Accessible Communication

Inclusive SA: State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019–2023

Priority 8.

Accessible and available information

Action 21.

Action 21 of Inclusive SA is *'Develop a toolkit to support State authorities to ensure communication about their services is available in a range of accessible formats. These may include easy read, Auslan, pictorial forms, large font, audible options, braille, closed captions and VoiceOver*.

The Department of Human Services has worked in collaboration with The Department of Premier and Cabinet, to expand the South Australian Government's award-winning Online Accessibility toolkit to include additional accessible communications. The complete toolkit can be found on the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit website.

Government of
South Australia

Welcome

This toolkit provides practical information to assist South Australian government agencies and local councils to ensure their services are available in a range of accessible formats, to assist people with disability to be aware of available services and programs and be able to participate more fully in our community.

Acknowledgment of Country

The Government of South Australia acknowledges and respects Aboriginal peoples as the state's first peoples and nations and recognises them as traditional owners and occupants of land and waters in South Australia.

Further, we acknowledge that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal peoples come from their traditional lands and waters, that they maintain their cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws which are of ongoing importance, and that they have made and continue to make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the state.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples have endured past injustice and dispossession of their traditional lands and waters.

Contents

Introduction

This toolkit has been prepared in collaboration with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and is an expansion of the South Australian Government's award-winning [Online Accessibility Toolkit](#).

The online accessibility toolkit is a 'quick-start' online guide about how to make digital products, content and services accessible. It was co-designed in consultation with people with lived experience of disability, the disability sector and over 100 organisations. The approach has drawn significant praise as it highlights the value in ensuring people with disability have the leading role in shaping policies and creating programs which influence their lives. Expanding the toolkit to include other forms of communications, ensures a broader range of people are reached and have accessible and available information.

In responding to the expectations of Inclusive SA (Action 21) the Online Accessibility Toolkit has been expanded, drawing on additional information provided by State and local government agencies, people with lived experience of disability, the wider disability sector and community, and open-source disability information.

Disclaimer

This toolkit is for reference only, is not a complete guide and may be added to or expanded over time. References to third parties are provided for your information only and not as an endorsement by the South Australian Government.

Acknowledgments

There are four Inclusive SA toolkits that have been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders (recognising that the South Australian Government's Online Accessibility Toolkit already existed and has been expanded as a part of the development of the four toolkits).

JFA Purple Orange was engaged to co-design stage one of the toolkits. Over 100 State government agencies and local councils were invited to contribute to the content. We engaged Vision Australia and Funktion as industry experts to provide an expert review.

The draft Accessible and Inclusive toolkits were released for public consultation. The Department of Human Services received feedback from people with lived experience of disability, service providers and community groups, with a number of ideas and resources incorporated into the final toolkits.

If you have further resources that you think could be included in any of the Accessible and Inclusive toolkits, please email DHSDisabilityInclusion@sa.gov.au

The collection of toolkits includes:

- Accessible and inclusive community events
- Engagement and consultation with people living with disability
- Accessible events
- Accessible wayfinding and signage.

Inclusive SA

The State's first Disability Inclusion Plan, Inclusive SA, was released in late 2019 and is a whole-of-government approach based on fairness and respect to improve access and inclusion for people with disability. The Plan includes 12 priorities with associated actions and aims to increase the involvement of people with disability in the community.

A key element of Inclusive SA is social inclusion, a priority for people living with disability as it affects all aspects of their lives. It is our aim that the contributions and rights of people living with disability are valued and understood by all South Australians and that their rights are promoted, upheld and protected.

It is important for social wellbeing that all South Australians can make independent decisions on how to engage with and contribute to the community. The whole community benefits when all South Australians are included.

This toolkit provides practical information to assist South Australian government agencies and local councils to use signage and wayfinding to assist people living with disability.

The toolkit is developed in response to Action 21 of Inclusive SA (the State Disability Inclusion Plan).

Legislation and frameworks

This toolkit is informed by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA), both of which promote equality of opportunity and the prevention of discrimination based on sex, race, disability and age.

The toolkit is also informed by the principles set out in the Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA), which reflect the principles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the National Disability Strategy.

Diversity in Australia

Australia has a diverse population. In acknowledging Aboriginal peoples as the first peoples of this country, we also acknowledge the many people who identify with more than 270 ancestries and who now call Australia home[i]. We also acknowledge the wider diversity of our community, including the many people in Australia who live with disability.

- In 2018 there were 4.4 million Australians living with disability, 17.7% of the population[ii], (1 in 5 people).

- 4.4% of people with a disability in Australia use a wheelchair[iii].

- 17.1% of people with disability use mobility aids.

- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age. One quarter (26.9%) of people aged 60–64 years are living with disability. Over eight in ten people aged 90 and over (84.6%) have a disability[iv].

- Disability discrimination accounts for the highest volume of complaints across the board to the Australian Human Rights Commission[v].

- 3 million Australians live with depression or anxiety[vi].

350,000

Vision Australia estimates there are now over 350,000 people who are blind or have low vision.

About 17%

of Australians are affected by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.

Be careful of stereotypes

Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about other groups of people that individuals form yet are not consciously aware of. We all have biases but by becoming aware of unconscious biases, challenging them and actively working to reduce them, we can enable better engagement and communication.

Review your ideas and consider if your proposal perhaps reflects an unconscious bias. Use inclusive language and ensure you are being truly inclusive and when planning wayfinding or signage consciously consider whether your biases are impacting your thinking.

The social model of disability

The Social Model of Disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by people living with disability. The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets, or people's attitudes such as assuming people with disability can't do certain things.

The Medical model of Disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences and looks at what is 'wrong' with the person not what the person needs. We believe that medical model of disability creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their lives.

The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice and control.

Sourced from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.

Accessible communication

To reach all your audience, you need to make good use of accessible communication formats. You should also be open to providing 'alternative formats' for people that cannot access your primary communication.

Developing your strategy

Involve people from your audience in developing and reviewing your strategy.

They will know what they need. You can also approach disability organisations for advice.

Consider the preferences your target audience has for receiving information.

For example, younger people may respond better to text messages than sub-titled adverts. Researching your audience will help you understand what they need.

Your strategy should outline:

1. How you will anticipate the needs of all people.

2. What standards are in place.

3. Who is responsible and who will pay for the accessible formats.

4. What type of information you will prioritise.

5. How to ensure you communicate successfully with people with communication difficulties.

6. What communication tools are available to help people get their message across and understand what people are telling them.

7. How you will monitor the strategy.

If you need help, please email us at onlineaccessibility@sa.gov.au.

Supporting resource

Communication Access (Scope Australia) - information about how to make communication in a business or service accessible and inclusive for people with communication difficulties and how to achieve accreditation and display the related Communication Access Symbol.

Supplying accessible formats: best practice

1. Involve relevant experts, such as marketing and communications, from the earliest planning stages.

2. Consider the needs of your audience in advance. Assess which, if any, accessible format versions are likely to be required.

3. Plan ahead. Make sure the accessible formats are available at the same time as the standard print.

4. If you intend to supply accessible formats on demand. You should produce these within a few days of the request. Make sure you are in contact with a range of suppliers. Make sure they can produce good quality materials in accessible formats.

5. Make sure any consultation period is not reduced for people with disability. This could be due to accessible formats not being available at the launch or running out time during the consultation period.

Deciding which accessible format to use

Is your communication or campaign targeted at people with a particular disability? Or do you know there will be a high proportion of people with a particular disability in your audience?

Some formats suit one type of disability more than another:

Alternatives to visual communication

These examples are from the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit:

- audio
- video and multimedia
- braille
- accessible print
- telephone.

Easy communications

These examples are from the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit:

- easy read

- plain language

- audio

- accessible print

- video and multimedia.

Alternatives to audio communications

These examples are from the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit:

- sign language–Auslan

- video and multimedia.

Co-ordination difficulties

These examples are from the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit:

- accessible print

- audio

- video and multimedia

- telephone.

Consider the preferences your target audience has for receiving information.

For example, younger people may respond better to text messages than sub-titled advert. Researching your audience will help you understand what they need.

Reducing the need for accessible format versions

Keep it simple.

Making your content more accessible will reduce the need for producing accessible formats. It will also appeal to a greater number of people.

Alternative channels

Different communication channels you choose are just as important as the accessible formats you provide or offer.

For example, you may have produced a print recruitment advert for a vacant job. Translating this into braille is unlikely to be the best method of reaching all people with visual disability.

- As an accessible alternative you could produce an audio advert for radio. This could be commercial or a specialist channel such as Vision Australia Radio.
- You could also deliver your message by engaging with disability organisations directly.

Summary versions

It can be more time-consuming and tiring to absorb the same amount of information listening to an audiotape or CD, or watching sign language than scanning through a document by eye.

The most important thing is that the information or messages are received. Consider providing a summary of important points in accessible formats.

For example, a long report or policy summarised into audio or the translated into easy read format.

Give the key points and a contact telephone number for further information.

Alternatives to visual communication

Audio description

Audio description opens new markets and audiences for your work.

From people with vision disability to people relaxing at the end of a busy day. Audio description can also be useful for people living with Autism.

Why it's important

- Lyla-Mae is using the audio option to listen to a film to relax at the end of the day.
- Jo listens to audio options because moving images are distracting.

Audio description is an additional commentary that describes on-screen or on-stage action, body language and facial expressions.

For example, a character looking shocked at something another character is doing.

Audio description is available in:

- television
- video and DVD
- cinemas
- museums and galleries
- theatres
- sports venues.

Steps to take

1. Take a look at the audio description decision tree (Vision Australia).
2. Read the guidelines for audio description (American Council of the Blind).
3. Arrange information in a logical order.
4. Avoid background noise and music.

5. Use voices that are appropriate to the subject matter and audience.

6. Give people time to understand calls to action.

Supporting resource

- [Audio description – what it is and the benefits (access2arts)](#)

- [State Government guide to video and multimedia transcripts and captions](#)

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

- [1.2.2 Captions (Pre-recorded)](#)

- [1.2.3 Audio Description or Media Alternative (Pre-recorded)](#)

Braille

Braille is a reading and writing system for people who are blind or have low vision. Braille can also be an important means of communication for people who are deaf and blind.

Why it's important

- Madilyn was born blind. With braille resources, Madilyn is able to learn and take part at school.

- Adrian lives with low vision and often uses a smartphone to assist in reading text. Adrian is also fluent in braille. When Adrian does not have access to a smartphone Adrian requests copies of text in braille to enable reading.

Steps to take

Before starting:

1. Make sure you do research with the people who will use your information.

2. Find out how those people will access your resources – whether it be in print, online or with support from others. Be aware that some people rely more on [audio material](#) and screen reading technology.

3. Consider making your resources available in braille on request. Putting braille on your business cards is also a great way to promote inclusive practices.

We can help with commissioning braille resources from an expert organisation. Email us at onlineaccessibility@sa.gov.au.

Supporting resources

- Braille: What you need to know (Vision Australia)

- Braille information fact sheet (Better Health Channel).

The importance of braille: Madilyn's story

Learn how Madilyn became fluent in braille and the important role it plays (YouTube, 2.30 mins)

Telephone

The phone is an important channel for making information accessible to your audience.

Why it's important

- Information provided only in a digital format will exclude sections of your audience. By not providing a telephone number this prevents some people from using your service or accessing your information.

- Many people do not have access to the internet or may have difficulties using it. This includes people with disability, older people and people living in remote locations.

Steps to take

1. Provide a helpline or hotline to support your communications campaign. Telephone operators should have training in communicating with a wide range of people.

2. Keep background noise to a minimum.

3. Make sure you speak clearly and at a pace which suits the individual.

4. Use a mix of communications channels in your communications planning. Telephone communications are not accessible for everyone.

National Relay Service

A call through the [National Relay Service (NRS)](#) lets you communicate with a person who is using a telephone. Even if you can't hear them or they don't use their voice.

- The NRS has specially trained staff called Relay Officers who help with every call.

- Depending on the type of call, a Relay Officer will change voice to text or text to voice and AUSLAN to English or English to AUSLAN.

- Relay officers stay on the line throughout each call to help it go smoothly. But they don't change or get in the way of what is being said.

- Except for calls made through Video Relay, the NRS is available 24 Hours a day, every day.

- People can choose from one or more relay call types. This is depending on their hearing and speech, and equipment.

Learning disability and literacy difficulties

Accessible print

How to make sure your printed publications reach the widest range of people.

Why it's important

- Kris has dyslexia. Kris finds the structure of printed documents helps to process information.

- Marlee lives in Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara. Access to internet connection is limited. Marlee just needs to grasp key information quickly. Marlee doesn't have time to read complex publications.

- Kala has a learning disability. Kala needs to be able to understand information about university admission. People with learning disability need access to all types of information. Not just disability-specific information.

- Tony is on home detention and unable to access the internet. A printed guide helps Tony understand important information about home detention rules.

Steps to take

1. Read Vision Australia's guide to [online and print inclusive design and legibility considerations](#).

2. Use [plain language](#). If your publication is easy to read it helps more people understand what to do. This includes people with lower reading comprehension.

3. Use pictures and diagrams where appropriate.

4. Use a plain, sans serif font, such as:

   - Arial

   - Calibri

   - Helvetica

   - Century

   - Gothic

   - Verdana.

5. Make sure there is significant [colour contrast](#) between the text and the background.

6. Avoid using UPPER CASE or italics. Only use underlining for hyperlinks.

7. Use a minimum of 12-point type size for all text. For large-print documents, use a minimum 18-point type size.

8. Use uncluttered text with no background graphics, patterns or watermarks.

9. Left-align text.

10. Use bold or larger print for important information.

11. Print your publication on matte or satin non-reflective paper.

Providing alternative formats

1. Make sure all printed material is available on request in [alternative formats](#).

2. Include a statement informing readers of this. For example. "this publication is available in alternative formats (such as online, audio tape or braille), on request from people with disability."

3. Read the State Government guide to [accessible PDF and Word documents](#).

Supporting resources

- [State Government introductory guide to easy read](#)
- [State Government introductory guide to accessible communication](#)
- [New guides support creation of accessible digital books (Copyright Agency)](#)
- [Accessible communication: the basics (PDF 103 KB)](#).

Easy read guide

Make your written information easier to understand for everyone.

Why it's important

- Dorota is the Chief Executive of an Australian Government department. Dorota needs to grasp key information quickly for a parliamentary request. Dorota doesn't have time to read complex government documents, reports or policies.

- Marlee lives in Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara. Access to internet connection is limited. Like Dorota, Marlee just needs to grasp key information quickly. Marlee doesn't have time to read complex government documents, reports or policies.

- Kala has a learning disability. Kala needs to be able to understand information about their university admission. People with learning disability need access to all types of information. Not just disability-specific information.

- Areeb is not fluent in English. Easy read helps Areeb understand important information about a community event.

- Kris has dyslexia. Kris finds the structure of easy read helps to process information.

What is easy read?

Information presented in easy read benefits everyone.

This is because information is made easier to understand by:

- using [plain language](#)
- using short sentences
- telling people exactly what they need to know.

For example:

- We have a policy for making technology accessible.

- Everyone who works in the South Australian Government needs to use our policy.

- Our policy was approved on 16 May 2019.

Pictures can also be used to support the meaning of words.

For example:

Policy

We have a policy for making technology accessible.

Everyone who works in the South Australian Government needs to use our policy.

Our policy was approved on 16 May 2019.

1. Follow the Australian Government's easy read guide.

2. If you're considering commissioning easy read versions of your publications from an expert organisation. We can help with this. Email us at onlineaccessibility@sa.gov.au.

3. Watch the video about easy read from Mencap (YouTube 2.30 mins).

Supporting resources

- A guide to producing written information in easy read - North Yorkshire County Council (PDF 707KB)

- Tips for writing easy read documents (Scottish Accessible Information Forum).

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

- [3.1 Readable (Guideline)](#)
- [3.1.5 Reading Level](#).

Plain language

If content is easy to read it helps more people understand what to do. This includes people with lower reading comprehension.

Why it's important

- Adara is not a native English speaker. Adara sometimes find it hard to understand legal or bureaucratic words.
- Aadhya is a lawyer. Aadhya needs to quickly find and understand government information.
- Kai has low tech literacy. Kai often doesn't understand highly technical language.

Steps to take

1. Use the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) as an ongoing reference point. The manual has [advice on plain language](#) and links to plain language resources.
2. As you're writing, think about the literacy level of your target audience. Improve the reach of your online content by reading the [State Government introduction to easy read](#).
3. The page title is the first thing someone using a screen reader will hear. It's important to write a clear title. Search results usually show the page title so it must describe the page clearly.
4. Expand abbreviations and acronyms the first time you use them.
5. Include in-line definitions for scientific, legal, or technical terms. Only use these terms if needed.
6. Think about adding a glossary. This helps if your content has a lot of terms that could be unfamiliar.
7. Avoid using [idioms](#).

8. Avoid using sarcasm. If sarcasm is used, explicitly state that the statement was sarcasm. Through text, sarcasm can be much harder to convey for everyone, but it may be especially confusing for people with autism.

9. Clearly communicate warnings, status messaging, and confirmation messages. These can assist people with cognitive and learning disability.

10. Test the readability of your content. Useful tools include the Hemingway App, Readable.io and Juicy Studio. If you are editing in MS Word, see how to turn on Flesch-Kincaid. When testing the readability of content using readability tools, remove the proper nouns so it does not affect the score.

11. Watch World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) understandable content video (1 min).

Supporting resource

- Australian Government Style Manual

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

- 2.4.2 Page Titled
- 3.1 Readable (Guideline)
- 3.1.3 Unusual Words
- 3.1.4 Abbreviations
- 3.1.5 Reading Level.

For further information see the following sections:

- Audio
- Accessible print
- Video and multimedia

Hearing

Video and multimedia

Captions and transcripts benefit everyone. Transcripts mean easier production of subtitles in a number of languages. They also improve the indexing of online content.

Improved indexing means improved search engine optimisation and discoverability of government online content.

Why it's important

- Sudo is hearing-impaired and cannot rely on audio.
- Mia is a non-native English speaker and has difficulty understanding video.
- Lyla-Mae is watching a video but cannot listen to the audio due to being in a teleconference.

Audio-only content

For audio-only content, such as a podcast or radio interview, provide a transcript, narrative or screenplay.

Include any visuals important for understanding the content. For example, [the Minister enters the room].

Audio and visual content

For audio and visual content, such as training videos, provide a transcript and captions.

- In the transcripts and captions, include the spoken information and any sounds important for understanding the content. For example, [the Minister's phone starts ringing].
- In transcripts, include any visuals important for understanding the content. For example, [the Minister enters the room].

Pre-recorded video

For pre-recorded video the Australian Government recommends the inclusion of [Auslan](#).

Steps to take

1. Start with the [World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) video captions page](). This is a great guide to best practice layout for embedded video, captions and transcripts. W3C use Able Player for their embedded videos, YouTube and Vimeo are also good options. Speak with your developer if you need help.

2. Read [the Australian Government Style Manual on video and audio]().

3. Make sure video captions synchronise to appear around the same time that they would be heard in the audio. Accurate captions must be provided, so don't rely 100 per cent on auto-captioning or auto-transcript options. A good starting point is a production script or transcription services.

4. To make video or audio transcripts available, link to it from the same place you link to or display your video or audio file.

5. Avoid brightly flashing or rapidly flashing colours in your videos. When flashes are faster than three times a second, they can trigger seizures for people living with visual epilepsy. Flashing colours can also cause headaches for other people.

6. Ensure that text within the video stands out from the background with good colour contrast.

7. Learn more about why captions are so important for everyone. Watch the [World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) video about captions (1 min)]().

Supporting resources

- [Captions, transcripts and audio (WebAim)]()
- [Audio description decision tree (Vision Australia)]().

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

- [1.2.2 Captions (Pre-recorded)]()
- [1.2.3 Audio Description or Media Alternative (Pre-recorded) 1.2.3]().

Sign language (Auslan)

Auslan (**Au**stralian **s**ign **lan**guage) is a visual form of communication for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. It uses hand, arm and body movements to convey meaning.

Why it's important

- Aarav's partner is in hospital having a baby. An Auslan interpreter is able to communicate on the progress and health of Asrav's partner and baby.

- People from across Australia are visiting a large event. Video messages at the event are also provided in Auslan. This ensures that people who are Deaf or hard of hearing have access to the same information as the hearing community.

Around 20,000 people use Auslan to communicate every day. It is used in many settings including:

- government agencies providing service information and training via presentations
- virtual launches and video conferences
- kindergarten programs
- schools and universities
- community events
- websites
- sporting activities
- medical appointments
- arts events
- within the police and court system
- emergency management communication.

Interpreting services

Auslan interpreters provide a wide range of services. For example: attending your community event, appearing on video or face to face interpreting.

Providers across Australia include:

- [Deaf Can:Do – Auslan Interpreters](#)
- [Auslan Services.](#)

Learning Auslan

A great starting point is to look up the organisation for deafness advocacy in your state. For example:

- [South Australia (SA) – Deaf Can:Do](#)

- [Queensland (QA) – Deaf Services](#)

- [Tasmania (Tas) – Tasdeaf](#)

- [Victoria (Vic) – Vicdeaf](#)

- [Western Australia (WA) – Access Plus](#)

- [New South Wales (NSW) – The Deaf Society](#).

Many community, technical and further education (TAFE) institutions and organisations also offer Auslan classes.

Supporting resources

- [More about sign language – Auslan (better Health Channel)](#)

- [Learning through play – Aussie Deaf Kids](#)

- [SA Public Sector Disability Employment Strategy, Plan and Toolkit launch](#) (virtual event with an Auslan interpreter).

Co-ordination difficulties

These resources come from the State Government Online Accessibility Toolkit:

- [accessible print](#)

- [audio](#)

- [video and multimedia](#)

- [telephone](#).

[Online Accessibility Toolkit – Government of South Australia](#)

Contact us

Inclusive.sa.gov.au

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References

[i] Australian Human Rights Commissioner website: Face the facts: Cultural Diversity | Australian Human Rights Commission

[ii] Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

[iii] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2015*

[iv] Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016, 4430.0 - Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2015

[v] Australian Human Rights Commission 2018-19 Complaint statistics, viewed 15 November 2019

[vi] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2008, 4326.0 - National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results