Creating accessible documents
A quick reference guide

Introduction

Developing documents that can be read and understood by all electors is not only good practice but also has application within the context of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. This Act states that people with disabilities have the same right to access information and services in the community as everyone else in the community.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide tips on producing accessible candidate electoral materials. This document is by no means exhaustive, please contact external providers if you require more assistance to produce accessible documents.

Types of documents

- Producing documents in a variety of formats is more accessible to electors, because not all electors will have access to Adobe Acrobat and Microsoft programs. Consider producing documents in Word, PDF and print versions as well.
- Other formats to consider are easy read, plain language, translations in languages other than English and Braille.

Use of colour

- Use high contrast for text and backgrounds. High contrast is easier to read for people who are blind and low vision. Printed and online material is most readable in black and white.
- Don't rely solely on colour to emphasise meaning in your document.

Fonts

- Applying styles to your document such as title, headings, subheadings and lists provides structure and helps people who are using technology such as screen readers to navigate your document.
- Ensure your text size is large, preferably between 12 point and 18 point.
- Large print material is more accessible for people who are blind or low vision. Text is 16 point or larger.
- Use fonts that are clear and easy to read.
- Avoid serif fonts. These fonts are harder to read because the shape of the letters is not as clear.
- Excessive use of CAPITALS bold or italic can make text more difficult to read.
- Don't underline words as it can be mistaken for a hyperlink.
- Ensure your document uses a minimum of 1.5 line spacing.
- Align your text to the left of the page.
- Avoid justifying your text. Justified text has big gaps between words and is harder to read.

Images

- Pictures that accompany sentences can assist the elector's understanding. However, be careful of choosing pictures that confuse the reader. Make sure the picture is clearly related to the text.
- For online documents, always add alternative (alt) text to images so that screen readers can read out a description of the image.
- Graphs and tables can be very difficult to understand but they can sometimes explain things better than in writing. Make graphs and tables simple and explain them well.

Printing

- Avoid background designs and watermarks that distract from your text.
- Use matte or non-glossy finishes on your print outs to reduce glare on your documents.

Language

- Use clear and inclusive language.
- Write in plain English.
- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms and jargon, special characters such as \ & < or #.

Testing for accessibility

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is the international standard for web content accessibility.
- Adobe Acrobat Pro has an Accessibility tool.
- Microsoft Word has an Accessibility Checker.
  - You can download from https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-content-accessible-to-everyone-with-the-accessibility-checker-38059c2d-45ef-4830-9797-618f0e96f3ab
- If you convert your document from Word to PDF or vice versa, ensure to check both documents for accessibility.
- Consider consulting with people within the community to test your documents. This ensures your documents are accessible and easy to understand.

Translations

- If you are considering translating your documents, it is best practice to use translators certified by the National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).
- Avoid using Google Translate and other automated translation tools. These tools can be inaccurate.

Tools

- Vision Australia free Colour Contrast Analyser. It is a tool for checking foreground and background colour combinations to determine if they provide good colour visibility. It also contains functionality to create simulations of certain visual conditions such as colour blindness.
  - You can download from https://www.visionaustralia.org/business-consulting/digital-access/resources/colour-contrast-analyser
- Freeware program PDF Accessibility Checker.
- Vision Australia free Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT). The DAT is a dedicated accessibility ribbon menu for Microsoft Word that makes it quicker and easier to create accessible documents. It features a range of hand-picked and custom-built functions to optimise and validate a document for accessibility.
  - You can download from https://www.visionaustralia.org/business-consulting/digital-access/resources/document-accessibility-toolbar

External providers

NSW Electoral Commission does not support or endorse any one organisation over another. The following organisations may be able to assist you to produce accessible documents or provide advice about where to find help.

- Vision Australia, Digital Access team.
- Multicultural NSW, Language Services.