

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Adapted from Accessible Events: A Guide for Meeting and Event Organisers published by the Meetings and Events Industry of Australia in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012

Tips for communication and assistance

- Understand that each person with a disability is an individual with their own likes and dislikes.
- Always focus on the person, not their disability. Always address the person directly, not the other.
- People who may be with them (such as a sign language interpreter or assistant).
- Always ask the person first if they want assistance; do not assume they need it.
- If you are having a conversation that will last more than a few moments with a person using a wheelchair, bend to eye level or pull up a chair.
- Disability, dementia or brain injury: Address the person directly, listen carefully, speak clearly and check for understanding.
- Always use clear language without being patronising.
- Allow the person time to ask questions and try not to rush them. Try not to overload the person with information. Make it clear you are there to help if they forget the information.

For people who have a hearing impairment or are Deaf:

- Always face the person so they can read your lips. Try to make sure there are no bright lights behind you that may limit their ability to see your lips.
- Use your normal tone of voice and volume. If possible, move out of areas with lots of background noise.
- If a Deaf person is there with a sign language interpreter, always address your comments directly to the Deaf person rather than to the interpreter.
- Pen and paper: have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with the person.

For people who have a vision impairment or are blind:

- Always identify yourself by name. If appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly and so that they know you are talking to them and not someone else.
- If a blind person asks for assistance to go somewhere, ask which side you should be on and offer your arm so they can hold it just above your elbow.
- Never pat or distract a guide dog or offer it food while it is in harness; it is a working animal under the control of its owner.