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Introduction

Everyone enjoys going to a good event. They can be a time to relax, have a bit of fun, learn some new skills, spend time with friends and family, or meet new people.

Unfortunately people with disabilities commonly come up against barriers which make their participation in events very difficult or impossible.

This might be because of where the event is held. Inaccessible venues pose many problems for people with various disabilities. Or, the event might not feel welcoming and inclusive.

This guide is designed to assist event organisers ensure that everyone is able to attend and participate in their events.

It will cover physical aspects of accessibility, and outline how the content of events can be more inclusive.

These guidelines are intended for application to the planning of any event or meeting, which may include conferences, festivals, workshops, film or music events, award ceremonies, fundraisers, community consultations or Annual General Meetings.

The principals of the guide can be applied to internal events within Council, such as functions, committee meetings and training.

The guidelines apply to any event, regardless of whether you are expecting people with disabilities to attend. This is because they will ensure a better experience for all event attendees, and also because it is likely that you will not know when a person with a disability wants to attend your event. People are under no obligation to disclose their disability to you.

Don’t forget that people with disabilities will not just be participants to your event, they may be sponsors, performers, special guests or presenters. This guide will help you to consider how accessibility and inclusivity can be ensured through all aspects of your event.

This guide cannot cover every instance where an access issue may occur. The most important principles to remember are:

- Throughout the planning process continually ask yourself, “Is this accessible and inclusive for everyone?”
- Remember that everyone should be able to attend an event, feel included and have their needs met.
- Be responsive when an accessibility issue is raised.
- Ask how you can make that aspect of the event more accessible and consult with others who can advise you on accessibility.
- Find a solution to the problem which will not compromise on the quality of the event experience for people with disabilities.
Be aware that no two people with disabilities are the same. All people have different needs and preferences. Examples have been provided in this guide to illustrate how a particular situation may affect a group of people with a specific disability. It is important to remember that these are generalisations and not all people in that group will be impacted in the same way.

This guide does not provide extensive technical specifications for access. For technical information consult the Disability Access to Premises (Buildings) Standards at http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2010L00668. Within these standards you will find references to the Australian Standards.

This guide provides detailed information about most aspects of making your event accessible and inclusive. A quick reference checklist can be found at the end of the guide in Section 5. This checklist acts as a summary of topics covered in this guide and can be used to make a quick assessment of your event.

**How Important is it to Plan Accessible Events?**

Approximately one in five people in Australia have a disability. Therefore, people with disabilities represent a significant sector of the population who need to be catered for.ii

Following this guide will help you to cater for a market which is often neglected, bringing the purchasing power of people with disabilities, plus their friends and families to your events.

People with disabilities have the right to participate in public life equally and with dignity, without disadvantage or discrimination.

People with disabilities are protected under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 which makes discrimination against people with disabilities unlawful in areas such as education, employment, transport, access to goods and services and access to premises. The act also protects family, carers, and other people associated with people with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability.  iii

If your event is not accessible and a person with a disability is disadvantaged or discriminated against either directly or indirectly, this could result in a complaint of discrimination against you or your organisation, which could be highly stressful, costly and damaging to a reputation.

Alternatively, making sure your event is accessible to people with disabilities demonstrates a commitment to, and value of inclusion of all people.

Local Governments are also required to demonstrate a commitment to access and inclusion for people with disabilities under the recently passed NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014. Hosting accessible and inclusive events is one way to help demonstrate this commitment.

Accessibility does not only benefit those with disabilities, it is beneficial to everyone; especially older people, parents with prams, people with temporary disabilities, children, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, event organisers and stall holders at your events and those with heavy loads making
deliveries. When an event has been planned with accessibility in mind it is generally a far more enjoyable event for everyone.

If you are contracting other services, such as caterers, or professional conference organisers, these services should be aware of their responsibility to make their services accessible to people with disabilities. You can ask them about how they plan to cater for people with disabilities when you are choosing a service provider.

Limited funding might mean you may find it difficult to implement some accessibility features. However, for the most part accessibility and inclusivity of an event is inexpensive and just requires some forward thinking, consultation and good decisions about your venue, services and activities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the following organisations for the use of their information in the compilation of this guide. Specific resources are listed at the end of this guide.

- Meetings and Events Australia
- The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- The City of Whittlesea and Deb Whitecross Enterprises
- Knox City Council
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- NSW Government – Don’t DIS my ABILITY campaign
- Deaf Australia Inc
- Vision Australia
- Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities
Section 1: Planning Your Event

From the earliest stages of organising your event, ensure that accessibility is on your planning agenda. It is much easier to consider accessibility from the outset, rather than as an afterthought closer to the day of the event.

You need to consider it a given that there will be people with disabilities who will be attending your event.

Consult with the Experts

It can be much easier to plan an event with accessibility in mind when you consult with people who know how to make an event accessible for people with a variety of disabilities.

You could invite people with disabilities and or, representatives who work in the disability sector to be on your organising committee.

Your Budget

For the most part, making your event accessible to people with disabilities just takes good planning. However, there may be some expenses that you need to budget for during the early planning stages. These expenses may include;

- Sign language interpreters
- The production of accessible formats; Braille or audio
- A wheelchair accessible portable toilet (if the venue you choose does not have an accessible toilet).

Choosing a Venue

When choosing a venue for your event, you will need to consider the accessibility. It is best to do a walkthrough of the venue. The below list of pointers should assist you in making a decision.

The Entrance

- The Entrance must be accessible via a flat, even surface or ramp, or elevator.
- If a ramp leads to the entry it should have a maximum gradient of 1:14 and have a slip resistant tread. For further details on ramps refer to The Disability Access to Premises (Buildings) Standards section, D5.2.
- Pay particular attention to whether there is a small step or two at the entry point. Often this is overlooked. If such a step does exist consider another building, or you may consider hiring a portable ramp. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)
- Staircases should have railings on both sides.
- If an alternative entry to the main entrance is used for accessibility, signage is required to indicate this accessible entry.
- Also note that entry to a building for people with disabilities should be equally dignified as it is for people without disabilities.
• The doors of the venue need to be easy to open. Automatic doors are preferable. If a door can be pushed open using only a light level of pressure, this is also acceptable.
• Also consider the door handle. A door knob is more difficult to turn compared to a lever handle. Try using the door handle with a clenched fist and light force.
• You could also leave the door open in a locked position.
• If the event requires a reception desk or table, ensure that it is low enough for a person of short stature or a person using a wheelchair to approach and see over. Some reception counters have a lowered section especially for this purpose. These lowered sections also provide leg room for a person using a wheelchair. This enables them to approach the desk front on, rather than from the side. If this is not available, staff will need to be accommodating and come around to the front of the counter to serve the person.

The Venue

• Make sure that participants with disabilities will be able to get to all parts of the venue that are necessary for them to visit including; toilets, the conference room, breakout rooms, eating areas.
• Consider whether people with disabilities will be able to move around furniture and any other equipment that will be assembled on the day.
• The venue should be well lit and also should have suitable window coverings so that you can control glare and sunlight.
• If your event is a sit-down function, or meeting with entertainment or presentations you should investigate whether the venue has a hearing augmentation system to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing. (See Section 5: Useful Resources for more information to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing.)
• Make sure there are wheelchair accessible spaces within fixed seating arrangements with seating near by for friends and family.
• If there are lifts in the venue consider whether they are large enough for people using wheelchairs to fit into and turn around in, and will also permit an attendant to fit. Also think about if the buttons are low enough for a person in a wheelchair to reach. The buttons should be labelled with tactile and Braille labels. The lift should also have audio announcements and visual displays indicating the floor level upon arrival.
• If there is a stage for presentations consider how it can be accessed in a wheelchair. If you cannot make it accessible via portable ramp, consider how you can designate space for a flat stage.
• Examine the floor surfaces. If carpet is too thick people using wheelchairs may find it difficult to push over this surface. Carpets with a low pile are best. Also make sure that surfaces are not particularly slippery or uneven.
• Consider whether the venue’s emergency procedure will cater for people with disabilities, for example, will people with disabilities be offered assistance to evacuate the building?
• Signage in the building such as emergency exits, toilets and way finding should be clear, printed in contrasting colours and at a height where most people will be able to read it.
Accessible Toilets

- The term ‘accessible toilet’ refers to a bathroom which a person with a disability is able to use. They may require a wheelchair, a carer or the support of railings for balance.
- It is essential to have an accessible toilet available at any event.
- It should be located with the other toilets.
- Ensure that it is unlocked for your event and not being used as a storage area.
- A unisex toilet is preferable.
- Consider how easy the door of the accessible toilet is to open
- The door should be at least 850mm wide to allow the width of a wheelchair.
- It is preferable that the door opens outwards or is a sliding door. If inward opening consider whether a person in a wheelchair and an attendant would be able to fit inside and close the door.
- Check that the door locks and unlocks easily from the inside
- Ensure that there is sufficient room to have a wheelchair positioned beside and in front of the toilet pan to allow for transfer from the chair.
- There must be an L shaped continuous grab rail on the non-transfer side of the toilet pan.
- Consider whether the flush button, toilet paper, bin, wash basin, soap and paper towel dispensers, and or hand dryer are within reach for someone using a wheelchair.
- The wash basin should have a lever tap. Is it easy to turn on and off with a clenched fist and with light force? viii
- If there is no suitable accessible toilet you will need to hire a portable accessible toilet. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)
- For technical specifications, consult the Access to Premises Buildings Standards (See Section 5: Useful Resources)

Outdoors

- Make sure that paved areas where your event will take place are free of trip hazards such as major cracks.
- If the event is on the beach, you may be able to borrow Gosford City Council’s beach wheelchairs to provide access to your participants who use a wheelchair. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)
- Make sure shaded areas are provided for those who are sensitive to heat or who experience light or glare sensitivity. Shade marquees can be hired from Gosford City Council. (See Section 5:Useful Resources)
- Ensure that there are no tree branches or bushes which impede into the line of travel, either from the sides or at head height.
- Make sure that there are no tree roots in any line of travel.

Facilities in Gosford Local Area

Visit the link below to view a list of community facilities in the Gosford local area which may be appropriate for you to hire out as a venue. Basic information about
facilities is provided, including disability access. Contact details for each venue are also provided.

Website:

Parking and Transport to and from Event

Of equal importance to choosing a venue is to consider how people with disabilities will get to and from your event.

Public Transport

It is preferable that your event venue is situated within close proximity to public transport. Many people with disabilities rely on public transport to get around; you will therefore be increasing the ability of people to attend your event if there is good transport available.

Consider how easy it will be for your attendees to walk from the transport to your event. Think about the distance and quality of the environment. If you consider the walk will be too difficult for attendees with disabilities to navigate, you could consider hiring an accessible shuttle bus.

If an accessible shuttle bus is not available, you may need to provide Taxi money for a wheelchair user so that they can attend your event on equal terms.

You can include information about the proximity of public transport and its accessibility in your invitations. This will make it easier for people with disabilities to plan their trip and will offer some reassurance that your event is accessible by public transport.

Accessible Parking for People with Disabilities

- Accessible parking should be available at your event.
- Accessible car parks should be as close as possible to the venue, with a clear and accessible line of travel leading to and from the entrance.
- Accessible car parks are wider than average car parks.
- Accessible car parks should be marked with the universal sign of access (Stick figure wheelchair user over a blue background). See the Disability Access to Premises Buildings Standards for specific technical requirements (See Section 5: Useful Resources)

Drop-off and Pick-up Zone

It is a good idea to have an area designated at your event where people can be dropped off and picked up at close proximity to the venue.

The zone creates a safe area where people with disabilities can get in and out of vehicles without danger from traffic. It also means that people with disabilities do not have to travel far to the entrance of the venue.
• The zone needs to be as close as possible to the venue with a clear and accessible line of travel leading to and from the entrance.
• The zone needs to be appropriate for private cars, taxis and vans to park and be able to offload wheelchairs.
• It needs to be sufficiently sized to allow wheelchairs to offload. There may also be several people needing to be around the vehicle assisting.
**Section 2: Invitations and Advertising**

Your venue and services at your event may be accessible, however if your advertising is not, people with disabilities may not even know your event is happening.

**Formats of Invitations**

It is essential to provide advertising and invitations in various formats to reach as many people as possible. You might use posters, flyers, invitations, mail outs, advertising in newspapers and magazines, email, advertising online, social media, radio and TV. By having various kinds of advertising you will usually cater for the access needs of people with a range of disabilities.

**Hardcopy or Image PDF Invitations and Advertising**

You may wish to produce hard copy or PDF flyers and posters using graphics. It is possible to create an appealing and eye catching document while ensuring that it does not prevent others from being able to read and understand it.

By ensuring your invitations and advertising for your event follow clear print guidelines you will help cater for many people with vision impairments, those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, those with intellectual disabilities, elderly people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**Producing Clear Print:**

These guidelines can be applied to any document you are producing, whether it is to be printed or electronic. (These tips are adapted from the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Guidelines on clear print.)

- Keep the format simple and in a logical sequence.
- Keep the main text justified to the left margin; this makes it easier for readers to follow the text. Headings and titles can be centred if desired.
- Make sure text is horizontal and straight, rather than going vertically down the page, zigzag or curved
- Use clear, easy to read sans serif fonts, such as Arial. Avoid serif fonts. These fonts have extra details on the letters which make them more difficult to read. Do not use fonts which cluster letters close together, are narrow or which space too far apart.
- Do not italicise, underline or use block letters or a combination of capital and lower case letters, such as, ‘IETteRs’.
- When creating flyers or invitations you can cater to people who require large print by making your text at least 18pt font when possible. Text should never be smaller than 12pt font.
- Use bolding to provide emphasis on important details. However, ensure that the font is not too thick, obscuring the gaps between letters or the space within a character, such as with the letters, ‘o’, ‘s’ and ‘e’.
- Make sure the colours of the text and the background are well contrasting, for example black text on a white background, or white text on a black
background are preferred by most people with vision impairments. You could also use such colour schemes as a black font over a pastel coloured background, or a pastel coloured font over a dark coloured background.

- Avoid colour combinations such as red and green, blue and green, green and yellow and blue and yellow, as people with colour deficiencies and colour blindness find these colour combinations difficult or impossible to read.
- Use clear, well defined photos and images. Consider how well the foreground of the photo contrasts with the background.
- If you are captioning photos, place the captions in a consistent position, such as beneath each photo.
- Do not place images, graphics, photos or watermarks behind the text, these can make reading the text extremely difficult or impossible.
- You can use paper with a matt finish as glossy papers reflect light and can prevent people with vision impairments and light and glare sensitivity from being able to read the text.

**Electronic Methods**

*There will still be many people who cannot access printed materials, such as those who are totally blind or who have an insufficient amount of vision to read text. These people will commonly use adaptive software to gain access to information.*

Screen reading software enables people who are blind or vision impaired to read text information through listening to synthesised voice output. Screen magnification enlarges the computer screen to the users preferred size. Some people will use a Braille display, which translates text into electronic Braille.

Remember the below points when producing electronic documents

- Screen readers and Braille displays do not interact with image PDF’s or images. A text version of your invitation is essential to ensure access to these people.
- Providing a text version will also benefit those using magnification software as image PDF’s commonly appear blurred once enlarged.
- Prior to producing your invitation in a hard copy format or as an image PDF, make sure you have all the details of the document in a text format, such as in a word document. This will make it far easier for you to produce alternative versions of your document.
- Follow the points on producing clear print provided above when creating text for electronic distribution.
- If you wish to distribute your invitation via email, provide a text version of the invitation in the body of the email or attached as a Word or RTF document. This will enable people who use screen reading software or an electronic Braille display to read the information.
- Utilise the internet and social media to advertise your event, including your organisation’s Facebook page and website. Make sure that the text of the invite is included in the original post, so that screen reader users can read the information.
- Also ensure that accessibility details are included in these forms of advertising.
Accessibility Details on Your Invitation

You can advise potential participants of the accessibility of your event on the invitation. Such details may include features of your venue and proximity of public transport. This will be very helpful to people who have disabilities, as they will know how to prepare for the event. It will also offer great peace of mind to be aware that the event will be accessible when they arrive.

An example of an accessibility statement:

Venue is wheelchair accessible, with accessible parking and amenities. A wheelchair accessible shuttle bus will operate on a 15 minute basis from 12:00 PM from Gosford Rail Station to the venue. Carers free entry to event.

As a continuation of this statement also have a note on your invitation which encourages people to make contact with the event organiser if they have any access requirements to attend the event. These may include alternative formats of the invitation, information provided at the event, such as the conference pack or PowerPoint slides, or a need for a hearing loop or interpreter. The statement could read:

If you have any additional access requirements to attend this event please phone (---Phone number----) or email (----email address----) or SMS (---mobile number---).

It is important to provide various ways to contact you to cater for differing needs. A SMS option will be of great assistance to people who are deaf or who have speech impairments.

It’s best not to make sweeping statements like, ‘This is an inclusive event’. What does this mean anyway? It doesn’t tell someone if there is an accessible toilet. It is best to state specific access features.

Carers and Personal Assistants

Details of entry fees are usually included on an invitation. Consider whether it is necessary to charge carers for an entry fee or ticket to your event. They may be there to provide an interpreting service, to act as a sighted guide to someone who is blind, or to provide assistance with personal care.

Gosford City Council is an affiliate of Companion Card NSW, which means holders of the Companion Card can have their attendant carer attend an event hosted by Gosford City Council without fee. You can advertise if the Companion Card will be accepted at your event on your invitation. Upon presentation of the Companion Card provide the carer with a ticket free of charge.

See the below link for more information about the Companion Card, including a list of affiliates of the scheme. Website: http://www.nswcompanioncard.org.au/

Presenters, performers and sponsors

Ask presenters, performers and sponsors upon invitation if they require any access adjustments in order to attend your event.
Section 3: Etiquette and Language

Even if you ensure that your venue, advertising and activities are accessible, this does not necessarily mean your event will be inclusive and welcoming for people with disabilities. Etiquette and language are very important in ensuring a good event experience for all.

Provide your event staff with the below list of tips for communication with people who have disabilities.

Tips for Communication

- Always speak to the person with a disability, rather than their interpreter or carer. Do not talk in third person to the interpreter, for example, ‘Does she want a cup of tea?’
- Speak to people with disabilities in the same manner you would to people without disabilities. Do not speak to an adult with a disability as though they are a child.
- If it is appropriate for the particular event shake hands with people with disabilities, as you would with people without disabilities.
- Do not speak to a person’s assistance or guide dog rather than the person. Engage a person in conversation before asking questions about their dog.
- Try not to express your admiration of people with disabilities when they are carrying out everyday tasks that all other people perform, for example, ‘That’s really wonderful that you caught the bus here on your own’, such comments are patronising.
- It’s best not to ask personal questions about a person’s disability when first meeting, for example, ‘Were you born with this, or did you have an accident?’ Curiosity is natural; however it is important to resist these questions as they are often considered intrusive. People with disabilities generally consider there to be far more interesting things to talk about compared to their disability.
- When talking about disability, use expressions such as, people with disabilities, a person with a disability, a person with quadriplegia, a person who is blind, a person who uses a wheelchair, rather than terms such as, disabled people, the disabled, a disabled person, a cripple, a blind person, a wheelchair bound or confined person. Generally remember that the person comes before the disability. Terms such as cripple, deaf and mute, deaf and dumb, retarded, slow, simple, spastic, and mong are highly offensive terms and not acceptable to be used to describe a person with a disability, nor to be used in conversation generally.
- Never assume assistance is needed or wanted by people with disabilities. Always ask if your assistance is required.
- Approach people with disabilities at your events to welcome them. It may be difficult for many people with disabilities to approach event staff, such as those with vision impairments and those with physical impairments.
- If speaking to a person using a wheelchair for longer than a few minutes, pull up a chair to sit at an equal height to them.
• Do not panic if you think you have offended or said something wrong, simply apologize as you would to a person without a disability.\textsuperscript{xii}

• Whenever you start, or resume a conversation with someone with vision impairment introduce yourself and let them know if you are a member of event staff, as they may not be able to read your badge. Make sure you say your name each time you engage them, as it is not easy for people who are vision impaired or blind to remember voices. It is good practice during meetings and conferences for all people to state their name before speaking.

• Advise people who are blind or vision impaired when you are leaving the room, otherwise they may continue to speak to you without realizing you have left. \textsuperscript{xiii}

• If a person with vision impairment indicates they would like sighted guide to a particular area of your venue this means they want to take your arm and be led to the destination. For specific details on how to give sighted guide see this link \url{guidedogs.com.au/education-and-resources/access/dont-turn-a-blind-eye/guiding-communication}

For more guidance on appropriate language, visit: \url{www.dontdismyability.com.au/tools_and_tips/language_guide}

**Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs**

Guide, hearing and assistance dogs are legally permitted to enter any public facility.

Guide dogs are identified by their harness, which may be a leather or nylon piece. Look for the long handle on the dog’s back.

Hearing dogs are identified by their bright orange collars and leads and sometimes may wear an orange coat. Note that hearing dogs can be any breed.

Assistance dogs are identified by a blue jacket.

Note that several different organisations provide service dogs, and dogs from other organisations may be identified differently. If you are not sure of a service dog’s authenticity you can ask the handler to produce their dog’s passport or identification card.

• Do not pat, feed or distract a service dog in any way. Always talk to its owner rather than the dog.

• Ask the owner of a guide dog if they would like assistance to find their way around the venue, to amenities or the meeting room. If so, ask how you can best help them. Do not take hold of the dog’s lead or harness. Usually a guide dog user will instruct their dog to follow a person who is showing them to a particular area. Alternatively, they may ask to take your arm to be guided.

• Make sure you are aware of where a grassed area is close to the venue for toileting of dogs and your event staff are also aware and can advise dog handlers of the location.
Section 4: Your Event

It is important to consider the actual structure and content of your event. You should think about how inclusive and accessible your activities are and whether the venue is set up to allow for easy mobility, comfort and inclusion of all participants.

Emergencies

- Ensure emergency procedures address how people with disabilities will be assisted in the event of an emergency.
- Make sure that event staff are aware of these procedures.
- Consider whether the venue has auditory and visual alarms.
- When briefing participants at your event about emergency procedures, it is essential to do this in a way that all people can understand:
  - Use clear, plain English
  - Provide both auditory and visual instructions
  - Be descriptive with verbal directions to emergency exits, 'To my left is the emergency exit'
  - Use hand and arm gestures to indicate emergency exits
  - If you are providing this briefing at the start of a PowerPoint presentation you can include a slide with written instructions. Make sure however that you also verbalise all information that is displayed on the slide.
- Ensure that there are accessible paths of travel leading to emergency exits and once outside the building to the assembly area.

Medical Bands

If there is an instance of a person at your event being involved in an accident or experiencing a health problem, such as a seizure, or allergic reaction, always check whether the person has a medical bracelet, or necklace, or key ring. These medical bands will give you information about that person’s medical condition which will help you to act promptly and correctly in these instances.

Setup of the venue

The setup of your venue, whether it is an outdoor setting or conference or meeting room needs to be designed keeping in mind the needs of people with disabilities.

- People using wheelchairs and other mobility aids will appreciate having a good amount of space to move around the venue comfortably without finding they are unable to move through a particular area.
- Make sure that items such as signs, bags, garbage bins, stray chairs, plants or branches and trolleys are not protruding into, or on walk ways.
- Make sure that electrical cable and cords are moved off walk ways. If it is necessary to have them in a walk way, tape them securely to the floor. These can cause trip hazards for all people.
• Tape down the edges of rugs and carpets if it is likely they could be a trip hazard.
• If you need to have an area blocked off from the participants of your event, make sure you use bright coloured hazard tapes or flags to indicate the area. Place hazard tape at various heights, including at knee height. This will assist people who are vision impaired using long canes to detect the hazard. Do not rely on this being sufficient warning however. If you have hazards on access ways the area should be monitored to make sure people can safely navigate around the hazard.
• If you plan to have marquees, or tents, ensure that the lines and tent pegs are marked with bright hazard tape at various points on the line. Unmarked, these lines are commonly invisible to people with vision impairments and difficult for a cane and even a guide dog to pick up.
• Consider the volume of music at your event. Overly loud music may make it more difficult for people who are hard of hearing to interpret conversation and other sounds. People with vision impairments may also find loud music at an event difficult to navigate through, as their reliance on hearing for orientation is impaired. This only needs to be a consideration where music is not the main activity.
• Also be mindful of other noises which may be distracting during sit down events, such as, catering staff, or noise from an adjacent room.
• Consider having a quiet zone within your event where people can go for some refuge from the busyness and noise of the main event. Such spaces are often appreciated by those with autism spectrum disorders or people with certain mental health disorders.

Maps
You may wish to have floor maps made up for a larger event that help participants locate certain facilities, programs and activities. Produce these maps using the clear print guidelines provided above. (See Section 2: Invitations and Advertising)

These maps can be particularly useful for people with disabilities to navigate around your venue if the map contains information about accessible features, such as toilets, entrances and exits and access ways.

You could also consider having a tactile map created for the benefit of people who are blind or vision impaired. See Vision Australia’s webpage on production of alternative formats. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)

A more affordable option is to create a text map. This is likely to be useful to anyone who finds a standard map difficult to read. People who use screen readers will find them particularly useful.

Example of a text map:
• As you enter the building, directly in front of you by 2 metres is the reception counter. You can register here for the event.
• As you are facing the reception counter, to your right is a corridor that leads to the conference room.
The conference room is approximately 4 metres along the corridor on the left. When you are outside the room you will notice a square of carpet under your feet.

Toilets are located directly opposite the conference room. A single door opens into a room where the ladies toilets are located on the left, the men’s straight ahead and the unisex accessible toilet is to the right.

Think about the kinds of indicators that will act as orientation points for people who cannot see, for example, the square of carpet.

**Announcements**

At your event it is a good idea to have announcements advising participants of accessibility features to ensure that they are aware of facilities available. For example:

‘There are toilets, including accessible toilets available to the left of the stage, at the main entrance.’

Or

‘There is a free wheelchair accessible shuttle bus going to Gosford Rail Station leaving in 15 minutes from the drop off and pick up zone, near the main entrance.’

• Give specific verbal directions so that people who are vision impaired have a better chance of finding the facilities independently. Make sure you do not give directions such as, ‘over there’.

• Use hand and arm gestures to indicate the directions of facilities for the benefit of people who are deaf or hard of hearing to aid understanding.

**Producing Alternative formats**

You may be requested by people who wish to attend your event to provide the invitation to the event, or other materials that will be available on the day, such as programs or a conference pack in an alternative format.

Be easily contactable, approachable and willing to find a method of providing the required information.

Ask the person what format they would like the information in and whether they would prefer the information prior to the event or on the day. Many people will find it helpful to have the information prior so they have more time to read and process it.

**Electronic formats**

The most common alternative format you will be asked for is an electronic version. This is so that people with vision impairments can read the material using a screen reader or screen magnification.

Follow the steps above in Section 2 under ‘Electronic Materials’ for guidance.
Most commonly a Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format RTF version will be requested.

**Large Print**

You may receive a request from an event attendee for large print versions of your event materials, including; the invitation, agenda, or conference pack.

- Enlarging the original document using a photocopier and printing on larger paper is often not effective enough for a person with significant vision impairment; instead enlarge the text electronically within the original document.
- Standard large print is 18pt font.
- When you have an individual request for large print ask the participant what their preferred font size is, as all people with vision impairments have varying requirements.
- If you have to alter your existing document to enlarge the font, ensure that the document still reads coherently and you are still following the clear print guidelines. (See Section 2: Invitations and Advertising)
- Do not remove any information; ensure that the reader will have access to the whole document. 
- In most cases you will be able to produce large print yourself, however if it is of a large quantity you can contact Vision Australia for transcription services. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)
- In your advertising and event materials use large print where possible. This will be beneficial to many people.

**Braille and Audio**

Sometimes an individual will request a Braille or audio alternative format. You can contact Vision Australia for these transcription services. (See Section 5: Useful Resources)

The cost of these alternative formats is fairly inexpensive; however you will need to allow three weeks for the transcription service.

**Seating**

To maximise the enjoyment and comfort of your event for patrons with disabilities, give some thought to the seating arrangements.

- For sit down events, it is advisable to keep some seating reserved for people with disabilities. People with vision impairments will commonly find it helpful to be as close as possible to the event. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may also appreciate sitting close to the front to maximise their ability to lip read, see an interpreter and read captions or slides.
• Make sure that there is some seating available with arm rests. This will enable some people with mobility impairments to pull themselves up and out of a chair.
• Also ensure that your venue has seating spaces reserved for people using wheelchairs. Try to ensure that these spaces are not all in one place.
• Keep in mind that it is likely people with disabilities will want to have their friends, family or carers sitting with them. Therefore, you need to make sure that seating allows for this. xvii

Lighting

If the lighting is too dull at your event it may be harder for people who are vision impaired to navigate around your venue and make it difficult for people who are hard of hearing or deaf to lip read, and or understand their interpreter's hand movements.

If it is necessary to dim the lights during a PowerPoint presentation, consider whether this will have an impact on these people. Ask them whether there is sufficient lighting. If you are aware ahead of time that lighting may be an issue for this reason you might consider spot lighting for your speakers, and or an interpreter.

Another important aspect of lighting to consider is the use of special effect and strobe lighting. Some people with epilepsy and other conditions can react adversely to such kinds of lighting. If you are having an event which will contain special effects consider lighting that chases at a slower rate, rather than flashes or strobes. xviii

Some people can also react to camera flashes. It is advisable when gaining permission to take photographs at your event that you also ask people if they are sensitive to camera flashes. xix

Activities

It is important to give some consideration to the content of your event’s activities.

Try to think of activities which are inclusive of as many people as possible.

When deciding on an activity consider how well people with various disabilities will be able to engage with the activity. You can then devise alternative means of completing the task, or if it is inherently inaccessible for many people you can change the activity.

Example:

You want your participants to brainstorm as a group and write down ideas on butcher's paper.

Potential Barriers:

• Difficult for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to follow the conversation
- Might be difficult for people who are blind or vision impaired, or people who have acquired brain injuries, learning or intellectual disabilities to join in
- The pens you have provided might not be suitable for some people with physical disabilities

**Ways to make it inclusive:**

- Have a designated scribe and reader at each table
- Encourage participants to express ideas with pictures as well as words
- Allow the use of laptops or tablet computers to complete the task.
- These activities may be made easier with the use of captioning or a sign language interpreter for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. (See Section 5: Useful Resources.)
- Consider whether the task would be just as effective if it can be completed in a different way. Perhaps participants can do the activity independently, or in pairs.
- If you display the sheets of paper after the task is completed for the whole room to see, make sure someone reads out the information, and you could also email a summary of the findings to your participants after the event.

**Example:**

You want to present a PowerPoint presentation to your audience

**Potential Barriers:**

- May be difficult for people who are blind or vision impaired to follow the visual aspects of the presentation.
- Some presentations might be difficult to understand and follow depending on the complexity, language and chosen styles, colour schemes and animations
- May be difficult for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to follow your speech or their interpreter, as well as the presentation.

**Ways to make it inclusive:**

- Include descriptive, but plain and clear English in your presentation
- Apply the clear print guidelines to ensure readability (See Section 2: Invitations and Advertising.)
- Speak all information on your slides to cater for people who are vision impaired. Do your best to describe graphs and tables.
- Make the slides available to people who are blind or vision impaired prior to the event via email. People who are deaf may also appreciate this service because they may need to be watching an interpreter as you speak, rather than the slides.

**Example** You want your participants to move around the room, swap tables and change seating at intervals during your event to exchange ideas with one another.

**Potential Barriers**
• The nature of such a task might be hard for many people with autism spectrum disorders, physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities to participate in. It might be overwhelming and confusing for some, and difficult to navigate around the room for others.

Ways to make it inclusive:
• Have a designated facilitator to move around the room to exchange ideas instead of your participants.
• Allow plenty of time between sessions to enable participants to move between tables without feeling pressured by time.
• Make sure the room is big enough for such an activity, and that there is sufficient circulation room between tables.
• Offer assistance to people with disabilities to move between tables.
• Consider a different activity all together

Example:
You want to hold a film night

Potential Barriers
• People who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and vision impaired will find it difficult to follow the plot without accessibility features.

Ways to Make it Inclusive:
• Turn on the subtitles on the DVD so that you have ‘open captions’ displayed to the audience.
• Audio description is available for people who are blind or vision impaired, however at this stage it is difficult to arrange for a public viewing of a movie, due to its disruptive nature to the rest of the audience, unless it is possible to transmit the audio through individual headsets. As an alternative consider a movie which has a lot of dialogue and is easy to follow without visual prompts.
• Talk to Media Access Australia about ways to make it inclusive. (See Section 5: Useful Resources.)

Example:
You want to have an art exhibition

Potential Barriers:
• People who are blind and vision impaired may not feel included due to the visual nature of the activity.

Ways to Make it Inclusive:
• Consider displaying multiple medians of art; including tactile displays. This will ensure an interactive and interesting experience for everyone.
• Print signage and descriptions of the art in large text and in clear print (See Section 2: Invitations and Advertising).
• You may consider an interactive method of labelling artworks, such as using QR codes which can be read by smart phones. The information is then provided straight to the user and they can view it in the manner which best suits them. Such a method might be beneficial too for people who have difficulty reading text for other reasons.

Let people with disabilities know about what you plan to do in the activities and ask them personally how you can best accommodate for their needs.

Virtual Participation

There are many people who find it difficult to attend events face to face. This might be because they have a chronic illness, fatigue or pain which limits their ability to get out and about. Yet other people are excluded from attendance due to living remotely, or simply because they cannot access transport, support services or equipment for mobility.

With social media, these individuals have more opportunities to participate in events. Consider how you can make your event accessible through these means.

• A conference may be streamed live, so that listeners at home can tune in via webinar. You may also monitor Facebook and Twitter so that viewers can post questions to your presenters.
• You can provide information given out at your event in various formats on your website for others to download. This might include; notes taken at the event, PowerPoint slides from your presenters, a recording or video of your event, recommendations made during your event etc

Catering

If your event includes catering, you will need to think about how people with disabilities will have their needs met.

• Think about the nature of the event and how you will serve people food and drink. Buffet’s are extremely difficult to access for many people with disabilities. Alternatively, an event where waiters bring food to the tables is far more accessible for everyone.
• Do not place food on tables out of reach to people of short stature, or who are using wheelchairs
• At a stand-up event, make sure that there are some chairs and tables available for people to sit down and eat at. It can be very difficult for many people to eat standing up.
• Mugs are easier to drink from compared to cups and saucers.
• Provide bendable straws for people who cannot drink out of a cup.
• Make sure that there is cutlery available for people who cannot pick up finger food.
• Ensure that there are event staff available to assist any person who may require help to get their refreshments. This assistance may include helping a person get food from a buffet and carrying their plate to a table.
• If you have menus for your event, you can have these translated into Braille and large print (See Section 5: Useful Resources). If you do not have menus available in alternative formats event staff will need to read a menu to people who require it.
• If you are hiring food vendors, consider whether their food stalls are accessible to people with disabilities. It is the responsibility of these vendors to meet requirements under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. xx

Evaluation and Feedback Surveys

You may wish for participants to fill out evaluation forms about your event. It is important to consider how you will make these surveys accessible so that everyone has a chance to have input.

Below are some suggestions for methods of gaining feedback.

• Have volunteers or members of staff asking people for feedback as they leave the event. They can dictate feedback into an evaluation form.
• Hand out printed evaluation forms as people register at the event. Be aware that this method excludes many people and others will find it very difficult, including those with vision impairments, people with learning or intellectual disabilities, people with low levels of literacy and some people with physical disabilities who cannot write in the standard way.
• You could have iPads on site for people wishing to fill out the evaluation electronically. iPads have built in accessibility features such as, Voiceover and Zoom for people who are blind or vision impaired, features for people with limited fine motor and physical abilities and features for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
• Ask for email feedback. You could do this by getting participants email addresses upon registration and later sending a mass email, with a Microsoft Word or RTF version of an evaluation form. If some participants do not have email, provide a print version, or offer to mail the form.

A combination of all of these methods should cater to almost everyone’s needs.

Conducting evaluation surveys are also an excellent way to establish if you have met the needs of people with disabilities. xxi

Include a few questions such as:

‘If you are a person with a disability, were your access needs met?  Yes/No’

‘How can we make access better in the future?’
Section 5: Useful Resources

This section provides information about hiring equipment and resources. It also offers further information on topics mentioned in this guide.

Please note that Gosford City Council does not guarantee the reliability, accuracy or validity of any of the facilities, services or schemes recommended below.

General Resources

Access to Premises
The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s webpage on access to premises. The page gives information about the rights of people with disabilities to have access to public areas. It includes links to various resources which can be of use to ensure access to your event venue.

The good, the bad and the ugly
A resource developed by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission which outlines common access problems, illustrated with images. The guide is available from the below link in Microsoft Word and HTML formats.

Disability Statistics
This page is provided by Australian Network on Disability. It provides useful statistics about disability which can help in establishing how many people will benefit from accessible events.

What’s Hot and What’s Not Guide
A language guide produced by Don’t DIS my ABILITY. This guide Contains useful tips about communication with people with disabilities. This guide acts as a useful educational tool, ideal for disability awareness training of event staff.

Media Access Australia
Media Access Australia is devoted to improving access to media for people with disabilities. Information to make various forms of media accessible can be found at this website.
Website: http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/

Access Ramps
Gosford City Council, Library and Community has a portable ramp which can be borrowed for events. It is suitable for one or two small steps.
Phone: (02) 4325 8109
Email: katie.butler@gosford.nsw.gov.au

Beach Wheelchairs
Gosford City Council has beach wheelchairs available at our patrolled beaches. Contact the individual surf clubs for details about hiring the chairs.
Shade Marquees
Gosford City Council, Library and Community has shade marquees available for hire.
Phone: (02) 4325 8351
Email: alison.amos@gosford.nsw.gov.au

Accessible Toilets
For technical specifications for accessible toilets consult section F2.4 of the Access to Premises – Buildings standards 2010.
Website: http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2010L00668

Hire of Portable Accessible Toilets

Coats Hire
Delivers to the Central Coast.
Phone: 13 15 52
Website: http://www.coateshire.com.au/booking-enquiry/?items=10396

Hearing

Portable Hearing Loops
Gosford City Council has portable hearing loops available for hire.
Phone: (02) 4325 8109
Email: katie.butler@gosford.nsw.gov.au

Interpreter services

Auslan Services
Auslan Interpreting services
Phone: 1300 287 526
Email: admin@auslanservices.com
Website: http://www.auslanservices.com/

Sign Language Communications NSW
Sign language, – Auslan Interpreting, video remote interpreting and note taking services available on the Central Coast.
Website:

Community Relations Commission NSW Government
Auslan interpreting services
Phone: 1300 651 500
Email: languageservices@crc.nsw.gov.au
Website: http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/services/language_services

Live Captioning

Red Bee Australia
Provides real-time captioning on the Central Coast, either remotely or in person.
Phone: 02 9212 5277
Website: www.redbeemedia.com.au
Pacific Transcription
Provides real-time voice to text captioning services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specify on booking that this is the required service.
Phone: 1300 662 173
Website: http://www.pacifictranscription.com.au/

Ai-Media
Provides remote live captioning
Phone: 02 8870 7700
Email: info@ai-media.tv

More Information

Better Hearing Australia – Assistive Technology
This page provides detailed and useful information about assistive technology which can be used to aid hearing. It includes information about various kinds of hearing augmentation systems.
Website: http://www.betterhearing.org.au/node/16

The Deaf Society of NSW – Working with Interpreters
This page provides information about working with an interpreter. It gives useful tips for communication between you, the interpreter and a person who is deaf.
Website: http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au/interpreting/working_with_interpreters.html

Vision

Vision Australia
The below link provides information about transcription services for large print, Braille, audio and tactile alternative formats.

More Information

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
The following webpage provides instructions for providing sighted guide to people who are blind or vision impaired.

Don't Turn a Blind Eye
This page from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT provides information about providing clear and hazard free travel for people who are blind or vision impaired.
Specific Disabilities

If you would like to find out about different disabilities to increase your understanding of how you can make events accessible, see below a list of websites regarding particular types of disabilities.

Cerebral Palsy Alliance
Website: http://www.cerebralpalsy.org.au/home

The Physical Disability Council of NSW
Website: http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/

Brain Injury Australia
Website: http://www.braininjuryaustralia.org.au/

Autism Spectrum Australia
Website: https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/

NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
Website: http://www.nswcid.org.au/

Mind Australia
Website: http://www.mindaustralia.org.au/about-mind.html

Vision Australia
Website: http://www.visionaustralia.org/

Deaf Australia Inc.
# How Accessible is this event?

**Quick Reference Checklist**

Use the page numbers at each heading to refer to parts of the Planning Accessible Events guide.

## Planning your Event - From Page 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you allocated some of your budget to potential access needs, eg, Auslan interpreters?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your venue wheelchair accessible? Don’t overlook small sets of stairs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a wheelchair accessible Toilet?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a sit down event, are there wheelchair accessible viewing spaces?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a hearing augmentation system?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the venue have accessible parking spaces, and or a drop off zone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Invitations and Advertising – From Page 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How accessible is your advertising? Is it available in different formats, including text which is accessible to screen readers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you considered the guidelines for producing clear print?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you included details about your event’s accessibility on your invite?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you provided contact details through which patrons can ask accessibility questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Etiquette and Language – From Page 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Event staff know how to interact with people with a disability?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are they aware of language dos and don’ts?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Your Event – From Page 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you asked your MC and presenters to keep in mind the need to use descriptive, verbal language for the benefit of people who are vision impaired, and clear body language to aid understanding for people who are hard of hearing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Key points to remember:

- Throughout the planning process continually ask yourself, “Is this accessible and inclusive for everyone?”
- Remember that everyone should be able to attend an event, feel included and have their needs met.
- Be responsive when an accessibility issue is raised.
- Ask how you can make that aspect of the event more accessible and consult with others who can advise you on accessibility.
- Find a solution to the problem which will not compromise on the quality of the event experience for people with disabilities.
References


ii Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) ‘One in five Australians with a disability’
Media release,


vi Knox City Council (2007) Your Guide to... Accessible Events’,


x  Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities (2011)

xi Knox City Council (2007) Your Guide to... Accessible Events’,


www.visionaustralia.org

xiv Knox City Council (2007) Your Guide to... Accessible Events’,


xv Knox City Council (2007) Your Guide to... Accessible Events’,

xvi Vision Australia (N.D.) ‘Large Print’ www.visionaustralia.org


