PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS IN CANBERRA

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR ORGANISERS

2026

afi advocacy for inclusion

People with Disabilities ACT Inc

Planning Accessible Events in Canberra

A practical toolkit for organisers

For community groups, businesses and anyone running events in the ACT

Covers in-person, online and hybrid events

Produced by Advocacy for Inclusion, funded by the ACT Government through the *Funding to Improve the Inclusion and Participation of People with Disability* program.

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A note before you start

This toolkit was produced by Advocacy for Inclusion, a Canberra-based disability rights advocacy organisation. We work with and for people with disability in the ACT, and we see the impact of inaccessible events every time someone cannot attend a community meeting, a business event, a public consultation, or a celebration in their own city. This kit was funded by the ACT Government through the *Funding to Improve the Inclusion and Participation of People with Disability* program.

This toolkit exists because we believe accessible events are achievable for any organiser who starts thinking about access early. You do not need to be an accessibility expert. You do not need to get everything right the first time. What matters is that you start early, make deliberate decisions about what is and is not in place, and tell people clearly what to expect.

Access barriers are rarely built in deliberately. They are built in early, when decisions about venues, formats, registration, technology and timing are made without thinking about who might be attending. Most of them can be removed. That is the useful thing about access as a design question: the organiser is the one who can change it.

Accessible events are well-designed events. Clear purpose, the right format, good sound, honest information, enough time, accessible documents and a named contact person help disabled people and improve the experience for many other attendees too.

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How to use this toolkit

If you are new to accessibility planning, or running a small or informal event, **start with the Ten Things below**. For many events, that may be enough.

For larger, public, hybrid, outdoor or more complex events, use the relevant section in the table below.

Your event	Start with	Then go to
In-person event	Ten Things	Part Three, then Part Four
Online event	Ten Things	Part Three, then Part Five
Hybrid event	Ten Things	Part Three, then Part Six
Outdoor, festival or major public event	Ten Things	Part Three, Part Four, then Part Seven: Major public events
Consultation or co-design event	Ten Things	Part Three, relevant format section, then Part Seven: Consultation
Training session	Ten Things	Part Three, then your format section

You do not need to read every section. Go to what is relevant for your event.

If you come across a term you do not recognise, the glossary near the back of the toolkit defines all key terms used here.

Scope. This toolkit is practical planning guidance. It does not replace legal advice, building certification, workplace health and safety advice, emergency planning advice or a formal access audit for complex sites.

Ten things that matter most

These are the actions that matter most across every kind of event. Start here.

1. Choose the format to match the purpose

Decide what the event needs to do, then choose the format that serves it. Do not default to your organisation's usual format.

Is the event for learning, networking, training, feedback, community building or celebration? The purpose should drive the format. A webinar, a workshop, a hybrid session and a recorded presentation are not the same thing. Choosing the wrong one creates barriers that cannot be fixed after the fact.

For larger, public, recurring or disability-focused events, involve disabled people before key decisions are made.

2. Ask people what they need

Include one open access question on every registration form, RSVP or sign-up:

Suggested wording: Is there anything you need to take part in this event? This may include access, communication, sensory, mobility, dietary or support requirements.

Then assign someone to check the responses and act on them before the event.

3. Tell people what to expect

Tell people what access features are available before they sign up. Also tell people what is not available. Honest information lets people decide whether the event will work for them.

State specific access features: step-free access, accessible toilets, captions, Auslan interpreting, quiet space, parking, whether materials will be sent in advance, whether the event will be recorded.

Tell people what the event will involve: whether they will be expected to speak, move around, join activities, give feedback, or use a particular platform or tool.

4. Name one person responsible for access

Put their name, phone number and email on the event page, registration form and final reminder. This person should be able to answer questions before the event and help resolve access issues on the day. It should not be a generic enquiries inbox.

5. Check the venue or platform before you commit

For in-person events, do not rely on the venue website. Check the exact room, entrance, path of travel, toilets, sound, lighting, seating, parking and emergency arrangements.

For online events, check that captions work, attendees can be muted by default for webinar-style sessions, chat and Q&A are available, and the platform does not require a download that some attendees cannot complete.

Neither a venue nor a platform can be fixed the week before.

6. Use microphones every time

At in-person events, every speaker should use a microphone even in a small room. At online events, presenters should use an external microphone and test it before the session.

Microphone use costs nothing if equipment is already in the room or on the platform, requires no specialist provider, and enables every other audio-based access provision to work: captions, Auslan interpretation and hearing loops all depend on clear audio. It supports Deaf and hard of hearing attendees, people using hearing aids, people relying on captions, people with auditory processing needs and anyone trying to follow the event from a distance or in a noisy environment.

7. Provide more than one way to participate

Not everyone can or will speak verbally. Offer written options alongside spoken ones: chat, Q&A, written questions, index cards, post-event email, follow-up feedback form, or a recording people can watch afterwards.

This applies to every format. In-person events can have written question options. Online meetings can have chat. Hybrid events need both.

8. Send materials in advance

Send slides, agendas and documents before the event in formats people can open, resize and use with assistive technology. Do not rely on screen sharing as the only way for people to view content.

This benefits people who use screen readers, people who need to adjust text size, people processing information more slowly, and anyone who wants to prepare.

9. Build in enough time

Use realistic schedules with real breaks and genuine time for questions and feedback, not a rushed five minutes at the end. Avoid overruns where possible. Rushed events exclude people with fatigue, chronic pain, support needs, accessible transport bookings, medication schedules and care responsibilities. If someone has arranged a wheelchair accessible taxi to collect them at a specific time, running 30 minutes over is not a small inconvenience. If participation and feedback matter to your event, schedule them as if they do.

10. Use plain language

Short sentences. No jargon. Spell out acronyms on first use. Plain language is not simplistic communication. It is clear communication. It supports people with cognitive disabilities, people for whom English is an additional language, and anyone reading quickly or under stress.

> ***Running a small or informal event?***
>
> *If you are organising a community morning tea, a small business meeting, a team training session or a similar event, the ten things above may be all you need. You do not have to read every section of this toolkit before you can begin.*
>
> *The practical things that matter most for small events are ask people what they need (item 2), tell them what to expect (item 3), use a microphone if you have one (item 6), and send materials in advance (item 8). Everything else builds from there.*
>
> *Come back to the relevant sections when your events get larger, go online or hybrid, move outdoors, or when you want to go further.*

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

Why access is a design question

Most events exclude people by accident. The barrier is usually not a locked door. It is a decision made early: a venue booked without checking the toilets, a webinar set up without captions, a registration form that only works with a mouse. By the time anyone notices, it is too late to fix.

That is actually useful news. It means the solution is in the planning, and the planner is you.

The disability rights field calls this the social model: the barrier is not the person, it is what the event was or was not designed to do. A wheelchair user is not stopped from attending by their wheelchair. They are stopped by stairs, a narrow door, or a stage with no ramp. Changing the design removes the barrier.

Designing for access improves events for everyone. Captions help Deaf and hard of hearing attendees, and also people in noisy environments and people following in a second language. Step-free access helps wheelchair users, parents with prams, and people carrying equipment. Plain language helps people with cognitive disability, and also everyone reading quickly. Flexible participation options, like being able to ask a question in writing rather than out loud, help people with communication differences and also anyone who is anxious, unfamiliar with the topic, or simply prefers not to speak in a group. This is not a coincidence. It is what good design does.

Plan with disabled people

The most useful thing you can do before any larger or public event is ask a disabled person to look over your plans, or walk through your venue with you. You will find things you would never have thought to look for.

For larger or disability-focused events, the consultation and co-design section in Part Seven covers how to do this properly.

Intersectionality and overlapping barriers

Disability does not exist in isolation. The barriers people face at events are shaped by the intersection of disability with other aspects of identity and circumstance. An event that addresses mobility access but ignores language access is not fully inclusive. An event that provides Auslan interpretation but

holds no quiet space is not fully inclusive. Understanding who is in the room, or who is not in the room, means thinking across multiple dimensions at once.

Some of the intersections that affect event access in Canberra:

First Nations identity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability experience the compound effects of racism and ableism. Cultural safety and access are not separate considerations and should not be designed separately.

Cultural and language diversity. Canberra has significant communities of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Plain language, accessible documents and written participation options support people for whom English is an additional language, as do materials available in community languages where practical.

LGBTQIA+ identity. Queer and trans disabled people face compounding disadvantage. All-gender toilets, inclusive registration forms that do not require binary gender selection, and language that does not assume heterosexual or cisgender norms matter to this part of your audience.

Gender. Women and non-binary people with disability are more likely to experience poverty, violence and exclusion from leadership and decision-making. Consider whether your speakers, panellists and decision-makers reflect this, and whether your event design accounts for the practical implications of those exclusions: cost, transport, safety after dark, and caring responsibilities.

Age. Older Canberrans are more likely to have disability, often acquired disability, and may be less familiar with digital platforms. Younger people may face different barriers including financial cost, transport access and support needs that differ from those of older adults.

Income and housing security. Poverty and housing insecurity are disproportionately experienced by people with disability. Event costs, travel costs, and the assumption that everyone has reliable internet access or a quiet private space to join an online event are all barriers that income affects.

Caring responsibilities. Many people with disability are also carers. Events that do not offer childcare, flexible timing or remote options place additional demands on people with complex daily responsibilities.

Trauma. Some people with disability have had negative experiences with services, systems, institutions and consultations. Events that are rushed, dismissive, inaccessible or fail to follow through on commitments can cause real harm. A trauma-informed approach means being honest about what the event can and cannot do, following through on commitments, and treating every person as the expert in their own experience.

You do not need to solve every intersection before running an event. But knowing these dimensions exist will help you notice barriers you might otherwise miss and ask better questions when you do.

Canberra context

The ACT positive duty

In most parts of Australia, disability discrimination law responds to complaints after the fact. In the ACT, the law goes further. The ACT Discrimination Act 1991 includes two related but distinct positive duties that event organisers should understand.

The first is the **duty to make reasonable adjustments**. This has applied since April 2024 and requires organisations to make proactive changes to remove barriers for people with disability, rather than waiting until someone raises a complaint. For event organisers this means checking the venue before booking, asking about access needs in registration, and responding to individual requests.

The second is the **broader positive duty to eliminate discrimination**, sexual harassment and unlawful vilification. This applies to ACT public authorities from April 2025, and to other duty holders, including community organisations and businesses, from April 2027. It requires organisations to take systemic steps to prevent discrimination from occurring, not only to respond to it.

In practice, most of what this toolkit recommends is what both duties ask for. The distinction matters most for ACT Government agencies and, from 2027, for all Canberra organisations in how they plan, train staff, review practices and report on progress.

For current guidance: ACT Human Rights Commission at hrc.act.gov.au/discrimination/act-discrimination-act-positive-duty

First Nations cultural safety

Events in Canberra take place on Ngunnawal Country. Some organisations also acknowledge Ngambri connections to the Canberra region. Before publishing event material, use your organisation's approved wording or seek local cultural guidance.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, their families and community members may be attending, presenting, organising or working at your event. Cultural safety and access are not separate considerations.

A Welcome to Country is a formal welcome given by a Traditional Custodian or a person authorised by Traditional Custodians. An Acknowledgement of Country can be given by anyone, and is often

used at smaller meetings or events. Consider arranging a Welcome to Country for larger public events, formal openings, conferences, government-funded events, or events focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or priorities. For smaller meetings or internal events, an Acknowledgement of Country is usually more appropriate.

If your event needs First Nations cultural guidance, treat that as a separate workstream led by proper consultation and paid input from the right people. Do not add an Acknowledgement of Country as a procedural step while leaving cultural safety unaddressed in the rest of the event design.

For Welcome to Country guidance: Reconciliation Australia at reconciliation.org.au. For Canberra bookings, use your organisation's current ACT First Nations contact pathway.

Public land in Canberra

Some Canberra public spaces are managed by the ACT Government, and some, particularly national areas near the lake, the Parliamentary Triangle and Commonwealth Park, are managed by the National Capital Authority. Both have different approval processes for events and temporary infrastructure.

Check which land management framework applies before you finalise your event design. Land rules affect what infrastructure you can place on site, which directly affects access. See Part Eight for permit details.

Using the toolkit in layers

The format sections use three tiers. Start with essentials and add more as your event, audience and confidence grow.

Layer	What it means
Essential	The basics that should be in place for every event of this type.
Good to have	Practical steps that make a real difference and are manageable for most events.
Going further	For larger, public, recurring or disability-focused events where you want to do more.

For consultations, hybrid events, major public events, or events that collect sensitive personal information, use the specialist sections in Part Seven as well.

PART TWO: CHOOSE THE RIGHT FORMAT

Format is an access decision

Before booking a venue, choosing a platform or writing promotional copy, ask: what does this event need to do, and what format best serves that purpose?

A poorly matched format creates access barriers that cannot be fixed later.

Does the event need to be live?

Live events require people to be in a specific place or online room at a specific time. For many people, that combination is a barrier. People with chronic fatigue, pain conditions or significant support needs may not be able to attend reliably. People who depend on accessible transport are constrained by service hours. People who need Auslan interpretation or a particular seating arrangement depend on you to have arranged it in advance.

A live event is the right format when what you are offering genuinely depends on being live: real-time discussion, shared activity, community building, or interaction that cannot be reproduced asynchronously.

Before defaulting to live, ask: does being live add something that a recording and transcript cannot? If the answer is no, your live format is creating obligations for your audience without offering them anything additional in return.

Format guide

Format	Use when	Watch for
In-person	Relationship building, practical activity, workshops, shared discussion or networking matter	Travel, venue access, sound, room layout, toilets, food service
Live online	Real-time discussion or questions genuinely matter	Captions, mute settings, chat, Q&A, platform access, speaker audio
Pre-recorded	Content is mainly one-way information	Checked captions, transcript, accessible hosting, question pathway

Format	Use when	Watch for
Pre-recorded plus live Q&A	Presentation content is fixed but questions are useful live	Captions for both parts, accessible question process, clear timing
Hybrid	Both audiences can participate fully	Room audio, online question parity, moderation, technical setup

Common format mismatches

Webinar with all microphones on. A webinar is a broadcast format. If all attendee microphones are live by default, background noise degrades audio quality and makes captions inaccurate. Default to mute. Use chat, Q&A or a raised-hand process.

Hybrid event that films the room. A hybrid event is not an in-person event with a camera pointed at the room. If online attendees cannot hear properly, see slides, ask questions or contribute, they are not full participants. Run hybrid only if both audiences can participate properly.

Online meeting with verbal-only participation. Not everyone can or will use a microphone. Offer chat, Q&A, written questions, reactions or post-event email options alongside verbal contribution.

Consultation that is not really consultation. If decisions are already made, a feedback session can waste people's time and reduce trust. Be honest. If the event is a briefing, call it a briefing. If feedback can influence something, say exactly what is open.

PART THREE: BEFORE YOU PROMOTE ANY EVENT

This section covers the planning decisions that apply to every event, regardless of whether it is in-person, online or hybrid. Work through this before you write any promotional copy, open registration, or set a date you cannot move.

The most common mistake is promoting an event before the access questions have been answered. Once people have signed up expecting Auslan interpretation, or accessible parking, or a step-free route, you are committed to delivering it.

Get these decisions made first.

Accessible ticketing and booking

For free events, the booking process is usually a simple registration form. The access questions covered in the registration section below apply. If you are using Eventbrite, Humanitix or a similar platform for a free event, check that attendees can complete registration without needing to call anyone.

For ticketed events, the booking process is the first access barrier most people will encounter, before anything else in this toolkit applies.

Check:

- Can attendees select accessible seating online, or do they have to call?
- Does the platform accept Companion Card entitlements without a separate process?
- Does the booking form work with screen readers and keyboard navigation?
- Can support workers or companions be added to the booking without requiring two separate transactions?

Accessible provisions should not cost more than standard tickets. If accessible seating or formats are priced higher, you have created a financial barrier on top of the access barrier.

For events using Eventbrite, Humanitix, Ticketek or similar platforms, check their published accessibility statements before committing.

Roles on the day

For larger or more complex events. A named access contact is essential, but for events larger than around 50 people, or events with specialist access supports, one person cannot cover everything. Access-related tasks fall across multiple roles, and if they are all assigned to one person, gaps appear.

Use this table as a prompt before the event. Not every event needs every role, and one person can hold more than one. For a small community event, the access contact can cover most of these.

Role	What it covers
Access contact	Named in communications; handles access queries before and during the event; first point of contact for attendees with access needs
Registration lead	Manages check-in; knows which attendees have access requests; can direct people to appropriate support
Room lead	Maintains clear paths, accessible seating and environmental conditions; monitors the physical space throughout
Technical support	Microphones, hearing loop, captions, screen sharing, hybrid audio and video, and any platform issues
Moderator	Manages questions and participation; monitors chat or Q&A for online and hybrid events; reads written questions aloud
Speaker and provider liaison	Confirms speaker needs before the day; meets interpreters and captioners on arrival; briefs them on timing changes
Evacuation lead	Knows the step-free evacuation routes; has identified any attendees who may need assistance to evacuate; briefs staff
Quiet space lead	Checks the quiet space is set up and available; can direct people to it discreetly without drawing attention

Event information

Avoid vague statements like "fully accessible" unless you can explain exactly what that means. The list below gives you specific language you can use directly. Also state clearly what is not available: honest information lets people decide whether the event will work for them before they sign up.

Useful statements:

- Step-free access is available from [arrival point] to all event areas.
- The route from [bus stop or light rail stop] to the entrance is [brief description].
- After dark, the safest route is [brief description].
- Accessible toilets are at [location].
- Captions will be available.
- Auslan interpreting will be available.
- A quiet space is available at [location].
- Seating is available throughout. Standing is not required.
- The event will be recorded. A captioned version and transcript will be available within [timeframe].
- If weather, smoke or route changes affect the event, updates will be sent by [method].
- Support people and companions are welcome.
- For ticketed events where you are affiliated with the ACT Companion Card program: Companion Card accepted. Cardholders receive a free companion ticket when purchasing their own.

Peak and quieter times. For longer or multi-session events, tell people when registration, food, or main sessions will be busiest. This allows people who find crowds or queues difficult to plan around them.

Registration

Registration does more than collect names. It should confirm access, gather requirements, and give people confidence about what to expect.

Registration should include:

- Clear event purpose and participation style
- Access supports already planned
- An open-ended access requirements question
- A date by which access requests should be submitted if services need lead time
- Named access contact with phone and email
- Support person and Companion Card arrangements where relevant. See the event information template above and the Canberra resources section for details on Companion Card affiliation for ticketed events.
- Dietary question if food is provided
- A privacy note covering how access information will be handled
- Any third-party tools or platforms people will need to use, with setup instructions

The registration form itself must be accessible: keyboard-navigable, screen-reader compatible, with all fields clearly labelled.

Privacy and access requests

Access requests may include disability, health, support, dietary, communication or safety information. Treat this information carefully.

Collect only what is needed. Do not ask for diagnosis or medical history unless it is necessary and your organisation has a lawful and safe way to collect it.

Before opening registration, decide: where access information will be stored, who can see it, who will monitor and action requests, how information will be shared with staff or providers, and when it will be deleted or de-identified.

Access request workflow. Access requests should be checked regularly, not only after registration closes. Decide who will monitor requests, how often they will check them, how requests will be acknowledged, and where actions will be recorded. If a request cannot be met in full, contact the

person early, explain what is possible, and offer alternatives where you can. Do not leave people to find out on the day that a support they requested is not available.

Suggested privacy note: We ask about access and dietary requirements so we can support your participation. We will only share this information with staff, venues or providers who need it to deliver the event. For questions about how your information will be used, contact [name] on [phone] or [email].

Accessible documents

Any document shared as part of the event should be accessible:

- Use proper heading styles, not just bold text
- Include alt text for meaningful images
- Avoid image-only PDFs
- Use good colour contrast (minimum 4.5:1 for normal text under WCAG 2.2)
- Do not rely on colour alone to convey information
- Use tables only where they make information easier to understand
- Share in Word or HTML where possible, not only PDF

Accessible marketing and social media

Do not rely on a flyer image alone. Put key event details in post copy or link to an accessible event page.

Check:

- Alt text is added for meaningful images
- Captions are included for videos
- Auto-captions are reviewed and corrected where accuracy matters
- Hashtags use capital letters for each word: #AccessibleEvents not #accessibleevents
- Colour contrast is strong
- Flashing or strobing content is avoided
- Links use meaningful text rather than "click here"
- Photo and video consent processes are clear

Photography, filming and consent

Before the event, explain whether photography, filming or recording will happen and provide a way for attendees to opt out.

Brief photographers to:

- Follow consent processes
- Avoid blocking accessible paths or creating trip hazards with equipment
- Represent disabled people with dignity
- Ask before taking close-up photos
- Avoid photographing mobility aids, communication devices or support equipment without consent
- Avoid cropping out a person's mobility aid as if it is something to hide
- Avoid using disabled people as an inspirational backdrop
- Avoid images that single out disability in a tokenistic or objectifying way

If filming or photography involves public land, drones, lighting structures or filming equipment, check approval requirements. See Part Eight.

Content warnings and sensitive topics

Content warnings are not only for consultation events. Many community events, training sessions, panel discussions, and even social events touch on topics that may be distressing, retraumatising or confronting for some participants, including violence, abuse, mental health, suicide, homelessness, family breakdown, forced institutionalisation, discrimination, grief, or systemic harm.

A content warning is a brief, specific statement before a session that names the topics that will be covered, so people can make an informed decision about whether to attend, whether to prepare, or whether to step out if needed.

Content warnings should:

- Be specific about the topic rather than vague ("This session includes a personal account of forced removal from family" rather than "some difficult content")
- Be provided in writing before the event and verbally at the start of the relevant session
- Include information about where support is available, including the quiet space and any support contacts
- Treat participants as capable adults who can decide what they need

Content warnings are not about avoiding difficult subjects. They are about giving people the information to engage with difficult subjects safely.

For any event where participants may be sharing personal stories or experiences, also consider:

- Whether the content will be recorded and what consent is needed
- Whether there are support resources or support people available
- Whether the facilitator has the skills to hold the room if the discussion becomes difficult
- Whether there is a clear way for a participant to step away without drawing attention

For consultations and events specifically collecting lived experience, see the trauma-informed escalation guidance in Part Seven.

Briefing suppliers and contractors

For events using external suppliers or contractors. Many access failures happen not in the organiser's own decisions but in the work of external suppliers and contractors. A venue that promises accessible facilities and then sets up furniture blocking the path. An AV team that does not know how to connect the hearing loop. A photographer who positions equipment across the accessible route. A caterer who cannot tell you what is in the food.

For a small community event with no external suppliers, this section may not apply. If your event involves a venue beyond your own premises, paid AV, interpreters, captioners, caterers, photographers, security or a ticketing platform, brief each one before the event.

Venues. Confirm accessible toilet locations, hearing loop operation, emergency evacuation procedures for people who cannot use stairs, and who on venue staff is responsible for access issues on the day. Get these confirmed in writing.

AV and technical suppliers. Confirm microphone setup, hearing loop connection and testing, screen positioning for captions, camera angles for hybrid events, and whether the supplier has worked with Auslan interpreters or CART captioners before.

Auslan interpreters and CART captioners. Send the run sheet, speaker names, technical vocabulary, acronyms and any pre-circulated materials well before the event. Confirm interpreter positioning, lighting, break arrangements for longer sessions, and how they will be visible in recordings.

Caterers. Confirm allergen labelling requirements, accessible counter heights, seating for eating, server availability for buffet service, and whether support workers and companions are included in catering numbers.

Photographers and videographers. Brief on consent processes, accessible path requirements, dignity guidelines, and the specific guidance in the photography and filming section above.

Security and venue staff. Brief on the location of accessible toilets, quiet spaces, evacuation arrangements, assistance animal protocols, and the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower if you are using it. Security staff who are not briefed can inadvertently create significant barriers for disabled attendees.

Ticketing platforms and registration providers. Confirm accessible booking features, Companion Card support, and whether the registration form meets the accessibility requirements in the ticketing section above.

Facilitators, MCs and external speakers. Send the speaker brief. Confirm their own access needs. Confirm that they understand how to work with interpreters if Auslan is being provided.

Registration and front-of-house staff. Brief on access features and their locations, how to handle access questions from attendees, who the access contact is, and how to respond to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower. Staff who are well briefed are often the most effective access support an event can have.

If access fails on the day

Things go wrong. Captions stop working. An accessible toilet is locked. The lift is out of service. The interpreter is delayed. The room setup has been changed by another booking. The microphone cuts out. Plan for this before the event.

If an access support fails on the day:

- Acknowledge the issue rather than pretending it has not happened
- Pause or adjust the format if participation is affected
- Offer another way to take part where possible
- Follow up with affected attendees after the event
- Record what happened so the same issue is not repeated next time

A failure handled honestly will damage trust less than a failure that the organiser pretends did not happen. Most attendees with access needs have experienced inaccessible events before and will respond well to organisers who acknowledge the problem and try to fix it.

A note on costs

One of the most common reasons organisations do not plan for access is uncertainty about cost. Some access provisions are free or near-free. Others have real costs that need to be planned for. Knowing the difference helps you prioritise and, where needed, build a case for funding.

Free or very low cost

Using microphones. Muting attendees by default in webinars. Enabling platform auto-captions. Sending materials in advance. Adding an access question to the registration form. Naming an access contact. Using plain language. Printing large-format name tags. Taping down cables. Sending a speaker brief. Asking about dietary requirements. Including WAT and transport information in event communications.

Low to moderate cost

AI-assisted captioning services typically cost less than human CART captioning and are suitable for many standard events. Check current pricing with providers before budgeting. Portable hearing loop hire for events without an installed system. Large print materials. Translating key documents into Easy Read format (this involves design time and should be budgeted properly).

Costs requiring early budgeting

Auslan interpreters in Canberra typically cost several hundred dollars for a half-day event and require at least four weeks notice. For sessions over 90 minutes, two interpreters are required. Human CART captioning rates vary by provider and session length; contact providers for current pricing. Changing Places portable unit hire for events where the venue has no facility. Audio description services for performances and exhibitions.

Funding sources in the ACT

ACT Government community grants, the ACT Inclusion Grants, and some peak body funding streams have accessibility as an eligible expense. If your event is ACT Government-funded or government-facing, accessibility costs should be included in the event budget from the outset rather than treated as an add-on. For community groups, the cost of basic access provisions is often lower than expected once free and low-cost items are separated from those that require specialist providers.

PART FOUR: IN-PERSON EVENTS

Venue

The venue decision shapes everything. Some venue barriers cannot be fixed the week before.

Essential

- Step-free route from public transport, parking and drop-off to every area attendees will use
- Accessible toilets close to the event space, unlocked and usable throughout the event
- Clear paths through the room
- Seating options including wheelchair spaces integrated with other seating
- Microphone or PA system
- Emergency evacuation arrangements for people who cannot use stairs

Good to have

- Visit the venue before booking; check the exact room, not only the website
- Check surfaces, doors, ramps, lifts, lighting, toilets and signage
- Confirm hearing augmentation is installed and has been tested recently
- Provide a quiet or lower-sensory space where possible
- Check whether all-gender toilets are available or nearby
- Ask whether a Changing Places facility is available if the audience may need it
- Consider ventilation and mask-friendly settings if the audience may include immunocompromised attendees

Going further

- Ask a disabled person to walk through the venue and provide feedback before confirming the booking
- Offer photos of the entrance, room and route in pre-event communications
- Provide a simple access map showing entrances, toilets, quiet space, parking and drop-off

Changing Places. Standard accessible toilets are not sufficient for people who need height-adjustable change tables, ceiling hoists and carer space. Changing Places Australia at changingplaces.org.au maintains a register of facilities. In Canberra, confirmed locations include the National Museum of Australia and Canberra Hospital. If your venue has no nearby Changing Places facility, state this clearly in your event communications.

Getting there in Canberra

Access planning includes the journey to the venue, not only what happens once people arrive.

Canberra is a multi-district city. An event in Civic, Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Kingston, Bruce or the Parliamentary Triangle may look accessible on the venue website but still be difficult if the final route from the bus stop, light rail stop, car park or drop-off point is long, poorly lit, under construction or exposed to weather.

When providing directions, name the specific route from each arrival point to the entrance people will use. Look for surface changes, kerb ramps, gradients, lighting, construction and whether the accessible entrance is the same entrance everyone else uses.

Include in event communications:

- Nearest bus stop or light rail stop, with the route number or line name
- Practical walking route from that stop to the venue entrance
- Accessible parking location and van height clearance where relevant
- Wheelchair accessible taxi drop-off point and route to entrance
- Lighting and safety after dark
- Any current construction, detours or changed pedestrian routes

Transport Canberra. All buses are wheelchair accessible. The light rail (currently Gungahlin to City, Stage 2A under construction) is fully accessible with hearing loops at all stops and on board vehicles. Free travel is available for vision-impaired passengers and their attendant, and for holders of a Person with Permanent Impairment ID card. Journey planning: transport.act.gov.au

Wheelchair accessible taxis (13WATS). WAT stands for Wheelchair Accessible Taxi. In the ACT, bookings are handled through 13WATS and must be made in advance. Phone: 139 287. Email: bookings@13wats.com.au. Include the finish time for return travel planning in any information you provide.

ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme. Provides subsidised transport for eligible people. Revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/taxi-subsidy-scheme

Transport Canberra Flexible Bus Service. For eligible people who cannot use standard services. Note: operates Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 1:30pm only. Not available on weekends, public holidays or public service shutdown periods. transport.act.gov.au/travel-options/bus/accessible-travel/flexible-bus-service

ACT Companion Card. For ticketed events, organisations can affiliate with the ACT Companion Card program for free. Affiliated organisations provide a free companion ticket when a cardholder purchases their own ticket. For free events, simply state that companions and support people are welcome. act.gov.au/community/people-with-disability/accept-the-companion-card-at-your-business-or-event

Canberra seasonal access

Canberra's seasons create access conditions that differ from most Australian cities. Check these before finalising any in-person event.

Summer and heat. Plan for shade and cooling, water stations, seated rest areas in shaded spots, shorter outdoor queues, indoor fallback options, and heat-sensitive conditions including fatigue, chronic illness and medications affected by heat. Communicate clearly if an event needs to be shortened or moved.

Winter, cold and early darkness. Many Canberra events run after work in winter when it is already dark and temperatures are near freezing. Check: lighting on every route from transport and parking to the entrance; visible kerbs, ramps and crossing points; paths visible enough for people with low vision or dog guide users; exposed waiting areas; and whether attendees using wheelchair accessible taxis, support workers or the Flexible Bus Service have enough time for return travel. Include a safe after-dark route description in your final reminder.

Smoke and poor air quality. Check current conditions before outdoor events. Have an indoor alternative or online option ready. Note mask-friendly settings and communicate changes early. Consider people with respiratory conditions, immune risk and sensory sensitivity.

Rain, wind and exposed routes. Plan for covered arrival points, non-slip routes, temporary matting where ground is soft or uneven, and signs that will not blow over or block paths.

For current weather warnings: Bureau of Meteorology ACT at bom.gov.au/act/warnings

The physical environment on the day

Essential

- Keep all paths and aisles clear throughout the event
- Tape down or remove cables
- Accessible toilets remain unlocked and usable
- Seating is available throughout
- Wheelchair spaces are integrated with other seating, not isolated at the edges
- Food, registration and information desks are reachable from a wheelchair

Good to have

- Large, high-contrast signage at decision points, readable from wheelchair height
- Background music off during the event, including networking, meals and breaks
- Staff briefed on accessible toilets, quiet space, entrances, exits and the access contact
- Assistance animal toileting and water area identified; staff briefed to not approach or distract working assistance animals
- Strobe and rapidly flashing lights avoided
- Name tags in large print format for networking events
- Charging points available for powered wheelchairs, scooters and AAC devices; location included in event communications
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards available at registration or the information point if your organisation has joined the initiative. The Sunflower is a voluntary signal that someone has a non-visible disability and may need extra patience, time or support. Staff should offer help and follow the person's lead. Do not assume what the person needs based on the lanyard alone. Membership, staff training and lanyards are free for organisations: hdsunflower.com/au

Managing sound levels. The inverse of the microphone problem is equally common and equally harmful. Loud music, hard surfaces creating echo, multiple simultaneous conversations, and PA feedback are significant barriers for people using hearing aids, people with auditory processing differences, autistic people and people with anxiety.

Check room acoustics when assessing the venue. Hard floors and high ceilings create significant echo that affects hearing aid users. Ask whether the venue can reduce ambient noise sources during the event. If live or amplified sound is part of the event, provide a quieter viewing area with reduced volume for people who need it.

Sound and communication

Essential

- Use microphones every time; every speaker in every room
- Repeat audience questions into the microphone before answering. If the question was not audible, ask the person to speak up or use a microphone before repeating it.
- At the start, give a brief orientation covering: room layout, toilets, quiet space, exits, emergency evacuation, question process, whether a hearing loop is active. If blind or visually impaired participants are attending, give a more specific description of the space: where presenters are positioned, roughly how large the room is, where key features are in relation to where people are seated.

Good to have

- Confirm the venue's hearing loop is switched on before the event; if no installed loop, hire a portable system
- Provide written question options at tables or via a staff member
- Send slides and handouts in advance in accessible formats
- Offer large print materials on request (minimum 16-point font; 18 to 20 preferred)
- Book Auslan interpretation and CART captioning where the event scale, topic or audience makes it appropriate

Captioning: choosing the right tier

Captions are not a single thing. Three tiers are available, with different cost, accuracy and use cases.

Platform auto-captions are free and built into most platforms and some in-room display systems. They are better than nothing but are unreliable for accented English, technical language, proper nouns and fast speech. Use them as a baseline, not a solution.

AI-assisted captioning (services such as Otter.ai and the AI-assisted products offered by some captioning providers) produces better accuracy than platform auto-captions at lower cost than human CART. Suitable for many standard in-person and online events where high accuracy is needed but budget is limited.

Human CART captioning (Communication Access Realtime Translation by a trained captioner) is the highest accuracy option. Use for large events, recorded events, technical or specialist content, policy or legal discussions, sensitive consultations, and any event where caption errors would significantly affect participation or understanding.

Auslan and CART are not the same thing. Auslan is a language used by many Deaf people. CART captioning is real-time written text, primarily useful for hard of hearing people, people with auditory processing needs, and people for whom English is an additional language. They meet different needs. Do not offer one as a substitute for the other.

Speakers and presenters with disability

Ask speakers about their own access needs at the same time you send the speaker brief. A speaker who uses a wheelchair needs step-free stage access. A Deaf speaker may need an interpreter positioned differently. A speaker with fatigue may need a chair at the lectern. A speaker who uses AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) may need additional setup time.

Do not assume speakers without disability have no access needs either. Ask everyone.

Speaker brief (send to all speakers before every event)

- Use a microphone at all times; do not move away from it
- Face the audience when speaking. Do not turn away to read from a screen. This is essential for lip readers.
- Identify yourself by name at the start of your contribution and again each time you begin speaking after a pause or after someone else has spoken
- Before answering a question, say your name: "This is [name]. In response to that question..."
- If blind or visually impaired participants are attending, briefly describe yourself when you are first introduced: your name, role and a short physical or contextual description so people can place who is speaking. The organiser will advise if this applies.
- Describe all visual content aloud: "This slide shows a bar chart comparing..."
- Read slide text aloud; do not ask the audience to read it

- Speak clearly and at a measured pace. Do not rush. This supports everyone following the event, including people using hearing aids, people relying on captions, people processing information in a second language, and interpreters.
- Pause between key points. This gives the audience time to process, allows captioners to complete a thought, and gives interpreters time to catch up before you move on.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. When you must use technical terms or acronyms, explain them on first use.
- Repeat audience questions into the microphone before answering. If you did not hear the question clearly, ask the person to use a microphone or speak up before you repeat it.
- For online sessions: ensure your face is well lit from the front. A window or bright light behind you makes lip reading and facial expression reading difficult.
- Send your slides to the organiser before the event in an editable format

Queuing

Queuing is one of the most consistently overlooked access barriers at in-person events.

Standing in queues for extended periods is difficult or impossible for many people with chronic pain, fatigue, mobility limitations or continence needs. Unpredictable queues also cause distress for people with anxiety.

Plan for:

- Seated waiting options at registration, food, and entry points
- Priority entry for people who have requested it at registration
- Information about expected wait times in pre-event communications
- Queue layouts that do not block accessible paths or exits
- Staff available to assist people who cannot wait in a standard queue

Catering

Accessible catering is not only about dietary requirements. How food is served matters.

Essential

- Ask about dietary requirements during registration
- Label all food clearly including common allergens, in text large enough to read
- Provide seating for eating at accessible table heights
- Make water easy to access and refill independently

Good to have

- Servers available if food is served buffet-style
- Enough space around food stations for mobility aids
- Tables usable by wheelchair users (cleared underneath)
- Staff able to assist anyone who needs help reaching food or carrying a plate

Support workers and companions. People attending with NDIS support workers, carers or Companion Card holders need those people accounted for in your headcount, seating, meals and parking. A support worker is not an optional extra; they are part of how the participant attends. Do not create additional barriers for them.

Emergency evacuation

Every in-person event needs an evacuation plan that accounts for people who cannot use stairs, people who may not hear audible alarms, and people who may become disoriented or distressed in an emergency.

Before the event:

- Confirm step-free exit routes with the venue
- Identify evacuation assistants by name, before people arrive
- Know which exits are step-free
- Provide safety information verbally at the start of the event
- Brief all staff and volunteers on their roles

Do not assume all disabled people need the same emergency support. Do not assume people will self-identify emergency needs without being asked.

PART FIVE: ONLINE EVENTS

Choosing a platform

A familiar platform is not always the most accessible one.

Check:

- Keyboard navigation works throughout
- Screen readers can use all controls
- Captions are available and customisable
- Auslan interpreters can join as a separate pinned video participant
- Chat, Q&A and raised-hand features are available
- Dial-in options are available for people who cannot join by video
- Recording and transcript settings can be controlled
- Attendees can join without creating an unnecessary account
- The platform does not require a download that some attendees cannot complete

Read the platform's accessibility statement before committing. Test it with accessibility features active before the event.

Third-party tools

Many events use additional tools for polls, Q&A, whiteboards or collaborative activities. These are often useful. They create access barriers only when attendees are not prepared.

If you use a third-party tool:

- Tell attendees before the event, including what it will be used for
- Provide step-by-step setup instructions with screenshots
- Specify which device and browser the tool works best on
- Allow time at the start of the session for anyone still setting it up
- Check the tool's accessibility statement and note any limitations
- Have a fallback option ready: chat, email or verbal response

Registration forms themselves should not require a plugin, app or download to complete.

Setting up for the format: webinars

A webinar is a broadcast format with structured audience interaction. Set it up accordingly.

Essential

- Mute all attendees by default
- Enable captions before the session starts, not after it begins
- Use chat or Q&A for questions; do not rely on verbal participation only
- Assign a moderator to monitor chat or Q&A throughout
- Read written questions aloud before answering

Good to have

- Use an external microphone and test audio before the session
- Use an accessible background: plain and dark or neutral, good lighting on the face, no busy patterns or bright window light
- Share slides via screen share so participants receive them directly, not through a camera pointed at a screen
- Have a co-host or technical support person assigned
- When sharing a screen, narrate what you are doing: "I am now sharing my screen and moving to the second slide." Do not assume participants can see what you are pointing at or navigating to.

Setting up for the format: online meetings

Online meetings involve multiple active contributors and need a different setup from webinars.

Essential

- Provide more than one way to participate: verbal, chat, reactions, written questions
- Do not require cameras to be on
- Let people join early to test technology
- Explain the participation process at the start
- Introduce participants; for people who are blind it matters to know who is in the room

Good to have

- Assign a moderator separate from the facilitator
- Disable entry notification sounds once the meeting begins
- Share materials directly, not only by screen share
- Offer a short technology orientation if the platform will be unfamiliar to some attendees

Breakout rooms

Breakout rooms are a common access failure in online meetings. Use them only where they add real value. Before using breakout rooms, check whether captions, Auslan interpreters or support people can move with participants on your platform. Always offer an alternative way to contribute for people who cannot use breakout rooms, such as staying in the main room with the moderator or contributing in writing afterwards.

Captioning and Auslan online

The same three-tier captioning approach applies as for in-person events: platform auto-captions as a baseline, AI-assisted captioning as a practical middle option, and human CART captioning for complex, sensitive or large-scale events. See the captioning section in Part Four for a full explanation of each tier.

Captions should be active at the start of the session, not enabled only on request.

If Auslan interpretation is provided, the interpreter must be visible as a pinned participant at all times, not buried in a gallery view. Position the interpreter window so attendees can see both the interpreter and the speaker without dividing their attention. Brief the interpreter with slides, names, acronyms and run sheet in advance.

Slides for online events

- Use sufficient colour contrast: minimum 4.5:1 for normal text under WCAG 2.2
- Avoid overcrowded slides; split content across multiple slides rather than reducing font size
- Set the reading order of slide elements for screen readers (in PowerPoint: Review > Check Accessibility; in Google Slides: Arrange > Order)
- Do not rely on colour alone to convey information in charts or graphics

- Avoid looping animation and flickering or rapidly moving elements

Recording and follow-up

Essential

- Decide whether the session will be recorded. If a recording will be shared, tell attendees before the event, obtain consent where needed, caption the recording before sharing, and tell people when it will be available.

Good to have

- Provide a full transcript for download
- Share slides or notes in accessible format after the event
- Make the post-event feedback form accessible on the same terms as the registration form
- Follow up with anyone who had access issues during the session

PART SIX: HYBRID EVENTS

Hybrid is its own format

A hybrid event is not an in-person event with a camera pointed at the room. It is a third format requiring its own planning, technical setup and facilitation approach. It is also, when done well, one of the most accessible formats available: it removes travel as a barrier while preserving the value of in-person participation.

If online attendees can only watch, say that clearly in your event communications. Do not describe the event as interactive for online attendees if they cannot ask questions or contribute.

Good enough to proceed?

Run hybrid only if all of these conditions are met:

- Online attendees can hear the room clearly
- Online attendees can see or access slides and materials
- Online attendees can ask questions or contribute
- Online questions will be read into the room
- In-room questions will be repeated into a microphone for online participants
- Captions and moderation are covered for both audiences
- A person is assigned to monitor online participation throughout
- Technology has been tested from both in-room and online perspectives

If these conditions cannot be met, fully online or fully in-person will serve everyone better.

Technical requirements

Essential

- Room microphone or roving microphone; a laptop built-in microphone is not sufficient
- Camera that captures the presenter and any slides or screens in frame
- Slides shared via screen share to online participants, not through a camera pointing at a screen

- Reliable internet connection tested before the event
- Captions active for both audiences
- Dedicated online moderator, separate from whoever is managing the room

Good to have

- Large screen in the room showing online participants and captions
- Brief all in-room laptop users to mute their speakers and microphones to prevent audio feedback
- Technical rehearsal with speakers, host, moderator and technical support before the event

Participation equity

Online participants should have the same ability to ask questions and contribute as in-room participants. Online questions should be read into the room before being answered. In-room questions must be repeated into a microphone before being answered.

Access across both audiences

Access need	In-person	Online
Deaf or hard of hearing	Hearing loop; Auslan and/or CART where provided	Captions in platform; Auslan interpreter as pinned video
Blind or low vision	Clear routes; verbal descriptions; accessible documents	Materials sent directly; all visual content described aloud
Mobility	Step-free access; accessible seating; WAT drop-off	Keyboard-only navigation; participation via chat not mic-only
Cognitive or sensory	Quiet space; predictable schedule; plain language	Materials in advance; recording; low-pressure participation
Chronic illness or fatigue	Breaks; seating throughout; accessible toilets	Camera-off option; audio-only option; recording available

PART SEVEN: SPECIALIST PLANNING

This section covers three types of content: consultation and co-design events, major public events and festivals, and a reference section on specific access needs.

Use the relevant subsection for your event type. The navigation table at the front directs outdoor, festival and major public event organisers here, as well as those running consultations or co-design processes.

If you are running a standard meeting, workshop, webinar or community gathering, the earlier sections cover what you need. The consultation and co-design content below is not for you unless your event specifically involves gathering community input or working with disabled people to shape a process or outcome.

Consultation and co-design

Plan with disabled people

Accessible events are better designed when disabled people help shape them. For events that involve disabled people as participants, subjects or stakeholders, disabled people should help shape the event before key decisions are locked in.

This is more than asking someone to check the plan at the end. It means involving disabled people early enough to influence the purpose, format, venue, access supports, communications and follow-up.

For larger, public, recurring or high-profile events, consider a more formal process. This could include paid co-design sessions, a lived experience advisory group, a venue or platform walkthrough with disabled people, or review before the event is promoted.

Co-design should be paid, accessible and clear about what participants can influence. Do not call a process co-design unless disabled people have genuine influence over content, structure or priorities.

In Canberra, consider engaging ACT disability organisations including Advocacy for Inclusion, People with Disabilities ACT, Women with Disabilities ACT, and the ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS). Each plays a different role. Advocacy for Inclusion focuses on individual and systemic disability rights advocacy. PWD ACT represents people with disability in the ACT. WDACT focuses on women with disability. ADACAS provides individual advocacy and

information. Carers ACT supports carers. Contact the one whose role matches what you need, not all of them simultaneously.

Acknowledging disability history and leadership

For disability-led or disability-focused events, organisers may choose to acknowledge disabled elders, advocates, activists, artists, survivors and community members who have shaped disability rights, culture and access.

This is separate from a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country. It should not replace First Nations cultural protocols.

Keep it genuine. Do not use it as a script if disabled people have not been involved in planning, speaking, decision-making or paid roles at the event.

Example wording:

> *We acknowledge the disabled people, elders, advocates, activists, artists and community members who have worked for access, rights and inclusion before us. We also recognise those who were excluded, institutionalised, silenced or harmed because of ableism. Their lives and work shape the access we are building today.*

Shorter option:

> *We acknowledge disabled people who have fought for access, rights and inclusion before us, and the disabled people shaping this work today.*

Consultation versus co-design

	Consultation	Co-design
Purpose	Gather feedback	Shape priorities or solutions
What is fixed	Some elements may already be set	Less is fixed
Participant role	Comment and raise issues	Influence direction
Organiser role	Explain and report back	Share power and support discussion
Main risk	Outcome already decided	Calling it co-design without sharing power

Before promoting a feedback event, confirm: what is open for influence, what is already decided, how feedback will be used, how it will be recorded, and when participants will hear what happened next.

Do not call an event co-design unless participants have real influence.

Privacy, consent and trauma-informed escalation

If the event collects personal stories, lived experience, health information, service experiences or reform priorities, use your organisation's privacy, consent, safeguarding and escalation procedures.

Prepare for:

Situation	Immediate response	Follow-up
Participant becomes distressed	Pause; check in privately where possible; offer a break or support contact	Follow up if consent is given
Urgent safety concern	Move out of group discussion; follow safeguarding process	Escalate under organisational policy
Personal casework issue	Acknowledge; explain what can and cannot be handled live	Offer referral or written follow-up pathway
Discussion becomes unsafe	Moderator interrupts; resets expectations or changes format	Record issue; review facilitation approach
Access support fails	Pause or adjust format if participation is affected	Provide alternative participation or follow-up option

Do not expect the moderator to make these decisions alone in the moment. Prepare responses before the event.

Major public events, expos and festivals

Use this section for outdoor events, expos, markets, festivals, open days, street events and events across more than one space.

Larger events need more than a general access checklist. They involve temporary infrastructure, crowds, queues, stalls, food areas, sound, weather, toilets, transport and multiple decision points. Plan the whole site, not only the main activity.

In Canberra, this may include city-centre activations, lake foreshore events, town-centre markets, community festivals, expos, public rallies and outdoor performances.

Site layout and movement

Check:

- Accessible entry and exit points clearly signed
- Step-free routes throughout the entire site
- Wide paths between stalls, displays, seating and food areas (minimum 1500mm clear width)
- Queue areas that do not block access paths
- Accessible viewing areas with clear sightlines
- Seating and rest points throughout the site, not only at the edges
- Ramps, mats or temporary surfaces where ground is uneven, soft, grassy or gravelled
- Cables, signage, bins and temporary structures do not create trip hazards

Relaxed and sensory-adapted events

Consider whether any session, performance or part of the event can be delivered in a lower-sensory format. A relaxed or sensory-adapted session typically involves reduced volume, dimmed or adjusted lighting, no strobing effects, freedom of movement, and an absence of social rules about noise or stillness.

This is particularly relevant for events with performance or exhibition content, and for events where children or families may attend. Announce sensory-adapted sessions clearly in event communications. They should be equally priced and equally resourced as standard sessions.

Audio description

For any event with significant visual content, performance, or exhibition material, consider audio description for blind and low-vision participants. Audio description involves a narrator describing visual elements in real time via a radio transmitter and earpiece.

Tactile tours before a performance or exhibition, where blind and low-vision attendees can touch set elements, props or key objects before the event begins, can significantly enrich the audio description experience. Keep groups small (3 to 6 people) and limit tactile exploration to 3 to 5 objects.

For Canberra guidance on audio description services, contact Vision Australia.

Toilets, quiet spaces and comfort

Check:

- Accessible toilets in practical locations throughout the site, not only at the far end
- All-gender toilets available or nearby where possible
- Changing Places information provided where the audience may need it
- Quiet or lower-sensory areas clearly signed where possible
- Shade, shelter, water and rest points available
- Weather and smoke contingency plans in place
- Ventilation and mask-friendly options considered for immunocompromised attendees

Transport and arrival

Check:

- Safe drop-off and pick-up points clearly signed
- WAT, taxi, rideshare, public transport and accessible parking information in event communications
- Clear routes from all arrival points to key event areas
- Lighting and safety for evening events
- Accessible parking and van height clearance
- Temporary wayfinding from arrival points throughout the site

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Stalls, exhibitors and vendors

Brief all stallholders to:

- Keep accessible paths clear at all times
- Leave wide routes between stalls, tables, displays and queues
- Avoid trip hazards from cables, signs, stock or banners
- Keep service counters and menus as accessible as possible
- Direct attendees to the access contact, accessible toilets, quiet space or information point

Final site check

Do a final site check after all temporary infrastructure is in place, not before. Check: paths, ramps, temporary surfaces, cables, signage, toilets, seating, viewing areas, queue areas, food service areas, quiet spaces, and emergency access. If the final setup changes the access route, update signage and tell staff before attendees arrive.

Access needs reference

This section is reference material. You do not need to read it in full before planning your event. Come back to the relevant subsection when someone requests a specific type of support, or when you want to check whether your event design creates a particular barrier.

Not every event will need every item listed here. It is organised by what people may need rather than by disability type, so you can focus on what to change without requiring attendees to disclose a diagnosis or fit into a category.

Clear structure and predictability

Supports people with anxiety, sensory overload, cognitive load, fatigue, trauma, neurodivergence or difficulty with unfamiliar places.

- Tell people what to expect before the event
- Provide a simple agenda
- Consider a visual schedule for events where some participants use visual supports: a one-page graphic showing the sequence of activities, with simple icons and minimal text. Visual

schedules help autistic attendees, people with intellectual disability and anyone who processes visual information more easily than text.

- Explain whether people will be expected to speak, move around, join activities or give feedback
- Avoid unexpected format changes where possible
- Provide a quiet or lower-sensory space
- Use clear, direct instructions
- Avoid sudden loud sounds or unexpected lighting changes

More than one way to communicate

Supports people who use AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), people with speech impairment, Deaf or hard of hearing people, people with anxiety, people using interpreters, and people who process information differently.

AAC includes communication devices, symbol boards, typing, gestures and other methods.

- Allow extra time for responses
- Address the person directly, not their support person
- Provide written question options
- Accept National Relay Service calls: Speak and Listen 1300 555 727
- Use microphones every time
- Read written questions aloud before answering
- Do not treat slower communication as lack of engagement or understanding

Accessible information

Supports blind and low-vision people, screen reader users, people with intellectual or cognitive disability, Deaf and hard of hearing people, and people who need time to process information.

- Provide accessible digital materials before the event
- Avoid print-only or image-only materials
- Describe slides, charts, images and key visual content aloud

- If a blind or visually impaired participant is attending, brief speakers to briefly describe themselves when introduced: name, role and a short contextual description. This allows the person to place who is speaking without having to ask.
- Use plain language
- Provide Easy Read where useful (Easy Read uses short sentences and images to make written information accessible to people with intellectual or cognitive disability)
- Provide captions, transcripts or summaries

Sensory, rest and environmental adjustments

Supports people with chronic illness, fatigue, pain, sensory sensitivity, chemical sensitivity, migraine, respiratory conditions or neurodivergence.

- Schedule real breaks in agendas
- Provide seating throughout
- Provide water
- Consider temperature, ventilation, air quality and lighting
- For events where the same group of people attend regularly, include a low-fragrance request in pre-event communications. Strong fragrances including perfume, cologne, scented products and strong cleaning chemicals are a genuine access barrier for people with multiple chemical sensitivity, migraine, respiratory conditions and some autoimmune conditions. A brief note asking attendees to avoid heavily scented products costs nothing and signals that the organiser is thinking about the full range of people in the room.
- Provide shade, cooling or indoor fallback for outdoor events
- Allow camera-off and audio-only participation for online events

Mobility, toileting and physical access

Supports wheelchair users, people using mobility aids, people with chronic pain or fatigue, people with continence needs, and people who need personal care support.

- Check step-free routes to all areas including toilets, food and stage
- Check accessible toilets are close, unlocked and usable
- Ask whether a Changing Places facility is available or nearby
- Provide seating throughout

- Keep paths clear; integrate wheelchair spaces with other seating
- Check parking, drop-off and WAT information
- Be honest if a venue cannot meet a particular access need

Assistance animals and support people

- State that assistance animals are welcome in event communications
- Brief staff to not approach or distract working assistance animals without the handler's explicit permission
- Provide a grassy outdoor area and water for assistance animal breaks
- State whether support people, companions or workers are welcome
- Explain Companion Card arrangements

Supports requiring specialist providers

Book early. If someone requests a support you are unfamiliar with, ask what would help and seek advice rather than guessing.

- Auslan interpreting: Deaf Connect or Expression Australia
- Human CART captioning: Expression Australia or AI-Media
- Deaf-blind interpreting, tactile interpreting or print-on-palm support
- Easy Read document preparation
- Audio description
- Specialist evacuation planning
- Changing Places or assisted toileting arrangements

PART EIGHT: CANBERRA PERMITS, PUBLIC LAND AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Do not treat permits as a late administration task. Land approvals can affect where people enter, where structures go, whether paths stay clear, where signs can be placed, where toilets sit, and how queues form. These decisions directly affect access.

If the event uses public land, parks, reserves, roads, footpaths or public space, check approval requirements before promoting the event.

You may need approval for: events on ACT public land; events on National Capital Authority land; tents, stages, marquees, signs, or temporary structures; food stalls; alcohol; amplified sound; traffic or parking impacts; markets, festivals, or rallies; drones; tripods; lighting or filming equipment.

Examples requiring early checks: events around Lake Burley Griffin, Commonwealth Park, the Parliamentary Triangle, town squares, public footpaths, suburban parks and any event using temporary infrastructure.

Useful starting points:

- Access Canberra event and filming planning: accesscanberra.act.gov.au/business-and-work/hospitality-liquor-and-gaming/get-help-to-plan-an-event-or-film-in-the-act
- City Services events on public land: cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/use/event-bookings
- City Services placing an object on public land: cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/use/object-on-public-land
- National Capital Authority event guidelines: nca.gov.au/events/event-guidelines
- National Capital Authority commercial filming: nca.gov.au/events/commercial-filming

PART NINE: CHECKLISTS

In-person event checklist

Before you book the venue

- ☐ Purpose and participation style are clear
- ☐ Venue checked in person: exact room, route, toilets, sound, lighting, seating, parking
- ☐ Step-free route confirmed from transport, parking and drop-off to all event areas
- ☐ Accessible toilets close, step-free, confirmed functional
- ☐ Changing Places facility confirmed or absence noted for communications
- ☐ All-gender toilets available or nearby
- ☐ Hearing augmentation tested
- ☐ Quiet or lower-sensory space considered
- ☐ Emergency evacuation arrangements checked
- ☐ Public land, permits, photography or filming approvals checked if relevant
- ☐ Seasonal access conditions considered

Before promotion

- ☐ Event listing states specific access features
- ☐ Event listing states what is not available where relevant
- ☐ Named access contact listed with phone and email
- ☐ For ticketed events: accessible ticketing confirmed; Companion Card affiliation in place or noted as not applicable
- ☐ Accessible pricing confirmed (no premium for accessible provisions)
- ☐ Access provisions budgeted; specialist providers (Auslan, CART) contacted for quotes if needed
- ☐ Registration form accessible; open access question included

- ☐ Privacy note for access and dietary information included
- ☐ Support people and companions stated as welcome; Companion Card noted if event is ticketed and affiliated
- ☐ Wheelchair accessible taxi information included where relevant
- ☐ Peak times or quieter periods noted for longer events
- ☐ Any third-party tools listed with setup instructions
- ☐ Photography, filming and recording information included
- ☐ Access request deadline included where services need lead time

One week before

- ☐ Access requests reviewed and actioned
- ☐ Speaker brief sent; access needs of speakers checked
- ☐ Auslan interpreters and captioners given run sheets, names and acronyms
- ☐ Staff and volunteers briefed on access contact, accessible toilets, quiet space and exits
- ☐ Final reminder includes transport, drop-off, after-dark route, access supports and what to expect
- ☐ Queuing arrangements confirmed; seated waiting available if needed

On the day

- ☐ Room setup matches access plan
- ☐ All paths, aisles and emergency routes clear; cables taped
- ☐ Accessible toilets unlocked and usable
- ☐ Microphones used for every speaker
- ☐ Opening orientation covers layout, toilets, quiet space, exits, hearing loop, evacuation and questions
- ☐ Seating available throughout; wheelchair spaces integrated
- ☐ Food labelled with allergens; seated eating available; support worker headcount included

- ☐ Assistance animal area identified; staff briefed
- ☐ Access contact visible and available
- ☐ Charging points available for powered equipment if relevant
- ☐ Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards available if provided

After the event

- ☐ Feedback gathered using specific access questions: Was there anything that made it difficult to attend or take part? Were the access details provided before the event accurate? Were you able to participate in the way you wanted? What should we change next time?
- ☐ Access issues recorded for next time
- ☐ Follow-up with individuals who had access issues
- ☐ Recording captioned before sharing
- ☐ Follow-up materials accessible

Online event checklist

Before promotion

- ☐ Format matches event purpose
- ☐ Platform accessibility statement reviewed
- ☐ Captions confirmed; tier chosen (auto, AI-assisted or human CART)
- ☐ Auslan interpretation considered separately from captions
- ☐ Third-party tools identified, accessibility checked, fallback confirmed
- ☐ Registration form accessible; access question and platform instructions included
- ☐ Access contact listed with phone and email
- ☐ Event listing explains participation method and recording availability

Before the event

- ☐ Slides and materials sent in accessible, editable format
- ☐ Captions enabled and tested before the session
- ☐ Mute settings confirmed for webinar-style sessions
- ☐ Chat or Q&A confirmed and tested
- ☐ Screen sharing tested from presenter's device
- ☐ Third-party tools tested; fallback confirmed
- ☐ Co-host, moderator or technical support assigned
- ☐ Speakers have tested audio; speaker brief sent; speaker access needs checked
- ☐ Attendees have joining instructions and access contact

On the day

- ☐ Attendees muted by default for webinar-style sessions
- ☐ Captions active at the start

- ☐ Auslan interpreter visible and pinned if provided
- ☐ Moderator explains participation, questions, breaks and access support at the start
- ☐ Chat or Q&A monitored throughout
- ☐ Written questions read aloud before answering
- ☐ Cameras optional

After the event

- ☐ Recording captioned before sharing
- ☐ Transcript or summary available
- ☐ Slides shared in accessible format
- ☐ Feedback form accessible and includes specific access questions: Was anything difficult? Were access details accurate? Could you participate as you wanted? What should we change next time?
- ☐ Access issues recorded; individuals followed up where needed

Hybrid event checklist

Before committing to hybrid

- ☐ Online attendees can hear the room clearly
- ☐ Online attendees can access slides and materials
- ☐ Online attendees can ask questions or contribute
- ☐ In-room questions will be repeated into a microphone
- ☐ Online questions will be read into the room
- ☐ Captions and moderation are covered for both audiences
- ☐ Online moderator assigned
- ☐ Technology and staffing are available

Before promotion

- ☐ Event listing explains how in-person and online attendees will participate
- ☐ Event listing is honest if online attendees are watching only
- ☐ Access features for both audiences listed separately
- ☐ Access request question covers both in-person and online needs

Before the event

- ☐ Full setup rehearsed with speakers, host, moderator and technical support
- ☐ Room microphones and online audio tested
- ☐ Camera view confirmed
- ☐ Slides shared via screen share to online participants
- ☐ Captions tested for both audiences
- ☐ In-room laptop users briefed to mute themselves
- ☐ Backup plan ready if hybrid setup fails

On the day

- ☐ Online attendees can hear the room
- ☐ In-room questions repeated into microphone
- ☐ Online questions read into the room
- ☐ Chat or Q&A monitored
- ☐ Captions and interpreter visibility checked
- ☐ Any technical failure acknowledged; alternative offered

After the event

- ☐ Feedback gathered from both audiences separately, with specific access questions: Was anything difficult? Were access details accurate? Could you participate as you wanted? What should we change next time?
- ☐ Access barriers for each audience recorded
- ☐ Recording, transcript or summary shared accessibly

Major public event checklist

Before booking or site confirmation

- ☐ Site layout supports step-free movement throughout
- ☐ Public land, permits and NCA or ACT Government approvals checked
- ☐ Accessible toilets and Changing Places options checked
- ☐ Transport, parking, WAT and accessible transport options confirmed
- ☐ Seasonal access risks assessed
- ☐ Emergency access and evacuation routes checked
- ☐ Photography, filming and drone approvals checked

Before promotion

- ☐ Arrival, transport, parking, drop-off and final path-of-travel included in event information
- ☐ Access features and limitations stated clearly
- ☐ Quiet or sensory-adapted options described if available
- ☐ Audio description and tactile tour options noted if relevant
- ☐ Accessible toilet and Changing Places information included
- ☐ Companion Card and support person arrangements included
- ☐ Photography and filming consent explained
- ☐ Access contact or information point listed

Before the event

- ☐ Stallholder and vendor briefing includes access requirements
- ☐ Staff, volunteers and security briefed
- ☐ Signage and access maps ready
- ☐ Seating, rest points and quiet areas prepared

- ☐ Food service areas accessible
- ☐ Emergency information available in more than one format

Final site check (after all infrastructure is in place)

- ☐ Paths, mats, ramps usable and unobstructed
- ☐ Cables, signs and barriers do not block access
- ☐ Queue areas do not block accessible paths
- ☐ Toilets accessible and clearly signed
- ☐ Seating and rest points in place
- ☐ Viewing areas have clear sightlines
- ☐ Information point and access contact visible
- ☐ Final setup matches published access information

After the event

- ☐ Feedback includes access questions
- ☐ Access incidents and barriers recorded
- ☐ Vendor or site issues noted for next time

Consultation event checklist

Before promotion

- ☐ What is open for influence is clearly defined and documented
- ☐ What is already decided is identified
- ☐ Process described honestly: briefing, consultation or co-design
- ☐ Disabled people involved in planning where relevant; paid input sought
- ☐ Access needs of participants considered before format is confirmed
- ☐ Easy Read or plain language materials prepared where relevant
- ☐ Privacy and consent process prepared for sensitive information
- ☐ Escalation and support plan prepared

Before the event

- ☐ Participants told what to expect: purpose, process, how input will be used, when they will hear back
- ☐ Auslan, CART or other communication supports confirmed
- ☐ Moderator briefed on trauma-informed facilitation and escalation process
- ☐ Multiple participation methods available
- ☐ Participant access requests actioned

After the event

- ☐ Participants told what happened with their input
- ☐ Follow-up materials accessible
- ☐ Individual follow-up where access issues occurred
- ☐ Process reviewed against co-design or consultation commitments

PART TEN: LEGAL CONTEXT

This toolkit gives practical guidance. It is not legal advice.

Your obligations

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)** makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of disability when providing goods, services, facilities or access to premises. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. An event does not need to deliberately exclude people to create an unlawful barrier. The Act requires organisations to consider changes that allow people with disability to access and participate. Discrimination is only excused where making the required change would cause unjustifiable hardship. Do not assume this applies simply because something is inconvenient, unfamiliar or has a cost.

The **ACT Discrimination Act 1991** applies alongside Commonwealth law in the ACT and includes the positive duty described in Part One.

The **ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024** establishes disability inclusion principles in ACT law and created the Disability Advisory Council. It is especially relevant for ACT Government-funded or ACT Government-facing work.

These laws set a floor. This toolkit aims to help you build above it.

If a person with disability believes they have been discriminated against, they can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission at humanrights.gov.au. Most complaints are resolved through conciliation. Compliance costs far less than conciliation, and conciliation costs far less than court.

Area	Relevant source
Disability discrimination	Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and ACT Discrimination Act 1991
ACT positive duty	ACT Human Rights Commission: hrc.act.gov.au
Disability inclusion principles	ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024
Digital accessibility	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2
Public transport access	Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

Area	Relevant source
Privacy	Privacy Act 1988; ACT Information Privacy Act 2014
Physical access standards	AS 1428 series

For legal questions, seek legal advice or contact the Australian Human Rights Commission or ACT Human Rights Commission.

CANBERRA RESOURCES

Local access and event planning

- ACT Human Rights Commission positive duty: hrc.act.gov.au/discrimination/act-discrimination-act-positive-duty
- ACT Office for Disability (Companion Card program, disability strategy, strategic advice): act.gov.au/directorates-and-agencies/health-and-community-services-directorate/office-for-disability
- Access Canberra event and filming planning: accesscanberra.act.gov.au/business-and-work/hospitality-liquor-and-gaming/get-help-to-plan-an-event-or-film-in-the-act
- City Services events on public land: cityservices.act.gov.au/public-land/use/event-bookings
- National Capital Authority event guidelines: nca.gov.au/events/event-guidelines
- I-Day ACT (International Day of People with Disability, now community-led): actiday.org.au
- Reconciliation Australia, Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country: reconciliation.org.au
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower (free membership, staff training and lanyards): hdsunflower.com/au
- Disability Gateway, Australian Government (general disability planning and event guidance): disabilitygateway.gov.au

Transport and companion support

- Wheelchair accessible taxis (13WATS): 139 287, bookings@13wats.com.au
- ACT Government WAT information: act.gov.au/community/people-with-disability/using-wheelchair-accessible-taxis
- ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme: revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/taxi-subsidy-scheme
- Transport Canberra accessible travel: transport.act.gov.au/accessibility
- Transport Canberra Flexible Bus Service: transport.act.gov.au/travel-options/bus/accessible-travel/flexible-bus-service

- ACT Companion Card (program affiliation for businesses and ticketed events): act.gov.au/community/people-with-disability/accept-the-companion-card-at-your-business-or-event

Communication access

- Deaf Connect interpreting: deafconnect.org.au/services/interpreting
- Expression Australia interpreting and captioning: expression.com.au/services/interpreting-and-captioning
- AI-Media captions: ai-media.tv
- National Relay Service (Speak and Listen): 1300 555 727, relayservice.gov.au
- Scope Communication Access: scopeaust.org.au/business-solutions/communication-access
- Vision Australia Canberra (audio description, blind and low vision services): 02 6132 5800, visionaustralia.org

Toilets and venue access

- Changing Places Australia: changingplaces.org.au
- National Public Toilet Map: toiletmap.gov.au

GLOSSARY

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication). Ways of communicating that supplement or replace speech. Includes communication devices, symbol boards, typing, apps, gestures and other methods. People who use AAC communicate; they may just do so differently and sometimes more slowly than verbal speakers.

Auslan (Australian Sign Language). The primary language of many Deaf Australians. Auslan is a complete and distinct language with its own grammar. It is not signed English. A person who uses Auslan as their primary language may need an Auslan interpreter to participate in an event with spoken content.

CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation). Live captioning by a trained human captioner who converts spoken words to text in real time, typically displayed on a screen. CART is distinct from auto-captions (generated by software) and from Auslan interpretation. It serves hard of hearing people, people with auditory processing differences, and people for whom English is an additional language.

Changing Places. A facility that goes beyond a standard accessible toilet to include a height-adjustable change table, ceiling hoist, and sufficient space for the person and at least one carer. Required by some people who cannot use standard accessible toilets. Changing Places Australia at changingplaces.org.au maintains a register of certified facilities.

Companion Card. An ACT Government card issued to eligible people with significant permanent disability who need lifelong attendant care support to participate in community activities. It allows the cardholder to bring a companion or support person to affiliated events free of charge. The Companion Card is primarily relevant to businesses and organisations that charge entry fees. Affiliating with the program is free and means cardholders receive a free companion ticket when purchasing their own. For free events, simply state that support people and companions are welcome. See act.gov.au/community/people-with-disability/accept-the-companion-card-at-your-business-or-event

Easy Read. A format that uses short sentences and plain language paired with images to make written information accessible to people with intellectual disability or cognitive disability. Easy Read documents are not the same as plain language documents; they require specialist design and co-design with people who use Easy Read.

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower. A voluntary lanyard or badge worn by people with non-visible disabilities to indicate they may need extra patience, time or support from staff. Staff who recognise

the Sunflower should offer help and follow the person's lead. They do not need to ask about the person's disability. Organisations can join the initiative for free, access staff training, and order lanyards through the Australian website at hdsunflower.com/au. Access Canberra service centres are already participating members.

Positive duty. The ACT Discrimination Act 1991 includes two related positive duties. The first is the duty to make reasonable adjustments, which has applied to all organisations since April 2024: it requires proactive steps to remove barriers for people with disability rather than waiting for a complaint. The second is the broader duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and unlawful vilification: this applies to ACT public authorities from April 2025 and to all other duty holders from April 2027. Together, these duties mean that access should be planned before problems arise, not only addressed after they are raised. See the ACT positive duty section in Part One for a fuller explanation.

WAT (Wheelchair Accessible Taxi). A taxi vehicle adapted to carry passengers who remain in their wheelchair. In the ACT, WATs are booked through 13WATS on 139 287 and must be pre-booked. The path from the kerbside drop-off to the venue entrance matters; drivers are not required to push passengers beyond kerbside.

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). The international standard for digital accessibility, published by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. WCAG 2.2 Level AA is the current benchmark for accessible websites, registration forms, digital documents and online event platforms. Conformance means content can be used by people with a wide range of disabilities including those using screen readers, keyboard-only navigation and other assistive technology.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

Event accessibility and inclusive communication

- Australian Human Rights Commission, Hosting accessible and inclusive in-person meetings and events: humanrights.gov.au
- Australian Human Rights Commission, Hosting accessible and inclusive online meetings and events: humanrights.gov.au
- Australian Human Rights Commission, Creating accessible and inclusive communications: humanrights.gov.au
- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, Making Events Accessible: w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessible-presentations
- Brotherhood of St Laurence and Neighbourhood Houses, Inclusive Events Checklist (co-designed 2024): ndis.bsl.org.au/creating-inclusive-events-guide-to-event-planning

Digital accessibility and accessible marketing

- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, WCAG 2.2: w3.org/TR/WCAG22
- Australian Government Style Manual, Alt text, captions and titles for images: stylemanual.gov.au
- Australian Government Style Manual, Requirements and standards for video and audio: stylemanual.gov.au
- NSW Government, Accessibility and inclusion on social media: nsw.gov.au

Inclusive meetings, Easy Read and supported decision-making

- Inclusion Australia, Inclusive meetings: inclusionaustralia.org.au
- Council for Intellectual Disability, Easy Read and Supported Decision Making resources: cid.org.au

Laws and standards

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992: legislation.gov.au
- ACT Discrimination Act 1991: legislation.act.gov.au

- ACT Human Rights Act 2004: legislation.act.gov.au
- ACT Disability Inclusion Act 2024: legislation.act.gov.au
- Privacy Act 1988: legislation.gov.au
- ACT Information Privacy Act 2014: legislation.act.gov.au
- Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002: legislation.gov.au
- Centre for Excellence in Universal Design: universaldesign.ie

A FINAL NOTE

You will not get everything right the first time. That is not the goal. The goal is to keep improving and to keep asking the people most affected whether you are getting it right.

Every event teaches you something. An accessible toilet that was not actually unlocked. A microphone that cut out. A speaker's brief that did not reach one presenter. A captioning tier that was not quite right for the content. A venue that looked step-free on the website but had a lip at the entrance. These are problems that can be fixed. The ones that cannot be fixed are the ones that were never noticed because nobody asked.

The most useful thing you can do for your next event is ask people who attended this one whether they could participate fully. Ask specifically. "Was there anything that made it difficult to take part?" will tell you more than "how did we do?" Keep a record of what comes back and use it.

Accessibility gets easier the more you practise it. Decisions that feel complicated the first time become routine. Relationships with Auslan providers, captioners and local disability organisations become reliable. The access question in the registration form stops feeling unusual and starts feeling normal. The speaker's brief goes out without having to think about it. The venue check becomes part of every booking conversation. And events become better, for more people, every time.

If someone raises an access barrier you have not thought of, thank them. They have done you a favour. The disability rights principle of "nothing about us without us" is not just a planning principle. It applies to feedback, too. The people best placed to improve your events are the ones who found them hardest to attend.

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