



The essential guide to digital accessibility in Australia

Learn the fundamentals of making your digital products and services accessible to everyone.

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Digital accessibility means making sure everyone can use your digital products and services, regardless of ability. This includes your websites, apps, electronic documents, and other digital experiences.

It's about designing and building in ways that work for everyone, including people with disabilities—whether those are visual, auditory, motor, verbal, or cognitive. It's also about supporting those who rely on assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice input, or alternative keyboards.

If you have users in Australia right now, digital accessibility is essential.

This guide is for anyone in your organisation responsible for digital products and documents, compliance, or customer experience—whether you're a developer building the next release, a compliance officer navigating Australia's regulatory conformance, or a business leader making decisions about where accessibility fits in your strategy.

You'll learn what digital accessibility means in practice, how people with disabilities interact with your products, how to evaluate where you stand, and how to build accessibility into the way your organisation works.

What is digital accessibility?

“Digital accessibility” means building digital content and applications that can be used by people with disabilities. This can apply to websites, mobile apps, desktop apps, video games, electronic documents, authoring platforms, and more.



“In Australia, an estimated 5.5 million people are living with a disability. This represents 1 in 5 of Australians.”

Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)



How do people with disabilities use the internet?

Many people with disabilities use some form of assistive technology to navigate computers, mobile devices, and other digital content and experiences. Examples include:

Screen reader software

Screen reader software reads out content to people who are blind and allows them to navigate via keyboard shortcuts.

Screen magnification software

Screen magnification software or other hardware tools magnify screens to extreme levels, helping people with low vision see what's on their screen more clearly.

Text-to-Speech (TTS) and reading tools

Text-to-Speech (TTS) and reading tools read text aloud within browsers or applications, often highlighting words as they're read. These tools help people with cognitive differences access content.

Keyboard-only navigation

Keyboard-only navigation enables individuals with visual or motor impairments to navigate entirely by keyboard or devices that emulate keyboard-style input.

Dictation software

Dictation software enables people to navigate by voice, which is helpful for those who have trouble with computer input devices but can speak.

Pointer alternatives and adaptive mice

Pointer alternatives and adaptive mice enhance standard pointing devices. Tools such as head-controlled pointers, eye-gaze systems, and sip-and-puff devices help people with fine motor disabilities who cannot use their voice to navigate.

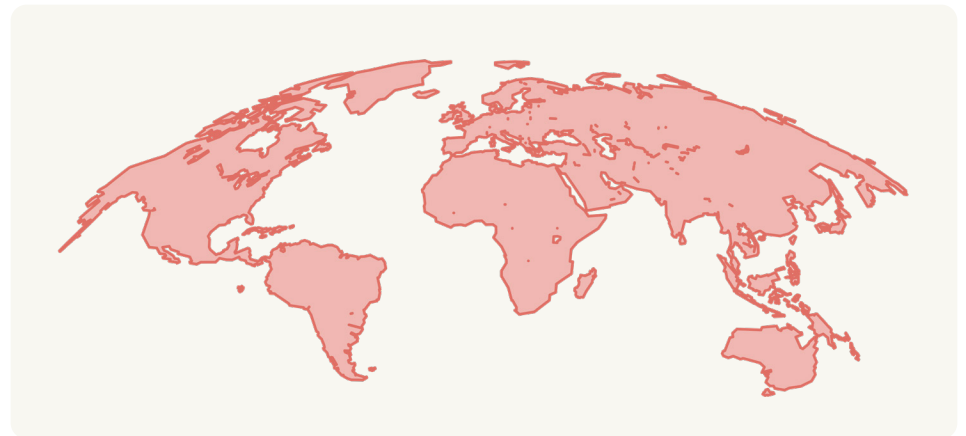


How does accessibility help your organisation?

Digital accessibility means reaching more people. By making your digital content accessible, you open up your organisation to a larger available market share. In addition to expanding your reach, accessible organisations offer improved user experiences, experience lower legal risk, and have more trusted brands.

An estimated 1.3 billion people experience significant disability worldwide. People with disabilities and their friends and family network have \$18 trillion in buying power.

Source: [World Health Organisation](#) and [The Global Economics of Disability Report: 2024 \(Return on Disability Group\)](#)





How does accessibility help my organisation?

Accessibility improves user experience

In addition to accessibility features helping people with disabilities — they also improve the experience for all users. Video captions help users watch in noisy environments. Voice search helps users who are multitasking. Logical page structure and clear language help users who are in a hurry, under stress, or accessing your product for the first time. When you design for people with disabilities, you build a better experience for everyone who uses your product.

Accessibility reduces legal and procurement risk

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, inaccessible digital services expose you to formal complaints, Federal Court proceedings, and reputational damage. Getting ahead of this reduces legal risk and strengthens your position in procurement conversations where accessibility is increasingly a requirement. Australian government contracts and enterprise buyers are asking for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) conformance as a condition of doing business.

Accessibility builds brand trust

Accessibility is part of building a brand and workplace that people trust. In a world where customers, employees, and partners make increasingly value-driven decisions, organisations that demonstrate genuine inclusion stand apart. Accessibility signals that your organisation sees all of its users — and builds for all of them.



How do I know if my site or app is accessible?

The only way to know if your site is accessible is to test it. An accessibility audit is generally performed through a combination of automated, guided, and manual accessibility testing.

Automated testing: Software tools automatically evaluate your code for accessibility issues.

Pros: Quality tools can accurately detect hundreds of basic accessibility issues in seconds. Using these tools generally doesn't require special accessibility expertise.

Cons: These tools cannot detect all accessibility issues. Some issues are simply more complex or require special expertise to identify.

Guided testing: An AI-powered tool uses a question-and-answer approach to guide you through the testing process.

Pros: Intelligent Guided Tests are more comprehensive, while still allowing humans to make final decisions.

Cons: They're not as fast as automated testing and still require manual interpretation.

Manual testing: An accessibility specialist reviews code to identify issues that could create barriers to assistive technology use. In addition, they attempt to navigate and interact with your application using different types of assistive technology.

Pros: The process is thorough and helps you get a complete understanding of your level of digital accessibility.

Cons: It's time-consuming and requires special expertise.

Reminder: Avoid the overlay trap!

When choosing accessibility testing tools, remember that overlays and widgets don't fix accessibility. They treat symptoms, not causes, and they don't meet compliance requirements. With the right tools, you'll find and fix what really matters.



Accessibility regulations

Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992):

The DDA aims to eliminate discrimination against people with disability across work, education, accommodation, access to premises, goods, services, and more. Any digital goods or services created for people to consume, engage with, or control should provide equal access for all.

The DDA applies to any individual or organisation in Australia, including the Crown, foreign corporations, and any trade or commerce inter-, intra-, or external to Australia.

Some key digital goods and services covered under the DDA include:

- Websites, intranets, e-commerce, and browser-based services
- Software, mobile applications, and games
- Software as a Service (SaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS) cloud-based services
- AI-generated services, including the AI platform itself
- Digital documents, emails, and learning materials
- Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), ticket machines, digital kiosks, and self-service terminals
- Facial recognition, biometrics, CAPTCHAs, and two-factor authentication
- Extended Reality (XR), including Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)
- Digital wallets and payment systems
- QR codes, digital wayfinding, and mapping applications
- Internet of Things (IoT) devices and digital interfaces to physical objects (printers, appliances, wearables, etc.)
- Chatbots and automated response systems

The Act also covers services relating to banking, insurance, entertainment, recreation, transport, telecommunications, and services provided by government bodies or any profession or trade.



Accessibility regulations

Digital Experience Policy (2025)

Introduced by the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), this policy mandates three new standards — Digital Inclusion, Digital Access, and Digital Performance — for all Commonwealth government websites and services. The Digital Inclusion Standard explicitly requires WCAG 2.2 AA compliance and DDA adherence, with deadlines of January 2025 for new services and June 2025 for existing ones. Agencies are required to report on their progress.

Regulatory Enforcement

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) enforces digital accessibility in Australia and publishes guidance. It receives complaints about alleged DDA violations and attempts to resolve them through conciliation — an informal process outside the court system. If conciliation fails, plaintiffs may pursue monetary damages in the Federal Court or Federal Circuit Court.

Australia operates on a reactive model: organisations are not required to proactively report, though they can voluntarily develop and report on Action Plans.

In April 2025, the AHRC announced new guidelines focused on meeting legal obligations under the DDA, covering public-facing digital services in both the public and private sectors. According to the AHRC, the guidelines “build on previous Commission guidance to reflect advances in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, facial recognition and other biometric technologies, mobile apps, social media, and self-service machines.”

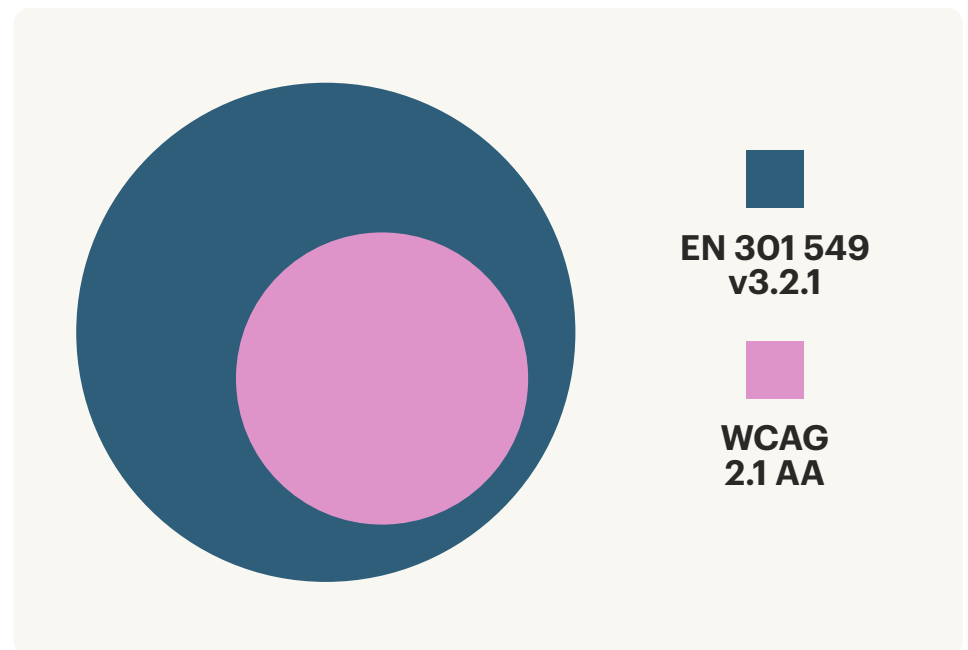


Standards to meet

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), developed by the W3C, are widely accepted as the go-to standard for digital accessibility. This is why Australian regulations cite WCAG as a digital accessibility standard to meet.

Today, EN 301 549 v3.2.1 incorporates WCAG 2.1 AA success criteria; however, v4.1.1 is anticipated to mature the standard to include WCAG 2.2. AA in late 2026. Until that up-leveling occurs, the Australian government has advised that all parties should also test for conformance to AS EN 301 549.

This approach will apply for digital properties like websites and mobile applications, along with devices like kiosks. Additionally, for success criteria such as video transcripts, audio contrast, clear links and section headings parties should consider appropriate level AAA success criteria.



Authoring tools should conform to ATAG 2.0. PDF and electronic documents should meet ISO 14289-1:2014 (which specifies the use of ISO 32000-1:2008) and PDF/UA as its standard.



How does my organisation become accessible?

Immediate needs

Your organisation may be under legal pressure or have another compliance deadline to meet. If that's the case, you have an immediate need to address digital accessibility issues. Here is a recommended approach for these kinds of situations:

Step 1: Get an expert accessibility audit report to accurately depict your amount of risk. Ensure it's clear and that all product and site stakeholders understand what they need to do with the results.

Step 2: Prioritise accessibility issues by severity, user traffic volume, and the criticality of the component to your end-users.

Step 3: Fix those accessibility issues. Make sure your team has been thoroughly trained in accessibility issue remediation through bootcamps and embedded support from accessibility specialists. Depending on your deadlines and budget, you may want to outsource your accessibility remediation.

Step 4: Perform validation testing to ensure that all accessibility fixes actually work. This can be done by in-house specialists or the consultants who performed your initial audit.

This process can be stressful, but by working with experienced experts, you can find a solution that fits your needs and deadlines.

Long-term growth

If your organisation isn't facing legal pressure or a compliance deadline – you're more likely working on new websites and applications – taking a proactive approach to accessibility is an ideal way to minimise future risk while securing all the long-term benefits that come with being accessible.

Step 1: Train your developers, testers, and content creators in accessibility concepts and techniques.

Step 2: Get any new design wireframes reviewed for accessibility optimisation and potential issue identification.

Step 3: Equip your development teams with tools to integrate accessibility testing into all stages of the development process.

Step 4: Establish internal policies and processes to ensure the accessibility of digital products, content, and any third-party tools you may be using.

Proactive accessibility not only reduces your organisation's risk of receiving a legal complaint, but also minimises disruptions and makes the entire accessibility process more efficient and cost-effective.



What an accessible organisation looks like

When accessibility is embedded into your organisational culture, the difference is clear — to your users, your team, and in your brand.

For your users

Everyone, including people with disabilities can navigate your products independently, without workarounds or frustration.

For your team

Designers have all users in mind, producing more effective experiences. Developers prevent accessibility issues from ever making it to production. QA teams have clear criteria to test against. Accessibility becomes part of how everyone works

For your brand

You become an organisation known for building things that work — for everyone. That reputation matters in procurement, in hiring, and in how customers and partners choose to work with you.

This is what you're working toward. It's achievable, and it starts here.



Get a clear picture of where your digital products sit relative to Australia's regulatory requirements — and what to do next. **Book a Free Consultation.**



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