

# Accessible Events Guide



March 2024



Queensland  
Government



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# Acknowledgements

## Cultural acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Queensland Government honours the cultures, histories and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We value the Traditional Custodians of the land and recognise the richness embedded within their diverse languages, cultures and perspectives.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge their significant and ongoing connection to the lands and waterways on which we live and work.

## Co-design

The Accessible Events Guide and corresponding checklist have been co-designed with the Queenslanders with Disability Network in consultation with people with disability.

Queenslanders with Disability Network is a state-wide not-for-profit organisation whose work focuses on disability rights and advocacy.



## Accessibility statement

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring digital accessibility for people with disabilities.

## A note on the language of disability<sup>1</sup>

Disability is wide-ranging and comes in many forms. We acknowledge that the language around disability is evolving and there is active debate in the community and different preferences about ways to describe disability.

We acknowledge the importance of having conversations with individuals about their preferred language and not making assumptions.

It is critical to respect individual preferences. Some people prefer to be referred to as a 'person with disability' and others prefer 'disabled person'. Others prefer the use of language such as 'diverse abilities' rather than disability.

Generally speaking, government and non-government organisations use person-first language for example: person with disability, person living with intellectual disability, person who is vision impaired.

Some people may not identify as disabled at all, but as part of cultural groups, for example deaf or autistic. A deaf person is not only deaf, but they are also a member of deaf culture, which has its own language and cultural richness and difference.

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1 Queensland's Disability Plan – [www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/campaign/queenslands-disability-plan](http://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/campaign/queenslands-disability-plan)



### *A note on the language of disability...*

It is important to respect these cultures in the same way we respect other cultures.

The language used in this plan is not intended to indicate a particular preference and we do not intend to exclude anyone on the basis that their preference differs to the style used. This plan is for all people with disability and diverse abilities, and we welcome feedback on the language of disability.

We recognise that many people's experiences as a person with disability are intersectional and can be shaped by not only their disability but their age, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, ethnic origin or race.

The disability community is broad and diverse and it is important to recognise that not all disability is visible to others.

Australian of the Year Awards 2024 © Queensland Government



# Introduction

A successful, accessible and inclusive event is one where all attendees have an opportunity to access and experience every aspect of the event and leave with a sense of enjoyment, togetherness and satisfaction.

One in five Australians live with disability, including almost one million Queenslanders. It is important that Queenslanders living with disability are not just able to access the event, but are included in all aspects.

Effective planning, including strategies for managing ongoing barriers, can help create accessible systems and reduce major obstacles. The strategies engaged will depend on the venue, size of the event, the audience, program and the presenter.

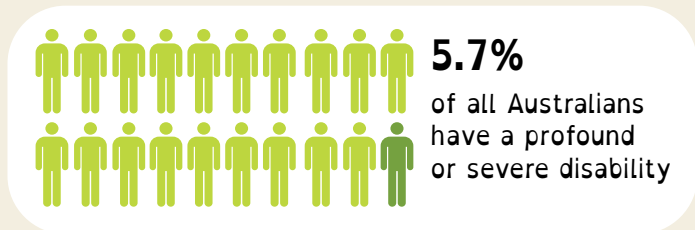
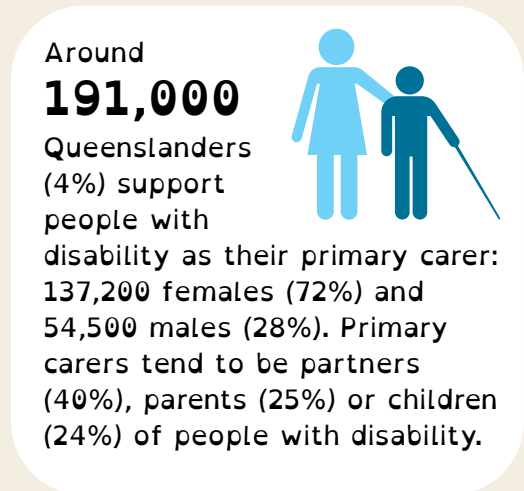
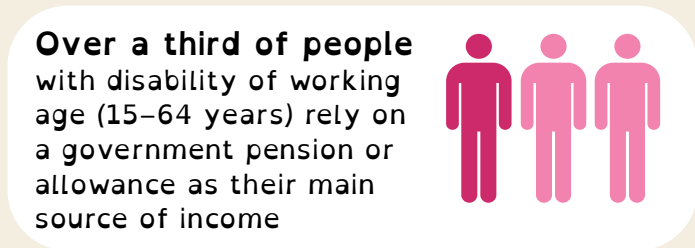
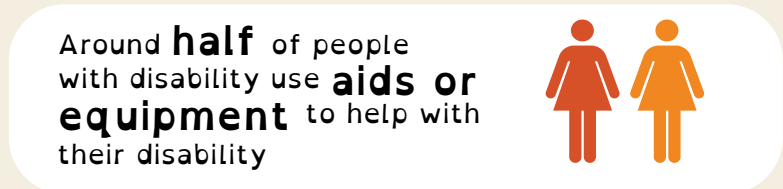
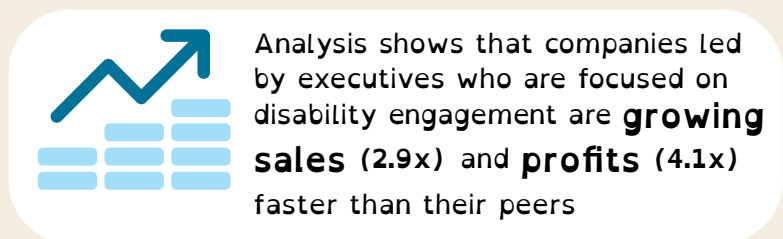
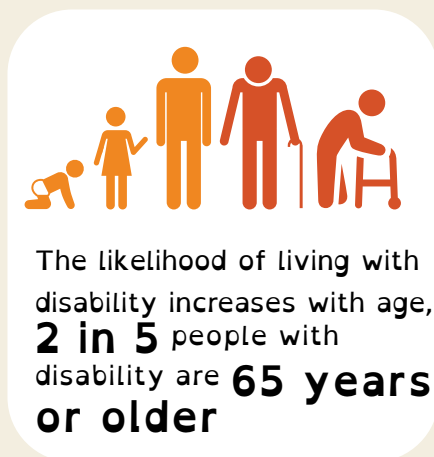
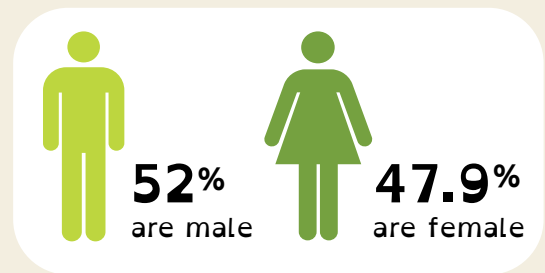
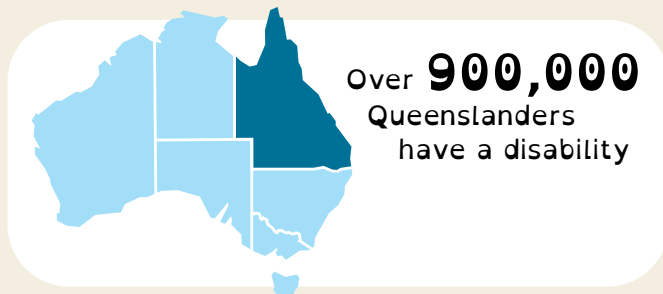
This guide is not exhaustive, and each event will have issues that are unique to the nature and location of the event. This guide is designed to help you in your planning and to complement any insights gained from research, co-design, focus groups and user-testing.

For the purposes of this guide, examples of events may include:

- community forums and information sessions
- markets and fêtes
- outdoor walking, cycling or social events (for example, Parkrun)
- community social events (dances, breakfasts, music in the park etc)
- awards ceremonies
- festivals, concerts and expos
- cultural and art events (for example, theatre performances, gallery exhibitions and the Ekka)
- major sports events (for example, triathlons, marathons and world cups)
- internal events (for example, town halls and staff forums).



# Queenslanders with disability



**Sources:**

- [Profile of people with disability in Australia – information sheet.pdf \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/press-releases/2019/10/4430-0)
- [Enabling Change \(accenture.com\)](https://www.accenture.com/au/enabling-change)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018](https://www.abs.gov.au/press-releases/2019/10/4430-0) (Catalogue No. 4430.0, 24 October 2019).



# Disability definitions

The United Nations states persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Not all disabilities are visible and people who have a disability may not want to share or identify it.

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** protects Australians against discrimination based on disability and provides a broad definition of disability including eight types.

Participants at an event © Queensland Queensland



## Disability types

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### Physical disability

**Impacts mobility, dexterity and muscle tone.**

For example: a person who has spinal cord injuries after a car crash. This might require them to use an electric wheelchair and impact the dexterity and strength of their hands.

Other examples include: cerebral palsy, post-polio syndrome, short-term injuries (broken bones, sprains) and age-related conditions.

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### Intellectual disability

**Impacts ability to learn or process information.**

For example: a person born with a cognitive impairment that impacts how well they can read and process information quickly. They may require others to assist them to learn and apply knowledge.

Other examples: Down syndrome, acquired brain injuries, dementia and other age-related conditions.

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### Mental illness

**Conditions that affect mood, thinking and behaviour.**

For example: a person with schizophrenia may have episodes of experiencing sensations (sounds, feelings and sights) that are distracting and upsetting. This can impact their mood and make it difficult to focus and to remain calm, especially in unpredictable situations.

Other examples: depression, anxiety and other forms of emotional dysregulation.

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### Sensory disability

**Impacts the senses of the body, such as the ability to hear or see.**

For example: a person who is hearing or vision impaired will experience barriers

to information and experiences that rely on sight and sound.

Other examples: autism and people with age-related conditions.

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### Neurological disability

**Impacts the brain and central nervous system.**

For example: a person with Motor Neurone Disease may experience trouble breathing and have limits to their strength and stamina.

Other examples: Multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

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### Learning disability

**Impacts acquisition, organisation, retention, and understanding of information.**

For example: dyslexia can make it difficult for people to learn information through written text. People with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder can find it difficult to retain and organise information.

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### Immunological disability

**Impact due to a response by the immune system.**

For example: people with lupus can experience light and chemical sensitivity, joint pain, skin rashes and fatigue. These symptoms can be unpredictable.

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### Physical disfigurement

**Impacts physical appearance and body.**

For example: a person with chemical burns may have lost the use of limbs or be sensitive to heat, cold and/or chemicals. They may also experience social stigma due to their appearance.

Other examples: medical conditions and accident-related injuries.



## The social model of disability

People with Disability Australia's (PWDA) definition of the social model of disability<sup>2</sup> is outlined below:

The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for people with disability.

When barriers are removed, people with disability can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

As a modern approach to thinking about disability, the social model helps us understand that exclusion from social life is environmentally produced and not a flaw of the individual.

Our aim should be to make events, experiences and environments accessible, rather than assume some people can't or don't want to participate.

### Want to learn more?

To learn more about the nature of disability, you can complete the Queensland Government's online [Disability Awareness module](#) (60 minutes).<sup>3</sup>

## Accessibility and inclusion

The United Nations defines accessibility<sup>4</sup> as:

'being able to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life [including] access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public.'

Accessibility means different things to different people as they encounter different barriers. For example, the accessibility of someone who uses a wheelchair is different to someone who is blind or visually impaired.

Inclusion is about feeling included and knowing you belong. For people with disability, it means enjoying a shared space with friends, family and other members of the public in ways that do not make them feel different to everyone else.

A barrier to inclusion is anything that prevents a person from being involved in any aspect of your event. These can result in mild inconveniences through to major issues of safety, stigmatisation, exclusion, and breaches of human rights.

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2 [pwd.org.au/resources/models-of-disability/](http://pwd.org.au/resources/models-of-disability/)

3 [dcsds.cls.janisoncloud.com/scormproxy/uploads/dcsdsadmin/Scorm/dc-dst-disability-awareness-online-program-v17/index.html](http://dcsds.cls.janisoncloud.com/scormproxy/uploads/dcsdsadmin/Scorm/dc-dst-disability-awareness-online-program-v17/index.html)

4 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Article 9 – Accessibility. [www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html)

### *Accessibility and inclusion continued...*

Accessibility requirements depend on what you are accessing and how you need to access it. It is individual, subjective and changes depending on the situation.

Accessibility and inclusion are foundations for civic engagement. Done well, accessibility and inclusion can help people to independently:

- source the information they need to make informed decisions
- register for and attend events with their friends and family
- attend public courses in their local community
- engage in public forums and share their opinions and preferences.

Through planning, design and delivery of events with accessibility and inclusion in mind, people with disability can equally participate in opportunities your department or organisation has to offer.

**“Accessibility should not depend on a person with disability attending. It should be automatic.”**

Collectively, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD), Australia’s Disability Strategy (ADS), Queensland’s Disability Plan: Together a Better Queensland 2022–2027 and legislation (including the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*) form a clear rights framework for people with disability.

The ADS and Queensland’s Disability Plan outline seven outcome areas which include inclusive homes and communities, and key action areas which relate to inclusion in events — outlining that people with disability should be able to fully participate in social, recreational, sporting, religious and cultural life.



# Design principles

## Universal design

Universal design is a framework that aims to improve the way things are designed and built. It is a design thinking process, which means it can be applied to anything and everything that is designed in our world.<sup>5</sup>

Universal design has seven principles<sup>6</sup>:

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**1. Equitable use.** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

For example, a website that is designed so it is accessible to everyone, including people who are blind.

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**2. Flexibility in use.** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

For example, a museum that allows a visitor to choose to read or listen to a description of the contents of a display case.

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**3. Simple and intuitive.** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

For example, a registration desk process that is clearly signposted and follows a logical flow.

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**4. Perceptible information.** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

For example, video captioning employs this principle.

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**5. Tolerance for error.** The design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

For example, an event registration software program that provides guidance when the user makes an inappropriate selection.

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**6. Low physical effort.** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

For example, doors that open automatically.

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**7. Size and space for approach and use.** The design provides appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture or mobility.

For example, an office with adjustable tables.

Consultation is key to the universal design process. Without it, designers and creators are limited by their personal experiences and imagination.

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5 Universal Design Australia. [universaldesignaustralia.net.au](http://universaldesignaustralia.net.au)

6 University of Washington. [Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications. \(washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications\)](http://www.washington.edu/doit/universal-design-process-principles-and-applications)

## Co-design

Co-design is a collaborative approach in which customers are engaged in the creation of a product to ensure that it effectively meets their needs. An example is working with people with disability to co-design an event – from planning, marketing and registration, through to attendance and feedback.

Not Now, Not Ever. Together Breakfast © Queensland Government





# Considerations for accessible and inclusive events

## Planning to deliver an accessible event

Ensuring all events are inclusive and accessible means people with disability can participate on an equal basis with others, which is a legal requirement<sup>7</sup>. While it is an individual choice to attend an event, the onus is on event organisers, staff and the broader public to remove avoidable barriers (see: [The Social Model of Disability](#)).

Inclusion is not just people with disability attending events but also including people with disability in roles across the events industry. Having staff that are people with lived experience can make the process far more relatable.

It is not about creating a bespoke solution for each participant, but rather using [universal design](#) principles to ensure your diverse attendees have their needs met and can get the most out of your event.

Being proactive and reflecting on the access and inclusion needs of attendees will help address most issues before they become a challenge or barrier for people. While there may be additional matters you need to consider, if you get this right, it will benefit most attendees, saving time and achieving a successful event.

Identify the barriers that people might experience, offer inclusive alternatives, and most importantly, avoid creating them in the first place. For example, someone who is blind cannot see the screen showing information and someone who uses a wheelchair may not be able to see if guests in front of them are standing in a large crowd.

For major events, consider forming a working committee that includes people with disability to assist in the planning process. Alternatively, you could engage specific focus groups to gather a broader range of perspectives from people who are not intimately involved in the decision-making processes.

Post event, evaluate and document challenges encountered, and commit to improving future events from lessons learnt.

## Communication

A key element of any communication strategy is to understand and target your audience in a way that is engaging and accessible to them, including breaking down barriers so people with disability are included from the beginning. These communication strategies will not only support people with disability, but they will also support people with low levels of literacy and different learning styles.

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7 Queenslanders with Disability Network. [Principles of co-design \(qdn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/QDN\\_Co-Design-Principles\\_FINAL\\_2022.pdf\)](https://qdn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/QDN_Co-Design-Principles_FINAL_2022.pdf)

*Communication continued...*

Here is a brief overview of key concepts around communication:

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**Simple English:** writing in a way that shares important information using language that is not unnecessarily complex, also known as Plain English.

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**Easy English:** sharing information in a specific format that uses images and small pieces of text, specifically intended for people with intellectual disability.

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**Auslan:** Australian Sign Language. Find out more information in the [Auslan](#) section

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**Captioning:** spoken language written in text, also known as subtitles. Commonly used at the bottom of videos, though is sometimes used at live events.

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**Screen reader:** software that a person uses to read text on a document or website. Primarily used by people who are blind or visually impaired. Screen readers will only read text that is formatted correctly.

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**Document/web accessibility:** creating a document or website content that is formatted for screen readers. The main requirements are the use of headings and correct hierarchy, lists (numbers or bullets), using interactive hyperlinks and including alt text on non-decorative images.

This is a simple process, and similar for websites, emails and Microsoft Word documents. Find more information in the accessible [Digital Content](#) section.

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**Alternative text:** a brief description of an image that is added to the image itself. A screen reader will read the alt text so the person reading can understand the 'why' of an image; what it is or what it is communicating.

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**Image description or caption:** included as visible text accompanying an image. It is useful for people with vision impairment and for people with sensory processing disorders or other neurological conditions that may find visual images overwhelming, whereas text can be easier to read and comprehend. Both alt text and image descriptions should describe the main object of the image, the action that is related to that object and then finish off with the context. Image descriptions are increasingly used in social media posts to make memes, videos, animations and photos more accessible.

**Example of an image descriptions:** a forum program included an image description to describe photos accompanying the speaker biographies.



**Image description:** a man who is light-skinned, in his 60s with a receding hairline is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, blue tie and lapel pin. His hair is brown and grey. He is wearing square glasses and smiling. Behind him is a blurred background of trees and grass.



*Communication continued...*

**Audio description:** a spoken description of what can be seen on a screen, stage or image for people who are blind or have visual impairment.

#### **Example of audio description:**

At a recent event, audio description featured in the following ways:

- All speakers were asked to provide a description of themselves in their opening words.
- MCs offered a full description of the room as part of housekeeping and scene setting.
- A graphic record comprising visual imagery and words (useful for people who prefer images to text) was created as a record of the event. At the close of the event, the files were provided to professional audio describers (a team comprising one person who is blind and one who is sighted) who have recorded a full description of the graphic record for publishing on the event website for people with vision impairment to enjoy.

When creating accessible communication materials, consider the language used.

- Be predictable and use consistent design logic, language and branding.
- Do not complicate instructions or key concepts, use logical steps in simple formats.
- Provide information in a variety of formats including words and images.
- Make the most important information the easiest to find.
- Give people the details they need to make an informed decision.

**Did you know?** The Queensland Government has a Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) for the procurement of Translation and Interpretation Services and this includes communications support including Auslan signing for events. Queensland Government agencies can access this SOA by visiting [Find a translator or interpreter | Queensland Government](#).

#### **Promotion and marketing**

People with disability, their family, friends and paid support workers or carers rely on practical information available when attending your event.

To help plan:

- provide information in a way that is flexible, intuitive and requires a minimum of effort. No single piece of marketing can include everything that needs to be communicated.
- create a range of coherent pathways for accessing the information that different groups of people need, in ways that are accessible to them.
- consider formats that are targeted at specific audiences, such as video in Auslan that shares information relevant to the native-Auslan speaking members of the deaf community.

Key information is needed by all participants, including the date, time, agenda/program, transport options, maps, accessibility of the venue and ticket prices.

Your communication should:

- provide a description of the event in simple language, including clear start and finish times and the nature of any performances.

*Promotion and marketing continued...*

- offer accessible entry points to get into the venue and when inside. Consider providing a map or drawing of the venue to participants beforehand, detailing which entrance to use and where your event will take place.
- provide information on accessible transport options to get to your event. This includes information on bus and train services that stop near the venue. This helps with planning, crowd control and ease of movement.
- include information about possible increased travel time. For example: “We are expecting large volumes of people at the event. We recommend that you allow additional time to travel to/from the event.”
- ensure there is information on concession tickets for people with disability and their carers or companions.
- consider providing captioning and audio descriptions for any videos shown and/or include information on the presence of interpreters and how to access them.
- provide braille signage and braille trails.
- consider including Social Stories, Access Keys<sup>8</sup> and Sensory Maps which together provide a wide range of accessibility information that a traditional map or floorplan of a venue might not provide.
- highlight facilities including the locations of accessible bathrooms, quiet spaces and catering.

Details of toileting and watering facilities for assistance animals and guide dogs would also be useful.

- supply materials in alternative formats.
- provide presentation materials to people ahead of time.
- include content warnings for people who may find content personally confronting.



### Case study: information provision for a large forum

Event information was published on a website and updated as arrangements were confirmed. Email alerts were sent when new information was added. Email messages included the new information and linked to the website. In addition, all key information, program and agenda for the event were emailed out a week prior so that people had time to plan.

The information was sent as PDF printable documents and accessible Word versions attached to an email as well as within the body of the document itself, in Plain English, in large font, well-spaced and with clear headings.

The email body version was for people who may have difficulty with executive

function and finding information.

A clearly titled email with all the information needed, was seen as most easy to locate and accessible to all, in conjunction with other information sources such as the website. An Easy English version was also made available on the website, along with an audio recording and Auslan signed video of the information, and the email contained that information also.

Finally, people were encouraged to enter a contact number (provided multiple times throughout the different communication formats) into their phone so they could access someone to provide information in real time on the day of the event.

These varied means of communication helped to optimise planning and reduce anxiety for attendees at the event.

Guest speaker Akii Ngo at a 2023 Speaker Series event © Queensland Government

Inspirational stories  
from Australia's business,  
philanthropic, sporting  
and creative leaders.

## Digital content

Most Microsoft Office products can assist you to create accessible documents with similar techniques available on other platforms. The principles are simple to incorporate, and Microsoft has written a guide to [make your Word documents accessible to people with disability](#). Their guide is transferable to other Microsoft products and can also be applied to content for websites (using headings, lists and meaningful hyperlinks) and other software.

**Tip:** PDF documents may not be reliably compatible with screen readers so ensure all information is also available in alternative format e.g. Microsoft Word or on a web page.

Web accessibility is vital as it is the public face of your event. When preparing web pages, structure and content, it is important to be aware of Queensland Government conformance standard for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. All Queensland Government agencies are required to meet [Level AA of WCAG 2.1](#), which includes Level A as mandated in the [Digital services policy](#).

To summarise the technical specifications, WCAG 2.1 is based on four principles:

- **Perceivable** means that all users should be able to perceive the content on a website. It shouldn't be hidden, or lose meaning from those who may have sensory limitations.
- **Operable** refers to the ability of users to navigate and interact with the website using various input methods like a mouse, keyboard, or screen reader.
- **Understandable** means that the content and functionality of the website should be clear and easy to comprehend. Users should be able to understand both the information presented and how to use the website.
- **Robust** indicates that the website should be compatible with different devices, screen sizes and browsers. It should also work well with assistive technologies and tools that help people with disabilities access the web.

The Queensland Government website contains information and guidance about [making digital services accessible](#) and how to meet the standard. It is highly recommended to meet early with available teams of web content designers, developers and graphic designers to discuss and plan your content, and help resolve any technical issues or hurdles.

The Web Accessibility Initiative has created the [W3C universal standards for web accessibility](#). This includes tips and tools for creating and evaluating content for optimal accessibility. The standards apply to documents, websites and other online platforms.

## Social media content

Social media is a fun and engaging tool for keeping customers informed about your business and is a very common marketing tool. Posting to social media for your business should be done in a way that makes the content accessible within the limits of the platform. There are common things you can do to make your social media posts more accessible:

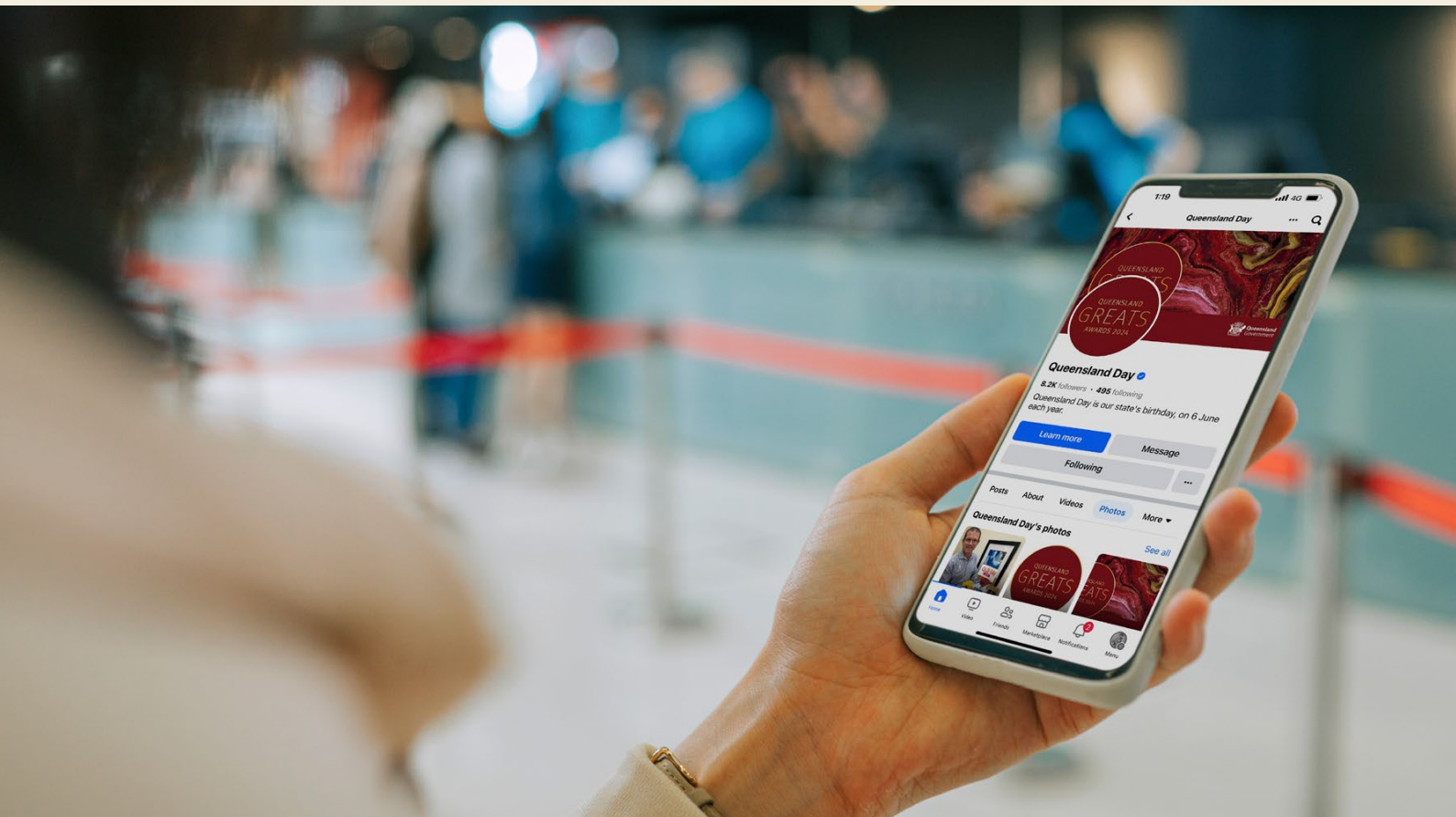


### Social media content continued...

- publish meaningful alt text with your images. Ensure that they describe the picture and convey a meaning.
  - keep the use of emojis to a minimum.
  - where possible, don't place text that is important within images.
  - put @ mentions and # hashtags at the end of a post.
  - format # hashtags in 'CamelCase', capitalising the first letter of each word.
  - make sure the colour contrast is between 4.5:1 to 7:1.
  - provide closed captions when you publish video. If you use the auto captioning function, review the text to see it's accurate.
- provide clear audio where possible. Try to film without background noise and speak clearly (where possible don't hide your lips when you speak).
  - consider reducing busy-ness and keep the post simple, clear and interesting
  - use inclusive language.
  - include an image description as well as alt text. This can be done in the image caption or the comments.
  - engage people with disability to test your social media and implement their feedback.

Some platforms are very widely used and provide a great place for customers to share their experiences too. Created with consideration and by embedding good access, social media can be a great marketing tool that is inclusive in content and delivery.

© Queensland Government / Getty Images



# Events and major events

This section of the guide outlines practical steps that can be taken to ensure events, including major events, are accessible and inclusive for everybody, not only people with disability.

## Before the event

As mentioned in the [importance of planning](#), it is vital to first reflect on what attendees will be expecting to do at each stage of the event – from learning about the event, to attending the event and getting home safely afterwards.

### Case study:

Samantha's disability means that she gets overwhelmed by sudden loud noises and flashing lights. Samantha is a big fan of the Broncos and enjoys attending Suncorp Stadium for their games, as well as the State of Origin.

To help Samantha plan for where she is in the stadium during any fireworks and when there are flashing lights, she gets information from the venue about the timing. Samantha and her support worker then monitor the time and move out of their seats and inside the stadium so they can still enjoy the game but go to a quieter area when needed.

## Select a venue

There are many physical and practical considerations when choosing venues and many of these depend on the size and scale of the event. This section will cover topics that are relevant for events of any size.

Most modern buildings are built to a reasonable standard of accessibility, which generally focuses on physical accessibility and may not include sensory, neurodiverse, or other disability.

Listed below are considerations to ensure accessibility at your event venue:

- Provide wheelchair access, including entryways, ramps, toilets, and lifts, ensuring automatic doors and non-automated doors that (at least) meet the Australian Standards for minimum wheelchair door width of 850mm. The doorway must be unobstructed to give enough room for the wheelchair user to approach the doorway, negotiate any turns, unlock and unlatch the door and pass through the doorway.
- For the venue to be accessible, a ramp must be provided, no steeper than 1-in-14 incline as per Australian Standard 1428.1. If there is no permanent ramp, a temporary ramp must be installed. If there is a speaker who uses a wheelchair, ensure accessibility to the stage with a ramp or a lift, and check microphone preferences for example, handheld, lapel, or microphone on stand.
- Provide hearing loops.
- Use braille signage and tactile surface ground indicators.
- Provide accessible signage, including high contrast design, clear words and symbols, braille or audio signage.

*Select a venue continued...*

- Consider the accessibility of the entrance to the venue and event room and how guests will move through ticket and/or security checks. Access controls such as turnstiles can create an inaccessible facility and reduce a person's autonomy when there is no alternative entrance.
- Consider public transport and public transport hubs close to the venue.
- Offer free, or low-cost accessible parking near the venue with accessible, lit pathways from the carpark to the venue.
- If holding your event outdoors, ensure it is held on even ground to avoid falls, injury or damage to mobility equipment.
- Installing an accessible viewing platform positioned centrally in front of the stage provides attendees in wheelchairs or people of short stature a vantage point to comfortably view the event.
- A lot of venues have restrictions on bringing in bags. This should be waived on a discretionary basis to allow people to take specific food or medical aids into events. It is important to identify this in advance so entry staff allow people to bring their required equipment. This could be via a question on accessibility needs at registration.
- Consider setting up one or several designated service desks for people with disability so they can easily get information, directions, support, basic mobility equipment (manual wheelchairs) and water.
- Provide guests the option to look at an unfamiliar venue before attending so they can prepare before the event. This may be in the format of a virtual tour of the venue.
- It is important to check with the venue about their emergency procedures, including checking that exits and assembly points are accessible. These procedures should be provided to participants in an accessible way. It is important to have a plan for how you will assist people in an emergency.

**Toilets and bathroom facilities**

- Ensure the venue has accessible bathrooms that are left or right-hand indicative (displaying signage) and preferably on the same level as the event.
- Always check the bathrooms are accessible before the event. Not all bathrooms are designed the same and wheelchairs vary greatly. If suitable facilities are not available, ensure information is included in the registration details.
- Choose a venue with a 'changing place' toilet for people who may need to change their clothes or freshen up during an event. These facilities are equipped with specialised hoists and tables fit for this purpose<sup>9</sup>.
- Ensure there is a flat entry point into the bathrooms, the doorways are wide enough for large, motorised wheelchairs, and that doors can be opened without assistance.

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<sup>9</sup> See more information on changing places toilets here: [hangingplaces.org.au/find-a-toilet/find-changing-places-toilet/](http://hangingplaces.org.au/find-a-toilet/find-changing-places-toilet/)



## Seating

- Where possible, give everyone, including people using wheelchairs, an opportunity to choose where they sit, ensuring you do not put everyone who uses a wheelchair together as this reinforces segregation and discrimination.
- If the event has table seating, do not place people too close to each other and ensure chairs are removed so that people who use wheelchairs can access the tables. Where possible ensure two-metre spacing between tables.
- If there is a limit on accessible seating for companions (often only one), families or groups can be separated. It would be preferable if the row in front or behind the accessible area is for groups accompanying the person with disability so they can be seated close together. This could be an area of reserved seating that could be booked first by companion groups, then opened to general public.
- For people with hearing impairment, seating at the front is preferable, where faces and signing can be easily seen. Hearing loops are important for events that require hearing such as plays and comedy acts.
- Consider early access to seating for those with additional requirements and providing staff to personally direct guests to seats so that everyone is able to easily find their allocated place.

## Floor plans

- For people who use wheelchairs or mobility devices at seated table events, layout of two metres between tables is optimum for accessibility. Communicate the flooring type on the venue map – the most accessible surfaces are hard and flat, like concrete, hard rubber matting or metal pathways. Bark chip, soft paths and cable protectors can reduce access to areas and are not always safe for people with disability.
- Make sure stalls at an expo are large enough for people in wheelchairs to navigate safely and easily.
- Ensure wayfinding signage is clear and easy to follow. The Department of Transport and Main Roads have developed wayfinding guidelines<sup>10</sup> that outline best practice.
- Offer designated quiet spaces for people who experience fatigue or sensory overload.
- Provide an outdoor toileting space to cater for guide dogs or assistance animals.
- Ensure easy access including open space, flat surfaces, wide doorways, and clear pathways to multiple entrances and exits with no obstructions.

## Technology

- Ensure PA systems are good quality with regular servicing to ensure there is no feedback and audio is not too loud.
- Include a hearing augmentation system such as a hearing loop.
- Check capacity for lighting and sound level adjustment.

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<sup>10</sup> **Supporting facilities** (Department of Transport and Main Roads, [tmr.qld.gov.au](http://tmr.qld.gov.au))

## Catering

- Food trucks can be difficult to access as they are often too high for people of short stature or people in wheelchairs. They can also create large congregations of people which is not ideal for people with sensory issues. The payment location is often problematic (tapping card without seeing the screen) and reaching up to get food is difficult for people in wheelchairs. It would be preferable to have a service that delivers food and beverages directly to people with disability, so they don't have to navigate crowds.
- Ensure that staff providing food or drink for the event are able and willing to comply with requests related to allergens, food sensitivities and preferences.
- Ensure there is a variety of table heights, including standing height tables and lower seated level tables for people who use wheelchairs and mobility devices. This is particularly important so people can put their plate on a table.
- Schedule longer breaks to ensure people have enough time to use the bathroom and eat or drink.
- avoid scheduling meetings or events during or close to peak hours as the noise levels can be challenging. It can also be too crowded to reach accessible seating on public transport.
- Let participants know when you predict the busiest times and the quietest times at the event to be, so they can plan their access to your event.
- provide attendees with useful information including mainstream services such as local public transport options and taxi ranks as well as pathways and footpaths that people may need to use to access the venue.
- if there will be many people attending who use wheelchairs, consider alerting taxi companies so they can prepare for the high demand for wheelchair accessible taxis.
- buses and trains can be provided by special agreement between transport providers and the event promoter at no extra cost to attendees.
- ensure sufficient staffing during loading and offloading to ensure people with disability aren't impacted by large crowds and have sufficient space to move and negotiate any mobility equipment. Make sure front of house staff have enough capacity to help with movement in and out of venues, to help with emergency management and to assist the public in general.
- include the option of booking an accessible carpark during the ticketing process, if required.

## Transport and parking

People with disability experience a range of challenges using public transport, taxis and ride sharing services. This can range from accessing bus stops and taxi ranks, entering the vehicles, finding accessible options (maxi taxis), driver and passenger behaviour, and safely navigating unfamiliar locations. Consider the following:

## Signage

Signage is a vital element of assisting attendees to navigate the venue and to effectively and efficiently access what they need. For this to work, signage needs to be clear, logical, accurate and accessible.

Some guidelines for great accessible signage include:

1. **Distinctiveness:** the information should have cues that are informative to the route and can be distinguished from the surroundings.
  2. **Consistency and standardisation:** information overload can be avoided with the consistent placement, size, colour and shape of signage.
  3. **Simplicity:** avoid visual clutter and limit each sign to three or four units of information, because people tend to glance rather than read.
  4. **Isolation:** keep the signs away from other visual clutter to help focus attention in the right place.
  5. **Reassurance:** letting people know they are still on the correct route especially if the destination is a long way from the directional sign.
- Set up items at the acceptable height (viewable at all heights for people in wheelchairs, children, tall people and tested in a crowd in advance) and ensure it has clear directions.
  - Think about the imagery: pictures/ icons are often best. Painted signs on the floor can also help with wayfinding.
  - Think about locations: signage should be placed at carparks and transport hubs that direct people to major venue locations.

- Ensure positive or neutral language is used when providing particular seating areas for those with accessibility requirements. For example “accessible seating” or “reserved seating”.

The Graphic Artists Guild (USA) has developed free downloadable **Universal Disability Access Symbols** which fit these criteria well. See below for examples.

### Symbol for wheelchair accessibility:

Image description: a black and white line drawing of a person in a wheelchair.



### Symbol for a guide dog:

Image description: a black and white line drawing of a dog standing in harness. Its head is raised and it looks alert.



## Registration

Registration is the best opportunity to give information to attendees as well as gather information from them to assist the delivery of the event. At point of registration, remind people about important information, promote accessibility supports and answer frequently asked questions.

Ensure you clearly communicate expected capacity of your event and ensure a cap is put on registration numbers to avoid crowding issues.

### Registration process

Best practice is to have a predictable and consistent registration process across all events. Not all online platforms are accessible, particularly to people who use screen readers.



*Registration process continued...*

Always seek advice from people with disability, inclusion consultancies, disability organisations, online reviews and review commentary when choosing the registration platform, and have it tested by people with a diverse range of backgrounds and disabilities.

It is also important to note that just because a platform has been accessible in the past, doesn't mean that it will continue to be.

### Questions to ask during the registration process

Offer people the opportunity to share what support they need to attend and actively participate. Examples of questions you can ask are:

- Do you have any specific support requirements? For example: sighted guide, wheelchair access, quiet space, interpreter.
- Do you have any dietary requirements?
- Is there anything we can do to improve your participation at this event?
- Would you like to receive information in advance to help you prepare for the event?
  - What is the best way to provide this – email, post?
- To better understand the people attending, please outline any needs or disability requirements you have and how it might impact your enjoyment or participation in this event.

It is recommended to ask everyone these questions to promote an inclusive approach to registration.

Include these questions alongside questions about dietary requirements and cultural or religious needs. This normalises accessibility, shows respect, and advances inclusion.

### Registration confirmations

Email is a highly accessible way of communicating with people. In your correspondence consider including an option of adding your event to calendar with links to other information. You can also send text message reminders before the event.

Consider options for registration confirmation:

- send confirmation emails and/or text messages once registration is received.
- send pre-event SMS reminders one day before and on the morning of the event.
- enable event to be linked to calendars.
- include the event link in all reminders and calendar invitations.

### eTickets

eTickets are the standard for almost all major events, and this is a great option for most people. It is important to assess your eTicketing platform for accessibility barriers for different groups and consider solutions for these issues.

Having a diversity of options, such as posting tickets or collecting tickets from a box office, will ensure that people can choose an option that best meets their needs.

### Case study: booking tickets

A large event used an online ticketing platform for ticketing. People with intellectual and cognitive disability wanted to register for the event and some people found the internet registration challenging because of their digital skills and literacy. The organisers offered a number for people to phone a registration support team.

A team member then took the person through the questions on Eventbrite (the chosen ticketing platform), which included questions about support needs, communication needs, access needs and any other information the person wanted to offer.

The team member completed the registration for the person and then either emailed them their ticket via Eventbrite or printed it out and posted it to them.

This interaction supported the person's access to ticketing. It allowed the organisers to understand challenges people may have in accessing the event in more detail.

It also allowed for connection and relationship – several people with disability sought out their contact person at the event for reassurance and to ask questions. A familiar face, voice or name is a powerful thing at an event if you are anxious or overwhelmed.

### Cancellation policies

Consider flexible cancellation policies – this is especially important for people with episodic disability who may not be able to attend on an event day due to health issues or cancellation of support workers.

## Staff and suppliers

Ensuring an accessible and inclusive event doesn't just mean ensuring a positive experience for attendees. Staff and supplier needs should also be considered and reasonable adjustments made.

Ensure staff, who may have their own needs related to disability, have those needs considered. Ask what people need, keep shifts short, don't require people to stand too long and give adequate breaks.

Staff that are supporting accessibility should feel confident in their role and have the support and resources they need to fulfil their role.

### Hosts, performers and entertainment

- Ensure the speakers, host, performers, or artists of your event showcase diversity.
- Provide lots of support, information, rehearsal opportunities and generally build relationship and connection – people will give their best if they feel supported and seen.
- Consult with your suppliers throughout the procurement process to ensure that reasonable accessibility adjustments to the process are provided where required.
- In advance, discuss audio visual requirements for performers and entertainment to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided to meet their needs and cater for the audience.
- Ensure that any presentations they provide are in line with best practice accessibility guidelines.

*Hosts, performers and entertainment continued...*

- Brief masters of ceremonies and panel discussion hosts to repeat or paraphrase any questions which may have been difficult for attendees to hear or understand.
- Brief staff at venues on how to help people requiring assistance, so they know where to go and what to do, how to communicate with people with disability, and can provide people with assistance in accessing lifts, trouble-shooting issues and getting to accessible seating.



### Case study

In June 2023, The Australia's Disability Strategy Queensland Forum was held at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre.

The forum was about the Australian Disability Strategy and national and state efforts to progress access and inclusion for people with disability, the event aimed to showcase best practice in access and inclusion and the leadership, capacity, skills, and gifts of people with disability.

The Masters of Ceremonies were young women with intellectual disability. Acknowledgment of Country was offered by two First Nations men with disability. One of the two keynote speakers was a person with disability. Many of the panellists were people with disability. All performers and artists – visual arts, dance, theatre, film, jazz music – were people with disability. Several support staff were people with disability.

At every table was at least one person with disability who acted as table host during the table conversations, including a young man who is non-speaking and uses a communication device.

Highlights gained from feedback from this event included: participant's inclusion, accessibility and, the leadership from people with a disability throughout the event.



## During the event

- Have a strategy in place for people who arrive early so they have somewhere comfortable to wait before the event starts – many people with disability who rely on taxis and support workers will leave plenty of time for getting to an event as they know there are many variables that can impact on their attendance.
- Ensure you have a process for supporting people as they arrive to the venue including, clear signage at eye and waist level, ample parking and drop off spaces and accessible registration processes.
- Consider voice-over announcements telling people about the event – this could include information around strobe lighting, fireworks displays and how loud the audio volume will be at the event.
- Ensure that lighting and sound is inclusive of people who experience sensory overload or where this is not possible consider programming other types of performance i.e. relaxed performance, Auslan interpreted event or sensory-friendly performance.
- Encourage active self-care during an event by letting people know that in addition to the breaks being offered, it's okay for people to move away and take a break.
- Ensure you let people know where the designated quiet spaces are located and keep these spaces monitored to ensure they remain quiet spaces.
- Have a dedicated customer service/ support person or team to provide information and directions, and to support people who require help.

Great Australian Bites event, Brisbane © Queensland Government



*During the event continued...*

- Ensure staff are familiar with the evacuation procedure for people with disability.
- Monitor accessible toilets and parking bays to ensure they are left available for the people who need them.

### The importance of a personal contact

No matter how well you predict and plan for the needs of attendees, there will always be certain questions that need to be asked and answered by a human being.

- Consider designating someone in your team who people can speak to or check in with before an event, highlight any issues, and follow up with after an event.
- Give a phone, SMS and email option for people who use different methods of communication or who aren't confident online.

### Examples of communicating with individuals

Though each person is different, some guidelines can be offered for how to communicate with people with various disabilities.

#### People with intellectual disability

Always ask permission to touch the person's chair or assist them in any way.

#### People who have a hearing impairment or who are deaf

- Always face the person so they can read your lips. Avoid bright lights behind you that may limit their ability to see your lips.
- Use your normal tone of voice and volume. If possible, move out of areas with lots of background noise.

- If a hearing-impaired person has an Auslan interpreter with them, always address your comments directly to the hearing-impaired person rather than to the interpreter, looking at the hearing-impaired person rather than the interpreter when the person is signing.
- Respond to what you are hearing non-verbally as you would with anyone else, making eye contact with the hearing-impaired person.
- Have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with the person if no other method of communication is possible.

#### People who have a vision impairment or are blind

- Offer sighted guides to people with vision impairment at events and if they choose to have one, make sure staff understand the role and know these guidelines.
- Always identify yourself by name and if appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly so that they know you are talking to them.
- If a visually-impaired person asks for assistance to go somewhere, ask which side you should be on and offer your arm so they can hold it just above your elbow. Alternatively, they may have a guide dog and ask you to walk in front of them so the dog can follow you.
- Never pat, play with, distract or feed a guide dog while it is in harness; the harness indicates the dog is working and its owner is the person in control.

## Auslan, live captioning and hearing loops

- Live captioning provides the added benefit of an event transcript that can be sent to participants afterwards.
- Recorded live captions or transcripts assist people who experience information overload as they can go back and read or listen to the information afterwards.
- Make sure you book interpreters early for your event, as Auslan interpreters and live captioners aren't generally available at short notice.
- Make sure there are sufficient Auslan interpreters to cover movement of participants, speakers, informal conversations and rest breaks for the interpreters. Work with the interpreter service to make generous tentative bookings to avoid being caught short if more people than expected register for an interpreter.
- Provide interpreters and captioners with a copy of the event material (agenda, run sheet, speeches, welcome to country, MC scripts and so on) prior to the event. This will provide them with an understanding of the context of the event and allow them to prepare unfamiliar signs or practice spelling of names.
- Some hearing loops use Wi-Fi and, if not set up properly, can cause significant impact both on Wi-Fi quality and the audio quality of the hearing aid signal<sup>11</sup>. This is not an issue with other systems, such as

Bluetooth, infrared or the traditional copper wire hearing loops<sup>12</sup>.

- Some auto-generated captions will often contain errors, so event organisers need to take the time to edit for a good result.

### Example: hearing loops and Wi-Fi

A Wi-Fi hearing loop system was identified at a large venue ahead of an event. The event organisers:

- opted to purchase a dedicated Wi-Fi channel for the hearing loop system separate to the guest and venue Wi-Fi
- liaised with the technical team at the event to highlight the potential issue and ensure proper set up, inviting a person with hearing aids to test the system
- contacted hearing loop users identified in the registration process and checked whether they had any issues or other suggestions
- offered information about the optimal seats in the room for good reception.

Following the event, feedback was provided to the venue recommending installation of Bluetooth-enabled hearing loop systems to overcome the issues.

11 Hearing Loop Insider. Can Wi-Fi Networks Interfere With Hearing Aids? [www.hearinginsider.com/can-wifi-networks-interfere-with-hearing-aids-can-wifi-networks-interfere-with-hearing-aids](http://www.hearinginsider.com/can-wifi-networks-interfere-with-hearing-aids-can-wifi-networks-interfere-with-hearing-aids)

12 University of Melbourne. Hearing Loops demystified. [unimelb.edu.au/accessibility/hearing-loops-demystified](http://unimelb.edu.au/accessibility/hearing-loops-demystified)



## Presentations

Both online or face-to-face presentations can add great value and richness to the ideas that are being communicated. The imagery used can complement the spoken words of the presenter and is also useful for people who benefit from visual communication, including people where English is their second language and people with learning and intellectual disability.

Presenters or performers should be briefed about accessible actions they can take. Part of this is to inform presenters and performers of the importance for them to:

- provide any tricky or unfamiliar words to interpreters and captioners ahead of time
- describe their own appearance at the start of the presentation
- describe images on accompanying slides
- speak slowly and clearly.

### Using presentation slides

- Use a simple background and clear font that has a high contrast from the background.
- Do not overcrowd slides with excessive words.
- Read the text out on each slide and describe what is on the screen so that blind or visually impaired participants are included.
- Explain the images you use and their purpose or metaphorical contribution, for example, “*here is a cartoon of a seesaw showing the need to keep things in balance*”.
- Explain the meaning behind complex graphs or pictures and avoid jargon and technical language.

- Give participants an opportunity to request slides in advance so they have time to process them before the presentation.
- Include alt text for images and graphics in any presentation you are sharing (see [Accessible communication](#)).
- If you are unsure if a document is accessible, it is best to check with the attendees.
- Check in with people throughout the event and encourage people to contact the organisers if they are experiencing any challenges.

## Exiting an event

It is important to develop an exit strategy for events to ensure a safe and positive departure experience is provided for attendees. Considerations when developing the strategy include:

- Have a staggered entry/exit for participants.
- Ensure you have people stationed at lifts, doorways, taxi pick up points and carparks to assist with the steady flow of people leaving and to troubleshoot any issues (for example if a wheelchair accessible taxi doesn't arrive or the parking machine doesn't work).
- Allow people with disability to leave first if they choose.
- Clearly announce the event has ended and invite people to leave when they are ready via the exits.
- Ensure bump-out does not commence as guests/patrons are exiting – this can cause more overcrowding, trip hazards and anxiety.
- Consider playing calm background music at the end of an event as it helps groups of people to slow down.

### Exiting an event continued...

- The venue's exit plan should form part of the pre-event briefing and be included on floorplans to help people to plan their navigated exits.
- Provide designated pick-up spots that are safe, well lit, and easy to access outside the venue.
- engage participants in an evaluation of the event, by online survey or providing responses over the phone.
- offer to share the end results when available and/or other presentations.
- if topics discussed have raised issues or cause distress, it may be important to follow up with attendees and offer access to support.

## After an event

An accessible event doesn't end when people leave. There are a range of follow-up processes that need to occur, as relevant:

- send an email thanking participants and guest speakers for attending.
- offer participants the option to share further ideas with you via email.
- if people are being acknowledged for their time through payment or gift vouchers, it is important to follow up with this as soon as possible after the event.
- provide links to resources and presentations at the event as soon as possible after the event.



*After an event continued...*

- host a debrief meeting after the event to thank staff and volunteers who assisted and gain their feedback on what went well and what can be improved for next time.

## **Feedback**

Post event accessibility feedback is critical for your event and the planning for future events. Consider providing a feedback form after an event. This will show you are proactive and committed to improvement rather than just expecting people to give feedback if they want to. You could also consider a phone call or direct contact with attendees that have disability access requirements, to understand their experience.

People with disability need to have their voices heard on accessibility and inclusion. Providing feedback is part of their self-advocacy. Generally, the more feedback that is received, the more likely there will be change.

It is important to provide patrons with information about how their feedback will be used and how it will help to assist planning for future events.

## **Responding to complaints and serious issues**

Any attendee, including a person with disability, who has a negative experience has the right to complain, be listened to and taken seriously.

A single inclusive complaints process that is accessible and flexible for attendees with disability is important, along with an understanding of the impact that exclusion and trauma may have for people with disability.

Follow up on complaints, genuinely listen, take the time to understand what happened and the context in which it occurred, respond with consideration and respect, be honest in explaining likely outcomes of the complaint and refer people to your complaints process so they can understand what it involves.



# Online events

A successful online event is one where participants have access to the information, content and ideas in a meaningful way and an equal opportunity to contribute.

Online events may include award ceremonies, seminars, workshops, meetings and webinars. It is important to ensure online events remain inclusive and accessible so people with disability can participate on an equal basis with others.

In addition to the considerations for running an in-person event, some specific considerations apply to events hosted online.

## Before an online event

### Planning

Giving people a clear understanding of an event will help them to prepare and access any support they may require. Being clear on the expectations of attendees is helpful for many people and can reduce potential anxiety and subsequent impact on their participation.

- Encourage active self-care and let people know that in addition to the breaks being offered, it's okay for people to move away from their screens.

Online event © Getty Images / Luis Alvarez



### Planning continued...

- Let people know they can turn their microphones and cameras off if they need to take a break.
- Encourage people to have water and snacks nearby.
- Keep online events 60 to 90 minutes long.
- For longer events, keep to 2–4 hours with breaks each hour. This allows Auslan interpreters, captioners, note takers and support workers to take a break.
- Send participants the link on the morning of the event to avoid people having to scroll through emails to find meeting information.

### Decide on a platform for the online event

It is not always possible to choose which platforms will be used for an event as there may be organisational and practical reasons why one online platform is used over another. Understand the strengths and limitations of the chosen platform and learn what you can do to address the accessibility challenges for different attendees.

Before procuring/contracting a third-party platform, subscription, content or software, ensure that it complies with the principles of accessibility included in the [Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture \(Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture \(QGEA\) | For government | Queensland Government\)](#) for purchase of digital products and the broader procurement guidelines. This is important because retro-fitting digital accessibility is particularly challenging after investment has been made in off-the-shelf solutions.

### Factors to consider when selecting an online platform

- Familiarity with the software – is it a new technology? Is it commonly used?
- Does it link in with existing accessibility tools? Is it optimised for accessibility? Is the colour scheme customisable? What is the contrast like within the app?
- Does the platform allow for access to the same experiences people are having in person (for hybrid events)? For example, are there break out rooms, opportunities to make connections, quiet space, support staff to answer questions?
- Can people test the platform before the event and be supported to use it during the event?

### Event setup

- Include Auslan interpreting, captioning and audio description. Captioning provides the added benefit of a transcript of the meeting.
- Have strategies in place to ensure people are not excluded from your online event because of poor internet connection. For example, ensure they can link by phone, or come into your office to participate in the meeting in person or through an online meeting room.
- Provide participants with an agenda and meeting or event materials in their preferred accessible format prior to the meeting or event – this may include digital or hard copy formats. This will allow participants to be prepared to contribute to the meeting, understand what is happening, what they can expect and what they need to prepare. It can also help reduce any negative impact or anxiety.

### Event setup continued...

- Reminders and calendar invites are useful for people who have issues with their executive functioning to help them plan and automatically be entered into people's calendars.
- Include a tip sheet in plain English that includes screenshots on how to connect and/or register for online events, including instructions for connecting to the platform. This will give people a chance to be independent and problem solve themselves before asking for assistance.
- Provide the details of a contact person who can assist with troubleshooting or any access requirements prior to and during the meeting.
- During the online event have a small team of people working back-of-house. This team can let people into the meeting, troubleshoot with people having connection issues, and help field questions in the chat. Make sure everyone knows the people who have asked for assistance during an online event and reach out to them and let them know how you can assist them.

## During an online event

Remember you are the host and being a good host is key to ensuring people are included. Some of the things you can do to improve the accessibility and inclusion for all participants are:

- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself as the facilitator of the event.
- Complete an audio check.
- Make sure the accessibility features are working for people.
- Use a good quality microphone and test your audio in advance. This is a better experience for everyone and might mean the difference between inclusion and exclusion for a person with a hearing impairment.
- Inform people of group rules, etiquette and general housekeeping matters in advance which will give them time to prepare for the session.
- Have a back-of-house person or small team to field questions, assist participants who have issues and to support the process of going into break-out rooms.

### When you start the online event, you can:

- Complete appropriate cultural acknowledgements.
- Describe what you look like for people who are blind or vision impaired and ask people speaking to do the same.
- Run through a list of housekeeping including:
  - group rules, expectations and meeting etiquette
  - the designated contact person (consider giving a phone number and tell people how to log back into the meeting)
  - whether the meeting will be recorded
  - reminding people of accessibility features (Auslan, captioning, taking a break if you need)
  - reading everything aloud and not assuming people can read the slides
  - adding important information in the chat, such as phone numbers and the presence of closed captions, so people can reference it later



- encouraging people to add questions to the chat
- encouraging people to say their name before speaking so that anyone online who has visual impairment or is blind can understand who is speaking (remind people throughout the session)
- encourage participants to consider the pace they speak at so Auslan interpreters can keep up
- encouraging participants to have their camera on when speaking if they are comfortable, to assist those who are visually impaired and may be lip reading.

If you are going to ask people a specific question, it is helpful to let them know in advance as they may need time to prepare and research this.

### Case study: online participation

Before an online workshop, organisers asked questions about support needs at the registration stage and contacted several people who had requested it before the workshop. Based upon the information provided, the workshop hosts were briefed with the following actions needed to deliver inclusive online event.

To enable participation of a person with Autism who has auditory and sensory processing differences, instructions were given for people to mute when not speaking and to choose backgrounds or background images that were not busy, too bright or distracting.

To ensure the comfort and ease of access for a person with vision impairment (who is 'unable to read the room'), hosts gave clear information in their introduction that there would be specific times to ask questions and make

comments at regular intervals during the workshop. These periods were clearly announced so that everyone knew when it was time to speak and when not.

At the beginning of the workshop, the host announced that there was a variety of ways participants could contribute to the workshop. This included the zoom chat function, the zoom digital function to put a hand up when wanting to speak and the option for participants to turn on their camera and raise their own hand.

### Inclusive interactions during the online event

Learn about the accessibility needs of your audience and do your best to meet them. You should consider a variety of meeting formats that engage people in different and inclusive ways.

To actively engage participants, you might like to consider:

- break-out rooms
- creative activities
- online polls.

It is important to remind people of online etiquette and keeping the meeting safe enough for everyone to share. The online event host should be mindful of people using stereotypes, stigmatising language, or making assumptions about disability.

Some people with Autism struggle to remember their thoughts, so if the group is small enough, they might benefit from being able to speak first. You could invite them to unmute and speak rather than put their hand up or invite them to speak ahead of the speaker's queue.

## Chat

Chat is a commonly used feature and can be helpful for people who are non-verbal and have trouble speaking. It is also helpful for people who are anxious speaking in groups, and people who need extra time to get their thoughts together.

However, for some people with disability, chat functions can be inaccessible. It is best to test the accessibility in advance. It is also useful to think about an alternative way for people share their questions and opinions. For example, waiting for a break in the discussion and asking people if they have any further ideas to contribute.

Again, the more you have learned about your attendees in [the registration stage](#) the better prepared you can be. During the meeting or event, try and read the needs of your audience to ensure the greatest level of engagement.

## Ending the online event

For people who may have difficulty understanding when things have finished it is important to clearly announce the meeting has ended. You can do this by:

- announcing the meeting has ended
- inviting participants to press the leave button or saying they can wait until the meeting organiser ceases the connection.

# Summary

Creating events that are accessible and inclusive requires a dedicated approach, a willingness to learn and develop skills, ask questions, and problem solve to get the best outcomes.

People with disability can be your most helpful co-designers of accessible and inclusive events.

It is important to start with this lens and focus from the beginning on the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of your event. Inclusive events will deliver great experiences and outcomes for everyone.

## Queensland Government resources

Creating an event that includes or targets employees? Contact your local Human Resources team to access expertise in diversity and inclusion.

**Accessible Communications and Brand Guidelines: A Guide for Operators and Businesses in Tourism and the Visitor Economy**

[Accessible-Communication-and-Brand-Guidelines-Dec-22-.pdf \(dtis.qld.gov.au\)](#)

**Accessible tourism**

[Accessible Tourism | Tourism and Events Queensland](#)

**DTIS' Accessible Tourism Toolkit**

[www.dtis.qld.gov.au/tourism/accessible-tourism/accessible-tourism-toolkit](http://www.dtis.qld.gov.au/tourism/accessible-tourism/accessible-tourism-toolkit)

**Queensland's Disability Plan 2022–27**

[Queensland's Disability Plan 2022–27 – Queensland's Disability Plan \(dcssds.qld.gov.au\)](#)

**Queensland Government inclusive communications and campaigns**

[Inclusive communications and campaigns \(forgov.qld.gov.au\)](#)

**Queensland Government – website standards, guidelines and templates**

[Website standards, guidelines and templates | For government | Queensland Government](#)

**TEQ podcasts – Accessed That**

[podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/accessed-that/id1702964284](https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/accessed-that/id1702964284)



## Other resources

Queenslanders with Disability Network  
step-by-step guide “How to use Zoom”  
[qdn.org.au/resources/#digitalinclusion](http://qdn.org.au/resources/#digitalinclusion)

Ableism

[www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/](http://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/)

Microsoft accessibility

[Make your Word documents accessible to people with disability](#)

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines  
[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#)

## References

The following references were used in the development of this guide:

Accessible events guide:

Hepburn Shire Council

[www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/residents/documents/accessible-events-guide-2019.pdf](http://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/residents/documents/accessible-events-guide-2019.pdf)

Accessible events: a guide for meetings and event organisers: this resource was developed by Meetings and Events Australia:

[www.meetingsevents.com.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/accessible\\_events\\_guide.pdf](http://www.meetingsevents.com.au/sites/default/files/uploaded-content/website-content/accessible_events_guide.pdf)

Brisbane City Council Event Accessibility Guidelines

[www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/laws-and-permits/laws-and-permits-for-businesses/events-venues-and-filming/events-and-festivals/event-preparation-and-safety/event-accessibility-guidelines](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/laws-and-permits/laws-and-permits-for-businesses/events-venues-and-filming/events-and-festivals/event-preparation-and-safety/event-accessibility-guidelines)

Hosting accessible and inclusive online meetings and events: produced by the Australian Human Rights Commission  
[includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/hosting-accessible-and-inclusive-online-meetings-and-events](http://includeability.gov.au/resources-employers/hosting-accessible-and-inclusive-online-meetings-and-events)

8 ways we’re making SEWF22 an accessible and inclusive event  
[sewfonline.com/making-sewf22-accessible-and-inclusive/](http://sewfonline.com/making-sewf22-accessible-and-inclusive/)

Sage Journals – Improving Wayfinding for Older Users With Selective Attention Deficits

[journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1064804616659992](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1064804616659992)

The Graphic Artist Guild USA

[Downloadable Disability Access Symbols – The Graphic Artist Guild \(graphicartistsguild.org/downloadable-disability-access-symbols/\)](#)

Top 10 tips for running accessible online events: produced by Access Arts New South Wales

[aarts.net.au/news/top-10-tips-for-running-accessible-online-events/](http://aarts.net.au/news/top-10-tips-for-running-accessible-online-events/)



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