



# Access and Equity Policy

The DSS Access and Equity Policy encourages DSS funded service providers to ensure that diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with government and accessing the services to which they are entitled. Grant applicants must therefore consider whether services, projects, activities or events require adaptation, or if additional assistance should be provided to ensure accessibility.

The Access and Equity Policy provides guidance to DSS funded programmes and services to ensure that they:

- are accessible by all eligible Australians;
- are responsive to their needs; and
- deliver equitable outcomes.

The Department encourages diversity and equity of access as a key component of effective service delivery, to ensure that eligible Australians can access the services they need. The Department recognises that most DSS-funded organisations have policies and processes in place to actively engage with and adapt service delivery to accommodate clients who: are living with a disability; are culturally and linguistically diverse; identify as Indigenous; are subject to violence; or are otherwise vulnerable.

Over the course of their life, many Australians will need to navigate barriers to Government services. This policy ensures the Department is able to reduce these barriers wherever possible. The Department is committed to funding appropriate services that recognise and embrace diversity.

A service provider who is delivering services to any of the following groups must consider ways in which service delivery can be inclusive. The following table is a general guide to accommodate groups who have been identified as experiencing barriers to services.

Population Cohort	Considerations for Service Delivery
Individuals subject to emotional, physical and sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training to accommodate sensitivities when communicating with individuals who have been subject to violence.</li> <li>• Strict guidelines in place to help staff recognise when it is appropriate to contact authorities and the function of mandatory reporting.</li> </ul>
Vulnerable persons (e.g. a child, or an adult who is unable to protect themselves against exploitation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate screening for persons (including sub-contractors and volunteers) who are working with, or are in contact with, vulnerable persons.</li> <li>• Staff-to-client ratio adjustments relative to the complexity of the case load.</li> </ul>
Indigenous Australians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding local and national Indigenous culture including languages, customs and community structures.</li> <li>• Awareness of cultural sensitivities relating to gender roles, kinship structures, social dynamics and traditional practices.</li> <li>• Employment of Indigenous staff members where appropriate.</li> <li>• Delivery of cultural sensitivity training for all staff members</li> <li>• Consultation with local Indigenous elders where necessary and the creation of strong networks with local leaders and groups.</li> <li>• Alignment with the Government’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the Whole of Government Programmes Framework.</li> </ul>
Deaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment of staff skilled in AUSLAN (Australian Sign</li> </ul>

Population Cohort	Considerations for Service Delivery
	<p>Language), or provision of training where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff knowledge of when and how to organise a sign language interpreter for clients who communicate using AUSLAN.</li> <li>• Assistive listening systems (such as hearing loop) are available and staff understand how to organise and operate them.</li> <li>• Ensure that all website materials to meet accessibility guidelines - WCAG2.0 Level AA compliance.</li> </ul>
<p>Mobility and access restriction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation of mobility needs, including ramp access and accessible facilities in service outlets, including access to toilets and kitchens where appropriate.</li> <li>• Designated and adequate disability parking or knowledge of local mobility transportation services.</li> <li>• Provision of spare wheelchairs and other walking aids on-site.</li> <li>• Ensure services allow sufficient times for appointments to cater for restriction of access and mobility.</li> </ul>
<p>Blind or low vision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities built to accommodate low or nil vision, particularly to ensure safe navigation.</li> <li>• Braille variants of materials, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Website materials supporting text-to-speech functionality - WCAG2.0 Level AA compliance.</li> </ul>
<p>Hard of hearing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact details on website include a TTY email address for those that cannot operate standard phone services.</li> <li>• Staff have a working knowledge of how to organise and implement assistive listening systems (such as a hearing loop, live captioning and National Relay Services).</li> <li>• Ensure that service outlets provide a noise free environment, where possible.</li> <li>• Ensure that all website materials to meet accessibility guidelines - WCAG2.0 Level AA compliance.</li> </ul>
<p>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that people (including sub-contractors and volunteers) who are working with, or are in contact with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse individuals including older persons are appropriately trained to have an understanding of CALD and ageing client needs.</li> <li>• Staff knowledge of the common languages and cultures within their service delivery area.</li> <li>• Consider the specific services needs of the aged, veterans, refugee and migrants using services.</li> <li>• Employment of multilingual staff where necessary.</li> <li>• Provision of credentialed translators and interpreters via face-to-face, telephone or video conference where appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure that website and advertising materials are clear, meet accessibility guidelines and cater to the multiple language options of client groups.</li> </ul>
<p>Intellectual impairment or disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate and respectful use of language, visuals and tone.</li> <li>• Materials available in appropriate accessible format and prepared in easy-English.</li> <li>• Clear contact details for further support or advice.</li> </ul>
<p>Individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that people (including sub-contractors and volunteers) who are working with, or are in contact with lesbian, gay,</li> </ul>

<b>Population Cohort</b>	<b>Considerations for Service Delivery</b>
transgendered, queer or intersex (LGBTI).	bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals are appropriately trained to have an understanding of LGBTI client needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate and respectful use of language and visuals that do not assume heterosexuality or binary gender identification.</li><li>• Staff have a working knowledge of the barriers that people who identify as LGBTI may encounter.</li><li>• Create a LGBTI inclusive environment.</li></ul>