

Media Release

Need a public toilet? Find one using a way-finding tool

You're in a large shopping centre, passing by a water feature on display. And that's when it hits you. You need to go – now! But where are the toilets?

Perhaps you look for the signs, ask someone, or just wander around in the hope you'll bump into them.

But what if you're blind, deaf, or sensory impaired? And you really need to go now. What can you do?

A new CRC for **Construction Innovation** project is researching the development of a tool to help people successfully navigate buildings and large public spaces - to find toilets, shops, lifts, stairs, exits – anything to help them find their way.

Currently there is limited technology to help the sensory impaired navigate commercial buildings and public spaces. Sporting venues, university campuses and public squares are usually crowded and noisy and can undermine people's capacities to independently and confidently use public resources.

The beauty of the way-finding tool is that it will provide essential navigational information using GPS and sophisticated software, positioning a person's location onto a digital map. This information, including instructions for what direction to go in next, can be read, heard, or felt via vibrations.

The tool will greatly assist people who have vision or hearing impairments, print disabilities, illiteracy or English as a second language to assist them in accessing large public spaces.

Construction Innovation's project will research the development of the tool for testing and implementation at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, assisting people to access this monumental event, perhaps for the first time.

Once developed, the way-finding device could be used by the construction industry to make premises accessible to people with a sensory or print disability. The same technology could also be used at a variety of public access sites, to assist tourists and international visitors, and may be useful as a device for providing early warning and hazard information.

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The Cooperative Research Centre for **Construction Innovation** is a collaboration involving 19 industry, government and research partners and has been made possible through a \$14 million Federal Government grant through the CRC Program complemented by \$50 million of cash and in-kind support from industry, research and other government partners. For more information, please visit our website www.construction-innovation.info

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