



Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office

ATO digital inclusion guide

Every interaction matters



Every interaction matters

That's our philosophy at the ATO as we continue to refine our website for the best possible user experience.

Developed with input from multiple specialists and community groups, the ATO digital inclusion guide encourages a culture of inclusive design when developing digital information and services for the community.

Our goal is to make digital inclusion central to our design process as part of our commitment to put the taxpayer at the centre of everything we do.

This guide is one step in our journey: one that as an organisation we are passionately committed to taking.

By sharing our guide, we hope to raise awareness of the importance of digital inclusion and the benefits it brings the community.

In this way, we'll share our vision to make digital inclusion – and every interaction with every Australian – matter.

Jacqui Curtis,
Chief Operating Officer



The ATO acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and elders past, present and future.

Why we developed this guide

Our goal is to deliver digital services that meet the needs of everyone in Australia.

This guide explains the:

- diversity of the Australian community
- complexity of how we connect in a digital world
- importance of accessibility
- value of inclusion.



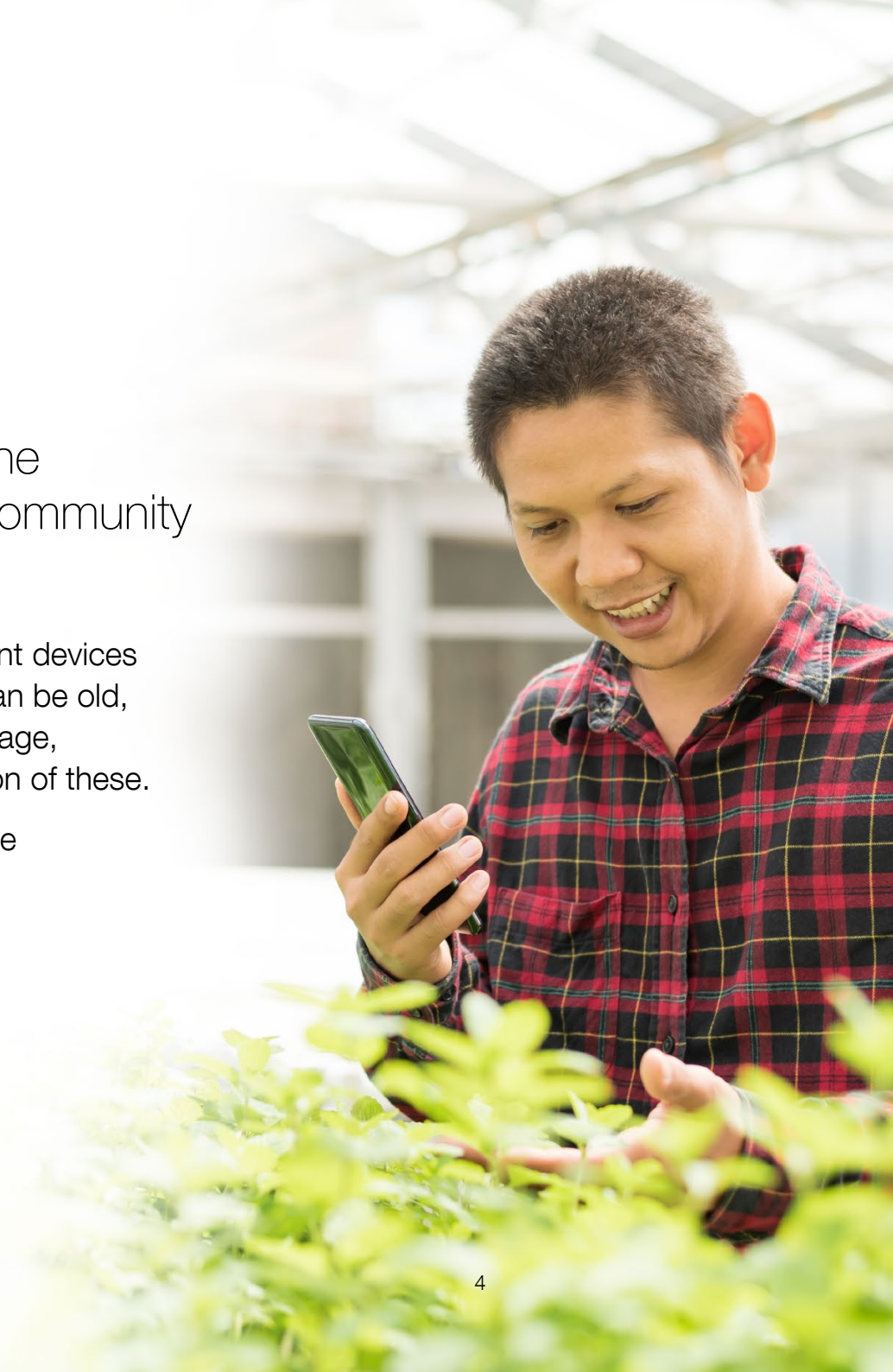
Diversity of people

Introduction

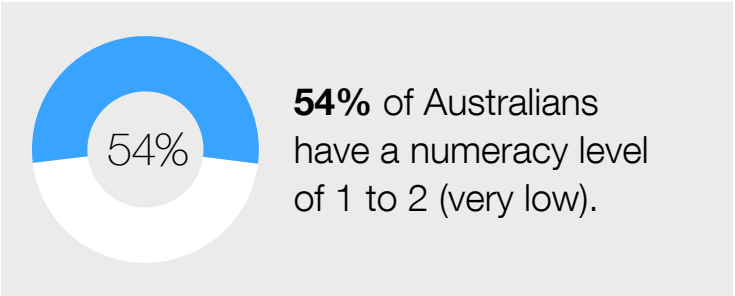
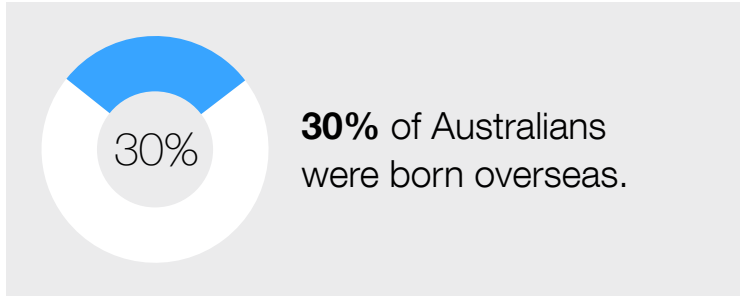
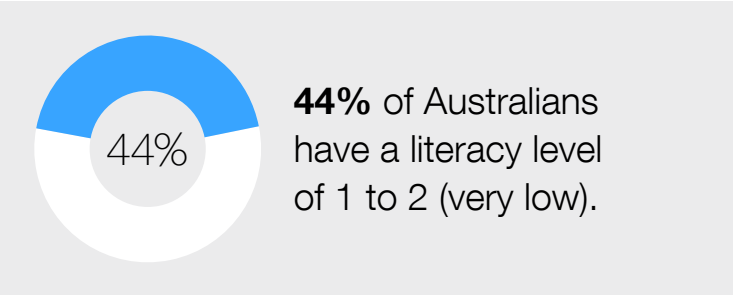
Our digital services are for everyone in the community and we recognise that our community has diverse needs.

People access digital services at different times, on different devices and for different purposes. Taxpayers are diverse – they can be old, young, new to Australia. They may speak a different language, or live in remote Australia or inner cities; or any combination of these.

Digital inclusion helps us reach as many people as possible in our diverse community.



Australia's diversity



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

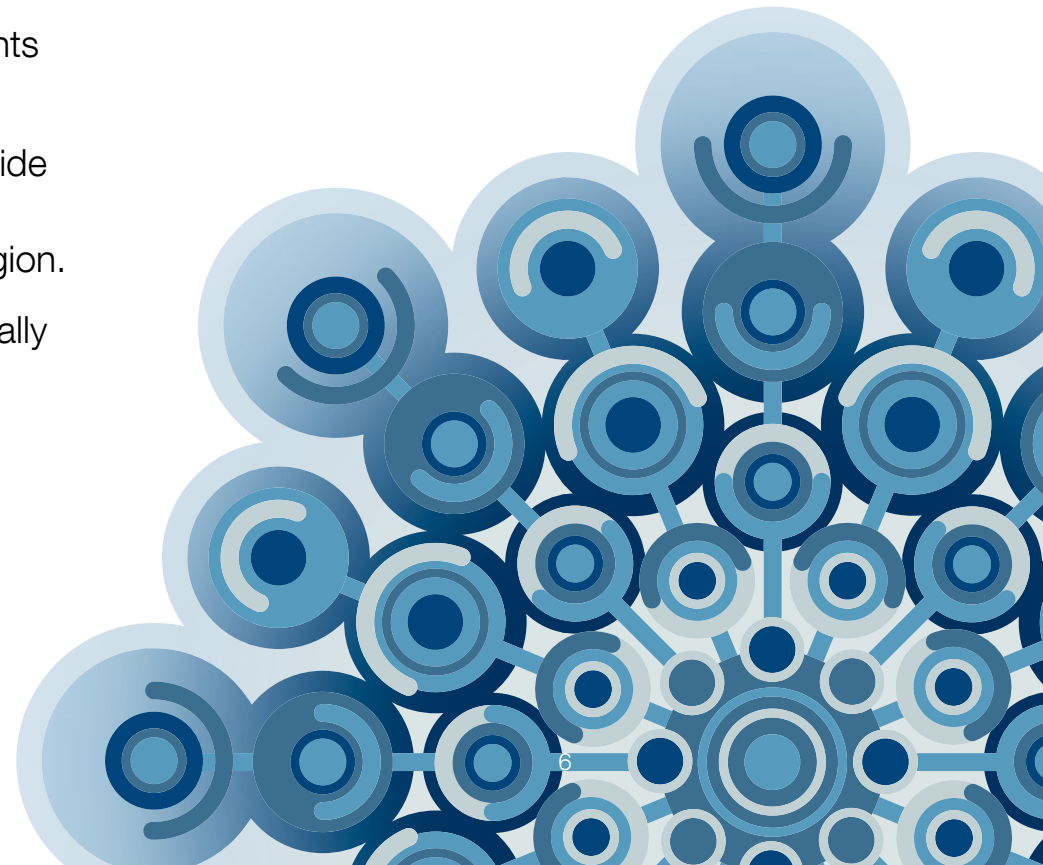
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the traditional owners and custodians of Australia. They are multicultural and diverse.

The two major groups are:

- **Aboriginal peoples** – the original inhabitants of mainland Australia, Tasmania, and other islands such as Stradbroke Island and Groote Eylandt
- **Torres Strait Islander peoples** – the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may use a wide range of terms to refer to themselves and each other. These are based on local customs, language group or region.

The ATO provides national services, so we use the nationally appropriate term of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. If you are unsure, seek local, specialist advice.



Inclusive language

Respectful language is important.
Avoid any form of discriminatory language.

We suggest focusing on the person and not the difference.
For example, use 'person with disability' or 'people with disability', not 'disabled person'.

Inclusive language also extends to people who are not directly experiencing the difference. For example, a person with lived experience of disability includes people who have experienced disability in the past and carers.

Avoid using words, expressions or assumptions that unnecessarily exclude people.

People with disability or impairment

The Australian Public Service Commission defines disability as:

'... a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months and restricts everyday activities'.

Over 4 million Australians have some form of disability, many of which are not visible. These numbers will rise due to our ageing population and increasing life expectancy.

Disabilities that can make it difficult to use digital services include:

- **sensory** – loss of sight or hearing
- **intellectual** – difficulty learning or understanding
- **physical** – restriction in physical activities
- **acquired** – head injury, stroke or acquired brain injury.



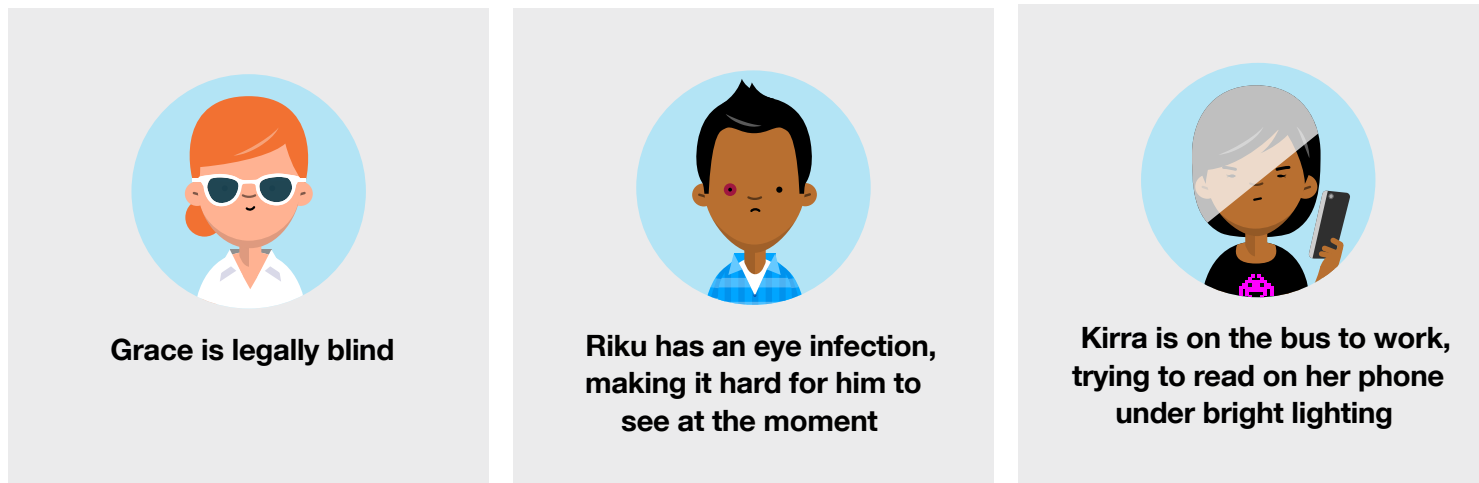
Temporary illness can present similar barriers

Temporary impairments can present similar difficulties as a disability – for example, short-term illness or a broken arm.

Situational blockers can present similar barriers

Sometimes a person's current situation can present a similar barrier to a disability.

Example



Grace, Riku and Kirra all use technology to read content out loud so they can listen to information. Designing a good experience for one user benefits all three people even though they are in very different situations.

Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read, write and understand information.

Low literacy can affect a person's ability to engage with us.

More than **44%** of Australians have difficulty reading and writing. People need to understand tax information to apply it correctly.

How you can help

- Write in plain English.
- Check readability and aim for a readability grade of 5 and no higher than grade 9.
- Avoid jargon. Jargon is information specific to a profession or group that is difficult for others to understand.



Numeracy

Numeracy is interpreting and using numbers to solve problems.

Low numeracy can affect a person's ability to engage with us.

It includes understanding graphs, tables, maps and measures. Estimates indicate that more than half of the population have very low numeracy.

How you can help

- Explain mathematical terms and concepts in plain English.
- Use digits on screen – for example, 5 not five.
- Be consistent – don't use % and percentage.
- Give practical examples to explain calculations.

Digital literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to use technology for everyday life, work and learning.

Not everyone in the community has the same digital literacy. People need to learn and use new technologies again and again in many parts of everyday life.

How you can help

- Apply consistency in layout, navigation and style. Consistent design reduces cognitive overload and helps people focus on the task.
- Make sure help content is easy to find, clear and broken down into steps.









Different ways people connect with us

People use a variety of technology to access our information and services.

Sometimes they don't have a choice and are restricted to a device, situation or need for assistive technology. Inclusive design helps people connect regardless of their situation. Digital inclusion is an opportunity to make it easier for people to engage with us online.

Some of the ways people connect with us

<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ on public transport■ at a remote location■ in a noisy workplace 	<p>Interface</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ touch screen■ mouse or keyboard■ sip and puff device 	<p>Device</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ desktop■ mobile phone■ tablet 
<p>Browser</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ to view web content■ to interact electronically 	<p>Assistive technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ magnifiers■ voice/screen readers 	<p>Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ download speed■ memory capacity■ keyboard only 

Accessibility and digital inclusion

Accessibility is removing barriers – inclusion is avoiding them in the first place.

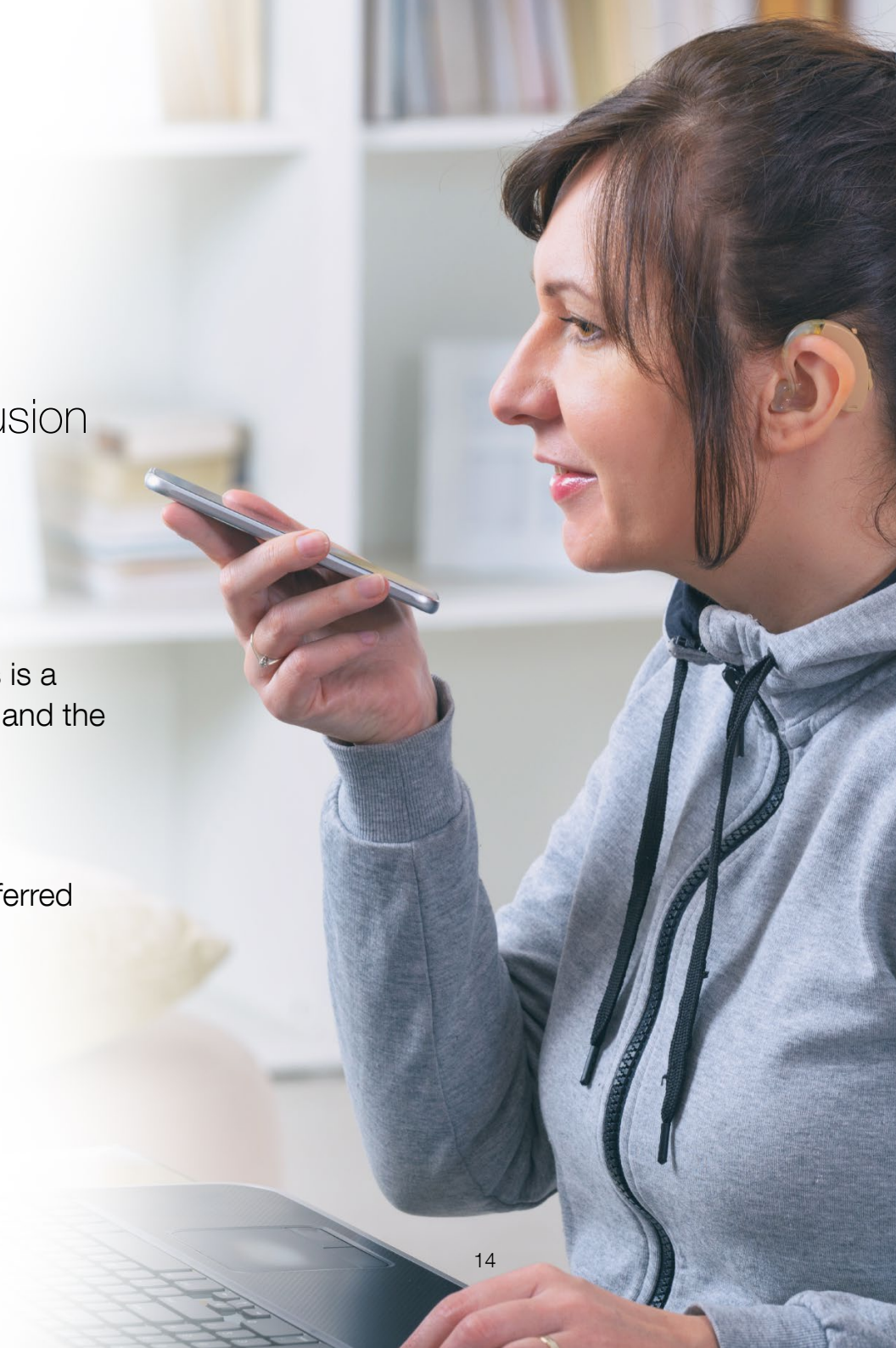
Accessibility

Our digital services must be accessible to everyone. This is a requirement under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0AA*.

HTML is the default for government

HTML means Hyper Text Markup Language. It is the preferred content format for government because it:

- is widely accessible
- doesn't restrict people from using content due to mobile use, remote location or disability
- is easier to update and maintain.



Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion means designing for as many people as reasonably possible from the beginning. Designing for everyone from the start reaches more people and delivers more value.

Why digital inclusion counts

<p>Inclusion is law</p> <p>Anti-discrimination legislation implemented by the Australian Government.</p> <p>Government-mandated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> 	<p>Rise in digital services</p> <p>We're experiencing an increase in digital services in government and the broader community.</p> 	<p>Diversity – people</p> <p>People approach the same content in different ways, based on their skills, background, education and ability.</p> 
<p>Reach</p> <p>Inclusive content reaches the most taxpayers.</p> 	<p>Expectations of government</p> <p>Community expectations of government digital services continue to grow.</p> 	<p>Diversity – device, technology and ability</p> <p>How people connect with us varies.</p> 

Resources

Statistics

- All statistics in this guide were sourced from abs.gov.au

ATO policy and guidelines

- [ATO Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–20](#)
- ATO Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2017–2019

Australian law and government mandated requirements

- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [Digital Service Standard](#)
- [WCAG 2.0AA – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)

This guide was released in May 2020.

We will review our advice regularly to make sure it is current.

Visit ato.gov.au

