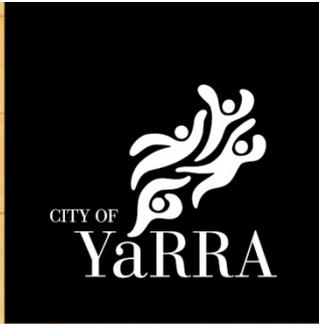
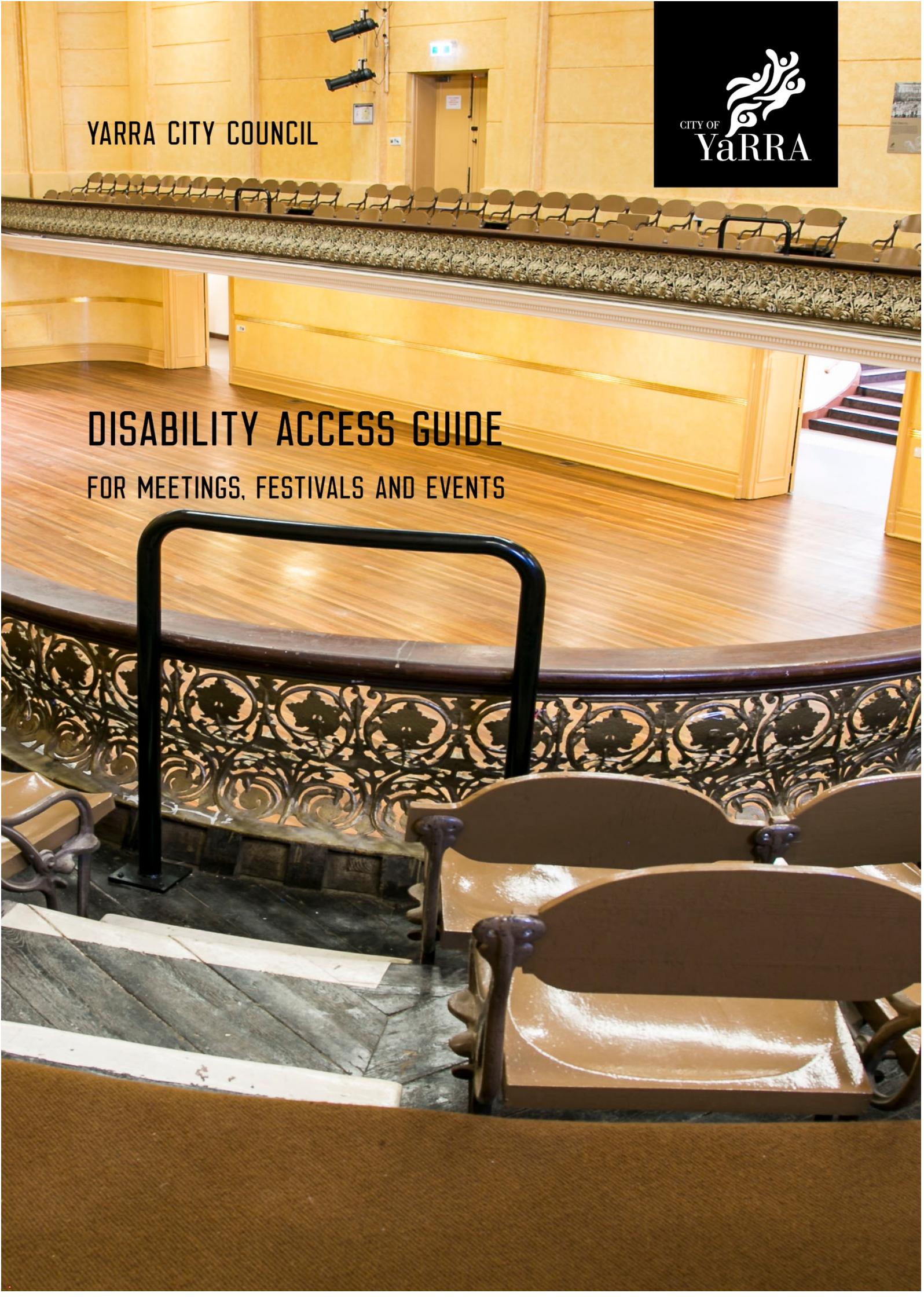


YARRA CITY COUNCIL



DISABILITY ACCESS GUIDE
FOR MEETINGS, FESTIVALS AND EVENTS



Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Contents

Why is accessibility important?	3
Step 1: Create an accessibility strategy	4
Step 2: Choose your venue	5
Step 3: Consider transport accessibility.....	6
Step 4: Select accessible equipment	7
Step 5: Add accessible features	9
Step 6: Use accessible technology	11
Step 7: Accessible catering.....	13
Step 8: Address staffing needs	14
Step 9: Write accessible event material.....	16
Step 10: Apply for funding and support	17

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Why is accessibility important?

When organising an event, it's important to ensure your event caters for people of all ages and abilities.

This involves creating a welcoming, inclusive environment and providing accessibility for people with a disability. With good accessibility, your event can run safely, smoothly and attract a wide range of people.

An inclusive event goes beyond making your venue physically accessible. Your event needs to actively encourage people with a disability to not just spectate, but be actively involved in the event, either as staff or participants.

If you are organising an event, you also have a legal obligation to remove any barriers to participation. This is explained in Step 1.

How to use this guide

If you are planning an event, this guide will help you ensure your event is accessible.

This is a step-by-step guide with checklists, so you can keep track of whether your event meets accessibility requirements.

Remember, you may need to consider other factors not included in this guide, and not all points in this guide may apply to your event. The degree of accessibility required for each event will depend on the size and location of your event.

Events can include the following:

- Festivals
- Conferences
- Public meetings
- Fundraisers
- Award ceremonies
- Concerts
- Exhibitions
- Community fairs

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 1: Create an accessibility strategy

Consider how you intend for your event to be accessible at the beginning planning stages. This is because accessibility is likely to intersect with a number of other decisions you will make, such as what venue you will choose or what equipment you will need.

It may seem overwhelming knowing where to begin. A helpful starting point is to determine what participants may or will need assistance. This includes staff, performers, volunteers and patrons.

- I have determined what participants will need assistance

It may then be useful to create an accessibility strategy. This could be in the way of referring back to this guide to make sure you are aware of potential obligations, or you may want to ask for external advice. You could also designate certain people to organise accessibility needs and invite people with a disability to help plan the event.

- I have decided on an accessibility strategy for my event
- I have considered whether I need external advice, such as from disability organisations

Meeting legal obligations

When creating an accessibility strategy, you should be aware of and consider any regulations, by-laws or codes of practice that may apply to your event.

Event organisers are legally obligated under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* to remove any barriers to participation. You need to know and meet your legal duties.

- I am aware of my legal obligations when running an event

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 2: Choose your venue

There are many factors to consider when selecting a venue for your event, including size, location and accessibility. We suggest you first visit the venue in person to ensure it meets accessibility standards. You may want to use the following checklist when inspecting the venue:

Venue checklist

- Level access to entrance
 - Level access to facilities
 - Clear signage
 - Unisex accessible toilets at venue or nearby (ensure this facility is accessible and not being used as a storeroom!)
 - Accommodation to be used by participants is accessible
 - Obstruction-free paths to all features of event
 - Even surfaces with non-slip floor covering
 - Automatic or non-heavy doors
 - Gradients accessible for people with limited mobility
 - Female and male working toilets in the same location
 - Ramps with handrails
 - Good air circulation
 - Facilities for assistance animals
 - Evacuation procedures in place, including for people with a disability
-
- I have visited the venue I want to use and have spoken to them about accessibility requirements.
 - The venue meets the above accessibility checklist

Additionally, where people may be using or need a wheelchair, check:

- Elevator is wide enough for wheelchair access
- Height accessible elevator buttons
- Height accessible counters
- Doorways are wide enough for wheelchair access
- Height accessible door handles

If your event doesn't meet certain venue requirements for accessibility, you may want to consider if you can hire equipment (see Step 4: Selecting Accessible Equipment).



Step 3: Consider transport accessibility

Before finalising your venue, you should make sure there are transport options for people to get to your event safely and efficiently. Without accessible transport, there may be low attendance.

Public transport

Establish whether there are nearby public transport options. Help your patrons by providing public transport information in your promotional material.

- There is accessible public transport close to the event

You may also want to provide a community bus to pick people up and drop them home. This is also a good way to encourage participation of people with mobility issues.

Drop-off points and parking

It's important to ensure that there is room for cars, taxis and buses to drop off passengers. Ensure these drop off points are close to the entrance of the event.

Additionally, parking should have a number of disability accessible parking bays. There are technical standards that apply to disability accessible parking bays which you can find online.

- The car parking at the venue is signed and accessible parking bays are clearly identified
- The path from the accessible car parking space to the entrance of the venue is clear and free from any barriers
- There are drop off points for cars, taxis and community buses

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 4: Select accessible equipment

You should consider what additional equipment may be needed for your event to cater to the needs of all participants.

Accessible toilets

You may need to hire disability accessible toilets. Whilst a toilet may be advertised as accessible, it is important to check with the supplier whether it meets the following criteria:

- Fits wheelchair access and up to 2 carers
- Fits assistance animals
- Be located on ground level with no steps leading up to it
- Be positioned along a clear pathway
- Has a doorhandle (not knob) with a lock
- Provides lighting inside and outside
- Includes handrails
- Be cleaned regularly and maintained in a sanitary condition
- Has taps, door handles and buttons at an appropriate height for people who are using a wheelchair

You should also consider whether your event may need a Marveloo instead of, or in addition to, accessible toilets. A Marveloo is a fully equipped accessible mobile restroom for people with complex requirements and their carers. A Marveloo is available for hire from Maroondah City Council.

Access Ramps

Access ramps should be provided everywhere that steps are located at front entrances. If your venue already has access ramps, you don't need to supply them. However, if it doesn't then you may need to provide portable access ramps to ensure temporary access for wheelchair users or people with limited mobility. Check with the supplier to ensure the ramp:

- Is not too steep
- Is well lit where the event is occurring at night
- Has a slip resistant tread

Access matting

Temporary plastic flooring (commonly called Pro Floor) may be needed to create pathways or assembly areas on unstable surfaces. It provides slip resistant safe access for people with limited mobility. Access matting can be purchased or hired from various companies.

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Wheelchairs

It is useful to have wheelchairs for people with temporary illnesses, mobility issues or for patrons who have become unwell at the event. They can be hired from pharmacies and some councils.

Mobility buggy

Where your event is on a large site, it may be useful to have a mobility buggy for people unable to walk long distances. Drivers should be briefed about their expectations in regards to accessibility.

- I have determined if I need to hire any equipment for my event to be accessible to all patrons

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 5: Add accessible features

You should consider if there are other features you can add to your event to provide an inclusive experience for all participants.

Remember to provide clear signage.

Below are some ideas for features you can add to your event.

Physical features

“Rest and Recharge” area

Provide a staffed “Rest and Recharge” area located away from noise (and close to an accessible toilet) so patrons can take a break and have privacy for any physical needs. This area should have free water and a power outlet sufficient to recharge electric wheelchairs.

First Aid

A first aid room or tent meets the obligation to provide a safe environment for patrons and staff. It should provide chairs, tables, be clearly signed and have running water and electricity. It needs to have a ramp or be on the ground with no steps.

Information desk/area

An information area means all patrons can easily access material about the event and be directed to certain areas that can assist people.

Shaded areas or shelter

If your event is outside, it is important to have an area out of the sun where people can be in the shade. This also avoids the risk of heatstroke amongst patrons.

Reserved areas or seating

You may need designated areas reserved for people using wheelchairs close to stages or main event areas. Ensure there are good paths of travel to those areas

- The event is set out in a way that ensures the safety and wellbeing of all patrons is prioritised

Operational features

Event timetabling

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Consider how the event timetable can be accessible, such as providing time to move between sessions or providing break times for interpreters.

Emergency procedures

Emergency procedures need to be developed in the event of an emergency. Procedures should take into account people with a disability. For example, you should ensure:

- all exit and assembly points are accessible
 - explain the emergency procedures to all staff, including additional support such as carers and AUSLAN interpreters
 - provide visual cues at activities and stages to alert people who are hard of hearing of an emergency situation
- The event is run in a way that considers the accessibility needs of all patrons

Step 6: Use accessible technology

Consider how people with a disability may be impacted by the technology used at your event.

Special effects

Some people with a disability respond negatively to special effects. If your event involves flash lighting and strobes, this should be communicated to people attending beforehand through advertisements or invitations.

- The event material communicates if special effects will be used

Dimmed lights

Dimmed lighting may affect some people with a disability. Where someone has vision impairment, they may also not be able to see sufficiently. It may also prevent a person who is hard of hearing be able to lip-read.

If your event may need to use dim lights, for example for the purpose of projecting images, there are some measures you can take to assist people with a disability. Ensure speakers or sign language interpreters are well-lit. Where someone may be vision impaired, it is a good idea to give them a copy of the presentation before the event. Check to see what their chosen print form is, like large print or Braille. You can also have these printed copies of presentations available at your event on the day.

- There is good lighting and acoustics in the venue
- There is dimmed lighting, and it is possible, to spotlight speakers and AUSLAN interpreters
- I have ensured that where there is dimmed lighting, a copy of the presentation is made available in print

Public Address (PA) system

PA systems are an important way to ensure people can hear what is being said at larger venues. Where attendees may be hard of hearing, you should also consider a hearing augmentation system.

- I have determined if my event needs a PA system and checked whether I need to supply it myself, or if the venue provides one

Hearing Loop system

People hard of hearing may require a hearing loop. A hearing loop system assists people using hearing aids more clearly by cutting out background noise. Ensure hearing loops are promoted before the event and there is directional signage to the hearing loops at the event.

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



- I have considered whether further systems are needed to assist people with a hearing impairment, such as a hearing loop

Communication board

A communication board is a tool used to visually communicate to people with language or learning difficulties who may otherwise have trouble understanding what is being said. It involves a series of pictures, symbols words and letters that people can point to in order to express themselves.

- I have considered whether my event needs a communication board

Speech-to-text display

You may find speech-to-text technology is appropriate to use at your event. This software converts speech into text shown on screen in real time. This is useful for members of the deaf community or those hard of hearing. This technology is commonly used at conferences and large gatherings.

- I have considered whether my event needs speech-to-text technology



Step 7: Accessible catering

Your event may provide food and drinks to patrons. It's important to plan how you can do so in an accessible manner.

Food

When serving food, ensure all patrons have access to the food available. If you are providing catering, remember to:

- have staff that can assist where it is self-service
- provide sufficient tables and seating
- aim for short queues to avoid patrons waiting for long periods of time
- print menus that are easy to read
- think about your choice of cutlery and crockery. For example, you may need to provide drinking straws where some people with a disability may not be able to hold a cup
- consider dietary needs, such as gluten-free options, and ensure food is clearly marked as such

If you have external catering, remember to brief them beforehand about the above points and other considerations you think need to be addressed.

Drinks

Water needs to be freely available. A washbasin is not considered a drinking fountain or tap for this purpose. Make sure all drinking fountains are at a height appropriate for people using a wheelchair.

- I have made sure any food provided meets the above points, and water is freely available

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 8: Address staffing needs

Do any of your staff members have a disability?

It is important to talk to your staff and volunteers in advance to identify any specific requirements and concerns. This includes any performers who may have a disability. You may need to take certain measures to cater to staff members with a disability, such as altering the program, adding a ramp and handrails to stage areas and making staff-only areas accessible.

- I have made sure staff and volunteer accessibility needs are met

Do you need a staff briefing?

To execute an accessible and successful event, staff need to be disability aware. For example, venue operators may need to understand their responsibility to allow assistance dogs into the venue.

We suggest that all staff receive training to ensure they are aware of what is involved in running an accessible event. Training should recognise the importance of:

- Creating a welcoming environment that ensures people with a disability feel comfortable to participate
- Redressing misconceptions or prejudices about people with a disability
- Recognising different types of disabilities and the assistance required for each
- Determining staff expectations of their role in relation to accessibility
- Explain emergency procedures

You may also want to include disability awareness and experience as part of the criteria when advertising staff positions.

- I have ensured that all staff have been made disability aware

Do you need additional staff for accessibility purposes?

You should consider recruiting additional staff for your event depending on the needs of participants. This may include:

Carers

A carer may be located at a number of locations to assist people with a disability. This can include the "Rest and Recharge" area, food areas during meal times and at other spots depending on your event to ensure people with a disability can participate in all activities. For a larger event, you may want to have a roving carer available for people who may need assistance.

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



AUSLAN interpreter

You may need to book an AUSLAN Interpreter. Check with the agency you are booking from about the requirements when booking an AUSLAN interpreter. For example, if your event is over one hour, more than one interpreter is required. And if an interpreter is working the whole day, they will require lunch and rest breaks. You should take this into consideration when organising the program for the event.

- I have determined whether I need extra staff for accessibility

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 9: Write accessible event material

It is estimated that 13% of people have difficulty reading and/or understanding printed material because of a disability. This may be because the person:

- is colour blind, blind or vision impaired
- has a learning disability
- cannot read small text, such as the aging community
- is deaf or hard of hearing

Therefore, it is important to be aware of the following:

Use accessible formatting

Make sure your promotional material is accessible. For example, if you promote material on a website make sure it can be reached by people utilising assistance technologies, such as screen readers and wireless pointing devices. You may also want to use a podcast.

The format and design of your material should also be considered within an accessibility framework.

Use appropriate language

Take care with the language you use when referring to people with a disability. Use language that puts the person before the disability. For example, the term “person with epilepsy” instead of “epileptic” as it is not appropriate to identify persons by characteristics of their condition.

Do not use offensive terms such as “cripple” or “dwarf”, and do not make value judgements like “suffers from” or “victim”. The adjectives “special” and “disabled” are also considered inappropriate in Australia.

Promotional material

Your material should also send the message that people of all abilities are welcome to your event and will be provided with appropriate support. Include what accessible features are available and contact details of an event organiser for individuals with particular requirements.

You may want to distribute specific accessibility maps and programs with the information discussed above prior to and at the event.

You should provide information about concession discounts including companion cards for ticketed events.

Disability access guide

for meetings, festivals and events



Step 10: Apply for funding and support

You should now have a strong grasp as to how your event will be accessible to all patrons. You will need to factor in the cost of this when running your event.

There are a number of funding options available to community organisations from local, state and federal governments, as well as philanthropic trusts. Each source has their own guidelines and details for granting funding.

The following bodies may be able to assist in a grant application:

- Australia Council for the Arts
- Arts Victoria
- Arts Access Victoria
- Tourism Victoria

Yarra City Council also has a range of services and information for people with a disability, and groups organising events and activities. For further information please visit www.yarracity.vic.gov.au or call 9205 5555.

- I have developed a budget to address access requirements

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended as a guide only. It should not substitute professional advice. Yarra City Council accepts no responsibility for any error or omission contained within this publication.