



Accessible Events Guide

for Community Groups



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Section 1 - Introduction

This practical Guide aims to help you make all events more accessible for people with a disability and frail older people. It gives information and guidance on 'best practice' that will open up a section of your potential market that is often overlooked and will help you to meet existing legal responsibilities.

There are a number of events held in the Frankston area every year and although the majority of events pass without incident, on occasions, problems do occur which can have serious implications for the organiser.

Events come in different sizes and cover a wide range of activities. It may be a small community fete, consultation, forum or a large music festival. Whatever size, they have common issues including planning, safety, insurance, contingency planning, marketing and disability access.

This Guide aims to help you:

- Think about access and participation when you plan an event.
- Identify features that make it impossible or difficult for people with disabilities to access your event.
- Understand what you can do to ensure the best possible access.
- Provide further contacts for advice, information and assistance that you might need.

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Who should use this Guide?

This Guide will be useful to anybody who is involved in organising events whatever the nature, size or location of the event. Even if you have organised many events in the past, unless you are well versed about access issues, there will be valuable information contained within this Guide that will ensure there are no cases of inaccessibility or discrimination against people with a disability.

How to use this Guide

Each section of this Guide provides a summary of accessibility issues or areas for consideration when organising an event. The Guide has been divided into seven 'user friendly' sections that provide advice about some of the access issues that may need to be addressed. Included in this Guide is a selection of self assessment checklists or samples for your convenience.

What is an 'accessible' event?

An 'accessible' event is an event that has removed as many barriers as possible to include as many **community members** as possible. An accessible event improves the experience for all people including people with a disability, families, carers, senior citizens, parents with prams, performers and anyone carrying equipment.

Why should we make our events 'accessible'?

When hosting events within the community it is important to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to participate.

Some reasons why you should think about access and how you plan to meet the requirements of people with disabilities include:

- Our communities want it!
- There are more than 21,000 people with disabilities in the Frankston City Council area representing a considerable proportion of your potential audience or customers
- People with disabilities can also influence the choices of their families and friends, especially if they have had a previous bad experience
- Everyone benefits when access is better, including other attendees, people making deliveries, people with heavy baggage, young children and many older people
- If a formal discrimination complaint is lodged, it is a stressful, lengthy and potentially costly exercise and must be avoided
- People with a disability can be disadvantaged when participating and accessing community events. This may include difficulty in being able to see the information on an invitation and responding, climbing up steps to an event, using the rest room or hearing what is being presented.
- To be inclusive to people with a diverse range of abilities and backgrounds, it is essential to ensure that access is maximised. Having easy access to an event may be the difference between people attending or not attending. Events that accommodate the diversity of our community needs, will be more successful with higher attendance and participation rates.

It is also a legal obligation. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) is a Federal Law to protect the rights of people with a disability. The Act makes it illegal to treat people with a disability inequitably and applies in all settings of community living.

What sort of access problems might there be at events?

Access for people with disabilities is not only about physical access to buildings for wheelchair users but also includes access to written and audio information for people with vision or hearing impairments and considerations for dietary needs, mental illness and more.

Section 2 - General Access Information

Summary

The information that follows is a generic, user-friendly summary of disability access information.

Types of events

These events may include:

- Community consultations
- Forums or public launches
- Expos
- Sports
- Festivals.

How these events are managed will vary such as:

- Large meetings around tables.
- Sit down functions with seating plans.
- Standing events perhaps with finger food.
- Theatre style seating layout.

Transport

Getting people to and from the venue, safely and efficiently, is essential. If you plan to give out information about how to reach the venue and available public transport then you could consider people with a disability and frail older people who want to attend and their transport requirements.

Politically correct language

If you are making the effort to make your event more accessible, it is also politically correct to make sure your signage and language is consistent with that effort.

Correct Terminology

Say:	Avoid saying:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victim, suffers from, deformed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person with cerebral palsy or vision impairment etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Afflicted by/ with, or blind/can't see
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person with a physical disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crippled, the crippled, crippling, invalid, spastic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person who uses a wheelchair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person with a hearing impairment, hearing loss or person who is deaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deaf and dumb, deaf mute, mute
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible parking, accessible toilets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disabled toilets, handicapped parking.

Note: Place the emphasis on the person not the disability. Remember that people with disabilities are as diverse as others. They may have terminology preferences that should be respected.

Communication tips

Do:

- Look at the individual when addressing him or her
- Ask an individual about the best way to communicate if you are unsure
- Speak directly to a person with a disability, even if he or she is accompanied by a person without a disability.
- Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but don't assume he or she will accept it. Wait for acceptance and instruction before proceeding. Respect a person's wishes and remember that not everyone will want or need assistance, and his/her wishes should be respected
- Extend your hand to shake when meeting someone, even someone with a physical disability.

Don't:

- Tell an individual you admire his/her courage or determination
- Stare at or avoid looking at a visible disability
- Express sympathy for the individual
- Feel uncomfortable using the word "see" when addressing a person with a vision impairment, or "hear" when addressing a person with a hearing impairment
- Presume the individual is more fragile or sensitive than others
- Assume someone with a speech or hearing impediment is intellectually impaired.

Accessibility site maps and programs

Another great way of ensuring everyone with a disability enjoys the event is to produce site maps and programs with all the relevant information. These can be produced prior to an event and can be distributed at the event through the Information booth or rest areas.

Below is a sample of a typical site map:

Welcome to our Festival!



Signage

Consider creating signage for:

- Where the free drinking water is located
- Reserved spaces for people using wheelchairs or scooters in an easily manoeuvrable space with space for a carer
- Reserved seats in the front row for people who have a hearing impairment and need to see a sign interpreter or people with limited vision.

Do not forget to use signage that identifies 'politically correct' language:

- 'Accessible Toilet' not 'Disabled Toilet'.
- 'Accessible Parking' not 'Disabled Parking'.
- 'Accessible Entry' not 'Disabled Entry'.

Signage and Maps Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
	Signage:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have signage for all the features of your event?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it clear and located for someone in a seated position?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the letters in non serif font, and written in upper and lower case? (<i>don't make it all capitals</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you added directional markers or arrows?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you made sure that there are no watermarks and they are printed on matt paper?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do they have the appropriate symbols? (<i>See sample of recognised symbols on page 11</i>)
	Site maps – have you indicated:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where the roads are closed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Key access points?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drop off points for people with a disability or frail older adults?
<input type="checkbox"/>	First aid site?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information counter?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessible and public toilets?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessible parking bays and other parking?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stage locations?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Catering sites?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasional seating or shaded areas?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessible routes, ramps or paths?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hazards?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact mobile phone numbers for assistance?

Disability Access Signs and Symbols

Accessible Unisex Toilet
(include if toilet is left or right handed)



Assistive Hearing Device



Disability Access Information



International Wheelchair Symbol



Sign Language Interpreters



Clear Directional Signage



Myth busting

Using accessible car parking

Most of us would be aware that there are designated, accessible parking bays for people who qualify for a 'disabled parking' permit/sticker. There are substantial fines for parking illegally in these spaces – motorists must NEVER park illegally – “even if it’s just for a few minutes and there was nowhere else to park”.

Using accessible toilets

Unlike car parking there is no legal status or criteria for using accessible toilets. Able bodied people are welcome to use these toilets on the condition that there are no people with a disability in attendance at the event or nearby who may be heading for the toilet. Use only if the mainstream toilets are unavailable or baby change facilities are only included in the accessible toilet.

Please note: People with a disability should never have to wait in a queue to use an accessible toilet that is being occupied by an able-bodied person.

Accessible toilets

The Frankston City Council supports accessible events, and strongly recommends that 5 per cent of total toilets required should be accessible to people with disabilities. People using assistance animals will also benefit from being able to use accessible toilets, as will anyone with prams and young children. Here are some quick guidelines:

- Ensure accessible toilets are non-gender specific, unisex and family friendly
- Accessible toilets must be located with the other toilets and have accessible pathways to them
- Toilets must be nearby the activity
- Accessible toilets also need accessible 'D' shaped handles, locks and signage
- Accessible toilets should never be used for storage
- Accessible basins must be provided within the accessible toilets
- Where possible, place an 'L' or 'R' on the sign that indicates where the toilet is located in the room.

Please note: As a tip for checking if a lock or door is easy to use, try clenching a fist and try the handles or locks – if you can't open or lock it, it will be very difficult for some people with a disability.

Toilets Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the signage leading to the toilet easy to see?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there plenty of circulation space outside the toilet?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it a unisex, family friendly toilet with a recessed baby change table?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the door automatic or outward opening?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If it is an inward opening door, is there enough room in the toilet for potentially two carers and the person with a disability?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the door opening at least 850mm wide?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the room free of storage items?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the door be locked easily?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the room well lit?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there an 'L' shaped continuous grab rail beside the pan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the sanitary container within easy reach and on the non transfer side of the pan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the mirror go all the way down to the basin?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there leg room under the basin?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a shelf at wheelchair height?

Reserved seating

Creating reserved seating areas near stages, performance and ceremony sites within good viewing and hearing distance of the action is a great way to ensure accessibility for everyone. People with mobility issues or chronic illnesses will find this particularly helpful. Older people and people with a hearing or vision impairment find reserved seating useful.

Do not forget to ensure that:

- There is an accessible pathway leading to the area
- The area is situated on a flat and even surface and if located on grass, that access matting has been used
- There is adequate space for wheelchairs and carers
- There is signage on the reserved seats
- Coordinators monitor the area to ensure seating is always available
- The reserved seating is within close proximity to the sound desk for users of hearing loops.

Equipment

Access ramps

Access ramps must be provided everywhere that steps are located. Ramps should not be located at the back of venues or stages. Portable access ramps can be used to provide temporary access where steps would otherwise prevent access for wheelchair users or people with limited mobility. Portable access ramps should not be relied upon but are great for emergencies.

Please note:

- Access ramps should have a gradient no less than 1:14.
- Access ramps must be well lit (if event is at night)
- Access ramps must have a slip resistant tread
- Portable access ramps can be hired for events.

Using podiums or stages

Podiums or stages can cause a problem for presenters with a disability if they do not have a permanent accessible ramp or equivalent. Temporary ramps and other access options may not be ideal unless they have been checked by an authorised auditor. If there is no suitable access, consider bringing the stage area to level ground and ensure all presenters or performers are on that level.

Information announcements

The use of clear audio announcements, made regularly from stages, performance and ceremony sites, alerting visitors to the accessible features of the event and giving directions is a great way of ensuring everyone is informed.

Making information accessible

Written Information

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

There are a number of different formats that people may prefer or require. For people who have a vision impairment, these include large print documents, audio tape or an accessible electronic format. If you are running a conference or seminar, you may be planning to give attendees reading material that has not been produced by your own organisation. This could be material produced by sponsors or exhibitors and inserted into delegate packs. You could ask these organisations to ensure they provide you with information in alternative formats.

Also consider using accessible and alternate formats for:

- Name tags
- Presenter's notes
- PowerPoint presentations
- Upload on web
- Table seating plans.

Visual information

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

Audio information

There are a number of ways to provide audio information for people with a hearing impairment. Material may be provided in a written form prior to or at the event. Note takers may provide a running 'commentary' on the event; hearing loops may be available, such as a hearing loop or infra-red system; a steno-captioner (LRC = Live Remote Captioning) may be employed to reproduce speeches in real-time, projected onto a screen; and for those people who use Auslan sign language, an interpreter may be provided.

Contingency Planning and Emergency Procedures

Contingency planning for assisting people with a disability or frail older people may require a suitably experienced person to be on hand in case there is unexpected access or disability related issues. Despite the best planning and taking all necessary precautions, emergencies can occur, so plans and procedures need to be developed. It is important that emergency procedures include how best to assist vulnerable people in the event of an emergency:

- Ensure all exits and assembly points are accessible
- Make sure you have sufficient staff to provide additional assistance and identify people with a disability
- Provide information to all carers, interpreters for the event, with regard to their obligations in case of an emergency.

Section 3 - Planning

Your team

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

Venue staff

You will need to tell venue staff about any adjustments you have made, or changes that you would like them to make to remove access barriers. Changes you might highlight in your briefing could include that you want furniture to be set up in a certain way to accommodate wheelchair access. You will also need to make sure staff are aware of any roles they have been given specifically to assist people with disabilities, such as serving food at the self-service buffet and carrying plates to tables for people with a disability or frail older people.

Selecting a venue

Deciding on the best space for your event is critical to your event's overall success. Assuming you have already identified your event aims and objectives, your task is to find a suitable location that meets all your requirements and is disability friendly. Use the checklists in this guide when evaluating accessibility of your preferred venue.

Marketing and Promotion

The marketing and publicity of your event is crucial to how successful it will be. Thinking clearly about who your intended target audience will be will help you decide the best ways to advertise and get your message across. An invitation flyer should fit on one A4 page and must provide a name and alternate methods of contact of the person who is best equipped to field all media enquiries.

Marketing materials

- In your written material, use a large text size in a clear non serif font such as Arial, no less than 12 pt. and use a good contrast for text and background
- If you promote your event on a web site, check the site is accessible and compatible with the range of specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information
- Ensure that it is written in 'Simple English'
- Ensure the content of all your promotional materials is finalised in an accessible electronic format such as Word, html or rtf before sending it off for desktop publishing. This will ensure that if a person with a vision impairment requires access to the material it is easy to produce it in a requested format.

Invitations

Sending out invitations to potential guests that may include people with a disability needs to follow the guidelines and suggestions as indicated on the checklist.

Tips on designing your invitations with access requirements in mind:

Ensure you ask if extra supports are required that could include:

- Interpreters
- Dietary needs
- Carers
- Transport
- Note taker
- Hearing loop
- Offer more than one RSVP contact method

Admission fees

Consider the cost of an event for people with a disability as they often require a carer which may incur extra costs.

Invitation

Please join us to celebrate....

Do you require any extra supports?

RSVP:

Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Invitations and Promotional Materials Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are universal symbols of access used? (see universal signs and symbols on page 11)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the text in non serif text and size 12 pt.(min) e.g. Tahoma or Arial?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the text justified left and in upper and lower case? (not all capitals)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do your invitations or programs have plain backgrounds?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there at least 80% contrast between background and text?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you mentioned that the venue is 'accessible'?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you asked if guests have any support needs?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided alternate contact details for RSVP? (in case someone who is deaf wishes to respond)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you advertised the costs and various pricing e.g. for seniors, concession holders, etc?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you advertised that Companion Cards can be used?

Speakers and presenters

Catering for the needs of presenters or performers who have a disability is as critical as catering to the needs of the guests.

Speakers and presenters need to be aware of the requirements in advance of people attending an event. Presenters may need to supply copies of PowerPoint presentations in a hard copy for people with sensory impairments and make a commitment to upload their presentation onto the website. Do not upload or email PDFs, as they are not compatible with most screen reading technology.

You may also have to plan for a briefing session to explain how to work with sign or other interpreters who are supporting people with a hearing impairment and have hard copies of materials available and any other arrangements that may need to be put in place.

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

Example: People with a hearing impairment can become tired watching interpreters - provide hard copies to read.

Speakers and Presenters Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you considered the needs of performers who may have a disability when setting up staging, performance spaces and programming?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you communicated with the performers in advance to identify any specific requirements?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you allowed time to rehearse and orientate a presenter who has a vision impairment, across the stage before the event?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you allowed extra turnaround time that may be required when working with performers with a disability?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have a stage manager who is aware of access issues and available at a moment's notice?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If there is a ramp, are there handrails each side of the ramp?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there carers available for people with a disability if required?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there accessible pathways between stage, waiting spaces or toilets?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you asked presenters to provide accessible information for the audience?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you briefed the presenters about explaining any visual material to people who have a vision impairment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you briefed the facilitator about explaining housekeeping or evacuation procedures by describing exits in terms of left, right and north, south, rather than using visual cues?

Section 4 - Selecting a Venue

When planning an event, selecting a venue is likely to be one of the first things you do and one of the most critical. You might already have criteria to use in your search for a venue, such as location, the number of people it can hold, the cost, or whether it has the facilities to suit your event such as a stage area, workshop breakout spaces or outdoor areas. At this stage think about the criteria to help you find a venue that is accessible. If the venue you choose is already accessible then your job is made easier.

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

Selecting an indoor venue

Finding an accessible venue can be very difficult. Many venues available for hire are not accessible or only have a few access features. Improvements can be made through the use of accessible equipment.

Entry to the venue

Please ensure that all entries and exits are accessible to people with a disability, especially with regard to manoeuvrability throughout for people with a mobility impairment.

Lifts

Lifts are invaluable for providing access for people with a mobility impairment. It is advisable to check the lift to ensure that it:

- Works
- Is wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter and a carer
- Has buttons at a level that a seated person can reach and
- Can be operated without a carer for independent users of wheelchairs.

Quiet spaces

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

Indoor venue Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the main door automatic or easy to open?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the reception counter at wheelchair height?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a lift with buttons at an appropriate height for people of short stature?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there generally good manoeuvrability in the venue?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the floor non slip or low pile carpet?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there good air circulation and acoustics?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any 'hearing loops' available?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there an accessible toilet available on the same level as the event?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the lighting equivalent to 'office' brightness? (Not 'mood' lighting)
	For seated functions:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there enough room to manoeuvre between tables when guests are all seated?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the front seats reserved for people with a vision or hearing impairment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there spaces at tables where seats can be removed for wheelchairs?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are chairs available with arm rests for people who are aged or with limited mobility?

Selecting an outdoor venue

Types of outdoor events include: festivals, concerts, art shows, sporting activities, picnics or any other types of celebration. Outdoor venues vary in relation to access provisions, traffic management and transport issues.

Matting

Accessible matting is temporary plastic flooring that when placed together can be used to create pathways or assembly areas on unstable surfaces. It provides safe access for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, pushers, prams and for people with limited mobility.

Accessible matting is especially useful to create pathways over grassed or muddy areas and can be used on any flat surface. Access matting has a slip resistant tread and can be purchased or hired through various hire companies. It is a good idea to ensure you have adequate staff to install and remove matting.

Shelter and outdoor events

Seating and water in sheltered and shaded areas should be available if the event is for an extended period of time.

Water necessities

All events must have a sufficient supply of freely available drinking water and clear directional signage to water. Ensure there is additional water available for extreme weather and that all drinking fountains and facilities are at a height appropriate for people using wheelchairs.

Please note: a washbasin does not constitute a drinking fountain!

Outdoor Venue

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it within close proximity of public transport?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a drop off area for people with a disability and frail older people close to the entry?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there clearly marked accessible parking bays available?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the approach to the venue have a firm level surface? (no loose gravel)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have any obstructions near the entry been removed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the signage outside and inside the venue large, clear and easy to read?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a site map for disability access directions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you organised an accessible portable toilet?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there chairs in the shade?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there free drinking water available and well signed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If there are stalls, are they at a wheelchair friendly height?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a ramp is required, does it have handrails?

Section 5 - Catering

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

Equipment

- Always provide cutlery for people who can't hold food in their hands
- Mugs are preferable to cups and saucers as they are easier to manage and hold
- Paper napkins - always provide napkins
- Always provide bendable straws for people who cannot hold a mug.

Food Vendors

The provision of high quality, affordable foods at public events contributes to the comfort of guests and is often a necessity. Therefore, it is imperative to choose sub contractors for events that are aware of their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act to provide accessible food stalls. Please ensure that they also identify the content of the food for people who may have allergies.

Example: A conference centre has a policy of only providing a self-service buffet at lunchtime for delegates. Some people with mobility impairments or vision impairments may find it difficult or impossible to carry or hold food from a buffet bar and eat without placing their plate on a table.

Serving food

Consider the potential access issues that may arise for someone who has a vision or mobility impairment when providing:

- Plated food – provide someone to help cut up the food
- Finger food – make cutlery, bendable straws and napkins available
- Self serve – assistance may be needed to choose food and carry plates to a table
- Provide some seating – even at standing events!
- Table arrangements – plan for manoeuvrability space between seats – when people are seated on them
- Chairs – provide some with armrests
- Spaces for wheelchairs – remove a few chairs to make space.

Refreshments

The amount of water required will vary but will be determined by:

- Season
- Time of day
- Number of guests expected
- Size of the event venue
- Anticipated time each guest will spend at the event
- Number of staff, performers and volunteers
- Level of activity, i.e. physical event or sedentary event.

Selection of food

The provision of a variety of high quality foods is essential for a successful event. Have you considered the following when selecting food stalls for your event and included it on marketing materials or registration forms?

Consider providing:

- Catering for special diets.
- Coeliac.
- Dairy free.
- Diabetes.
- Gluten free.
- Good environmental practices i.e. organic, fair trade, local produce.
- Halal or kosher.
- Healthy options.
- Low calorie.
- Multicultural food options.
- Options to consider include:
 - Soft food.
 - Stalls with accessible serveries.
 - Vegan.
 - Vegetarian.
 - Wheat free.

Catering Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	If catering is self-service, are there staff to assist people with disabilities with food choice and carrying food to an eating area?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there seats and tables available?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If outdoors, are the seats in the shade?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the menus accessible and in large clear text?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are staff prepared to talk through the menu if someone cannot read or see?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided napkins, cutlery and crockery, even for finger food?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided some mugs instead of cups and saucers?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided plenty of free drinking water?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided bendable straws for people who cannot hold their cups?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there enough manoeuvrability space between tables?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you considered having a number of food and beverage stations spread around the venue?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you made provision for dietary needs for people from different cultural backgrounds?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you considered providing for people with different dietary needs?

Section 6 - Using Technology

Public Address Systems

Public Address (PA) systems play an important role at many events, helping to ensure that people can hear what is being said in large venues. Always check the quality and the volume of the PA system for clarity and comfort. Also, ensure the PA system is supplemented by a hearing loop system to assist people with hearing impairments.

Sound systems

Other considerations relate to the alternate types of microphones:

- Roving microphones for audience to participate and still be heard
- Lapel microphones – are ideal for presenters who may be seated and not using the lectern microphone or those who like to walk away from the lectern
- Lecterns – be aware that people using wheelchairs cannot use a high lectern so make other provisions
- Screens – ensure that reserved seating is available up the front for people who have sensory impairments.

Please note: People who use hearing aids do not necessarily need the volume up excessively.

Flash lighting, strobes and other special effects

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

Remember to give enough notice for people to leave the area if they wish to and to let them know when the special effect stops so that they can return to the audience.

Lighting

Lighting must be appropriate for whoever is sitting in an audience. Particular attention must be paid to people with disabilities to ensure that they can all follow what is happening. At conferences and seminars, lights are sometimes dimmed when speakers are using visual aids such as slides or videos. It may be necessary to dim the lights in these circumstances because any glare on the screen prevents many people in the audience from being able to see the text or images on the screen. If dimming lights is absolutely necessary to allow delegates to see the projected images, then you will have to ensure that speakers and any sign language interpreters are suitably spotlighted. It is also a good idea to give a copy of the projected images to people with a vision impairment before they come to the event in their chosen format such as large print.

Technology Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
	Website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the website compliant with access provisions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all event marketing and other information uploaded on the website?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all presentations available on the website in word format (no PDF)?
	Microphones
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there provisions for alternate types of microphones? Roving microphones Lapel microphones Fixed microphones
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there alternate options for a lectern that a seated person can use?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a hearing loop installed and in good working order?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If there is not a hearing loop installed, have you organised a portable hearing loop?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a support person to set up a presentation on a laptop and available to change slides for a presenter with a disability?
	Lighting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there enough lighting to see the Auslan interpreter?

Section 7 - Other Supports

Interpreters

Obviously when we think about interpreters, we generally think about other languages. People who are deaf also need interpreters as they too use English as their second language. It would be advisable to book both types of interpreters earlier rather than later. Interpreters for the deaf need to be booked well in advance as there are more events than interpreters available.

Be warned that if the event is longer than an hour you will need to budget for two interpreters as they need a rest every 20 minutes or so.

Also, they need to be catered for with food and beverages and allow time for any briefing and set up beforehand. They will need two spare seats in the front row of any event.

Example: a person with a hearing impairment is watching an interpreter intently and someone walks between the interpreter and themselves - it is not only bad etiquette but it interrupts the conversation as if the sound and light has been switched off.

Assistance animals

We are familiar with seeing guide dogs helping people who have a vision impairment and need to cater for their needs. Ensure there is an area for them nearby to stretch their legs in the breaks and relieve themselves. It may interest you to know that there are other assistance animals as well as guide dogs – ‘hearing dogs’ who alert their companions about any sounds that may be relevant e.g. door bells or alarms etc. All these valuable animals are able to go anywhere their owners want to and it would be discriminatory to prevent their entry to venues. It may also interest you to know that there are increasing numbers of ‘guide ponies’ being trained to assist people with a vision impairment – yes, true!

Hearing Protocols Checklist

Yes	Checklist item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use a sound system for all events where possible
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have a sign indicating 'best listening seats' and announce before the meeting that they are available
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a sound system is being used, all forms of oral/aural input need to be connected, i.e. all speakers, and any audio/visual presentations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure good lighting above and in front of the speaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brief speaker or presenters to not walk between the sign interpreters and the person with a hearing impairment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Position tables so all listeners have a direct line of vision to all speakers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give time and opportunity so people can relocate to a better hearing position before the start or during breaks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use visual backup, e.g. printed notes, agenda, PowerPoint presentation when appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that when visual information is being used, verbal explanations are also provided
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that all speakers, including those asking questions, speak from the front or use a microphone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repeat questions if necessary
<input type="checkbox"/>	If 'break out' groups are to be used, they are separated by distance or a sound barrier such as partition or in a separate room.

Useful Local Contacts

Hearing Support

Role:	Contact details:
Free captioning downloads available.	Website: www.mediaaccess.org.au PH: 02 9212 6242
Auslan Interpreters	Website: www.vicdeaf.com.au Email: info@vicdeaf.com.au PH: 03 9473 1199 Fax: 03 9473 1122 TTY: 03 9473 1199
Hearing Loops	Website: www.wom.com.au PH: 03 9761 2211 Fax: 03 9761 1834 TTY: 03 9761 2184
National Relay Service (NRS)	Website: www.relayservice.com.au Email: lance.hately@relayservice.com.au PH: 03 9473 1160 M: 0402 016 185 TTY: 03 9473 1149

Vision

Vision Australia	Website: www.visionaustralia.org.au Email: info@visionaustralia.org PH: 1300 847 466 Fax: 02 9747 5993 TTY: 02 9334 3260
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Arts

Arts Victoria	Website: www.arts.vic.gov.au/index Email: artsvic@dpc.vic.gov.au PH: 1800 134 894 Fax: 03 9686 6186 TTY: 03 9682 4864
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Tourism

Tourism Victoria	Website: www.tourismvictoria.com.au Email: feedback@tourism.vic.gov.au PH: 03 9653 9777 Fax: 03 9653 9722
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