

TOURISM AUSTRALIA

Accessible STORYTELLERS



RIVERSIDE RESORT URUNGA

Rebecca Beaton

Midway between Nambucca Heads and Coffs Harbour on the northern New South Wales coast, Riverside Resort Urunga sits at the junction of the Kalang and Bellinger Rivers. Owned by not-for-profit Community Sporting & Workers Clubs (FCSWC), the resort has long been a leader, offering accessible accommodation, services, and facilities, along with staff who are trained in accessibility. The resort has picked up a variety of awards, such as the Excellence in Accessible Tourism Award in NSW and Regional Tourism Awards three times.

When Rebecca Beaton took on the Resort Manager role almost ten years ago, the resort had three wheelchair accessible self-contained apartments, which has since expanded to five.

Accessibility has grown to become an integral part of the business, with a core commitment to create an inclusive environment by providing suitable accommodation for all guests, regardless of their abilities or individual needs.

'When I started, I was blown away with the high standard of accommodation of wheelchair accessible apartments, which have always been highly sought after. After attending accessibility workshops facilitated by Melissa James of CanGoEverywhere.com.au through the Bellingen Shire, we engaged Melissa to do an accessibility audit,' Rebecca said.

The result was a comprehensive inclusion of facilities and services to ensure that all guests are comfortable

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and have the best experience possible. Rebecca says that she couldn't imagine going on holidays and having one of her children excluded or not being able to participate and have fun with the other kids.

'Everyone's needs are different, and everyone should feel accepted and included,' she said.

'Our accessible accommodation caters for guests in wheelchairs, the elderly, families with prams, guests with injuries, and sometimes just the golf clubs that guests don't want to lug up the stairs.'

In addition to accessible apartments there are 21 ground floor apartments, making a suitable adjoining option for carers, friends or family. Other facilities include a Dolphin mobility chair lift at the swimming pool, along with ramp access, handrails and toilets and showers with wheelchair access nearby. BBQ areas located poolside or riverside both have picnic tables which accommodate wheelchairs and wide, level paths allow for ease of movement for wheelchairs, prams and mobility scooters. Mobility aids such as bed lifts, scooters, wheelchair and bathroom aids

can be hired in advance and delivered to guest accommodation.


The resort's website has a detailed Accessibility section with information and images showing spaces in apartments and public areas. Their blog features articles about travelling with dementia and autism.

'I feel so proud to work for such a fantastic organisation which goes over and above to cater to each guests' individual needs,' Rebecca said. 'We all have different abilities and some just need more support than others. We want to make sure that families, whether young or old, have the facilities to have a great holiday and create memories to last a lifetime.'

Bellingen Shire has developed an Inclusive Tourism Strategy as part of their commitment towards an accessible and all-inclusive community. The shire runs workshops to promote accessibility across the region, which has developed a reputation for wide-ranging and innovative inclusivity. A comprehensive Mobility Map details parking spaces, public toilets - including those which can be accessed after hours through a Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK)

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– along with services like banks, post offices and public transport which have full accessibility. Recreational spaces such as the Lido Saltwater Pool, Urunga Boardwalk, the Wetlands Boardwalk and the waterfront gardens at Mylestom all have accessible pathways and bathrooms nearby. Beach wheelchair hire is available to access the Lido boardwalk and foreshore.

'Urunga is an inclusive tourism destination which has two beautiful boardwalks, one that stretches 1km over a tidal lagoon all the way to where the mouth of the river meets the sea. Where else in the world can you go all the way to the mouth of a river in a wheelchair?' said Rebecca. 



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