



Communicating With Everyone



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Connect to Council





Warrnambool City Council Communicating With Everyone



 (03) 5559 4800



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Foreword

The rights of Victorians with disabilities are protected by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006.

This Act of Parliament requires that all levels of Government consider a person's human rights when it makes laws, acts through its officials or makes decisions which affect people.

Warrnambool City Council takes these responsibilities very seriously, and has reproduced this booklet, with the permission of Maroondah City Council, as one method of assisting Warrnambool residents to maintain their rights.

People who are older and people with disabilities are no different to other people in our community.

Warrnambool is an inclusive community that embraces all residents and visitors. Warrnambool welcomes people from diverse backgrounds and ensures people of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds are respected and can participate fully in the community.

This booklet contains valuable information that will enable effective communication which will in turn ensure our social inclusion.

This booklet also notes the rights of the older person in our community and the value they add to our community.



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Introduction

The way we refer to people who are older or with a disability can have a profound effect on how they are viewed by the community.

When communicating with an older person, or a person with a disability, rely on your common sense. Ask yourself how you would want to be treated and always be willing to adapt to a person's individual preference.

The fundamental principle is to put the person first.

General guidelines to follow:

- Avoid labels.
- Do not use collective nouns such as 'the disabled' or 'the blind' or "the oldies".
- These terms imply people are part of a group which is separate from the rest of society.
- Portray people positively by recognising what a person can do rather than focusing on their limitations.
- Avoid any word or phrase that has a negative connotation, for example, using the term 'confined to a wheelchair' instead of 'uses a wheelchair'.

Say

Avoid

Person with a disability	Disabled person Suffers from... Handicapped Victim Deformed Retarded
Uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair
Person with cerebral palsy	Afflicted by/with cerebral palsy
Person with a vision impairment	Blind/can't see
Person with a physical disability	Crippled Crippling The crippled Invalid
Person with a hearing impairment/ hearing loss/person who is deaf Person who is non-verbal	Deaf and dumb Deaf mute
Accessible parking	Handicapped parking
Accessible toilets, etc	Disabled toilets
Stroke survivor	Stroke sufferer Stroke victim
Person living with Dementia	Demented Senile "a sheep short in the top paddock"



Communicating with people who have a hearing impairment or are Deaf/deaf

- To gain the person's attention, it may be appropriate to gently touch them on the arm or position yourself where they can see you.
- Be sure to maintain eye contact.
- Be aware of any visual distractions, such as glare from a window, large table decorations or inappropriate lighting.
- Be aware that not everyone with a hearing loss can lip read.
- If the person wishes to lip read, do not exaggerate your lip movements, put your hand over your mouth, or turn your face away while speaking.
- Be flexible. If something you say is not understood, then reword it instead of repeating it. Use notes or visual expressions/clues to illustrate what you are saying.
- Where necessary, use a pad and pencil to communicate.
- Reduce unnecessary background noise as this can interfere with hearing aids (if they are worn) and make communication difficult.
- Do not shout.
- Don't refer to a person who is deaf or has a hearing impairment as 'deaf/dumb'. Some people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment can speak; while others are 'non-verbal' and use sign language.
- Relax and don't be embarrassed if you say "Did you hear about..."
- Use natural gestures in conversation as this aids in communication.

- If there is an Auslan interpreter present, speak directly to the person who is deaf or hearing impaired - not the interpreter.
- It must not be assumed nodding in response to a signed message necessarily signifies agreement. The nod may just indicate an understanding of the message received.
- Allow the person who is deaf/hearing impaired and the interpreter to find the best position for seating - this may involve rearranging chairs.

Resources

Employment Assistance Fund – Job Access

Provides assistance to maximise the opportunity of people of all abilities to find work and assist them to achieve workplace independence. Job Access provide funding to remove disability specific barriers in the workplace by providing workplace modification and training.

For more information:

T: 1800 464 800 (free)

W: www.jobaccess.gov.au

National Relay Service

Australia-wide telephone access service providing phone solutions for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment.

For more information:

TTY: 13 36 77

T: 1800 555 660

SMS relay number: 0423 677 767

W: www.communications.gov.au

E: helpdesk@relayservices.com.au

Expression Australia (formerly The Victorian Deaf Society)

Expression Australia is the primary source of reference, referral, advice and support for deaf and hard-of-hearing adults in Victoria.

Expression Australia works collaboratively with a variety of mental health, legal and employment providers, welfare agencies and government

departments. Some of the services they provide include Auslan interpreting, audiology services through hearing clinics, NDIS service providers, employment services through Expression Australia.

For more information:

T: 9473 1111

TTY: 1300 780 235

SMS/Facetime (video & sign) : 0402 217 586

E: info@expression.com.au

W: www.expression.com.au

Word of Mouth Technology

Suppliers of hearing augmentation systems, hearing loops and assistive listening devices.

For more information:

T: 9723 0660

E: info@wom.com.au

W: www.wom.com.au



Communicating with people who have speech difficulties

Below are some tips for communicating with people with speech that is difficult to understand.

Remember, do not assume that a person with a disability has difficulty understanding speech as well.

- There is no need to raise your voice as people with a speech impairment may not be deaf.
- Talk in a quiet environment if possible.
- Be patient, concentrate, and let the person finish what they want to say without trying to finish their sentences for them. This only slows down communication.
- Do not pretend to have understood the message. Either repeat back your understanding of the message for clarification, or ask the person to repeat themselves.
- If a person is using an electronic communication aid, stand in front of the person and refrain from reading over their shoulder as they type.
- Ask if there is someone close by who may be able to interpret for you.
- Acknowledge if you have not been successful despite all efforts and ask whether the message was urgent.

Resources

Yooralla – choosequality

Yooralla supports people with disability of all ages and needs, in their home and in the community with quality services. View the Yooralla website to find out more about the wide range of services provided to support adults and children with disability, and carers.

Businesses are encouraged to go to the web site to know more about the services Yooralla can provide with Communication and Assistive Technology.

For more information:

P: 9666 4500

E: ooralla@ooralla.com.au

W: www.yooralla.com.au

Communicating with people who are blind or have low vision

- When meeting, identify yourself and others with you. If chairing a meeting or gathering, ensure all in attendance introduce themselves i.e. conduct a 'roll call'.
- When conversing in a group, address people by name.
- If you know the person's name, address them directly so they realise they are being spoken to.
- Do not pat a guide dog when in harness as you may distract the dog from working.
- Be specific with verbal directions to places, and avoid comments like, "Over there..." Instead use left/right directions, for example, "on the right of the doorway".
- Walk alongside and slightly ahead of the person. Don't hold onto the person's arm, but do allow them to take your arm if they need assistance.
- Tell the person you are approaching steps or stairs and whether you are going up or down. Provide the person the option of sighted guide or handrail. If the person prefers the handrail, the sighted guide can place their hand on the rail – this then allows the person to follow the rail independently.
- If possible, offer the person a choice of using stairs, escalators or a lift. Avoid revolving doors.
- When seating a person who is blind or has low vision, the sighted guide can place their hand on the back of the chair and the person can locate their seat independently.
- Direct the person who is blind or has low vision to their left or right, not yours.
- Don't leave without saying that you are doing so, and do not leave a person who is blind or has low vision in an open area. When you leave, guide the person to a landmark, for example a reception desk, so they will then feel more secure and oriented to the surrounding environment.
- Do not relocate objects or furniture without telling the person who is blind or has low vision first.
- Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but pay attention to the person's response – take your cues from him or her.
- Do not presume that the person can't see anything. If appropriate, it is okay to ask what they can see.
- When preparing printed information for a person with low vision, it is best to seek their advice for their preferred format for personal documents.

- General information for people with low vision should be provided in Arial 18 point bold.
- The lighting needs of people with low vision differ and may be significant. Many people see much more with stronger light and others do not. The most common concern is glare.
- Do not respond to a question by nodding 'yes' or 'no', speak clearly and avoid using body language to convey a response.
- Feel free to use words such as 'look' and 'see' as they are part of everyone's vocabulary. Otherwise both you and the person who is blind or has low vision will feel awkward.
- Don't shout. Vision problems and hearing loss are not necessarily related impairments.
- Ask a person who is blind or has low vision what they need and want. Above all, do not direct questions through their companion.

Resources

Vision Australia

Vision Australia Warrnambool

Vision Australia provides the following services:

1. Physical access and mobility issues

Services available to businesses, state and local governments, community organisations and people who are blind or have low vision include:

- consultation with businesses, public transport providers, state and local government services regarding environmental modifications, safety improvements and accessibility.
- assisting individuals to develop skills and strategies which enable them to access various parts of the community.
- teaching individuals to use a variety of mobility canes and or other devices to assist with way finding and safe navigation.

For more information:

Help Line

T: 1300 847 466

TTY: 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 847 466

T: Warrnambool 5560 2300

W: www.visionaustralia.org.au

2. Adaptive Technology

For alternative formats such as large print, Braille and technologies to assist people with vision loss and other print handicaps to access written information.

T: 1300 847 466

E: athelp@visionaustralia.org

3. Technology Advice

A range of materials and resources for architects, school students, businesses and government departments wanting information about accessibility.

T: 1300 847 466

E: info@visionaustralia.org



Communicating with people with a physical disability

- Always ask a person in a wheelchair if they need help before you offer assistance. It may not be needed or wanted.
- If a person is using a wheelchair, where possible, be seated so the person doesn't have to look up. Communicate at eye level with the person.
- Speak directly to the person and not with the person who may be assisting them.
- Don't shout. Deafness and physical disability are not related.
- Don't pat a person on the head or shoulders or slap their back as a friendly gesture. This may be patronising to the person or may cause the person to lose their balance if they use a mobility aid.
- Ensure that there is a clear pathway to intended destinations. At meetings or restaurants, make a chair-free space at the table for the person using the wheelchair to sit.
- When assisting a person going up or down a kerb, ask the person if they prefer going backwards or forwards.
- Be prepared – learn the locations of ramps and accessible facilities.
- Avoid leaning on, rocking or touching a wheelchair without permission.
- Never presume that a person who is non-verbal does not understand what you are saying. They may just require the assistance of a communication aid, such as a picture communication board or talking device.
- If children are curious, don't discourage them from asking questions.
- Do not pat a guide or assistance dog as they are always in working mode when they are with their owner.



Communicating with people who have a cognitive impairment

A cognitive impairment is a disability which affects a person's ability to process information.

It may be due to an intellectual disability which a person was born with (such as Down syndrome), or it may be due to an acquired brain injury (such as an accident or stroke), or they may be a person living with dementia.

People will vary greatly in their abilities, therefore always respond to the individual's needs rather than making assumptions about their ability.

- Speak directly to the person, not to the person who is assisting him or her.
- Be patient. Do not complete sentences for the person.
- Talk to the person using an age-appropriate tone of voice.
- Be clear and concise with your communications and don't get frustrated if you have to repeat yourself.
- Use simple language and allow the person time to think and respond.
- Don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat something if you don't understand.
- Pay attention, particularly if the person has a speech impairment.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to write information down or to use pictures for people who have difficulty with memory.

Resources

Brainlink

Offers information and educational programs for individuals, family and carers affected by acquired brain injury, as well as respite opportunities. Also offers a range of resources including fact sheets, booklets for individuals, large and small organisations, and hospitals.

For more information:

T: (03) 8761 9232 or 1800 677 579 (free)

E: admin@brainlink.org.au

W: www.brainlink.org.au

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) – JobAccess

Provides specialised support and training packages for workers with specific learning disorders delivered by qualified professionals who possess specialist expertise in the support area.

Also provides disability awareness training for employers by qualified trainers.

For more information:

T: 1800 464 800 (free)

W: www.jobaccess.gov.au

Scope Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre (CIRC)

Scope offers a variety of educational programs to businesses, organisations, local government and community groups across Victoria. Programs are tailored to suit the individual goals of your organisation. Our programs give you expert advice and practical tools helping you interact in a positive way with people with a disability.

The communication accessible symbol



This symbol is used to indicate environments that are communication-friendly for people with communication difficulties. It is similar to the wheelchair logo

which indicates physical access for people with a disability. Any community organisation or business wanting to be accredited to display this symbol can contact Scope's Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre. An audit will then be conducted by a person with a communication difficulty.

The audit checklist may cover questions such as:

- are the people/staff at the organisation/business polite and friendly?
- do they speak to the person with the communication difficulty and not the support person?
- do they wear name badges?
- do they take the time to try and understand people with communication difficulties?
- do they take an interest in learning about the person's communication?

For more information:

T: 1300 472 673

E: circ@scopeaust.org.au

W: www.scopeaust.org.au

Communicating with people who are living with dementia

The same principles of communication and care apply for people with dementia as for those with any cognitive impairment.

Dementia Australia

Dementia Australia is the national peak body for people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their family, carers and the community.

Dementia Australia provides resources for people living with dementia, their family and friends. Dementia Australia provides support for communities to understand dementia and be better able to assist the person living with dementia. Become a Dementia Friend by visiting dementiafriendly.org.au

For more information:

T: 1800 100 500 (free)

T: Warrnambool 5562 1666

E: helpline.nat@dementia.org.au

W: www.dementia.com.au

Communicating with people who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability.

A person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder has difficulties in some areas of their development, but other areas may be unaffected. The areas most affected are communication, social interaction and behaviour.

The currently favoured term is Autism Spectrum Disorder. The word 'spectrum' is used as no two people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder are exactly alike.

- Be patient (interaction may take longer than expected).
- Give the person time to process what you are saying. Some people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder may take time to process information.
- Give instructions one part at a time, and allow short pauses between instructions. You may also like to offer to write down instructions.
- Do not force the person to make eye contact with you, and do not expect them to make eye contact.
- Some people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder have a particular strength in learning visually. It may help to use visual cues where possible, for example when saying "Please take a seat" point to the vacant seat.
- Minimise external distractions. If the area is busy or noisy, you may suggest moving to a quieter place where you can both concentrate more easily. Some people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder are sensitive to noise and this can make them anxious, irritated or distracted.
- Use an age-appropriate tone of voice.
- Be aware that common sayings and phrases can be interpreted literally.
- For example, a person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder may not understand that 'pull your socks up' means that they are required to put more effort into a task.
- Use speech or text which uses irony, sarcasm and other indirect forms of communication with caution, as they may be misinterpreted.
- Try to avoid open-ended questions, as some people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder may be more comfortable giving short and direct responses.
- Be aware that some people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder may repeat words or phrases you say to them but this may not always be a reflection of their opinion, choice or understanding. This is known as echolalia.

- Do not be alarmed if the person makes unusual physical movements, for example hand flapping, or rocking back and forth.
- Ask the person if they would like information written down.

Resources

Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria)

Amaze is the peak body for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Victoria. It conducts policy analysis at both a state and national level, provides a forum for members to communicate with each other, and lobbies to support their interests. It also provides specialist information and advice to the families and services caring for people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

For more information:

T: 9657 1600 or 1300 308 699

E: info@amaze.org.au

Professional Advice Line

T: 9657 1621 or 1300 308 699

E: training@amaze.org.au

W: www.amaze.org.au

Communicating with a person with a mental health issue

One in five adults will experience a mental health issue at some stage in their life.

Mental health issues can include the following:

- depression
- anxiety
- bi-polar disorder
- eating disorders
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- obsessive compulsive disorder
- schizophrenia
- personality disorders.

At different times, mental health issues can cause changes to a person's thinking, perception, feeling and emotional state.

These changes can lead to behaviours that are out of context and do not match the situation as you would expect. People living with mental health issues usually manage their symptoms with medication and support.

Remember that social interaction can be difficult for a person experiencing an episode of mental illness. Be non-judgmental and allow time for interaction and decision making.

If you are interacting with a person and you notice that the individual:

- is disorientated, and responding to events and perceptions that you do not share (indicating that the person may have lost touch with reality)
- is becoming highly anxious and frightened to the extent that the belief of threat is governing their behaviour (indicating paranoia)
- is displaying unusual or inappropriate behaviour or emotion
- is speaking slowly or appears unfocused (this is usually due to medication side effects or sleep disturbance).

Remain calm and follow these suggestions:

- Read the body language to assess the situation. Non-verbal communication can be very helpful in times of confusion.
- Allow the person their space and initially avoid both direct eye contact and touching.

- Show understanding and compassion. Empathise with their feelings without necessarily agreeing with what is being said, for example, “I understand that you are feeling frightened by your experiences...”
- Ask how you can help. The person may ask you to sit with them, or to ring an emergency contact number. Or they may just want to be left alone. Respect the person's situation and do not pressure them to take up your assistance.
- Don't take things personally. Remember that the individual may not have insight into their behaviour and its impact on other people.
- Use short, clear direct sentences to minimise confusion and keep the tone of your voice low and unhurried.
- Make an effort to talk to the individual again. Symptoms of a serious mental health issue are episodic and successfully managed with medication and support.

Resources

beyondblue

An independent, not-for-profit organisation working to increase awareness of depression, anxiety, and related disorders throughout Australia. The organisation works with health services, schools, workplaces, universities, media and community organisations, as well as people living with these disorders, to bring together their expertise.

For more information:

TTY: 133 677 and ask for 1300 224 636

T: 9810 6100 or 1300 224 636

Fax: (03) 9810 6111

E: bb@beyondblue.org.au

W: www.beyondblue.org.au or www.youthbeyondblue.com

Heads Up

Heads Up is all about giving individuals and businesses the tools to create more mentally healthy workplaces.

Developed by Beyond Blue and supported by the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, Heads Up calls on business leaders to make a commitment and start taking action in their workplaces. It also encourages everyone in the workplace to play their part in creating a mentally healthy

working environment, take care of their own mental health, and look out for their colleagues.

The website provides a wide range of resources, information and advice for individuals and organisations – all of which are designed to offer simple, practical and, importantly, achievable guidance.

For more information:

T: 1300 224 636

E: headsup@beyondblue.org.au

W: www.headsup.org.au

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) – JobAccess

Provides specialised support and training packages for eligible workers with mental health issues delivered by qualified professionals who possess expertise in the area.

Mental health awareness training for employers is delivered by trainers with specialist knowledge. EAF guidelines can be accessed via the web page.

For more information:

T: 1800 464 800 (free)

W: www.jobaccess.gov.au

SANE Guide for Customer Service

A guide to mental health issues for customer service staff to help understand mental health issues and its effects; improve communication with customers affected by mental health issues; reduce frustration; respond to challenging situations, and to know where to get further help.

SANE Guide to Mental Illness & the Workplace

This guide helps workmates to understand mental health issues, and suggests ways to work with and support colleagues who may be affected.

For more information:

T: 9682 5933 OR 1800 187 263

E: info@sane.org

W: www.sane.org

Supporting employees with a disability

- Help the employee understand and learn about the organisation by providing the tools and resources they need to be successful in their role.
- Describe the formal and informal requirements of the job.
- Introduce the person to co-workers. Encourage others to include the person, but don't try to force relationships.
- Be sensitive to the person's limitations, but don't lower traditional performance standards.
- Provide the same encouragement and feedback as you would to other employees, and don't be afraid to offer constructive feedback. The person may offer alternative strategies for dealing with difficulties.
- Use language that the person can understand.
- Encourage the person to pursue career development and training opportunities, just as you would with other employees.
- Arrange relevant training for staff to be more aware of disability issues and how to best accommodate the person's needs.

Resources

JobAccess

JobAccess is an Australian Government initiative that provides information and advice as well as workplace solutions for the employment of people with a disability.

The JobAccess advisers are professionals who provide free, confidential and expert advice. They are available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 7pm (EST).

JobAccess services include:

- placing employers in touch with organisations to outline the business benefits of employing a person with a disability
- access to funding for Auslan interpreting and co-worker training
- access to on the job support
- information on workplace modifications and adjustments
- advice on how to support an employee who becomes unwell with a mental illness.

The JobAccess website offers practical information on every step of the employment process as well as ideas on how to adjust or modify a workplace to suit people with disability.

The website content includes comprehensive and practical information including:

- how to create a supportive and healthy work environment
- step-by-step guides on recruitment, adjusting a workplace and understanding rights and responsibilities at work
- disability awareness information
- supporting and retaining staff.

For more information:

TTY: 1800 464 800 (free)

W: www.jobaccess.gov.au

Australian Network on Disability

Managers' guide: disability in the workplace

The Managers' guide: 3rd Edition includes information to assist managers and supervisors to effectively manage employees with disability throughout the entire employment cycle - from initial recruitment to leaving employment.

To purchase this inexpensive guide, please contact the Australian Network on Disability:

T: 1300 363 645

E: info@and.org.au

W: www.and.org.au

Further resources

Association of Consultants in Access, Australia Inc Database of Accredited Access Consultants

For business, local government and community organisations.
This database covers advisory, auditing, training (disability awareness), design, action plans, policy development, plan appraisals, and Australian Standards (disability related).

For more information:

T: (03) 5221 2820 - Monday – Wednesday 8am – 12md.

W: www.access.asn.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission leads the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. This Act makes disability discrimination unlawful and aims to promote equal opportunity and access for people with disabilities.

The Commission's website offers a range of information including:

- guidelines to premises standards
- a brief guide to the Disability Discrimination Act
- Disability Standards and Guidelines
- relevant legislation
- how to lodge a disability discrimination complaint
- captioning and media access
- internet access
- public transport.

It also offers access to publications, such as

- Disability Discrimination Act Action plans: A guide for business

For more information:

T: 1300 656 419

E: infoservice@humanrights.gov.au

W: www.hreoc.gov.au

Scope Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre (CIRC)

For further information refer to page 17 of this publication.

Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPV) Talking Taxis Communication Boards

The Talking Taxis project aims to improve communication between taxi drivers and their passengers.

As part of the project, a set of picture boards, personal journey cards and an alphabet board have been developed.

These tools improve communication between taxi drivers and passengers, thereby reducing confusion about destinations, payment and routes.

CPV provide the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, Driver Handbook with all the information to support drivers when assisting their clients.

The tools are available by contacting the Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria.

For more information:

T: 1800 638 802 (free)

W: www.cpv.vic.gov.au

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission provides:

- a free telephone Enquiry Line
- a free, fair and timely dispute resolution service
- information and education about equal opportunity, racial and religious vilification and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- education, training and consultancy services.
- Download the VEOHRC Communication and/or Spelling board by going to the website.

For more information:

TTY: 13 36 77 and ask for 1300 292 153

T: 1300 891 848 or 1300 292 153

E: enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au

E: education@veohrc.vic.gov.au

W: www.humanrights.vic.gov.au

SMS relay: 0423 677 767

At your service

Council's Service Centre staff are happy to help you with any Council business.

www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au/welcoming-business

Ph: 5559 4800

Civic Centre 25 Liebig Street, Warrnambool 3280.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

13 14 50

National Relay Service (NRS)

Switchboard and General Enquiries: 1800 555 660

Disclaimer

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