



**Meetings & Events Australia**

# ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

A Guide For Meeting and Event Organisers

# FOREWORD

Events such as conferences, festivals, annual meetings, award ceremonies, fundraisers and seminars are big business and an important part of the lives of many people.

This Guide, which has been developed by the Meetings and Events Industry of Australia in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission, is designed to help those responsible for organising events and to ensure they are accessible for people with disabilities - whether they are presenters, sponsors or participants.

It is based on the experience of organisers who are responsible for creating accessible events.

Under both state/territory and Federal law, making events accessible for people with disabilities is a legal requirement, but with approximately four million people with disabilities in Australia who have significant spending power, providing access is also an important commercial decision.

Organisations wanting to make an event more accessible often have difficulty in finding out what they can do to ensure the best possible access is provided.

We hope that this guide will help you to do this.

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## *Feedback*

Readers are invited to submit their ideas and suggestions for making events more accessible for people with disabilities. Please let us know how useful you found this Guide.

Please forward comments to: [mea@mea.org.au](mailto:mea@mea.org.au)

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This practical Guide aims to help you to make events more accessible for people with disabilities who may be attending as presenters, participants or sponsors. It gives information and guidance on best practice that will open up to you a section of your potential market that is often overlooked, and help you to meet your existing legal responsibilities.

The Guide does not attempt to list everything that will need to be done for every type of event. It is not designed as a technical checklist covering detailed specifications. Instead, it outlines principles that will lead to the development of best practice and increase access for people with disabilities to a range of events.

This guide aims to help you:

- think about access and participation when you plan an event;
- identify features that make it impossible or difficult for people with disabilities to access your event;
- understand what you can do to ensure the best possible access;
- understand the relevance of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)* and state/territory anti-discrimination laws;
- find further sources of advice, information and assistance you might need.

## **Definition of an event**

This Guide uses the term 'event(s)' to cover the broad range of functions such as exhibitions, conferences, awards ceremonies, Annual General Meetings, film festivals, fundraisers, outdoor concerts and local community street fairs. The Guide uses the term 'event organiser' to describe the person or organisation hosting the event.

## **Who should use this Guide?**

This Guide will be useful to anybody who is involved in organising events whatever the nature, size or location of the event. You might be a professional organiser of events like conferences or exhibitions, a Government Department or local authority, a voluntary organisation, or chair of a local fundraising group. You will also find this Guide useful if you are a student of event or hospitality management.

# WHY SHOULD YOU THINK ABOUT ACCESS?

There are many reasons why you should think about access and how you plan to meet the requirements of people with disabilities:

- There are around four million people with disabilities in Australia representing a considerable proportion of your potential audience or customers.
- People with disabilities can also influence the choices of their families and friends if they have had a previous bad experience.
- Everyone benefits when access is better, including other attendees, people making deliveries, people with heavy baggage, families with young children and those with prams.
- Our population is ageing and as we age our capacities change. The proportion of Australia's population aged over 65 years has grown from 8% in 1970-71 to 13% in 2001-02. Projections are that over the next 40 years, the proportion of the population over 65 years will almost double to around 25%. More and more of us will benefit from good access to the events we want to participate in.
- Under the law you have a legal responsibility to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. Complaints of discrimination could result in costly court proceedings and rulings.

If the needs of potential participants in an event are taken into account at the earliest planning stages the better the chances of making it genuinely accessible and significantly reducing the potential for future problems.

# WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

While all states and territories have similar laws that prohibit discrimination, this section provides a brief overview of the Federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA). The DDA aims to ensure that people with disabilities are not treated less favorably than people who do not have a disability.

The DDA covers areas such as employment, access to goods, services and facilities, education, access to premises and transport. The DDA defines disability very broadly and includes, for example:

- people who are blind or vision impaired;
- people who are Deaf or hearing impaired;
- people with intellectual and learning disabilities;
- people with mobility and manual dexterity difficulties;
- people with psychiatric disabilities;
- people who have a brain injury;
- people who have epilepsy; and
- people who have a disease-causing organism such as the HIV virus.

Service providers, such as events organisers and sponsors have a legal responsibility under state/territory and Federal laws to avoid discriminating and, when barriers exist, to remove them.

## **What sort of access problems might there be?**

Access for people with disabilities is not only about physical access to buildings for wheelchair users, but also includes, for example, access to written information for people with vision impairments and access to public announcements for Deaf people.

The following are examples of actions that might lead to discrimination complaints:

- Door stewards at a rock concert refuse entry to a ticket holder because he has cerebral palsy and has difficulty controlling and co-ordinating his movements.
- A conference centre only provides a self-service buffet at lunchtime for delegates. Some people with mobility impairments or vision impairments may find it difficult or impossible to carry or hold food from a buffet selection and to eat without placing their plate on a table.
- An awards ceremony takes place on a platform that can only be accessed by two steps so a graduate who uses a wheelchair cannot participate in the ceremony in the same way other students can.
- Motions being put to an important company general meeting are only available as printed material making it difficult for a blind shareholder to participate in the debate.
- The keynote speech at a conference is delivered in a room with no hearing augmentation system for people with a hearing impairment.
- A senior staff member of a major conference sponsor has to go to another building to find an accessible toilet.

### **Who is responsible for making sure an event is accessible?**

If you run an event you are a service provider and you will be the person responsible for making sure the event is accessible.

This is reasonably straightforward where, for example, an event organiser holds an event in their own premises and provides all the services such as information, catering, staff and entertainment. However, in other cases, there will be a number of service providers involved in a single event. The following examples help to illustrate this.

*Example:* A council is running a program of consultation events for people living in the local area. It is hosting these meetings in community centres that it owns and operates. The service provider is the local council and it would be responsible for ensuring that each event, including the content of the consultation and any supporting materials, are accessible for people with disabilities.

*Example:* Food is available to buy from a burger van at an agricultural show. The fast food van was invited to attend by the show organisers and to provide hot food at the event. The service provider in this situation is the owner of the van and he or she may have responsibilities under the DDA to ensure that people with disabilities can get access to the fast food service being provided.

*Example:* An exhibition organiser rents out exhibition stand space to companies wishing to be represented at the exhibition. The exhibition organiser would be responsible for ensuring that the exhibition stand spaces are accessible, but the exhibitors might be responsible for ensuring that the services provided in the stand space are accessible.

*Example:* The organiser of an international two-day conference offers to make hotel bookings for delegates. The organiser is providing a hotel booking service and it will be responsible for ensuring that the booking service itself is accessible to people with disabilities. However, the hotel is also a service provider and it would be responsible for ensuring that the hotel rooms and services are accessible for all guests, including guests with disabilities.

Where there is any doubt about whether a particular event is covered by the DDA or concerns about who is the responsible service provider, you should seek further advice (see Section 15 – *Information about the law*).

### **How can you make sure that services supplied to you as an event organiser are accessible?**

If you contract services for an event you are organising, you could ask suppliers for details of how they make their services accessible for people with disabilities. If they are providing a service to the public then they should already be aware that they have responsibilities under the DDA and know how they plan to meet those responsibilities.

Services supplied to you by others might include things like the venues, sound systems and catering services. Other services might include those supplied by professional conference, event or exhibition organisers you hire to help you put on your event.

### **What happens if someone believes they have been discriminated against?**

If a person with a disability tells you they feel they have been discriminated against when they have tried to access your event, you should consider what you can do to put things right. The guidance in Sections 4 to 12 can be used to help find solutions.

It is important that you take any complaint seriously and look for ways to resolve the issue through discussion and negotiation.

If a person with a disability decides to make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission), or a state/territory anti-discrimination body, you will be informed of the complaint and asked to provide your side of the story.

The Commission will try to conciliate an agreement between you and the person who has complained, but if this is not successful the complainant will be advised of their right to take their complaint to the Federal Court or Federal Magistrates Court. (The process is similar under state and territory anti-discrimination laws, but generally complaints that cannot be conciliated will be referred to a Tribunal.)

If the Federal Court or Federal Magistrates Court finds that you have discriminated and there is no unjustifiable hardship defence (see below) it can order you to remove the barrier or stop the discrimination and to make changes to avoid discriminating again in the future. The Court can also order you to pay compensation to the complainant.

### **Examples of complaints and outcomes relevant to events**

- A man who has a hearing impairment complained that when he attended a lecture series at a public venue he was unable to hear the lectures as there was no audio loop installed in the theatre. The complaint was resolved with the respondent agreeing to provide an apology, a refund of \$85.00 for the lectures and install an audio hearing loop in the theatre.
- A man who uses a wheelchair complained that a major publicly funded arts facility did not have public lift access, so that patrons requiring lift access needed to arrange to be met by staff and accompanied through goods lifts and otherwise off limits areas. The complaint was settled with an agreement to install appropriate public lift access.
- A man complained that he had been unable to participate in a conference because of access limitations at the venue. The complaint was resolved when the organisers apologised and advised that they had adopted a checklist based on the accessible events materials developed by Meetings Events Australia in conjunction with the Commission.
- A woman who has arthritis complained that no provision had been made for disability access at a street festival organised by her local council. The matter was resolved when the council agreed to develop and publish a disability access plan for public events within 6 months.
- A man who uses a wheelchair complained that when he attended an event at a major public venue access to toilet facilities was inadequate with insufficient signage, doors too heavy to open and insufficient room. The matter was settled when the respondent advised that signage had been upgraded and refurbishment of toilets commenced.

For more information on the type of agreements that have been reached to resolve complaints look at the Commission's website at

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/decisions/conciliation.html#area](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/decisions/conciliation.html#area)

### **Do you always have to remove barriers or make changes to avoid discrimination – unjustifiable hardship?**

In some circumstances; the law says you might not have to remove barriers or make changes to ensure equal access. This is referred to as a defence of 'unjustifiable hardship.' Factors that may mean you would not have to provide full access include:

- the cost of making a particular change or providing a particular service would impose an 'unjustifiable hardship' on you as the service provider; or
- a health and safety regulation is applicable at the venue that prevents a particular change to the premises from being made; or
- the adjustment will change the nature of the service or make it impossible for you to provide that service for other people.

It's not possible to say for certain what would be an unjustifiable hardship as every complaint of discrimination has to be assessed on its own merit. The resources available to some organisations would make it difficult for them to successfully argue unjustifiable hardship in most situations, whereas other organisations may have so few resources available to them that any significant additional costs could seriously threaten the viability of the event.

All that can be said is that as an event organiser you need to carefully consider any decision you make about not providing equal access to your event.

If you do decide that providing full access to a particular aspect of the event might cause an unjustifiable hardship that does not mean that you have justification to do nothing. Your broad responsibilities under the law still apply and you should concentrate on the changes that you can make, including considering alternative ways of making your event accessible.

*Example:* Even if the main public entrance to an event cannot be made accessible because of technical or cost reasons, there may be an alternative means of providing access through a different entrance.

*Example:* Even if it is not possible to provide all documents for a conference in Braille, it might still be possible to provide them in an accessible electronic format such as a Word document on a CD.

*Example:* Even if it were not possible to find a sign language interpreter for a deaf person attending a conference it might be possible to provide a note taker and ensure the participant has all the papers being presented in advance.

### **Access requirements for new buildings and upgrades to existing buildings**

On 1 May 2011 a new set of access requirements were introduced in Australia called the *Disability (Access to Premises – buildings) Standards 2010* (Premises Standards).

This means that all new buildings, and those parts of existing buildings undergoing upgrade or modification, will have to provide significantly better access than was required under previous building laws.

In some situations there is also a requirement to upgrade the path of travel from the principal pedestrian entrance of an existing building to the area where upgrades or modifications are taking place.

Examples of the changes include:

- More accessible unisex toilets
- Better circulation space around and through doors
- More accessible entrances to buildings
- Better signage
- More accessible spaces in theatres, cinemas and lecture theatres
- New types of toilets designed to meet the needs of people with ambulant disabilities
- Access to the upper floor in most 2 and 3 storey buildings

Event organisers responsible for new venues or upgrades to existing venues need to carefully consider these new requirements.

Information, including a Guideline on the Application of the Premises Standards can be found at <http://www.ag.gov.au/Humanrightsandantidiscrimination/Pages/DisabilityStandardsforPremises.aspx>

# THINKING ABOUT ACCESS IN THE EARLY PLANNING STAGE

The most effective way of ensuring access for everyone is to think about access at the very earliest planning stages of your event. This means thinking about the access requirements of attendees, staff, speakers, performers and exhibitors who may have a disability.

It will often be more expensive and more time consuming to address the requirements of people with disabilities if you treat access as something you 'add on' at a later stage.

*Example:* If you produce all your publicity material and conference papers in an accessible electronic format such as Word or html before getting it desk-top published it will be much easier and cheaper to meet the access needs of blind people at a later stage.

*Example:* If you ensure that physical access to a venue and good internal signage are some of your initial criteria for booking a venue you will not have to look for access solutions at a later stage.

## **Booking services and supports**

Even if they will not be used it is good practice to book services such as sign language interpreters and hearing augmentation systems early on in your planning.

These service providers are in high demand so the longer notice they have the better the chances of you being able to secure them.

Discuss the cancellation policies of these service providers and make sure there is time between the close of registration and the event for you to cancel the service if there has been no request for them.

## **Planning the program**

When planning the program for your event consideration should be given to timetabling (especially if you know there will be a strong likelihood of significant numbers of people with disability attending) to take account of issues such as:

- Time required for people with mobility disabilities moving between rooms and sessions
- If sign language interpreters are to be used time for regular breaks and changeovers to avoid fatigue
- More frequent breaks for people with diabetes or people with low attention span.

### **Involving people with disabilities**

A good way of ensuring the best possible access would be to involve people with disabilities in planning your event. If you have a steering group or committee you could include the views of people with disabilities by inviting some to join the group. You could also speak to local groups or contact voluntary organisations for information and advice. You can find out about these organisations in Section 15 - *Information about disability organisations who can assist*.

### **Obtaining access expertise**

For larger events, and in particular for outdoor events that often raise complex access questions, consideration should be given to seeking the assistance of someone with expertise in access issues. They would be able to assist in developing an access policy and strategy to address relevant issues. You can find out about more about how to find someone with expertise in Section 15 - *Information about access appraisals*

### **Budget**

While most access issues can be resolved through good planning and preparation, some arrangements may have cost implications so organisers should consider budget allocations accordingly at an early stage.

For example, if you were organising a conference on early childhood learning, it would be sensible to budget for the use of sign language interpreters. If at the close of registrations there has been no request for interpreters, there will be a budget saving that might be used elsewhere.

# THE VENUE

Choosing the venue is likely to be one of the first things you do and one of the most important. You may have your own venue that you want to use or you might be looking for a venue to hire for your event. In both cases there are things you can do to make it easier for people with disabilities to take part in your event.

## Choosing a venue

Finding an accessible venue can be very difficult. Many venues available for hire are not accessible or only have a few access features.

You will already have criteria to use in your search for a venue such as the location, the number of people it can hold, the cost, or whether it has the facilities to suit your event such as a stage area, seminar breakout rooms or outdoor areas.

At this early stage, you should also be thinking about criteria to help you find a venue that is equally accessible for everyone.

As a starting point, you should only consider venues that allow people to enter, exit and move around the building with ease, that offer accessible unisex toilet facilities and where, ideally, the event can take place on one floor only.

When sourcing a venue for a meeting or event you might consider asking some preliminary questions to get an idea of how seriously the operator takes access.

For example:

- Whether the operator is aware of anti-discrimination law and their responsibilities to provide equal access
- Whether there have been any access issues in the past and if so how the operator has dealt with them
- Whether venue staff have ever had an disability awareness training

If the venue is not ideal it may be possible to make improvements for your event.

*Example:* A community centre is accessed from the street by climbing two steps and is regularly used for local events. The venue management gets permission from the council to build a ramp at the front of the building. This will ensure people with a mobility impairment can enter the centre in the future. Until the ramp is completed the venue management might provide a temporary ramp.

*Example:* A hotel conference centre has each of its rooms identified with small, hard-to-read signs with low contrast. The venue might add larger, high-contrast signage including room numbers rather than names for your event. Apart from assisting people with a vision impairment this would also assist anyone who is unfamiliar with the venue.

*Example:* A community consultation is taking place in a large hall that does have a PA system but no built-in hearing augmentation system. The organiser might hire a portable hearing loop to assist people with a hearing impairment.

## Visiting the venue

While many venue managers will have a clear understanding of what access features they have, unfortunately many do not, and it is not uncommon to arrive at a venue that its management claims is accessible only to find one or two steps at the entrance. It is good practice, therefore, to check the venue in person before confirming a booking as well as asking the venue management for information. If in doubt, you could carry out or commission an access appraisal.

## Access Appraisals

An access appraisal is ideally an independent, professional assessment of the access features of a venue and its policies and practices. An appraisal will result in a report outlining existing access provisions and recommendations for improvements. You can find details of where to find an access consultant in Section 15 – *Information about Access Appraisals*.

Appendix 1 provides a very basic checklist that could be used to identify key access features for an event.

You can find information on other checklists, including a more detailed set of checklists and briefing notes produced by the Centre for Accessible Environments in Section 15 - *Information about other guides and checklists for accessible events*.

## Top Tips for finding an accessible venue

The following list of tips is not exhaustive, but will assist in identifying accessible features at a venue:

- Is there level access with no steps or other barriers from the arrival point at the venue, through the main entrance(s), to all the areas being used by participants?
- If there is a reception desk is it (or a part of it) at a height that is accessible for people using wheelchairs? If not, can an alternative desk be provided for the event?
- Are there any steps or other barriers to facilities being used by participants such as 'break-out' or workshop rooms, dining areas, outside areas and exhibition areas?
- If there is a speaker's or performer's platform, is it accessible?
- Are the accessible unisex toilets at the same location as other toilets or close by? Check to make sure they are not being used as a storage room!
- Is there clear signage to direct people from the entrance(s) to any information desk and all the facilities being used?
- If participants have to use lifts to get to facilities are they large enough for people using wheelchairs to use? Are the control buttons at a height that can be accessed by people using wheelchairs? Do the control buttons have raised buttons and Braille information? Is there audio information in the lift telling people what floor they are arriving at?
- If the venue has fixed seating are there wheelchair-accessible spaces provided at various locations spread throughout the venue?
- Is there a choice of seating available that will provide extra support for people with disabilities who might need it?
- Is the venue large enough to allow people with disabilities to freely move around when all participants are present?
- Is there good air circulation throughout the venue?
- Are there good acoustics?
- Is there a hearing augmentation system (see Section 14 - *Glossary*) and is it functioning properly?
- Are the surfaces on the paths, inside and outside, even and slip resistant?
- Are there clear evacuation procedures in place? Do they take account of people with disabilities including people with sensory impairments and mobility impairments?
- Is there good maneuverability around exhibition stands and in areas where food and drinks are served?
- Have staff received disability awareness training so that they can respond appropriately to the requirements of participants with disabilities?
- Are staff aware of the right of people using assistance dogs to bring them into the venue?

Features such as entrances, lifts, ramps, accessible toilets and corridor widths are all subject to building laws and should comply with technical specifications found in Australian Standards (see Section 15 – *Information about building specifications and requirements*).

Checking whether or not the features do comply with these technical specifications may not be possible and to some extent you will be reliant on the information provided by the venue operator.

If you are in doubt about whether or not the accessible features of the venue are built to the relevant specifications you might consider arranging for a professional access appraisal before confirming your booking.

### **Outdoor events**

If you are organising an outdoor event you will need to consider other issues including:

- ensuring the event layout, for example, where stalls are located, provides for the best access and circulation;
- ensuring the location of stalls or performance areas do not block kerb ramps
- providing some parking spaces close to the event for people with disabilities;
- provide carparking spaces within the event space close to key facilities such as the main show ring or display areas at an agricultural show
- making sure any street closures do not include the use of traffic control barriers that result in blocking kerb ramps or paths of travel;
- installing portable accessible toilet facilities, marquees or first-aid cabins;
- supplying occasional seating points in the shade;
- providing drinking water at clearly identified points in extreme weather;
- designating small areas close to a stage for use by people using wheelchairs;
- covering some grassy areas with materials that make mobility easier;
- ensuring cables are secure and don't present a trip hazard;
- producing an 'Access Map' for the event and putting the map and other access related information online.

For more information on outside events organisation, see Section 15 - *Information about other guides and checklists for accessible events*.

### **Making changes**

If you have identified changes that need to be made, you should discuss with the venue management who will be responsible for making the changes (see Section 3 – *What the Law says*).

Changes might be permanent and take some time to put into place, like leveling external paving, or may be something simple like moving furniture on a path of travel, or changing the layout of chairs in seminar rooms.

You will need to be sure that the venue management can implement the changes they are responsible for before your event takes place.

If the venue is not willing to improve access you should consider finding another venue.

### **Promoting your own venue**

If you own or operate a venue you should take active steps to ensure prospective users and potential clients are fully aware of the access features of the venue and your commitment to access.

This could take the form of highlighting information on your web site or publicity material. Information you might provide includes:

- A statement of commitment to ensuring equal access
- Information of staff training undertaken
- Specific information of the access features of your venue including access routes to and within buildings, parking, toilet facilities, room identification and signage
- Information about accessible public transport points close to the venue
- Maps showing accessible routes and location of toileting areas for assistance dogs

# TRANSPORT - GETTING THERE AND GETTING AWAY

Getting people to and from the venue, safely and efficiently, is very important. If you plan to give out information about how to reach the venue and about public transport then you should think about people with disabilities who want to attend and about their transport requirements.

## Public transport

If you plan to provide details of public transport, such as train stations or bus services running near the venue, you should also find out about how accessible they are for people with disabilities and pass this information on to your attendees.

## Drop off points

Areas where cars, taxis and coaches set down passengers should be as close as possible to the entrance of the venue. Check if there is a kerb ramp at the drop off point to allow a person using a wheelchair to get from the road to the entrance.

## Car parking

If the venue has its own car park, some of the spaces should be identified as being reserved for people with disabilities.

There are technical standards applicable to accessible carparking spaces, but these are not always complied with. This could make it very difficult or impossible for some people with disabilities to attend your event even though they may have already travelled a long way or paid to do so.

## Top Tips for car parking

- Is the car park clearly signed and are the accessible car parking bays clearly identified?
- Are the accessible car parking bays on firm level ground?
- Are the accessible car parking bays close to the entrance(s)?
- Is there a clear level path of travel from the accessible car parking spaces to the entrance(s) with no steps or other barriers such as bollards placed closely together?
- Is there a kerb ramp if a pavement or walkway needs to be crossed?
- If there is an intercom system at the entrance of the car park, make sure a person with a hearing impairment or reduced limb movement is not disadvantaged in using the system.

If you are in doubt about whether or not any of the spaces are built to the relevant building standards check with the venue owner/operator or arrange for a professional access appraisal before confirming your booking.

If there are no parking facilities at the venue, find out about local on-street and car park facilities. It may be possible to reserve spaces for people with disabilities attending your event.

## Getting Away

Don't forget going home! Think about arrangements for leaving, especially if there are likely to be crowds and long queues. It might not be possible for some people with disabilities to stand for long periods of time. There may be arrangements you could put in place such as seating or using stewards to let people know when their transport is at the front door.

# PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

You will want to market your event, sell tickets and fill places. This section looks at how you can promote your event in ways that are accessible for all.

## Telling people about access at your event

You will have a lot of information about your event that you can share with people with disabilities.

You may use mailouts, advertise in newspapers or magazines, or even on radio and television. More and more event organisers are using a web page or e-based networks to communicate relevant information.

Each of these methods has access implications for people with disabilities particularly, for example, for people who are blind or vision impaired, people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, or people who have learning disabilities.

## Top tips for promoting your event

- If you promote your event on a web site, check it is accessible and compatible with the range of specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information. All web pages should comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W3C guidelines). Generally pdf documents are not considered to be accessible and should not be the only available format on your web site (see Section 15 – *Information about web accessibility*).
- Provide alternative contact details such as a telephone number, fax or e-mail address. Some people with disabilities will require one or another of these. You should also consider offering a telephone typewriter (TTY) number for Deaf people or people with a hearing or speech impairment to contact you directly or make arrangements through the National Relay Service (see Section 15 – *Information about the National Relay Service*).
- In all your promotional material, ensure the content is finalised in an accessible electronic format such as Word, html or rtf before sending it of for desktop publishing. This will mean that if a blind person requires access to the material it is easy to produce it in a preferred format.
- In your written material use a large font size in a clear sans serif style such as Arial and use a good contrast for text and background. You can find out more about this in Section 9 – *Making information accessible*.
- Use appropriate language in your promotional material when communicating information to people with disabilities. For example, talk about ‘accessible toilets and parking’ rather than ‘disabled toilet or parking’, talk about ‘access for people with disabilities’ rather than ‘disabled access’, talk about ‘people who use wheelchairs’ rather than ‘people confined to wheelchairs’, talk about ‘a person who is blind’ rather than ‘a person who suffers blindness’.

Having made the effort to ensure good access, don’t forget to promote your event through organisations and networks aimed at people with disabilities in order to fully access all possible markets (see Section 15 – *Information about disability organisations who can assist*).

# TICKETS, BOOKING AND REGISTRATION

Different types of event will have different ticket, reservation or booking systems in place. This section looks at some of the features of ticketing and booking and makes suggestions on how to make these more accessible for people with disabilities.

## **Selling tickets**

If you are selling tickets for your event, you will need to ensure the system for booking is accessible. For example, box offices should be located in a place where people using wheelchairs can access them and booking agencies should have accessible web site booking systems.

If you are using a third party ticketing agency, make sure they are able to provide accessible sales services and accurate information about access to and at the venue.

## **Seat allocation**

If seats are allocated at the time of booking, you will need to consider how to make sure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against in this service.

Conference venues and stadiums may have allocated seating for people who use wheelchairs. This might be in an area designed specifically for people who use wheelchairs or it might be an adaptable area where seating is removed as necessary.

Check to make sure there are flexible seating arrangements that allow for a choice of positions; requiring everyone who uses a wheelchair to sit at the back behind a pillar is not appropriate.

If you are issuing seats on a first come, first-served basis, you should allocate wheelchair accessible seats last so as to ensure they remain available if people with disabilities need them.

People who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment are likely to prefer seats where they have a good view of what is happening on the stage or speakers' platform. Ensuring this option will assist people who lip read to do so and also ensure that any communication support, such as sign language interpreters, are not obscured.

## **Registration forms**

Asking people to complete and return registration forms is a common feature of events such as conferences and seminars. However, you need to be flexible as some people with disabilities may need to pass on their information over the telephone for registration.

You can use the form to let people know what access provisions are already in place such as physical features, sign language interpreters and large print material.

It is important people have an opportunity to note down any specific individual requirements they may have when registering.

### **Examples of suggested wording on registration forms and material posted online would be:**

#### Access for people with disabilities

*The conference venue is accessible for people using wheelchairs and all handout materials will be available in accessible electronic form on request. If you have any other access requirements in order to participate fully, please let us know on this form.*

OR:

#### Access for people with disabilities

*If you have any access requirements in order to participate in this workshop please note them in the space below, and a conference organiser will contact you to discuss your requirements further.*

If you receive a request for something you are not sure about or that you believe might involve an unjustifiable hardship, consider the issues raised in Section 3: What does the law say? If you decide you cannot respond to the request, talk to the applicant about any alternative ways of responding as soon as possible.

Remember; treat all information you receive confidentially.

## **Support workers and assistants**

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by support workers, or personal assistants. Their role is to assist the person with a disability to participate fully in the event and they will only attend to the requirements of the person they are there to support.

You will need to think in advance how you will respond to support workers or personal assistants who attend your event. Each situation will be different but, in general terms, if the person is solely there to provide assistance, you should consider not charging admission or registration fees, or charging only enough to cover basic costs such as catering.

# MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

This section looks at making information accessible for people with disabilities.

## **Written Information**

When you produce written information for your event, such as programs, hand outs or agendas, you will need to think about how you will make these accessible for people with disabilities. Sometimes this might include producing information in different formats.

There are a number of different formats that people may prefer or require. For people who are blind or vision impaired these include large print, Braille, audio tape or an accessible electronic format.

If you are running a conference or seminar, you may be planning to give attendees reading material that has not been produced by your own organisation. This could be material produced by sponsors or exhibitors and inserted into delegate packs. You could ask these organisations to ensure they provide you with accessible information including information in alternative formats.

If they are service providers they are likely to have duties under the DDA and similar state and territory laws and should be prepared to meet any requests or to offer an alternative means of making the information accessible.

Many people with a vision impairment and others, including those with brain injuries, will welcome receiving copies of papers before the event as this gives them an opportunity to read them and to be able to concentrate on what is being said once they are at the event.

You can find out more about different formats and how to provide them in *Section 15 - Information about how to provide information in Braille and other alternative formats*

## **Visual information**

When using presentation tools such as power point or video be aware that the information presented may need to be communicated in a different form in order to ensure that blind people can access the information. This may involve a simple description of what other participants are seeing or may involve the production of accessible electronic, audio or Braille copies of the material.

## **Audio information**

There are a number of ways in which access to audio information can be provided for Deaf people or people with a hearing impairment.

Material may be provided in a written form prior to or at the event; note takers may provide a running 'commentary' on the event; hearing augmentation systems may be available, such as a hearing loop or infra-red system; a stenocaptioner may be employed to reproduce speeches in real-time, projected onto a screen; and for those people who use Auslan sign language an interpreter may be provided.

For more information on how to book AUSLAN sign language interpreters see *Section 15 - Information about how to access sign language interpreters.*

# THE EVENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Everybody in the event management team including venue staff, performers, exhibitors, session chairs, booking staff, suppliers and speakers can contribute to making your event more accessible for people with disabilities.

This section looks at the different people involved in making your event a success as it will be important to make sure that everyone knows about access arrangements.

## **Your team**

Your own team is critical to ensuring your event is as accessible as possible. If they are well prepared and trained they will be able to deal with any problems and make any necessary changes on the day as the need arises.

You should think about training for you and your staff. Disability awareness training is available and can be tailored to meet your needs. You can expect disability awareness training to include an introduction to the DDA, an awareness of disability, and how to meet some of the requirements of people with disabilities.

An on-line kit and some organisations that can supply disability awareness training or signpost you to other suppliers are listed in Section 15 - *Information about Disability Awareness Training*.

Even after planning to ensure good access, many barriers can arise throughout the day at an event, which is why good housekeeping is so important. Remind staff to be on the look out for things going wrong. This might be double swing doors where one door is locked, bags on floors, or open cupboard doors and portable display stands creating hazards for people with vision impairment. It could be that groups of people are gathering on a designated access path preventing access for wheelchair users.

## **Venue staff**

If you are using a hired venue for your conference or event, you may find that the venue will supply staff. Their duties may cover roles such as management, security, catering, reception, operating car park facilities or setting up exhibition areas. They may also be responsible for technical roles, such as operating lighting and PA systems where these are available.

You could ask the venue management if you can brief all staff, including any temporary and contract staff, before the event, or ask the venue management to do so. This might take the form of a briefing session on the day of the event or information in writing.

You could also take the opportunity of encouraging venue management to organise disability awareness training for their staff if not undertaken before.

You will need to tell venue staff about any adjustments you have made, or changes that you would like them to make. Changes you might highlight in your briefing could include that you want furniture to be set up in a certain way to accommodate wheelchair access. It will be important that venue staff do not rearrange your requested changes.

You will also need to make sure staff are aware of any roles they have been given specifically to assist people with disabilities, such as serving food at the self-service buffet and carrying trays to tables.

### **Chairs, speakers and presenters**

Session chairs, speakers and presenters need to be aware of the requirements in advance of people attending an event. For example, they may need to supply copies of power point presentations in an accessible electronic format such as Word or html for people with vision impairment.

Similarly, if papers are to be handed out at the event presenters need to provide their papers in advance to allow for sufficient time for them to be produced in alternative formats if required.

You may also require a briefing session to explain how to work with sign language interpreters who are supporting Deaf people, and any other arrangements that may need to be put in place.

It is also important to remind speakers to describe any slides or visual material they use during a presentation for audience members who have vision impairments.

Chairs may have additional responsibilities, like explaining evacuation procedures, and they need to be aware that they should describe exits in terms of left, right, and north, south rather than pointing or saying 'over there'.

### **Things to consider on the day of the event**

Before the event begins it is important to ensure access arrangements are in place. Things to consider include:

- Making sure event signage is in place and clearly visible
- Ensuring venue and registration staff have been briefed on any access issues including location of toilets, designated seating and arrangements for picking up any handout materials in alternative formats if available
- Making sure any seating arrangements planned for wheelchair users have not been undone by staff re-arranging chairs
- Making sure the event team are aware of what part of the venue is covered by any hearing loop that has been provided
- Ensuring technical staff are available to check and assist with audio visual and access technology such as hearing loops
- Making sure all the event team are aware of who to contact if issues arise
- Making sure event team knows of assistance dog toileting arrangements
- Ensuring refreshments arrangements including circulation, provision of mugs with larger handles, straws and assistance are in place
- Checking the accessible toilet to ensure it is not being used for storage

### **Attitude, communication and assistance**

In a recent UK survey, 41% of people with disabilities valued a positive attitude above value for money. A positive attitude by staff can make all the difference on the day. How your team responds to requests for assistance and how they put things right if they go wrong will count for a lot.

It's not difficult to train your staff on how to communicate effectively with all your clients and how to give practical assistance when it's needed.

## Tips for communication and assistance

### Generally:

- Understand that each person with a disability is an individual with their own likes and dislikes. Always focus on the person, not their disability. Always address the person directly, not the other people who may be with them (such as a sign language interpreter or assistant).
- Always ask the person first if they want assistance; do not assume they need it.
- If you are having a conversation that will last more than a few moments with a person using a wheelchair, bend to eye level or pull up a chair.

### For people who may have a learning difficulty, an intellectual disability, dementia or brain injury:

- Address the person directly, listen carefully, speak clearly and check for understanding. Always use clear language without being patronising.
- Allow the person time to ask questions and try not to rush them. Try not to overload the person with information. Make it clear you are there to help if they forget the information.

### For people who have a hearing impairment or are Deaf:

- Always face the person so they can read your lips. Try to make sure there are no 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 Deaf person is there with a sign language interpreter, always address your comments directly to the Deaf person rather than to the interpreter.
- Pen and paper: have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with the person.

### For people who have a vision impairment or are blind:

- Always identify yourself by name. If appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly and so that they know you are talking to them and not someone else.
- If a blind 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.
- Never pat or distract a guide dog or offer it food while it is in harness; it is a working animal under the control of its owner.

### What's the best language to use?

If you are making the effort to make your event more accessible it is also important to make sure your staff and the signage you use is consistent with that effort.

Use signage that identifies:

- 'Accessible Toilet' not 'Disabled Toilet';
- 'Accessible Parking' not 'Disabled Parking';
- 'Accessible Entry' not 'Disabled Entry'. And always refer to:
- a person with a disability rather than a disabled person;
- a person who uses a wheelchair rather than someone confined to one;
- a person who is blind rather than a person who suffers blindness.

# SOUND, LIGHTING AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY

Many events use technology and special effects to add to impact or to overcome issues such as the large size of the venue. This section shows how you can consider the impact for people with disabilities of any technology you use.

## **Flash lighting, strobes and other special effects**

Some special effects can have a detrimental effect for people with disabilities such as those with epilepsy or tinnitus. If part of your event involves flash lighting, strobes and other special effects, you will need to consider how you let people know about this.

You should let people know about the special effects before they buy a ticket as well as at the event before the effect takes place. Remember to give enough notice for people to leave the area if they wish to and to let them know when the special effect stops so that they can return to the audience.

## **Dimming lights**

Lighting must be appropriate for whoever is sitting in an audience. Particular attention must be paid to people with disabilities to ensure that they can all follow what is happening. For example, a hearing impaired person will be prevented from lip-reading if there is insufficient light on the speaker.

At some events the lights are dimmed as part of the entertainment value of the event. At conferences and seminars lights are sometimes dimmed when speakers are using visual aids such as slides or videos.

It may be necessary to dim the lights in these circumstances because any glare on the screen prevents many people in the audience from being able to see the text or images on the screen. This is something you could check when you audit the venue. It may be possible to overcome this by closing curtains and blinds and keeping suitable lights on in the room.

If dimming lights is absolutely necessary to allow delegates to see the projected images then you will have to ensure that speakers and any sign language interpreters are suitably spotlighted and there is good light for reading. It is also a good idea to give a copy of the projected images to people with a vision impairment before they come to the event in their chosen format such as large print or Braille.

## **Public address systems**

Public Address (PA) systems play an important role at many events, helping to ensure that people can hear what is being said in large venues. At conferences and seminars, where members of the audience are invited to ask questions from the floor, it will be important to have staff equipped with portable microphones for the audience to use.

You should check the quality and the volume of the PA system for clarity and comfort.

You should also ensure the PA system is supplemented by a hearing augmentation system to assist people with hearing impairments (see Section 15 - *Information about how to arrange for hearing augmentation systems*).

# ADDITIONAL SERVICES

There are many other services that might form part of your event and it will be important that they also be accessible. This section gives guidance on a few of the most common services.

## **Catering**

Catering at events can range from a cup of tea and a biscuit, to fast food outlets, or a sit-down banquet. It is useful to provide different catering choices where practicable and to ensure that catering staff are briefed on helping people with disabilities with their selection and service.

### **Top Tips for Catering**

- If self-service is the only option available, ensure that staff are available to assist people with disabilities, including those with mobility and vision impairments with their food choice and their being able to carry their food to the eating area.
- Make sure that there are seats and tables available. Some people with disabilities need to sit down. Seating also helps those who are talking to a person using a wheelchair so that they do not have to constantly look up to engage in conversation.
- Make menus more accessible by printing them in large sans serif fonts using contrasting paper and print. Ensure staff are prepared to talk through the menu.
- Provide a choice of cutlery and crockery. A mug may be easier for some people with disabilities to use than cups and saucers or plastic cups that do not have handles. Offer drinking straws as a standard as some people with a disability may not be able to hold a cup, glass or mug.
- Don't overlook the small things. Sachets of condiments, or milk in very small containers, can be difficult to open. You could consider ensuring help is on hand for people experiencing difficulty.
- Make sure there is room for everybody to manoeuvre safely between tables. When you conduct a site visit to the venue think about what it will be like when lots of people are moving around and sitting at tables.
- Consider having a number of food and beverage service areas spread around the venue. This is helpful for people with disabilities as there is likely to be a service point closer to where they are. Everyone will benefit from the shorter queues if you only have a short period for a break before continuing the event program.
- Consider dietary needs such as gluten-free food and the needs of diabetics and ensure buffet food is clearly marked as being gluten-free or vegan for example. Registration forms may need to include a question on dietary needs.

**Accommodation**

Some events may include accommodation, whereby the event organiser may offer a service to book accommodation on behalf of people attending or working at the event. The information or booking services should be accessible for people with disabilities. Information should also be provided on the hotels and their accessibility.

**Quiet Room**

It is a good idea to provide a quiet room for rest, especially if your event is going to be long and crowded. Some people with mental health issues or fatigue will particularly welcome this.

**Evening entertainment**

Some events may include a supplementary evening social event, such as an award ceremony, barbeque or dinner dance. It is important to think carefully about where and how the evening entertainment being offered as this service is likely to be covered by the DDA.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide has been developed in partnership by Meetings and Events Australia and the Australian Human Rights Commission with the assistance of Michael Small Consulting [small.consulting@bigpond.com](mailto:small.consulting@bigpond.com)

The guide draws on material developed by the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission.

# GLOSSARY

**Audio Description** - Audio description is available on some videos, DVDs, digital TV and cinema films. Digital access equipment enables people with a vision impairment to listen through personal headphones to a narrator describe what is happening on the screen.

**Braille** - Braille is a tactile system of reading and writing used throughout the world by people who are blind. It is based on a 6-dot "cell", and by using various combinations of these 6 dots, it is possible to represent the alphabet, as well as the specialised symbols used in subjects such as Mathematics and Science.

**AUSLAN or Australian Sign Language** - AUSLAN is a language that uses visual gestures and space using the hands, body, face and head and has its own principles of grammar. AUSLAN interpreters translate what is being spoken to AUSLAN for Deaf people.

**Hearing augmentation** - Hearing Loop system and infrared system -assists people using hearing aids to hear more clearly by cutting out background noise. A loop system can be set up with a microphone and a transmitter to send signals via a loop system to be picked up by hearing aids that are switched to 'T' setting. In larger event situations, infra-red systems that allow for stereo sound may be more practical.

**Telephone typewriter (TTY)** - A machine that has a keyboard and a screen. It may be built into a telephone or be connected to one. A Deaf person, or a person with a speech impediment, can use the machine to communicate with another person who also has a TTY by typing the message and reading the reply. TTY users can call people who do not have a TTY by using the National Relay Service provided by the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE). This allows the Deaf person to send or receive messages from ordinary 'voice' telephones.

# FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

## Information about access appraisals

- Association of Consultants in Access Australia has a list of members who can provide access services <http://www.access.asn.au/>

## Information about Disability Awareness Training

- Free on-line training program <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~dakit/welcome.htm>
- WA Disability Services Commission Disability Awareness Training <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/DSC:STANDARD:1386098991:pc=L5C4C9>
- Some members of Association of Consultants in Access Australia also provide Disability Awareness Training <http://www.access.asn.au/>

## Information about disability organisations who can assist

- Links to national peak disability groups. Most of these national peak groups have local branches or will know of local groups who may provide assistance. [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/links/links.html#community](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/links/links.html#community)
- The organisation Accessible Arts plays an important, information, advocacy, training and assistance role in relation to organisations involved in arts events and festivals <http://www.aarts.net.au>
- Many Local Government bodies also have Community or Disability Officers who may be able to provide advice and identify local contacts.

## Information about the law

- Australian Human Rights Commission Disability Rights homepage [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/index.html)
- State and Territory anti-discrimination agencies <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/links/index.html#ad>

## Information about other guides and checklists for accessible events

- The UK Centre for Accessible Environments has also produced a useful checklist covering in more detail access issues and briefing notes for events <http://www.cae.org.uk/pdf/venues/index.html>
- The Victorian Government has also produced a useful short checklist at [http://bit.ly/eventguidechecklist\\_PDF](http://bit.ly/eventguidechecklist_PDF)
- Frankston Council has also produced a valuable guide and checklist including checklist on outdoor events at <http://bit.ly/AccessibleEventsGuideForCommunityGroups>

### **Information about building specifications and requirements**

- The Building Code of Australia (BCA) includes access requirements for different types of building. It is developed by the Australian Building Codes Board <http://www.abcb.gov.au/>
- The BCA references a number of Australian Standards which provide details of the technical specifications. These standards can be purchased from SAI Global. AS 1428.1 is the primary technical reference. <http://www.saiglobal.com/>

### **Information about how to access sign language interpreters**

- The web addresses below provide access to organisations who will assist in booking a sign language interpreter. <http://www.slcommunications.com.au/>

### **Information about website accessibility**

- Human Rights Commission Advisory Notes [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/standards/www\\_3/www\\_3.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/www_3/www_3.html)
- World Wide Web Consortium Guidelines <http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility>

### **Information about TTY**

- Telstra Aged and Disability Centre (National Disability Line: 1800 068 424). Rental TTYs are available from Telstra on application.
- The National Relay Service has produced a fact sheet on TTY <http://www.relayservice.com.au/faqs/tty-faqs/>

### **Information about the National Relay Service**

- The National Relay Service (NRS) is an Australia-wide telephone access service which provides access to anyone in the wider telephone network for people who are Deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. As a business you could ensure people with a speech or hearing impairment are aware that they can contact you through NRS see <http://www.relayservice.com.au/>

### **Information about how to provide information in Braille and other alternative formats**

- There are a number of private companies who produce Braille material and signage – web search for more information.
- Vision Australia may be able to provide more information <http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=682>

### **Information about how to arrange for hearing augmentation systems**

- There are a number of suppliers of hearing augmentation systems – web search for contacts

### **Appendix 1**

- Provides a checklist that could be used in planning an event and identifying a broad range of access features to be considered.

### **Appendix 2**

- Provides a checklist to assist those responsible for organising smaller events to focus on the most critical access issues. Neither checklist should be relied on as a comprehensive assessment tool for ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination law.

# ACCESS CHECKLIST FOR EVENTS

Appendix 1 provides a checklist that could be used in planning an event and identifying a broad range of access features to be considered. Appendix 2 provides a checklist to assist those responsible for organising smaller events to focus on the most critical access issues. Neither checklist should be relied on as a comprehensive assessment tool for ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination law

Please refer to the Meeting Events Australia *Accessible Events – a Guide for organisers* for more detailed information on accessible events.

EARLY PLANNING	YOUR NOTES
Have you considered developing an access policy and strategy to guide your organisation through the planning stage?	
Have you considered seeking advice from an access expert and/or disability organisations about your event?	
Have you considered how your event timetabling might affect the participation of people with disability eg time to move between sessions, start time, break time for interpreters?	
Have you considered the need for a budget to address access requirements eg production of accessible material, sign language interpreters and hiring hearing loops?	
Have you considered booking services and supports such as sign language interpreters or hearing loops early on?	
Have you discussed access requirements thoroughly with venues being considered and visited preferred venues before confirming bookings?	

VENUE	YOUR NOTES
Is there level access with no steps or other barriers from the arrival point at the venue, through the main entrance(s), to all the areas being used by participants?	
Are there any steps or other barriers to facilities being used by participants such as 'break-out' or workshop rooms, dining areas, outside areas and exhibition areas?	
Are the doors into the venue and any rooms being used wide enough for a person using a wheelchair to get through and easy to open?	
Is there at least one accessible unisex toilet at the same location as other toilets or close by? Have you checked to make sure it is not being used as a storage room!	
Is there clear signage to direct people from the entrance(s) to any information desk and all the facilities being used?	
If participants have to use lifts to get to facilities are they large enough for people using wheelchairs to use? Are the control buttons at a height that can be accessed by people using wheelchairs? Do the control buttons have raised buttons and Braille information? Is there audio information in the lift telling people what floor they are arriving at if the lift travels more than two levels?	
If the venue has an inbuilt PA system is there also a hearing loop or similar system to assist people with hearing impairment? If not do you need to consider hiring a portable system?	
Is there good lighting and acoustics in the room(s) being used and is it possible to 'spot-light' speakers and sign language interpreters if they are to be used?	
If participants are likely to come by public transport is there accessible public transport close-by?	
If participants are likely to be dropped off outside the venue is there a kerb ramp at the drop off point to allow a person using a wheelchair to get from the road to the entrance?	
If there is carparking at the venue Is the car park clearly signed and are the accessible car parking bays clearly identified?	

<p>Is there a clear level path of travel from the accessible car parking spaces to the entrance(s) with no steps or other barriers such as bollards placed closely together?</p>	
<p>Are the areas where refreshments will be served accessible?</p>	
<p>Do the venue operators understand their responsibility to allow assistance dogs into the venue and is there a designated assistance dog toileting area close-by?</p>	
<p>If the venue has accommodation to be used by participants are there accessible rooms available?</p>	
<p>If the event is outdoors are there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible carparking spaces close to the entrance or inside the site close to main features such as the event ring, stage or stalls</li> <li>• accessible portable toilets</li> <li>• clear signs to identify the location of features such as toilets, first aid points and main event spaces</li> <li>• designated areas reserved for people using wheelchairs close to stages or main event areas and good paths of travel to those areas?</li> </ul>	
<p>If you are concerned about any of these essential access requirements have you discussed them with the venue operators or an access expert?</p>	

PROMOTING THE EVENT	YOUR NOTES
Is the promotional material available in accessible formats or can it be made available on request?	
Is the website used to promote the event and allow for registration and ticketing an accessible site? If not can it be made accessible or can alternative accessible paths for registration and ticketing be offered?	
Does the promotional material and website provide information on access at the venue including a site or venue access map?	
Does the registration material provide a space for people with disability to request other access features such as a sign language interpreter or hearing loop?	
Is there a clear policy in place about responding to requests for additional access features?	
Does promotional material use appropriate language when describing access features?	

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION	YOUR NOTES
Is material provided before the event such as papers, programs and promotional material available in accessible formats on request?	
Is material such as programs, hand-outs or agenda provided on the day of the event available in accessible formats on request?	
Is any website used in relation to an event accessible?	

THE TEAM	YOUR NOTES
Has the event organisation team undertaken disability awareness training?	
Have team members who will be involved in direct contact with participants been briefed on all the access provisions set in place for the event?	
Has someone been designated responsibility for addressing access issues if they arise during the event and do all team members know who that is?	
Have speakers/presenters been briefed about how to ensure their presentations are as accessible as possible eg how to work with sign language interpreters or how to describe visual presentations for blind people?	

# ESSENTIAL CHECKLIST FOR EVENTS

This checklist has been developed to assist those responsible for organising smaller events to focus on the most critical access issues. It should not be relied on as a comprehensive assessment tool for ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination law.

Please refer to the Meeting Events Australia *Accessible Events – a guide for organisers* and its *Appendix 1 – Access checklist for events* for more detailed information on accessible events.

ACCESS FEATURE	YOUR COMMENTS
<p>In the early planning stages have you discussed access issues including choice of venue, accessibility of information and how you will respond to requests about access?</p>	
<p>Does the registration material provide a space for people with disability to inform you of any access requirements they may have such as a sign language interpreter or hearing loop?</p>	
<p>Is there level access to and within the venue with no steps or other barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from the arrival point at the venue, through the main entrance(s)</li> <li>• to all the areas being used by participants including conference rooms, workshop rooms, dining areas, outside areas and exhibition areas</li> <li>• from accessible spaces in the carpark</li> </ul>	
<p>Are the doors into the venue and any rooms being used wide enough for a person using a wheelchair to get through and easy to open?</p>	
<p>Is there at least one accessible unisex toilet at the same location as other toilets or close by?</p>	
<p>If participants have to use a lift to get to parts of the venue being used is it big enough for a person using a wheelchair to get in and out and do the buttons have Braille and raised tactile numbers?</p>	
<p>Has someone been designated responsibility for addressing access issues if they arise during the event and do all team members know who that is?</p>	
<p>If you are concerned about any of these essential access requirements have you discussed them with the venue operators or an access expert?</p>	