

Accessible information for all

Victorian Government standards for making information easy to read and understand

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If you would like this information in an accessible format such as large print or audio:

Telephone [1300 366 356](tel:1300366356)

Email advertising@dpc.vic.gov.au.

This document is available as a PDF on our website www.vic.gov.au/accessibility-guidelines-government-communications.

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Why accessible communications?

This document provides standards to help government communicators build accessibility into all communication activities across all channels and formats.

Accessible communication ensures everyone has the same access and opportunity to read publications, use websites, attend events, respond in emergency situations and find out about government policies and programs.

To do this well, you need to be aware of the diverse range of needs in the community and how to plan your communications with accessibility in mind.

Equal opportunity

There are over 1 million people living with a disability in Victoria; that's around 20 per cent of the population.

People can have a disability from birth, disease, illness or accident. Disabilities can also be temporary. Many of us will develop impairments as we age.

In these guidelines 'people with a disability' refers to people who have an impairment that affects their physical, mental, intellectual or sensory functions. This may mean they encounter barriers to accessing information.

You should also consider the communication needs of people:

- recovering from accidents or illness
- with chronic health issues
- who are ageing
- with English as a second language or who have low literacy.

It is both a legal obligation and a human right for people with disabilities to be able to access information, services and opportunities offered through government programs.

Legislation and policy priorities

Legislation at both state and commonwealth levels protects the rights of people with disabilities:

- the ***Disability Discrimination Act 1992*** (Cth)
- the ***Disability Act 2006*** (Vic)
- the ***Equal Opportunity Act 2010*** (Vic)
- the ***Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*** (Vic)

The State Disability Plan 2017–2020 **Absolutely Everyone** commits every Victorian Government department to making mainstream systems more responsive to people with a disability, their families and carers.

Accessibility principles

Plan upfront for alternative formats

You should always consider accessibility when planning your communications.

Your communications should be easy to understand and available in alternative formats.

Involve disabled people from your audience in developing and reviewing a strategy for producing information in accessible formats. They will know their needs and could help you find the most effective ways of meeting them. You can also approach disability organisations for advice.

Reduce the need for accessible format versions

Keep it simple:

- write in plain English to Grade 8 level or below
- make it as concise as possible
- use headings to 'signpost' the information
- use short paragraphs
- design it to be as legible as possible, for example using a minimum 14-point text size

If your initial document follows these principles it will already be accessible to a greater number of people without needing to create an additional version, thus saving time and money.

Equitable use

This principle promotes you to think about users with different abilities. For example, avoid segregating or stigmatising users who may be colour blind by using strong colour contrast.

Consider font size and type

Maximise legibility of essential information.

Careful with colour

Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.

Format with care

Allow for flexibility – the flexibility in use principle encourages flexible, adaptable and/or customisable design. It lets the users choose how they will accomplish a task. When you provide choices for your users, they will feel more free and more in control of their experience with your information.

Alternative formats for a range of abilities

- **Large print** – typically a minimum 16-point font size is used, but this can be customised to suit individual requests.
- **Audio** – audio file, CD or podcast. This format is most useful if the information can be read from beginning to end without needing to refer to other parts of the document.
- **Braille** – a tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired. When preparing information to be converted to braille, keep the document layout as simple as possible for easier transcription.
- **Easy English** – is a simplified form of plain English that is used for written information. Easy English is helpful for people with a cognitive or intellectual disability or low English language literacy levels.
- **AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language) interpreting, videos with captions, and/or audio description.**

For targeted communication, you should determine the particular needs of your audience and the most effective method to reach them.

Clear and inclusive language

The language we use is important, for both audience reach and ensuring people with a disability are included and represented in a positive way. The key considerations are:

- always put the person first, not the disability
- use plain English (everyday words and short, concise sentences) or Easy English (conveying information using pictures and short sentences) to help convey your message.

Digital accessibility

Accessibility requirements for websites are mandated under government policy, legislation, and through whole-of-government commitments.

The Australian Government has endorsed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 for all government websites.

At a minimum, all Victorian Government websites are required to conform with the Level AA WCAG 2.1 standard.

Where the audience is primarily people with disability, it's required that government websites meet the Level AAA (Triple A) standards, which are the highest accessibility standards.

See [Make your content accessible](#) for more information on digital accessibility.

Publications

All policy statements, strategies, reports or documents should be produced in accessible formats.

Other documents should be available in accessible formats upon request.

Accessibility statement

An accessibility statement provides standard and consistent wording to inform those with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

Publications, event invitations and websites should include an accessibility statement offering support.

Avoid naming an individual as a contact point. Instead try to use URLs, email addresses and phone numbers that will remain current for the life of the document or website.

This is an example of an accessibility tag for publications, which you can include in your documents or publications:

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format such as large print or audio, please telephone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

This document can also be found in (.....e.g. HTML, PDF or Word) formats on our website (www.department.vic.gov.au).

Below is an example of accessibility tag for events, which may be included in your event invitations:

We aim to ensure that people have equal access to public events.

If you need alternative formats or other reasonable adjustments, please contact (name of person) on (telephone number) or via email: (email address here) with your request by close of business on (deadline) so that arrangements, where possible, can be made.

PDF accessibility

HTML should be the default format for all government information.

If there is a strong user need to provide a PDF (for example for printing) the document must still be accessible.

You should still make sure the PDF content is available in another format such as HTML.

PDFs are not accessible on mobile devices

On mobile devices, PDFs do not comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 due to a lack of support for document structure.

People can only use assistive technologies to read PDFs if they are using a desktop or laptop device.

PDFs are also difficult for many users to access on smaller screens as they don't resize and reformat to fit the screen (reflow).

People can also be aware of how much data they use – especially on mobile devices. Downloading large files (over 1MB) can be difficult especially in regional and remote places.

Users may simply choose not to open a PDF and this means information is hidden.

Structure PDFs logically

To make a PDF accessible you must make sure structural elements such as headings are marked-up so that a screen reader can follow the logical order of the content. This is called the structural hierarchy.

Guidance on how to structure PDFs:

- PDF Techniques for WCAG 2.0 — W3C
- General Techniques for WCAG 2.0 — W3C
- Accessibility for Adobe Acrobat — Adobe
- Accessibility for Adobe InDesign — Adobe

Make it clear you're linking to a PDF file

Use the link to tell your users that they are downloading a PDF and how big it is.

Offer an alternative format to PDF

Provide a contact (an email address) so users can request the information in a different format.

If you are relying on PDF as the accessible format, then the document needs a HTML landing page. The landing page should contain an overview of the document and outcomes, as relevant.

Checklist: preparing accessible publications

The following is a guide on things to consider when preparing Word documents and PDF files – both printed and digital versions to be uploaded online.

Topics and questions	Yes	No
In printed material:		
Minimum type size of 12 point or 16 point is recommended for people with a visual impairment.		
Brand Vic font or plain fonts used, such as Arial. (These are often described as 'sans serif' - without small curls or decorative features.)		
No blocks of text written in capital letters – information is easier to read if it is written using a mix of upper and lower case.		
Lots of white space and a simple layout.		
Bold text used for emphasis rather than underlining or italics.		
Margins justified on the left-hand side and right-hand margin left unjustified.		

Topics and questions	Yes	No
In printed material:		
Contrasting colours used to increase readability – for example, black text on a white background is preferable.		
No text placed over pictures, photos or other images, as this makes the text hard to read.		
When providing a link to a PDF document, also provide an alternative accessible format such as Word or HTML. Or make the PDF accessible (LINK).		
Limit the use of tables and try to use bullet points where possible, for better visibility and for people with low literacy. Where tables are used, design the content so that it is suitable for screen reading software – for example, by formatting rows with headings as heading rows		
Accessibility tag included in publication to let readers know other formats are available and how to obtain them via telephone, email or website.		
Use cream or off-white non-glossy paper to reduce glare.		
Use uncoated paper weighing over 90gsm (photocopy paper usually weighs 80gsm). If the text is showing through from the reverse side, the paper may be too thin.		
Very large or very small documents can be difficult to handle. A4 size is generally the most user-friendly.		

Standards for easy-to-read information

About these standards

Standards are a list of rules and examples which help people to do things in the right way and in a consistent way.

What are these standards about?

These standards are to help people make their information easy to read and understand. People from different organisations have contributed to the development of these standards.

Who can use these standards?

Anyone who wants to make information easy to read and understand can use the standards. However, some of the standards can be hard to understand.

So people with intellectual disabilities might need the help of a support person when they read them for the first time.

These standards were made to make information easy for people with intellectual disabilities to understand.

But these standards can also be useful to make information easy for many other people to understand. For example:

- People who do not have English as a first language
- People who find it difficult to read

Why do we need these standards?

- People with disabilities can find it harder to understand things and to learn new things.
- But they can do a lot in life if they get the right support. It's important for people with disabilities to have information that is as clear and as easy to understand as possible.
- Good information helps people find out what they need to know. It helps them to make their own choices and decisions.
- The Convention of the United Nations is about the rights of disabled people. In article 9, this Convention says that people with disabilities have a right to receive accessible information.
- Accessible information means making information easy to read and understand.
- To do this well, you have to follow standards. Standards are a list of advice which helps people to do things in the same way and in the right way.
- These standards will tell you how to make information easy to understand, whatever the format of information you are making.

Note:

If you want to know more about people with intellectual disabilities, you can ask questions and get information from one of the organisations listed at the end of this booklet.

Standards for easy-to-understand information

Before you start producing your information

- Always find out as much as you can about the people who will use your information and about their needs.
- Choose the best format for your information. For example, information on a video or animation may be better for some people than written information.
- Remember that the people who will use your information might not know much about your subject. Make sure you explain the subject clearly and explain any difficult words to do with the subject.

Words

- Use easy to understand words that people will know well.
- Do not use difficult words.
- If you need to use difficult words, make sure you always explain them clearly.
- Use examples to explain things. Try to use examples that people will know from their everyday lives.
- Use the same word to describe the same thing throughout your document.
- Do not use difficult ideas such as metaphors. A metaphor is a sentence that does not actually mean what it says. An example of a metaphor is “it is raining cats and dogs.”
- Avoid using initialisms. Use the word in full where possible. Initialisms are making a word from the first letter of every word in a phrase. If you have to use initials, explain them. For example, if you write “EU”, explain that it stands for the European Union.”
- Keep the punctuation simple. For example, do not write: “Yesterday, I bought a green/yellow bike (a new one!) for my son – whose name is Michael.” Instead, write “My son’s name is Michael. Yesterday, I bought a new bike for him. The new bike is green and yellow.”
- Avoid all special characters where possible, like \, &, <, or #.

Sentences

- Always start a new sentence on a new line.
- Always keep your sentences short.
- Speak to people directly. Use words like “you” to do this.
- Use positive sentences rather than negative ones where possible. For example, say: “You should stay until the end of the meeting” rather than “You should not leave before the end of the meeting.”

How to order your information

- Always put your information
- in an order that is easy to understand and follow.
- Group all information about the same topic together.
- It’s OK to repeat important information.
- It’s OK to explain difficult words more than once.

Standards for written information

Design and format

- Use a format this is easy to read, follow and photocopy. For example, A4 or A5.
- Never use a background that makes it difficult to read the text. For example, never use a picture or a pattern as a background.
- Be careful when using a dark background. When you do that, make sure the background is dark enough and the writing clear enough for you to read it.

Writing

- Always use a font that is clear and easy to read.
- A font is a type of writing, for example Arial or Tahoma are clear and easy to read fonts.
- This means you should Never use serif fonts. These fonts are harder to read because the shape of the letters is not as clear. Here is an example

Serif font

Sans-serif font

d

d

- Here are some examples of fonts that are harder to read.

Century is not easy to read

Times new roman is not easy to read

Never use writing that is too close together.

Example:

This is Gill 14 condensed.

This is not easy to read because it is too close together.

This is Arial 14 with character spacing at 70%.

This is not easy to read.

Never use writing that is too light and does not print off well.

Example:

This is Eras 14 Light.

This is not easy to read because it is too light.

Never use italics.

Example:

This text is in italics.

It is not easy to read.

Never use a special writing design.

Example:

This is text with shadows.

It is not easy to read.

- Always use large writing.
- You should use writing which is at least the size of Arial 14.
- Do not write whole words in capitals.
- Lower case letters are easier to read.
- Try to use only 1 type of writing in your text.
- Underlining can make the text harder for some people with intellectual disabilities to read. Use underlining with caution.

Writing text

- Use headings that are clear and easy to understand.
- Headings should tell you what the text underneath is about.
- Try not to use too many layers of subtitles or bullet points.
- Graphs and tables can be very hard to understand. But they can sometimes explain things better than in writing.
- When you use graphs or tables, make them simple and explain them well.
- Align your text to the left of the page.
- Never justify your text.
- Justified text has big gaps between words and is harder to read.
- Do not put too much text on your page.
- Leave space between paragraphs.

Images

- Many people find it hard to read text.
- To help them understand your text, you should put images next to it to describe what it is about. To illustrate your text, you can use photographs, drawings or symbols.
- Where possible, try to use the same style of images throughout your document.

Communicating with people with a disability

General tips

- If a person with a disability is accompanied by another person, such as an attendant carer or interpreter, address your questions directly to the person with a disability.
- Put the person first, not their disability. For example, use the term “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person”.
- Do not use negative phrases or words that define a person by their disability – for example, ‘suffers from’ and ‘crippled’. Use the phrase ‘people who use a wheelchair rather than ‘wheelchair bound’.

Communicating with people with physical disabilities

Remember that a person’s personal space can include their wheelchair and crutches. Do not touch or push a person’s wheelchair or move their crutches or walking stick without their permission.

When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, it is preferable to be seated so you can speak with them at eye level.

Communicating with people with a vision impairment

When you meet a person who has a vision impairment, always address them by name and introduce yourself by name.

Speak clearly, in a normal voice and volume.

When offering seating, provide verbal cues.

Remember that people with a vision impairment cannot rely on the same visual cues as people who do not have a vision impairment. Make sure you verbalise any thoughts or feelings.

When you enter or leave a room, say something that indicates your presence or that you are leaving.

If a person is accompanied by a guide dog, do not pat it, feed it or otherwise distract it while it is in a harness. A dog in a harness is working. The same applies to assistance dogs.

If you are guiding the person, walk on the person’s opposite side to the guide dog.

According to the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, you must allow the guide (or assistance) dog to go anywhere the person using it can go.

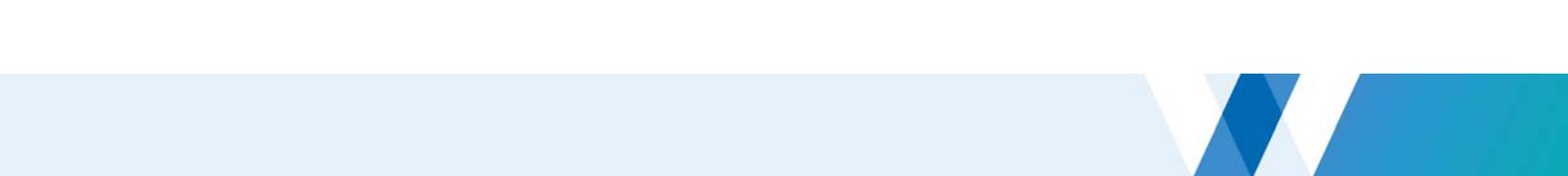
Communicating with people with a hearing impairment

Gain the person’s attention before speaking. Try a gentle tap on the shoulder, a wave or some other visual signal to gain attention.

Face the person directly and maintain eye contact.

Make sure your mouth is visible. Remember not to cover your mouth with your hand or any other object as you talk.

Look directly at the person while speaking and speak evenly, not too fast or slow.



Don't exaggerate your mouth movements, as this will make it more difficult to lip read.

Use short sentences.

Speak at your normal volume – don't shout.

Communicating with people with a speech impairment

Give your whole attention when talking to a person with speech impairment.

Ask short questions that require short answers.

Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Rephrase the question or ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.

Use your normal tone of voice.

Do not try to complete the sentence or answer. Give the person the time they need to communicate their response.

Communicating with people with an intellectual disability

Before talking, ensure you have the person's attention. Try using their name or eye contact to make sure you have their attention.

Keep your questions simple and your answers easy to understand.

Remember that your body language is important, as people with an intellectual disability often rely on visual cues.

Be prepared to use, or to receive, visual information from people with an intellectual disability.

Be specific and direct. Avoid talking using abstracts, acronyms, metaphors or puns.

Checklist: Appropriate language

The language you use in your communication should be positive and inclusive when referring to people with a disability.

Use ...	Instead of ...
Person with a disability For example: Person with autism Person with epilepsy	Disabled/the disabled/victim of/suffers from/handicapped/special/stricken with/unfortunate Autistic person Epileptic person
Person with a physical disability For example: Person with cerebral palsy	Physically challenged
Person with a sensory disability For example: Person with a vision/hearing impairment Person who is deaf or hard of hearing Person who is blind	The deaf The blind, blind people
Person with an intellectual disability For example: Person with Down syndrome	Mentally disabled/intellectually challenged Downs' kids
Person with a mental illness For example: Person with schizophrenia or a person with bipolar disorder	Insane/mentally challenged Schizophrenic person
Accessible toilet/accessible parking space/accessible entry	Disabled toilet/disabled parking space
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound
Person with little or no speech	Dumb
Person who is comatose/unconscious/in a coma	Vegetable/vegetative
Person without a disability	Normal/non-disabled

How to make websites and social media content accessible

To comply with the federal Disability Discrimination Act all Victorian Government online services must achieve Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG) accessibility standard level AA.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) are designed to make websites universally accessible. They also improve the experience for users without disability.

There are three levels of WCAG conformance:

- Level A: the minimum level – the web page satisfies all the Level A success criteria or a conforming alternate version is provided.
- Level AA: the medium level – the web page satisfies all the Level A and Level AA success criteria or a Level AA conforming alternate version is provided.
- Level AAA: the highest level – the web page satisfies all the Level A, Level AA and Level AAA success criteria or a level AAA conforming alternate version is provided.

In Victoria, the minimum requirement for government content is Level AA.

If your department works directly with people with disability, such as the NDIS, your digital content needs to comply with the AAA standard.

These standards apply to both external and internal digital content, including intranets.

Our [Digital Standards](#) provide lots of guidance on how to make online content accessible. For example, there is an accessible colour palette that outlines the colours that are accessible for both AA and AAA standards.

You must:

- provide transcripts for videos (for example on YouTube)
- link to accessible web content
- keep the language simple
- caption video and consider live captioning
- describe the content of photographs
- give alternative text descriptions of the key data in maps, charts or graphs.

Transcripts

A transcript is an alternative text version of audio material. An example of a transcript of a radio news story can be found on the ABC News website.

Victorian Government Accessibility Toolkit (version 3.1.1) can provide you with more detail on how to make your digital content accessible:

www.egov.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-resources/manuals-and-toolkits-victoria/accessibility-toolkit/accessibility-toolkit-version-3-2009.html

How to word an accessibility tag

A 'tag' provides standard and consistent wording to inform people with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

- Tags should be placed on all publications, event invitations and websites (if not already fully accessible)
- Avoid naming an individual as a contact point, except for specific events. Instead, try to use websites, email addresses and phone numbers that will remain current for a reasonable period
- The exact text and format of the tag may be tailored to suit your communication however the tag must be clear and easy to read.

Sample accessibility tag to replicate in your publication:

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format. For example, large print or audio.

Phone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

You can also get formats on our website (www.department.vic.gov.au).

Sample accessibility tag for event invitations:

We can help you with access at this event. For example, accessible parking, Auslan interpreters and attendant carers.

To make sure we can help you, contact us by (insert response date). Phone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

Checklist: Website and social media accessibility

The following checklist has been prepared as a guide to designing and updating web pages and formulating social media content. This checklist is not exhaustive and you should work with your digital team to ensure online accessibility requirements are met.

Topics and questions	Yes	No
In web pages:		
1. Text is in simple, everyday language (aim for Year 5 reading level) – Hemingway App can help assess the level of your content		
2. Text provided as a shorter version in html - check accessibility of documents and images in the Vic Gov digital standards		
3. Most important information is at the top of the page		
4. Avoided loading PDFs, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint or Excel documents online where possible as they are not mobile friendly.		
5. Alternatively, if a document must be uploaded, Microsoft word files are preferred over PDFs but need to be made accessible		
6. Hierarchical headings are in order e.g. never go from h1 to h3		
7. Headings are easy to scan and descriptive e.g. Local Aboriginal Network stories not LAN stories		
8. Images have alternative (alt) text (unless they are purely for decoration)		
9. Images are not used for text, unless the image is part of a logo or brand name		
10. Images included, such as graphs, don't rely on colour to be able to interpret the data		
11. Audio and video can be paused or stopped by users		
12. Video files have closed captions and written transcripts (mandatory) – Please note: YouTube Captions don't work		
13. Audio files have written transcripts (mandatory)		
14. There is strong colour contrast between text and background		
15. Colour is not used as a prompt or to convey information		
16. Text can be increased and decreased in size by the user		
17. Links are meaningful and describe where the link is going, not the URL address (rather than 'click here' links)		
18. Links to documents contain the document type and file size		
19. All documents are available in an accessible version (Word doc content & PDF)		
20. All parts of the website can be accessed using only the keyboard		
21. There is more than one way to find information (search/sitemap/navigation)		

Topics and questions	Yes	No
In web pages:		
22. Labels are presented next to fields that require the user to enter information		
23. There are no time limits imposed on users or a pause button is provided		
24. Pages do not contain quick flashing (i.e. more than three flashes a second)		
25. If you need to use tables, have checked with your web team about how to make these accessible		
26. Tested your website using screen reader software with your web/online team		
27. Do you need an Auslan version on the website?		
In social media content:		
1. Text is in simple, everyday language (aim for Year 5 reading level) - Hemingway App can help assess the level of your content		
2. Images have alternative (alt) text		
3. Audio and video can be paused or stopped by users		
4. Video files have closed captions and written transcripts (mandatory) – Please note: YouTube Captions don't work		
5. Audio files have written transcripts (mandatory)		
6. Links describe where the link is going, not the URL address (rather than 'click here' links)		
7. Links to documents contain the document type and file size		
8. All linked documents are available in an accessible version (Word doc content & PDF)		

How to prepare a plain English version of your publication

Plain English refers to written communication that is easy to understand, free of jargon and well structured.

Plain English is not the same as 'Easy English'. Easy English uses further simplified language and layout, in combination with images or symbols.

Scope Victoria provides some good guidance on Easy English:

www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/resources/easyenglishstyleguide

The Plain English foundation provides useful tools: www.plainenglishfoundation.com/free-writing-tools

The following checklist has been prepared as a guide to writing in Plain English.

Checklist: Plain English

Question	Yes	No
Have you considered your audience and who your message is aimed at?		
Are the things you want to communicate to your audience easy to identify?		
Does the structure of your document present the information in a logical order?		
Are your sentences concise? Does each sentence contain just one idea?		
Is your language clear and considered? (Does your document avoid jargon and acronyms?)		
Are your paragraphs concise and focused on a single idea?		
Is your wording clear or can your sentences be interpreted in several ways? (Tip: use the Microsoft Word readability statistics tool)		

How to make events and venues accessible

You must consider accessibility when hosting events that are open to the public, such as stakeholder briefings or community forums.

Helping people with a disability to plan their attendance at your event is a key consideration.

Invitations should include the following accessibility tag.

We can help you with access at this event. For example, accessible parking, Auslan interpreters and attendant carers.

To make sure we can help you, contact us by (insert response date).

Telephone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address).

The checklist below covers the essentials to consider when planning an event.

Checklist: Accessible events and venues

This checklist can help you quickly and easily assess whether your venue, event, content and format, are accessible and appropriate for people with a range of different needs.

Topics and questions	Yes	No
Planning your event and invitations:		
Have you included an offer to provide accessibility aids and/or support (accessibility tag) on the invitation?		
Do you have a RSVP system for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, including TTY, National Relay Service or text messaging facilities?		
Have you checked that staff at the venue are aware of disability access issues and will help you to ensure equal access for people with a disability?		
Have you advertised your event in accessible formats?		
Have presentation and other materials been made available beforehand?		
Have you considered alternatives for communicating with your audience at the event, such as live captioning, captions on videos, provision of Auslan interpreters and visual or auditory alternatives to announcements?		
At the venue:		
Is the venue close to public transport?		
Are there accessible parking bays and pick-up/drop-off areas?		
Is the entry free from steps or is there an alternative, such as a ramp?		
Have you been to the venue and checked the suitability of the alternative entrance?		
Is there a hand-rail on any steps?		
Are the edges of steps marked clearly?		

Topics and questions	Yes	No
Are doorways wide enough for people who use a wheelchair?		
Is there adequate space for people who use a wheelchair?		
Are tables and tea and coffee facilities accessible for people who use a wheelchair?		
Are accessible toilets conveniently located to your event?		
Is there a quiet room that people can access if they need to?		
During your event:		
Have you instructed your host to briefly outline the venue features and facilities such as directions to bathrooms, exits, refreshments and quiet rooms?		
Have you made copies of your presentation/materials to be handed out at the event?		
Have you made name tags with the font size as large as possible?		
Is seating available at the front of the venue for people who have vision or hearing impairment, so they can lip read or see the Auslan interpreter clearly?		
Does the room have an inbuilt FM transmitter system or hearing loop?		
If your venue has televisions, do they have teletext facilities? Have you considered live captioning?		
Have you located where the Auslan interpreter will be positioned?		
Is there easy access to the stage (a ramp with handrails, does the ramp have the correct gradient?)		
Are there any other features which address accessibility (e.g. Braille and tactile ground floor indicators etc)?		
If you are using a PowerPoint presentation, is it clear and easy to read?		
In your PowerPoint presentation, is the font sans serif no smaller than 24 point in size?		
If you are screening a video, does it have captions?		

Organisations and resources

Here are some contact details for organisations that can provide services and information to assist you to provide accessible communications.

Hearing loops

Better Hearing Australia can provide more information on hearing augmentation systems to support people with a hearing impairment to access meetings and events. It also provides hearing impairment awareness training: www.betterhearing.org.au

Vicdeaf and the Deafblind Australia can provide you with information about Teletypewriters (TTY) and hearing augmentation systems.

Interpreters and notetakers

If using interpreters refer also to the Victorian Government's guidelines on using interpreter services:

www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/improving-language-services/standards-and-guidelines

The following organisations can provide note takers, Auslan and tactile interpreters and Auslan translation:

- Auslan Services www.auslanservices.com
- Echo Interpreting www.echointerpreting.com.au

Live captioning

The following Australian companies provide live captioning services:

- Ericsson (formerly Red Bee Media)
- Ai-Media
- Caption It
- The Captioning Studio.

Scope communication resource centre

Not-for-profit organisation Scope has a Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre that specialises in Easy English, plain language and other accessible written information. Scope can provide training, consultancy and peer support and partners with organisations and businesses to provide written information in accessible formats.

www.scopeaust.org.au/service/accessible-information

Telephone relay services

National Relay Service is an Australia-wide telephone access service that relays calls. People with speech and hearing impairment can contact anyone through the National Relay Service. They can use a Teletypewriter (TTY) or a computer with internet access. relayservice.gov.au/

Able Australia

A not-for-profit organisation supporting people with multiple disabilities, including deafblindness.

Telephone: 1300 225 369

www.ableaustralia.org.au

Amaze (Autism Victoria)

Body supporting people on the autism spectrum and their supporters in Victoria.

Telephone: 1300 308 699 or 9657 1600

www.amaze.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability

Works to improve the lives of children with a disability and their families.

Telephone: 03 9880 7000 or 1800 654 013 (rural callers)

www.acd.org.au

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Australia

Supports children, adolescents and adults with ADHD and co-existing disorders.

Telephone: (+613) 9848 9300 (metro)

www.adhd.com.au

Deafblind Australia

Provides support and advocacy services for people with deafblindness.

Telephone: +61 427 006 890

www.deafblind.org.au

Blind Citizens Australia

National body that can provide advice and assistance in preparing material for people with a vision impairment.

Telephone: 1800 033 660

www.bca.org.au

BrainLink Services

Victorian-based service that provides resources and services to improve the quality of life for people affected by an acquired brain disorder.

Telephone: 1800 677 579 or 9845 2952

www.brainlink.org.au

Cerebral Palsy Support Network

National not-for-profit organisation providing information and support services to people living with cerebral palsy and their families

Telephone: 1300 277 600

www.cpsn.org.au

Communication Rights Australia

Body providing specialised support and information for people with communication difficulties, and/or little or no speech.

Telephone: 9555 8552

www.caus.com.au

Cystic Fibrosis Community Care (Victoria & NSW)

Not-for-profit body providing advocacy, support and information services to people living with cystic fibrosis and their families.

Telephone: 03 9686 1811

www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/vic/

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU)

A dedicated resource unit funded to work with disability advocacy organisations to promote and protect the rights of people with disability.

Telephone: 03 9639 5807

www.daru.org.au

Down Syndrome Victoria

Organisation providing information, support and advocacy services for people with Down syndrome.

Telephone: 1300 658 873

www.downsyndromevictoria.org.au

Epilepsy Foundation

Not-for-profit organisation providing people living with epilepsy, and their families, with support, resources and advocacy services.

Telephone: 8809 0600

www.epilepsyfoundation.org.au

Independence Australia

Social enterprise that supports people living with a disability or other physical need.

Telephone: 1300 704 456

www.independenceaustralia.com

VICDEAF

Can provide more information on resources and assistance for people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Telephone: 9473 1111

www.vicdeaf.com.au

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)

Peak organisation in the Victorian disability sector representing adults with an intellectual disability and their families.

Telephone: 03 9416 4003

www.valid.org.au

Vision Australia

National provider of blindness and low vision services.

Telephone: 1300 84 74 66

www.visionaustralia.org

Glossary

Accessible format	Accessible format is the term used to describe alternative communication formats for people who have difficulties accessing information. Sometimes the term 'alternative formats' is used.
Accessibility statement	An accessibility statement provides standard and consistent wording to inform those with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.
Attendant carer	A person employed to assist people with disabilities with daily tasks: for example, at mealtimes and for personal care.
AUSLAN	Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) is the sign language of people in the Australian Deaf community.
AUSLAN translation	English is not the first language of the Deaf, AUSLAN is. AUSLAN translation assists in making information more accessible for people who are deaf. Videos can be produced in a variety of formats.
Braille	Braille is a system of tactile writing used by people who are blind or visually impaired. When preparing information to be converted to brail, keep the document layout as simple as possible as this aids transcription.
Captions	Captioning is the text version of speech and other sound that can be provided on video, DVDs, the internet, and at cinemas and theatres. Captioning is usually displayed on the bottom of a screen or on a separate screen and in some cases is positioned to show which character is speaking or where the sound is coming from. Colouring may also be used to distinguish between sounds or voices.
Deafblind	Deafblindness, sometimes called dual sensory impairment, is the combination of both hearing and vision impairment. There are many forms of deafblindness. People who are deafblind may communicate using tactile interpreters, or use other communication supports such as note takers.
Disability action plan	A disability action plan is a document that organisations prepare and use to reduce and remove the barriers experienced by people with a disability. The Victorian Disability Act 2006 requires all public sector bodies to have a disability action plan. Public sector bodies include state government departments, statutory authorities and statutory corporations.
Easy English	Easy English is a simplified form of plain English that is used for written information, often using pictures and short sentences. It is helpful for people with a cognitive or an intellectual disability or low English language literacy levels.

Easy English uses clear and simple words and short sentences, and often uses pictures and photographs to illustrate sentences. Developing Easy English documents is a specialised skill and it is advisable to contact an expert to assist you to produce information in Easy English.

An example of an Easy English document is the Easy English version of the Victorian Government 'State Disability Plan 2017–2020', available on the State Disability Plan website.

Scope also provides an Easy English Style Guide for more assistance.

Hearing induction loop

Hearing induction loops enable sound, such as speech, to be transmitted to a listener by means of a magnetic field. Many large conference venues have 'loops' installed in rooms. Alternatively, portable 'loops' can be hired for events.

Live captioning

Live captioning of speeches, conferences, school lessons or other events is also known as CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation). It is often performed remotely with the captioner connected via phone or the internet.

Microsoft Office readability tool

Microsoft Word includes a tool to assess the readability of your document, according to the average number of syllables per word and words per sentence.

Use the readability test to assess the Flesch Reading Ease and the grade level of your document.

National Relay Service

The National Relay Service is an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It can also support people with speech that is hard to understand. www.relayservice.gov.au

Plain English

Plain English (or plain language) is a term which describes writing that is clear and simple. It avoids jargon, bureaucratic terms and acronyms. It is characterised by everyday words and simple language. See the Plain English Foundation website for more information.

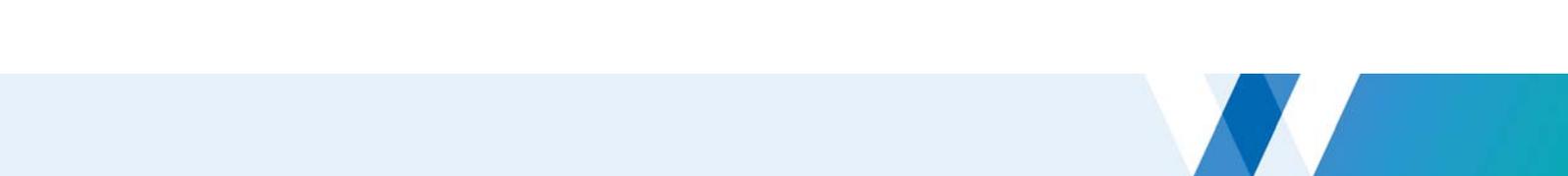
Positive duty

The Equal Opportunity Act 2012 (Vic) introduces a positive duty requiring all organisations covered by the law (including government bodies, employers and service providers) to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission website provides more information about positive duty.

State Disability Plan

The Victorian Government has prepared **Absolutely Everyone**, the state's disability plan for 2017-2020. This plan is the way the government is taking a lead on promoting the inclusion of Victorians with a disability and providing them with support to live satisfying everyday lives.

**Tactile interpreter**

Tactile interpreting is a common means of communication used by people with deafblindness. Tactile interpreting is based on Auslan and requires two interpreters.

Transcript

A transcript is an alternative text version of audio material. Here is an example of a transcript.

TTY

A TTY (teletypewriter) is a telecommunication device that enables people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to send and receive text messages over the telephone network. The Australian Government's National Relay Service website has more information about TTY.