Accessible Events Guidelines

Bayside
CITY COUNCIL

Accessible Events Guidelines

At Bayside, we are committed to full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The purpose of this guide is to provide meaningful information to ensure all community events have access and participation needs considered. The aim of creating accessible events is to increase access and participation of people with disability.

The guide aims to help you to:

- identify what you should do before, during and after an event,
- understand what you can do to ensure the best possible access for people with disability,
- provide further contacts for advice, information, and assistance that you may need.

Why is accessibility important?

Improved accessibility and inclusion in all settings creates a better experience for people with disability and provides a sense of belonging in the community. With 18.4% of Australia's population having experienced disability, access and inclusion is an important consideration at our events to ensure our commitments and outcomes from the Council Plan and the Disability Action Plan.

There are many components to setting up an event, and it is best to think about access, inclusion and participation at the very beginning when planning an event. As access requirements are individual and varied for people with disability, it is best practice to be aware of specific requirements of the people attending the event where possible. In some cases, using a co-design approach where you include people with disability at the beginning of the planning process can be valuable.

This guide is designed to provide information on how to make your events accessible, and the things you need to consider in order to create a welcoming and inclusive event for people with disability.

Who are people with disability?

There are different ways of defining disability. Clinical or medical models define disability as health conditions or impairments, whereas social models define disability as the interaction between the person living with impairment and the barriers created by society. Under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it states that:

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.

It is also beneficial to understand the range of disability that may face societal and environmental barriers. This includes:

- people with mobility and manual dexterity difficulties
- people with psychosocial disability
- people who are neurodiverse
- people who are blind or vision impaired
- people who are deaf or hearing impaired
- people with intellectual or learning disability
- people who have brain injury
- people who have epilepsy and
- people who have chronic illness, medical conditions and hidden disability.

What events are included?

There are a variety of ways that we interact with each other and our community where the inclusion needs of people with disability should be considered. These include:

Meetings

Meetings are generally smaller in size and for a shorter time.

Virtual Meetings

A virtual meeting can take place using a variety of platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Webex and is a real-time interaction online.
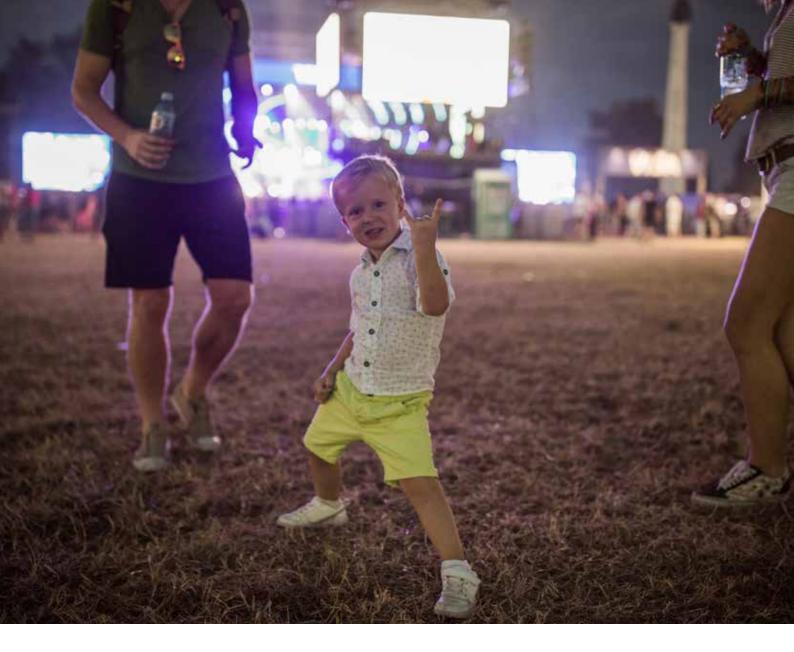
Hybrid Meetings

A hybrid meeting connects people that are remote and online and people who are face-to-face.

Events

An event can be a conference, organizational training, festival, fund-raiser, or a community event. These often require significant planning and have complex components to pull together to set it up.

What are my legal obligations?

The Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 requires all barriers to participation be removed, and that dignified and equitable access is provided for people with disability.

There may be other regulations and by-laws you need to consider and be aware of to meet your legal duties.

What do I need to consider when planning my event?

Everybody involved in putting on an event, including venue staff, performers, exhibitors, session chairs, booking staff, suppliers and speakers can contribute to making your event more accessible for people with disability. Applying a disability lens to planning your event starts by considering the following:

- What is your event, and can everyone participate?

- What barriers might make it impossible or difficult for people with disability to access your event?

- What are the things you can do to ensure the best possible access?

- What are the things of relevance in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and State/Territory anti-discrimination laws you to think about?

- Where can I go for further information and assistance, including speaking to people with disability?

There are three planning stages to plan and deliver an inclusive event:

- Before an event

- During an event

- After an event.

Before an event:

CHOOSING A VENUE

There are many factors to consider in making your venue as accessible as possible.	YES	NO	N/A
Is the location accessible? (Is it close to accessible public transport or easy drop-off zones).			
Is there accessible parking available?			
Is there a continuous, safe, easy and accessible path of travel?			
Is there sufficient circulation space for wheelchair users?			
Does the venue have an accessible entrance for everyone? (Not a separate entrance at the back or via an alternative route)			
Are there accessible bathrooms?			
Does the venue have hearing loops?			
Is there an appropriate space for an Auslan interpreter?			
Are screens available for live captioning?			
Does the venue have appropriate lighting and acoustic sound absorption?			
Is there an optional quiet room or space for people with sensory impairments?			
Are there options or different seats and seating arrangements?			
If applicable, have the staff received disability awareness training?			
Are there amenities for service dogs?			
Is there sufficient signage and navigation information?			
Are there options for an accessible stage or platform?			
Features such as ramps, lifts, entrances and corridor widths are all subject to the Access to Premises Standards 1428. Compliance with these standards are dependent on the age of the building.			

OUTDOOR EVENTS

Achieving accessibility for an outdoor event has some additional requirements to consider.	YES	NO	N/A
Are the ground surfaces even, stable with no steps or kerbs?			
Is surface matting or ramps required to enhance accessibility?			
Is there sufficient shelter that is accessible?			
Is the layout accessible with appropriate circulation space between displays or seating?			
Is the sound system set up for optimal acoustics and hearing loop access?			
Does additional temporary accessible parking need to be provided?			
Are there options for portable accessible toilet facilities, marquees, or first-aid areas?			
Is there a variety of accessible seating options?			
Is there sufficient signage and navigation information?			
Does the venue have hearing loops?			
Is there an appropriate space for an Auslan interpreter?			
Are screens available for live captioning?			
Are there designated areas close to a stage for use by people using wheelchairs or mobility aids?			
Are the cables secure and don't present a trip hazard?			

COMMUNICATING YOUR EVENT

	YES	NO	N/A
Is your invitation accessible and available in alternative formats, such as plain and easy English?			
Have you asked for access requests in your invitation or communications?			
Is your booking process accessible, and have alternative ways of booking been considered?			
Have you provided sufficient alternative formats for different audiences?			
Have you provided materials and information in advance where applicable?			
Have you provided information such as Access Maps or Keys, Social Stories, or available access features for the event (such as Auslan, Companion Card or accessible amenities) to assist people with disability?			
Have information disclaimers been provided for activities that may include things like loud sounds, flashing lights or excessive crowds?			
Please see the accessibility guidelines for communications by the Victorian Government or further information.			

PREPARING FOR YOUR EVENT

There are additional things that may also need to be considered for the benefit of inclusion for people with disability.	YES	NO	N/A
Have guest speakers or conference delegates been briefed on accessible content and accessible communication?			
Have you arranged amplified and roving microphones where applicable?			
Have you scheduled regular short breaks in the agenda or run sheet?			
Do you have a designated and disability confident contact person for any access requirements for your event?			
Where catering is available, ensure that people with disability can independently reach food, and where applicable, suggest support workers or have staff that can assist.			
For any events with specific accessible amenities (such as Changing Places or accessible bathrooms), ensure that keys and instructions are available and make sure people know how to operate anything that is required.			

HYBRID AND VIRTUAL EVENTS

More than ever, hybrid and virtual meetings and events are becoming more common. You may need to consider options for accessibility where an event may be virtual or hybrid.	YES	NO	N/A
Ensure the virtual platform is accessible and where appropriate, ask for preferences on the platform from people with disability.			
Provide detailed instructions on how to access a hybrid or virtual meeting, including the access features of the platform.			
Ensure access requests are implemented for virtual and hybrid meetings to enable full participation.			
Establish rules and guidelines on accessibility for equal participation, such as who will monitor the chat, how will the people who are virtual participate, when microphones and cameras need to be on or off.			
Ensure all images and videos are captioned and describe them where applicable.			
Ensure content has sufficient color contrast and is presented in an accessible way (not too busy, readable font).			
Create accessible agendas and send them in alternative formats with sufficient reading time.			

During an event:

AT THE VENUE			
At the beginning and during your event, you will need to ensure the following access considerations are met.	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Before attendees arrive, do an access assessment. This could include accessible and reserved seating for Auslan users, continuous paths of travel, accessible bathrooms and amenities are unlocked and hazard free.			
Ensure any staff at the event are aware of the detailed access features and amenities or point them in the direction of the appropriate person.			
Describe the location of any access features or amenities such as bathrooms and emergency exits in detail (Example: Bathroom is to the left of the front door, approximately 4 metres away).			
Provide generic information at the beginning of the meeting or event about the access features being used (Example: Auslan Interpreters, live captioning) Note: Privacy is to be maintained for people with disability attending and their specific access requirements or adjustments.			

At the outdoor event

- Before attendees arrive, do an access assessment. This could include accessible and reserved seating for Auslan users, continuous paths of travel, accessible bathrooms and amenities are unlocked and hazard free.

- Ensure any staff at the event are aware of the detailed access features and amenities or point them in the direction of the appropriate person.

Please consider the resource list below for:

Hybrid and virtual events

A key component of virtual and hybrid meetings and events is to ensure that all attendees can participate.

- Start with an access check – check the volume, live captioning, and Auslan access (pinning to the screen for virtual meetings and events).

- Advise keyboard shortcuts such as for microphone on and off for the relevant platform as they could be useful for people with disability.

- Remind people of meeting etiquette. Examples include:

  - saying your name before you speak

  - one person speaks at a time

  - how and when to use the chat function

  - how and when to raise hands

  - describing images and information on shared documents

  - having your mouth visible on screen for people who lipread

  - reducing background noise for Auslan interpreters and people who are hard of hearing

  - reducing distractions and avoiding the use of virtual backgrounds.

- Ensure closed captions are available on all videos used.

- Use plain English and avoid acronyms, not only to increase understanding for people who are neurodiverse, but to enable clearer live captioning and access for Auslan interpreters.

- Ensure all participants are taking off masks and their camera is on when they speak (for people who rely on lip-reading).

- Allow for break times or pause for the changeover of Auslan Interpreters.

- For hybrid meetings (a combination of online and in room participants), ensure the person who is speaking faces the camera and explain the room layout and who is in the room.

- Where possible, record or transcribe virtual or hybrid meetings to enable playback and review for people with disability that may need extra time to absorb information.

After an Event

To ensure that continuous improvement is considered for meetings and events, obtaining feedback is always a great option as part of the event evaluation. However, people with disability may need additional information after a meeting or event.

- If available, a copy of the transcript or recording in an accessible format should be sent to attendees.
- Provide detailed and accessible instructions on how to download a transcript or recording.
- Send any other relevant information used in the meeting or event, such as presentations, links to reading and contact information.
- Follow up with attendees who requested access requirements to ensure people with disability could participate.
- Ensure any post-event surveys or evaluations are in accessible and alternative formats.
- Meeting organizers to evaluate what went well and what could be improved.

Resources

Microsoft Teams Access Features

Cisco WebEx Access Features

Zoom Access Features

Disability (Access to Premises — Buildings) Standards 2010

Victorian Government Accessible Communications

Microsoft - how to make your documents accessible

Useful contacts

SERVICES	ROLE	CONTACT DETAILS
Hearing Supports	Auslan Interpreters, translations, education, and information services.	Auslan Services www.auslanservices.com Deaf Connect www.deafconnect.org.au
	Live Remote Captioning	www.redbeemedia.com
	National Relay Services	Voice Relay number 1300 555 727 TTY number 133 677 SMS relay number 0423 677 767 Website
Word of Mouth	Purchasing Augmentation and Hearing Loop devices	www.wom.com.au E: info@wom.com.au P: 03 9723 0660
Vision Supports	Vision Australia Useful resources to support people living with blindness or low vision. Services include: • Seeing Eye Dogs • Braille	www.visionaustralia.org P: 1300 84 74 66
Travellers Aid	Travellers Aid offers practical support to ensure people with disability can participate in community life. Services include: • Participation Assistance • Mobility Equipment Hire • Companion Service	www.travellersaid.org.au
Centre for Inclusive Design	Guide to Easy English versus Plain English	centreforinclusivedesign.org.au
Portable Ramps for Hire	Portable or Threshold ramps can be used indoors or outdoors to provide access to a door threshold. They are a suitable alternative where a permanent ramp is impractical.	**Aidacare** Visit Aidacare website to view ramps available for hire. P: 1300 133 120 **Independent Living Specialists** Wheelchair access ramps for hire available on ILS website. Low-cost threshold ramp mats for entry ways are available to purchase from Bunnings. Visit the Bunnings website.
Hire a Marvelloo (Mobile Changing Places Facility)	Mobile fully accessible toilet for people with severe or physical disabilities and their carers.	Visit the Maroondah City Council website and complete the Expression of Interest form for hire.

We acknowledge Bayside's Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for sharing their expertise and providing their lived experience in the development of this resource.