognises difference, offers flexibility, and creates environments where everyone is welcome and feels comfortable being themselves. For accommodation providers, this means first understanding neurodivergence and how it impacts on travel and then working to foster safe, inclusive, and empowering experiences for every guest at every step of their journey.

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Common barriers & challenges faced by neurodivergent travellers:

Sensory Experiences:

- Lack of information provided ahead of time about different aspects of the environment (e.g. sensory maps, indicating which rooms are quieter/noisier, information about busier/louder times, etc.)
- Lack of identification/access to retreat spaces.
- Lack of flexibility or control over sensory elements during stay (e.g. room temperature, bedding, lighting, etc.)

Communication Differences:

- Different communication preferences not recognised or honoured.
- Lack of explicit information about different communication options.
- Differences in communication styles leading to breakdowns or misunderstandings.
- Lack of appropriate supports and alternatives in place for people who may be non-speaking, overwhelmed, from a different linguistic background, etc.

Lack of Staff Awareness or Understanding of Neurodivergence:

- Feeling misunderstood or unsupported.
- Fear of judgment.
- Feeling pressured to disclose a diagnosis or neurodivergence in order to access support.

Lack of Predictability:

- Not sure what to expect during the guest journey.
- Limited/no information about the sensory environment.
- Limited/no information about different types of support and options available.
- Mismatches between online information and that provided at the accommodation (i.e. not updated or changes not communicated).

Unclear or Confusing Systems and Processes for:

- Navigating the online booking system.
- Check-in and check-out procedures.
- Arrival and parking processes.
- How to access onsite activities or services.
- How to request additional support.

Scan QR code for more AccommodateUs Toolkit resources designed to reduce barriers and create inclusive venues.

Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:

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