**Website Accessibility Policy for Staff**

**Effective: August 2023**

**Version: 1.1**

Note, this document is available in alternative formats upon request including electronic or audio format.

*Organisation IT*

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## Policy Statement

This policy is designed to ensure that all content published on *Organisation IT* websites is accessible for all users, regardless of physical and cognitive ability. The policy came into effect on 1st August 2023.

Accessible website content is inclusive content that can be read and understood by everyone, regardless of ability. Our goal at *Organisation IT* is to become a leader in the area of accessible content.

Website accessibility involves creating and structuring website content so that it can be navigated, read or experienced by users regardless of disability. Disabilities can be visual, auditory, physical, speech-related, cognitive or neurological. Our content needs to be accessible for those using screen readers and assistive technology as well as different devices whether that is a desk top computer, mobile device or laptop. Our content should also be clear, well written and comprehensible by our clients regardless of educational level, English language skills or cultural background.

## Scope

This policy is to be followed by:

- All staff across *Organisation IT* who create web content for internet and intranet sites

- Consultants and others creating web content for *Organisation IT* websites.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [FACS Digital Accessibility Standard](#).

The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](#) were developed in cooperation with individuals and organisations from around the world. WCAG aims to provide a universal standard for web content accessibility.

The WA Government's Circular on Website Management directed departments and agencies to streamline their websites to focus on customer needs, including meeting mandated accessibility requirements (the WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard) by December 2014. The Department of Premier and Cabinet provides an [overview on accessibility](#).

The federal government mandates all Australian, state and territory government websites to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA [compliance](#).

[Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI](#)). The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) develops standards and support materials to help you understand and implement accessibility.

## Best practice digital writing makes web content more accessible

We are going beyond the technical guidelines to make sure our websites are truly accessible for all *Organisation IT* web users and our staff. When creating content, we keep our user in mind at all times. This includes the words we choose, the format used to present information and also following a consistent style so web users know what to expect from us. Writing in a clear, jargon-free way is always the goal. If we must use a particular formal name or term we seek to explain it. By implementing better standards for what we produce, we will ultimately produce web content that is more accessible for all our users. This includes clients with cognitive, learning and intellectual disabilities and those from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background.

## Standards

### 1. Accepted accessibility standards

The most widely accepted accessibility standards are those produced by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) called the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG). If you've gotten to this point in your accessibility policy development, most likely you've heard of them. **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act references WCAG version 2.0**, many federal accessibility lawsuit settlements reference the more recent WCAG 2.1, and many US states and other countries [reference WCAG and may include additional guidelines](#). Other standards or guidelines that may need to be referenced in addition to an overarching standard such as WCAG, include the **Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG)** which apply to tools used to create content, including software such as Google Docs, MS Word, or comments, forum posts and uploaded content for interactive websites (meaning the tool itself should be accessible to assistive technology users as well as create accessible content), and **User Agent Accessibility Guidelines (UAAG)**, that apply to plug-ins or organisational-specific internal browsers or mobile apps.

### 2. Benefits of improving website accessibility

Accessible content:

- helps us broaden our audience for *Organisation IT* content
- improves the usability of our sites for all people
- ensures we cater to web users who are blind or with low vision
- makes our digital content easier to use for seniors, people with lower literacy or from *Organisation IT* communities
- ensures our information can be viewed easily by smartphone/tablet users
- improves the technical performance of our sites such as faster loading times and smaller bandwidth requirements.
- answers questions immediately more often and so reduce the need for clients to seek information using other means such as phone calls or visiting the *Organisation IT* office

- provides an opportunity for us to review all our content
- makes us compliant with relevant legislation
- reduces our reliance on the PDF document format. This format is not as accessible, mobile friendly or searchable as other types of website content

## 3. Risks of inaccessible web content

Inaccessible content on *Organisation IT* websites:

- Restricts access to information for people who are blind or with low vision, limited English, or an intellectual disability or learning challenge
- Exposes us to risk of adverse findings from an audit by the NSW Auditor-General
- Could result in complaints from peak bodies and the public about inaccessible content
- Is contrary to a staff culture promoting web accessibility
- Lowers staff productivity, as non-accessible documents take longer to read and comprehend.

## 4. Number of people with disability

According to the United Nations, around 15% of the world's population, or an estimated 1 billion people, have a disability. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that (18%) people in Australia have one or more disabilities – that's more than about 4.4 million people. This number is rising due to Australia's ageing population.  (32%) people with disability have severe or profound disability (about 1.4 million).

https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/people-with-disability/prevalence-of-disability

## Definitions and Acronyms

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Disability | Disability was defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities. Examples range from hearing loss which requires the use of a hearing aid, to difficulty dressing due to arthritis, to advanced dementia requiring constant help and supervision.<br><br>The DSA (Disability Services Act 1993) defines disability as a condition that:<br>• is attributed to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical<br>• impairment or a combination of those impairments; and<br>• which is permanent or likely to be permanent; and<br>• which may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature, and<br>• which results in a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication,<br>• social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services |
| Plain English | is a set of writing principles developed to guide professionals who write as part of their everyday work. Plain English is clear, concise and easy-to-read. Plain English practice avoids jargon, is accountable and uses active verbs, for example, 'engaging' not 'engagement' and 'employ' not 'the employment of'. |

| PDF | is short for Portable Document Format. This type of file format is often used to present documents that are long, so they are easy to print out. The PDF is designed to be independent of application software, hardware and or an operating system. |
|---|---|
| Website "accessibility" | involves taking steps to make a website easy for everyone to use no matter what their life circumstance. It involves the words we use and the way we create and structure website content so that it can be navigated, read or experienced by a wide range of users no matter their device of choice or particular challenge. We design our digital channels so those with a visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive or neurological disability or impairment that may affect their access to the web can use them. Web accessibility also helps people from a range of cultural and language backgrounds |
| Web content | is the information you see on a web page or within a web application such as a photographic image, a graphic, piece of written text, a form you need to fill in and even video and audio content. |
| WCAG | Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are comprehensive and internationally recognised. The guidelines were developed in cooperation with individuals and organisations around the world. WCAG aims to provide a universal standard for web content accessibility. |

## Related polices and other relevant documents

Staff Code of Conduct

## Related legislation

Accessibility requirements for websites are mandated under government policy, legislation, and through whole-of-government commitments.

### 5.1.1 Commonwealth legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) requires government agencies to provide information and services in a non-discriminatory accessible manner to ensure that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as others in the community.

In 2008, the federal government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Articles 9 and 21 of the convention recognise that having equal access to information, communications and services, including on the internet, is a human right.

The *Disability Services Act 1993* became legislation in Western Australia almost 30 years ago. The Act provides for and regulates state-led disability services.

[Disability Services Act 1993](Disability Services Act 1993)

https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a224.html

## Review Date

June 2024

## Contact Information

Chief Information Officer

## Revision History

| Version No. | Approved/ Amended/ Rescinded | Date | Approval Authority | Amendments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | Approved | August 2023 | ITC MD | |
| 1.1 | Amended | January 2024 | | Corrected grammar errors |

References

- https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/archive-aho/accessibility/chapters/digital-accessibility-standard
- https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/archive-aho/accessibility/chapters/website-accessibility-policy
- https://advocacywa.org.au/news/disability-legislation-reform/#:~:text=The%20Disability%20Services%20Act%201993,regulates%20state%2Dled%20disability%20services.
- https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/archive-aho/accessibility/chapters/website-accessibility-policy