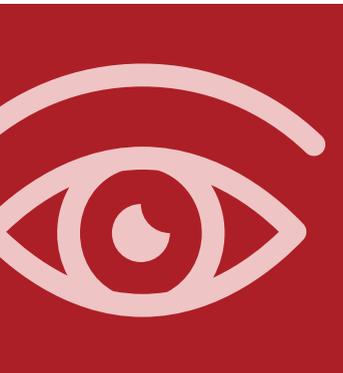




City of
KINGSTON

Access for All

Promoting disability inclusion in community groups



Access for All – promoting disability inclusion in the community

This booklet provides advice, ideas, contacts and practical suggestions to assist your centre to become more accessible and inclusive of people with disability.

Becoming more inclusive of people with disability gives you an opportunity to attract more customers to your centre and helps to improve the social, mental and physical wellbeing of those involved.

In the City of Kingston, it is estimated that approximately 32,000 people, or almost 23 per cent of Kingston's population, have a disability or difficulties with mobility, sight or hearing.

This includes people with different types and levels of impairment, children, young people, older people, women, men, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Together with their friends and families, the number of people affected by disability is larger still – and every one of them is a potential visitor to, or member of, your centre.

For more information and assistance to increase your centre's inclusiveness, contact the City of Kingston's Social Development Team at **community@kingston.vic.gov.au**, **1300 653 356** or refer to section 4 of this booklet for organisations that you can contact.

Places, services and facilities that will benefit from this booklet include:

- Community Centres
- Neighbourhood Houses
- Men's Sheds
- Senior Citizen Centres
- Committees
- Lions, Rotary and Probus Clubs

For the purpose of this booklet, the above mentioned are referred to as centres.

A separate booklet has been developed for sporting clubs called 'Access for All – Promoting disability inclusion in sport'. Please contact the City of Kingston or visit **kingston.vic.gov.au** for a copy.

This resource has been developed to encourage and empower Kingston-based centres to be inclusive of people with disability. The material has been developed from extensive knowledge and experience of the disability sector, industry standards and resources available on websites.

The City of Kingston would like to acknowledge the Darebin City Council for allowing us to reproduce their resource 'Access for All – Promoting disability inclusion in sport' which was adapted and modified to develop this booklet.

This booklet is a City of Kingston MetroAccess initiative and part of the Building Inclusive Communities Program which supports communities to develop ways of including people with disability in local life. The Building Inclusive Communities Program is supported through NDIS Information Linkages and Capacity funding.

For further information contact the Social Development Team at **community@kingston.vic.gov.au** or **1300 653 356**.

Council acknowledges the Kulin Nation as the custodians of the land on which the municipality is a part and pays its respects to their Elders past, and present. Council is a member of the Inter Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

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Accessing information can be difficult for some people, especially those who have a disability. We outline how to make your centre's information accessible to a wide audience.

Section 1: Participation for all

Centres are fantastic community hubs from which local people can come together for a common interest. Centres provide:

- a sense of belonging
- volunteering opportunities
- increased social networks
- skill development
- leadership development
- improved mental wellbeing.

People with disability may be under-represented in your centre, however there are many ways to include people with disability. This inclusion will lead to an environment that better reflects the richness and diversity of the general community.

The greatest barrier to people with disability becoming involved in the community can be people's attitudes. There is little point in someone being able to physically access your centre if its culture is not welcoming and inclusive.

What can a centre do to include people with disability?

1.1. Ensure staff and members are welcoming and inclusive of all community members.

Ensure you are welcoming and inclusive to all visitors to your centre and you will be inclusive of and welcoming to people with disability. Routinely ask all new members and visitors if they need assistance rather than singling out people you think may need help. People may need assistance but have a disability that isn't obvious or may have a visible disability and be quite independent. The best thing you can do is ask the person what they need in order to participate fully.

Ensure members, volunteers and staff are aware of human rights legislation that protects disadvantaged members of the community from discrimination.



Visit [humanrights.gov.au](https://www.humanrights.gov.au) for further information.

Staff and members can actively include people with disability in their centres by adopting some or all of the following actions.

- Welcome people to your centre openly and equally.
- Be aware of the needs of all members and participants and ensure everything possible is done to meet those needs.
- Have a contact person for all disability enquiries, including new and current members with disability.
- Organise disability awareness training sessions for centre members.
- Develop flyers and put information on your centre's

website or Facebook promoting that it is inclusive and welcoming to all members, including people with disability.

- Share resources, ideas and opportunities for including people with disability with other centres.
- Develop an inclusion statement and a strategy to help increase the participation rate of people with disability within your centre.

1.2. Create events and activities to include people with disability.

Events, activities and classes can be more inclusive if minor adjustments are made to the physical environment, equipment and teaching methods. Activities should be suitable for all participants or adjusted to meet the needs of individuals wherever possible. Different people will have different needs, ask them what will help them to participate.

- Can people participate in a range of ways? eg Tai Chi from a seated position?
- Can information be accessed in a range of formats? eg Are presentations available online as accessible documents so participants can use a screen reader?
- Are meeting rooms inclusive? eg Is there a hearing loop? Step-free access?

Visit the following websites for information on planning accessible events:

- Australian Network on Disability and.org.au have an event accessibility checklist.
- Knox City Council knox.vic.gov.au for information on planning accessible events.
- For a downloadable accessible events guide visit meetingsevents.com.au

1.3. Include people with disability as centre volunteers.

There are often tasks that need to be completed each week in order for your centre to run effectively. Engaging a volunteer community member with a disability to fulfil these roles helps your centre while empowering the individual. Please contact the City of Kingston Social Development Team if you are interested in exploring this idea.

Why should we include people with disability?

It is unlawful to exclude a person from your centre on the basis of their disability. It is beneficial for centres to be representative of their whole community. Including people with disability in your centre can lead to:

- increased membership
- more volunteers
- better community relations
- opportunities for sponsorship/ access to grants

- greater media exposure
- increased confidence and skills for all centre members when interacting with diverse community members
- reduced stigma and discrimination of people with disability
- empowered community members
- reduced social isolation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 is legislation that protects people with disabilities from being treated unfairly or unfavourably as a result of their disability.

It is important that your centre is aware of its obligations in relation to this legislation and takes action to ensure it does not treat people with disabilities less fairly than other community members. For more information and advice, contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission enquiry line on 1300 292 153.

Section 2: Access at your centre

No matter how inclusive your intentions, if a community member can't make it to your door you can't include them. The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 requires all public premises to be accessible to people with disability.

Some basics to consider:

- Do you have designated, signed, accessible parking? (that meets Australian Standards)
- Is your building/venue accessible to all?
- Is there a main entrance with a ramp and clear path of travel?
- Is there wayfinding signage? (wayfinding signage provides more information than basic directional signage)
- Are the bathroom facilities accessible to all? Do they comply with Australian Standards? Are they free of clutter?

If you need to upgrade the physical environment to improve access for people with a physical disability, contact the City of Kingston Social Development Team for information and advice. (Details section 4)

Below are some examples of the access requirements a person with disability may need (remember each person is an individual and this list may not address all needs):

Use wheelchair, frame or cane to assist mobility or have limited mobility

- Ensure ramp access to at least one main entrance.
- Clear obstacles from pathways including internal thoroughfares.
- Ensure any designated accessible (disabled) toilet meets Australian Standards and is not used for storage.



- Make seats available for people who use a frame or cane.
- Ensure doors can be easily opened with easy-to-use lever-style door handles, rather than knobs.
- Provide handrails for ramps, steps and uneven surfaces (this is required under Australian Standards).
- Provide access to power points to charge an electric wheelchair or scooter.
- Ensure accessible parking is close to the main entrance.
- Install low-pile carpet or slip-resistant flooring.

Cognitive – memory, concentration, information processing

- Deliver simple, direct instructions.
- Break tasks down into simple steps.
- Do not overwhelm with unnecessary information.
- Provide visual cues for instructions eg pictures, photos, symbols and give demonstrations.
- Allow each individual time to process what you've said and to respond before moving onto the next instruction.
- Provide opportunity to practice skills or tasks before moving onto a new one.
- Give immediate feedback and encouragement.
- Encourage participants to ask questions.

Blind/low vision/locating environment

- Use luminance and colour contrast to assist people with low vision to locate aspects of the environment ie doors, furniture, equipment.
- Provide clear signage that is concise, uncluttered and incorporates large print and symbols.
- Provide hand rails and colour-contrasting edges on steps and ramps (required under Australian Standards).
- Ensure effective lighting throughout facility.
- Ensure information is available in large print (font size 16) on request.
- Clear pathways of overhanging foliage.

Deaf or hard of hearing

- Provide clear signage.
- Minimise background noise.
- Provide a quiet zone where communication can take place without music, radio, TV in background.

- Look directly at the person while speaking, do not cover your mouth or turn away as they may be using lip-reading techniques as well as their functional hearing.
- Use the National Relay Service (NRS) for communicating over the phone with people with hearing or speech difficulties.
- Communicate via text message (SMS) when appropriate.
- When an Auslan Interpreter is present direct conversation to the individual, not the interpreter.
- Ensure a pen and paper are available for exchanging information as required (last resort).

All

- Use plain English in written and verbal communication.
- Provide a welcoming and inclusive environment with an attitude of willingness to make it work.
- Ask the person what assistance they need rather than stepping in and helping.

- Accept the 'Companion Card' (holders of this card pay any fees associated with participation or membership but their 'companion' does not).
- Provide discounts for people receiving Centrelink payments e.g. Disability Support Pension, Health Care Card.
- Provide information about centre activities in an accessible format, see section 7.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health affects nearly half of the population at some stage of their life, including people with disability.

Depression, anxiety and substance-use disorder are the most common types of mental illnesses. Less common (but often more debilitating) are schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and eating disorders. With appropriate support and treatment most people will recover fully from a period of mental illness. Some people will require ongoing treatment in order to manage their illness and these treatment options (often involving medication) can cause side effects that may impair their functioning and result in memory problems, fatigue, difficulty concentrating or low motivation. It is important to be aware of these side effects and, as with people with disability, asking what support is required is the best way to understand whether they have any additional needs when they are interacting with centre activities.

For more information on mental health and how to find the most suitable service in your area, contact Sane Australia on 1800 187 263 or see **[Sane Australia's website](#)**.

Section 3:

Communication for all

It is important to consider the language used when talking with, or about, people with disability as it affects the attitude of your centre.

Arrange training or information sessions for staff and members to raise awareness of the needs of people with disability and how to communicate with them. This can be organised through some of the organisations listed at the end of this document. Free online training resources are listed in section 6.

Tips for communicating with people with disability

Remember that the individual is a person first. Their disability is just one aspect of them.

- Consider the age of the person with a disability. It is disrespectful to refer to adults with an intellectual disability as children or kids.
- When approaching a person with a disability, be polite, introduce yourself, and ask how you can help.
- Wait until your offer is accepted before trying to assist someone.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take some people to do or say some things or even process information they have been given.
- Don't patronise or talk down to a person with a disability, or assume that they won't understand you.
- Be aware that some people may need written information to be provided in different formats, such as electronic formats, large font, Braille or audio. Verbal instructions can also be very helpful. This depends on the individual.
- If a person is blind or has low vision, consider describing the layout of the area to them, especially any obstacles such as stairs or furniture.



- Speak directly to the individual, even when they are accompanied by an interpreter, assistant or carer.
- Make sure you face the individual when you speak to them, so they can read your lips if they need to. Don't cover your mouth or speak when your back is turned.
- Don't shout, use big hand gestures, or speak extra slowly to someone who is hard of hearing or has difficulty understanding. Just speak clearly.
- When you leave a conversation or group of people that includes someone with low vision, let them know as it can be awkward for the individual who may think you're still present.
- Try and put yourself at eye level with an individual who is a wheelchair user, and speak directly to them.
- If you do not understand what someone has said, do not pretend that you have. Ask them to repeat what they said, ask them questions with 'yes' or 'no' answers, ask them to use different words to convey their message, ask whether they can write it down or use gestures or pictures to make themselves understood.
- Be aware that behaviour that might be considered inappropriate could stem from frustration at not being able to adequately communicate their wants and needs.
- Remember that people with disability deserve the same respect and treatment as any other member of your centre. Therefore, a person with a disability should also be made aware of your centre's rules or code of conduct and be expected to abide by the same rules,

within reason (you may need to make the code of conduct or centre rules available in an alternative format).

- Don't push a person's wheelchair if they haven't asked you to, and never lean on or hang things from a person's wheelchair unless you have permission.

- Don't distract an assistance animal (eg Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs) by patting or giving food.

The best practice use of language when referring to people with disability is person-first and impairment second (when relevant).

 DON'T USE	 ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES
Disabled (the)	People with disability, person with a disability
Deaf (the)	Person who is deaf or hard of hearing
Blind (the), visually impaired (the)	Person who is blind, person with low vision
Wheelchair bound or confined to wheelchair (wheelchairs enable mobility not restriction)	Wheelchair user, person who uses a wheelchair
Suffer from, afflicted with 'condition'	Person has/with 'condition'
Mentally retarded	Person with an intellectual disability
Physically/mentally/vertically challenged; differently abled (these are euphemistic and patronising)	Person with a disability
Special/Special needs (this is demeaning and childlike)	Person with a disability
Disabled parking	Accessible parking
Disabled toilet	Accessible toilet

Adapted from ACE DisAbility Network website

Section 4:

Engaging with your local community

To increase engagement of people with disability the first steps are being accessible and inclusive. You can also partner with local or service-specific organisations to run appropriate programs or events. The list below is a starting point for identifying potential partners or support organisations:

City of Kingston	The Social Development Team can provide guidance, help with promotional material and links to the disability community. Centres may consider applying for a City of Kingston Community Grant for funding to help increase participation of people with disability. The Social Development Team can also help link centres directly with organisations and networks able to discuss programs or offer facilities. P: 1300 653 356 E: community@kingston.vic.gov.au
AAA Play	Access for All Abilities provides a first-point-of call service connecting people with a disability to sports and recreational opportunities in Melbourne, Victoria. P: 1800 222 842 E: request@aaavic.org.au W: aaavic.org.au

<p>Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)</p>	<p>ADEC strives to empower people with a disability from non-English speaking backgrounds, their carers, and families to fully participate as members of the Victorian community. ADEC is a state-wide organisation.</p> <p>P: 03 9480 1666 E: info@adec.org.au W: adec.org.au</p>
<p>Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)</p>	<p>ACD is the leading advocacy and information service for families of children with any type of disability living in Victoria.</p> <p>P: 03 9818 2000 E: mail@acd.org.au W: acd.org.au</p>
<p>Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT)</p>	<p>Services include social and independent living skills, community participation and recreation and leisure activities for adults with autism.</p> <p>P: 1800 277 328 E: contact@autismspectrum.org.au W: autismspectrum.org.au</p>
<p>Bayley House</p>	<p>Bayley House, based in Brighton, offers a range of services and programs to support adults with an intellectual disability.</p> <p>P: 03 9982 1500 E: contactus@bayleyhouse.org.au W: bayleyhouse.org.au</p>
<p>Bayside Special Developmental School</p>	<p>Bayside SDS, based in Moorabbin, is a school in which teachers, specialists, therapists and parents work together to provide individual education and therapy programs for students with special needs.</p> <p>P: 03 9555 4155 E: bayside.sds@edumail.vic.gov.au W: baysidesds.vic.edu.au</p>

Berendale School	<p>Berendale is a modern and innovative secondary school that offers an alternative education for students with a mild-to-moderate intellectual disability. Berendale is located in Hampton East and services students in the south eastern suburbs.</p> <p>P: 03 9555 6141 W: berendale.vic.edu.au</p>
BrainLink Services	<p>Brainlink provides information, referral and education services for families and carers of people who have an acquired brain injury or who have suffered a stroke or other neurological condition or brain tumours.</p> <p>P: 1800 677 579 E: admin@brainlink.org.au W: brainlink.org.au</p>
Central Bayside Adult Community Options (CBACO)	<p>CBACO has a number of day programs for adults with disability in the City of Kingston.</p> <p>P: 03 8587 0250 E: info@cbchs.org.au W: cbchs.org.au</p>
Communication Rights Australia	<p>Communication Rights Australia is a human rights information and advocacy organisation giving priority to people with communication or speech difficulties.</p> <p>P: 03 9555 8552 E: info@communicationrights.org.au W: communicationrights.org.au</p>
Deaf Children Australia	<p>Deaf Children Australia provides a range of services to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.</p> <p>P: 03 9539 5300 E: helpline@deafchildren.org.au W: deafchildren.org.au</p>

Disability Sport and Recreation	<p>Disability Sport and Recreation is the health promotional organisation for the disability sport and recreation sector in Victoria. Its mission is to provide and promote positive health outcomes for Victorians with disability through participation in sport and recreation.</p> <p>P: 1800 234 648 E: info@dsr.org.au W: dsr.org.au</p>
Jewish Care (and Maccabi Victoria)	<p>Jewish Care provides an Outreach Support Program to enable people living with disability at home to become more independent and involved in their community. Maccabi Victoria, in conjunction with Jewish Care, facilitates an accessible All Abilities program, offering options for people with disability to participate in sporting and recreational activities.</p> <p>P: 03 8517 5999 E: info@jewishcare.org.au W: jewishcare.org.au</p>
Marriott Support Services	<p>Specialising in the areas of day services, transition programs and employment for adults with intellectual disability, Marriott Support Services aims to achieve greater inclusion in the wider community for people with disability.</p> <p>P: 03 9578 7557 E: reception@marriott.org.au W: marriott.org.au</p>
MOIRA	<p>Disability services for children and young people including recreation and respite services and youth services.</p> <p>P: 03 8552 2222 E: hello@moira.org.au W: moira.org.au</p>

The Bridge	<p>The Bridge Inc. is a not-for-profit disability services provider located in the south eastern suburbs.</p> <p>P: 03 8710 8555 E: info@thebridgeinc.org.au W: thebridgeinc.org.au</p>
Scope	<p>Scope provides a range of flexible services and activities to support people with disability to live the life that they choose. Scope’s mission is to enable each person it supports to live as an empowered and equal citizen.</p> <p>P: 03 9587 8225 E: contact@scopevic.org.au W: scopevic.org.au</p>
Wallara Australia	<p>Wallara delivers programs in the south eastern suburbs, providing a wide range of community-based programs.</p> <p>P: 03 9792 2985 E: info@wallara.com.au W: wallara.com.au</p>
Wesley Mission Disability Services Southern	<p>Wesley Mission provides a range of services including education, training, recreation and respite programs for people with disability.</p> <p>P: 03 9794 3000 E: dssouth@wesley.org.au W: wesley.org.au</p>
Yarrabah School	<p>School for students with intellectual, physical and/ or emotional disabilities who range from three to 18 years of age.</p> <p>P: 03 9580 0384 E: yarrabah.sch@edumail.vic.gov.au W: yarrabah.sch.vic.edu.au</p>

Yooralla	Yooralla provides essential services for children and adults with disability, their families and carers. P: 03 9666 4500 E: yooralla@yooralla.com.au W: yooralla.com.au
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National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rolled out in the City of Kingston from April 2018.

The NDIS is a new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers. Disability could affect anyone – having the right support makes a big difference.

This may mean that more people with disability will receive the appropriate support to access their community. Centres may be approached by potential members with a disability who want to become involved.

To find out more about the NDIS visit ndis.gov.au or speak with the City of Kingston Social Development Team.

My Community Life

mycommunitylife.com.au

My Community Life is a free online marketing website for community groups and organisations to list their organisation, events, activities and volunteering opportunities.

This provides a resource for residents to find out how they can be involved in community life in the City of Kingston.

The My Community Life website allows people to search for activities, events and volunteering opportunities that are on offer within the City of Kingston. Listings can be filtered by suburb, date and type to ensure people find the information that interests them.

The site also provides resources such as maps, public transport options and the ability to link to Facebook and twitter to share information with friends.

Section 5: Celebrating diversity and raising awareness

There are recognition days for specific disabilities and to celebrate all people with disability. This section outlines some key dates and gives ideas of things centres can do to celebrate.

Consider running activities in line with days of recognition in partnership with local disability organisations.

Hosting awareness or fundraising events for charitable organisations or campaigns is a great way to support our diverse community, raise money for those in need and improve your centre's profile.

Here are some key dates to celebrate people with disability and promote inclusion in your centre:

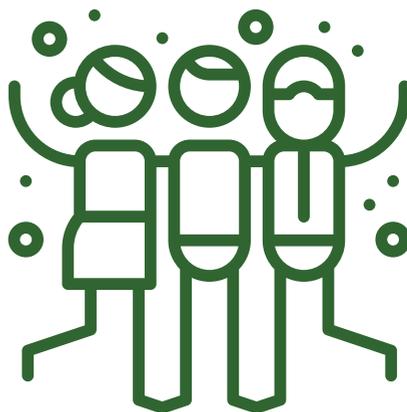
DATE	OBSERVANCE	FOR MORE INFORMATION
March 21	World Down Syndrome Day	Down Syndrome Victoria: downsyndromevictoria.org.au
April 2	World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)	Amaze – Autism Victoria: amaze.org.au
Last Wednesday of April	International Guide Dog Day	Guide Dogs Victoria: guidedogsvictoria.com.au
Early May	National Heart Week	Heart Foundation: heartfoundation.org.au

DATE	OBSERVANCE	FOR MORE INFORMATION
Early May	National Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Week	MND Australia: mndaust.asn.au
First Tuesday in May	World Asthma Day	Asthma Foundation of Victoria: asthma.org.au
Last Wednesday in May	World Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Day	MS Society Victoria: mssociety.org.au
First week of September	National Spina Bifida Awareness Week	Spina Bifida Foundation Victoria: sbfv.org.au
First Wednesday of October	World Cerebral Palsy Day	Cerebral Palsy Support Network cpsn.org.au
October Held from the third Saturday of October and ending the following Friday	National Week of Deaf People	Deaf Victoria deafvictoria.org.au Vicdeaf vicdeaf.org.au Deaf Children Australia deafchildreनाustralia.org.au
Second week of November	Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week	Event homepage: sciaw.com.au Victorian contacts: AQA Victoria: aqavic.org.au Independence Australia: independenceaustralia.com

DATE	OBSERVANCE	FOR MORE INFORMATION
Last week of November	National Social Inclusion Week	Event homepage: socialinclusionweek.com.au
December 3	International Day of People with Disability	Event homepage: idpwd.com.au

What your centre could do:

- Invite a group to participate in an activity at your centre and then host a BBQ afterwards.
- Arrange fundraising for a particular group on a nominated day. Volunteer centre members could rattle collection tins, organise a raffle and/or sell awareness merchandise.
- Partner with a local disability support organisation to deliver an activity to their clients.
- Have centre members participate in a disability awareness activity e.g. do tasks blindfolded, use non-dominant hand to paint, have a 'silent' morning where you refrain from verbal communication and use other ways to communicate.
- Promote your centre's inclusive and accessible activities to local media.
- Offer free membership/activity fees for the day/week/month to community members.
- Have centre members volunteer with organisations hosting their own events.



Section 6:

Access for all resources

This section outlines where you can go for further information and resources that will assist you to increase disability inclusion at your centre.



FREE ONLINE TRAINING

ACE DisAbility Network	The ACE Disability Network website has a range of free training videos. acedisability.org.au
YouMeUs – Achieving Inclusion	YouMeUs has a range of free inclusive online training courses aimed at Neighbourhood Houses, Community Centres, Men’s Sheds and Leisure Centre staff and volunteers to build skills and confidence to engage and include people with disability. You are also provided with a certificate on completion. youmeus.info

GENERAL RESOURCES

City of Kingston	Provides a range of information for individuals, centres and business to improve access and inclusion. kingston.vic.gov.au/Services/Disability
ACE DisAbility Network	Provide a great range of information under the section information for providers, including the Language of Disability, Inclusion in the Community, Legislative Requirements and Definition of Disability. The resources for providers section includes a large range of information for training organisations. acedisability.org.au

GENERAL RESOURCES

Inclusion Melbourne	Has some great resources on their website including two great volunteer manuals for including people with disabilities. These are available on their publications page. <u>inclusion.melbourne/resources/publications</u>
Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training	The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training provides information, advice and resources to disability practitioners, academics, teachers and students on inclusive practices within the post-secondary education sector. This website has been developed for the university and TAFE sector, however information may be useful for those who offer community courses. <u>adcet.edu.au</u>
Classroom Strategy Resources for Teaching People with Disability	Written for community organisations: includes Model Policies (also in Easy English), tips and examples on class room techniques and teaching strategies, duty of care and a range of other disability related topics. <u>providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/inclusive-communities-resource-manual-pdf</u>
Australian Human Rights Commission	Provides a range of information and fact sheets on accessibility, inclusion and disability related matters. <u>humanrights.gov.au/employers/good-practice-good-business-factsheets</u>
City of Whitehorse	Have developed a comprehensive accessible communications guide and other resources for community groups. <u>whitehorse.vic.gov.au/MetroAccess.html</u>

Section 7: Accessible information

This section explains how accessing information can be difficult for some people, especially for those who have a disability that makes receiving information hard. Providing information in a variety of formats helps ensure that information is communicated to the widest audience possible.

Community members who may experience barriers to information include:

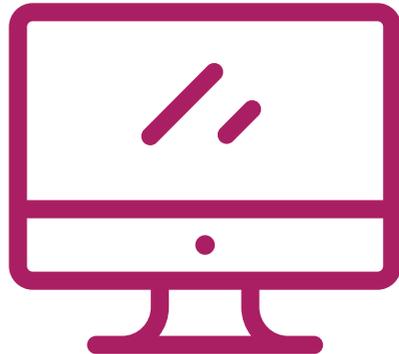
- people with disability
- older adults
- people with low literacy skills
- people who speak English as a second language
- people with mental illnesses.

What is an accessible format?

‘Accessible format’ is the term used to describe alternative communication formats that

increase access to information for many people, including people with disability. Sometimes the term ‘alternative formats’ is used.

An accessible format document is one written without jargon and designed so the text is more readable. Assistive technology and software such as screen reading software or computer generated voice technology can also improve access to information.



Commonly used accessible formats

Examples of commonly used accessible formats include:

- **Plain language**, also called plain English, is a communication format an audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Plain language involves:
 - short sentences
 - the use of an active voice
 - positive rather than negative sentences
 - explanations of new or complex concepts
 - concrete examples
 - no acronyms, metaphors, colloquialisms or puns.
- **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, low English language literacy levels or people for whom English is a second language. Developing Easy English documents is a

specialised skill. Easy English uses:

- clear and simple words
 - short sentences
 - pictures and photographs are often used to illustrate sentences.
- **Large print** is typically a minimum 16-18 point font size, but text should be customised to suit individual requests.
 - **Videos** with captions and/or audio description.
 - **Audio** — audio, 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** is a system of writing used by people who are blind. When preparing information to be converted to Braille by a service that specialises in this field, remember to keep the document layout as simple as possible for easy transcription.

Producing accessible formats

It is not necessary to produce all documents in all accessible formats. The most appropriate formats can vary according to an individual's specific communication needs.

For best practice, using plain language (plain English) at all times is encouraged. Plain language is communication that your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.

Centres are encouraged to identify key documents and prepare them in accessible formats. This enables you to respond to requests for accessible formats in a timely manner. It also reduces the need to

store large quantities of materials that may go unused.

It is recommended the availability of accessible formats is advertised or promoted by a short statement. In a publication, this statement is often located on the inside front or back cover. It tells people how they can obtain an accessible format of the publication. This is often referred to as an 'accessibility tag'.

An example of an accessibility tag is:

To receive this publication in an accessible format, please contact City of Kingston on 1300 653 356, info@kingston.vic.gov.au or visit kingston.vic.gov.au

Accessible print and electronic information

Many people in the community find small, elegant and colourful print difficult to read. Making documents more readable reduces the need for alternative accessible formats. The following are a number of tips/recommendations to make standard print more accessible:



- Use a minimum 12-point font size.
- Use plain fonts such as Arial. These are often described as “sans serif” (without the small curls or decorative features).
- Avoid using blocks of text written in capital letters. Information is easier to read for people with low vision if it is written using a mix of upper and lower case.
- Separate paragraphs with blank lines make it easier to find the start of the next paragraph.
- Justify margins on the left-hand side and leave the right-hand margin unjustified.
- Use contrasting colours to increase readability. Black text on a white background is preferable.
- Do not place text over pictures, photos or other images. 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.
- Limit the use of tables. Where tables are used, design the content so that it is suitable for



screen-reading software. This might include repeating the name of the column in each cell.

- Use plain English. Use short sentences with no jargon and clear headings.
- Avoid the use of underlining or italics, instead use bold text for emphasis.
- Avoid using text boxes.

Accessible digital information

When websites are developed, especially for government organisations, developers design them so that they meet the latest web content accessibility guidelines. However, if webpages are owned by different authors and approved by different supervisors, accessibility can fall through the cracks, and webpages can become inaccessible.

This often happens because authors and supervisors of webpages are unaware of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Examples of webpage content that meets accessibility criteria include:

- PDF files accompanied by a word document or HTML page
- alternative text for images
- captions or transcripts for videos/audio files
- content and resources in plain English/Easy English
- headings used correctly to organise content
- unique and descriptive website links
- tables used for tabular data, not for layout purposes
- content that can be accessed with the keyboard only and in a logical way.

Checklist for accessible information

HAVE YOU:	YES ✓
1. Used plain English?	
2. Used clear headings?	
3. Used plain, sans serif font (such as Arial, Helvetica)?	
4. Checked for significant colour contrast between text and background?	
5. Avoided using UPPER CASE, <u>underlining</u> and <i>italics</i> ?	
6. Checked that text is at least a minimum 12 point type size?	
7. Checked that the text is uncluttered with no background graphics, patterns or watermarks?	
8. Used left aligned paragraphs, checked the spacing and limited the use of indentation?	
9. Checked that colour is not used as a prompt or to convey information?	
10. Used pictures and diagrams where appropriate?	
11. Checked that written material is available on request in alternative formats and there is an accessibility tag statement?	

The following are only applicable to information that will be available electronically including webpages, documents that will be available online and in emails)

HAVE YOU:	YES ✓
12. Used 'alt text' for images?	
13. Avoided using images of text, graphs and tables unless the image is part of a logo or a brand name?	
14. Used tables appropriately?	
15. Made all documents available in an accessible version (i.e. both word and PDF)?	
16. Checked that there are links describing where the link is going, not the URL address or 'click here'.	
17. Checked that links to documents contain the document type and file size	

Use these tips if your document will be printed

HAVE YOU:	YES ✓
18. Checked that information has been printed on matt or satin non-reflective paper?	

The following are applicable to webpages only

HAVE YOU:	YES ✓
19. Used clear page titles?	
20. Checked that audio and videos have subtitles, captions or written transcripts?	
21. Checked that audio and videos can be paused or stopped by users?	



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