



SYDNEY

INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION
CENTRE

Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide 2023 – 2025

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COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

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Additional Information for Event Organisers

1. LANGUAGE AND INCLUSION

Inclusive language is a way of acknowledging and respecting the individuality and uniqueness of each person who is welcomed to ICC Sydney. This guide provides references that can be used to incorporate preferred or accepted language into your event, in accordance with relevant advocacy groups and community representatives.

A safe space can be defined as a place where a person or group can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, or harassment. Creating safe spaces makes it easier for people to enter spaces as their authentic selves, giving them confidence to participate while feeling supported. Safe spaces can be nurtured through meaningful communication and collaboration with community members to deliver activities that acknowledge diverse communities, use respectful language, celebrate diversity, share stories, and create a welcoming space for open participation.

While this guide offers a great starting point, it is important to remember that diverse communities are made up of unique people, each with different experiences and opinions, and preferences may differ based on the individual. It is recommended that organisers listen to and respect the needs and suggestions of their delegate representatives in the first instance.

1.1 FIRST NATIONS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians represent the world's oldest living cultures. Australia's First Nations people are made up of many unique Nations or language groups, each with different identities that continue to be expressed in dynamic and contemporary ways. Today, there are over 250 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups. When talking to or about people from this community, it is important to use terms that acknowledge and respect this diversity of cultures and identities.

Terms such as 'First Nations' or 'First Peoples' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are typically considered to be acceptable. Pluralisation should extend to explaining First Nations 'histories,' 'perspectives,' 'beliefs,' 'experiences' and so on as this also acknowledges and respects the rich diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for profit organisation working to inspire and build relationships, respect and trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians and is our partner in the [ICC Sydney Reconciliation Action Plan](#). As the leading body for reconciliation in Australia, Reconciliation Australia has released a helpful language guide to assist the community to understand and apply respectful and inclusive language with regards to First Nations people. You can download Reconciliation Australia's *Demonstrating Inclusive and Respectful Language Guide* [here](#).

ICC Sydney encourages and supports event organisers to acknowledge and honour Indigenous people by including First Nations content as a key part of events. You may wish to incorporate a Welcome to Country, music, dance, artwork or other activities and content that recognises and celebrates First Nations culture, knowledge and history. It is important that any inclusion of First Nations content in any event is undertaken with respect, that appropriate community representatives are consulted in advance and that any relevant permissions and /or payments have been confirmed.

The Arts Law Centre of Australia has developed a set of protocols which provide information and advice on respecting Indigenous culture and heritage with regards to the publication or use of Indigenous artforms, including dot-art, Aboriginal iconography, film and photographs, music, artifacts and more. You can find the Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property [here](#). By following these guidelines, you can help ensure Indigenous people are appropriately credited and receive compensation for the use of their artistic intellectual property.

ICC Sydney is grateful to have longstanding relationships within First Nations communities across Greater Sydney including Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, KARI Singers, Dreamtime Southern X Tours, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Supply Nation and more. If you would like to book a Welcome to Country, First Nations Performance, or cultural experience for your event but are not sure where to start, you can leverage ICC

Sydney's community partnerships as detailed in the ICC Sydney [Legacy Program Guide](#) to ensure your event is respectful of Indigenous people and is culturally appropriate.

1.1.1 CULTURALLY SAFE SPACES

ICC Sydney aims to be a culturally safe space for First Nations People, where First Nations histories are visible, the unique tapestry of First Nations identities are supported, and First Nations experiences are heard and respected.

The inclusion of a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country is a great way to kick off your proceedings in a way that recognises and respects the contribution, knowledge, experiences and ongoing connection of First Nations people. It is also a sign of respect and protocol.

Event organisers seeking to create a welcoming and safe environment for First Nations people, particularly where event proceedings may contain content that could be confronting for First Nations, may wish to consider establishing a breakout room that offers a culturally sensitive safe space.

The development of a culturally safe room provides a meeting place, space for conversation, learning, celebration and culture open to First Nations people, allowing individuals the freedom to connect with culture in a dedicated space, as and where it may be needed.

In establishing a culturally safe space, you may consider engaging an Elder or traditional custodian to oversee the room and be available for attendees to talk to, incorporating Aboriginal artwork, and establishing areas for reflection and areas for conversation.

Any establishment of a culturally safe room should be undertaken in consultation with representatives from First Nations community, such as through the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. ICC Sydney, through the development and implementation of its Reconciliation Action Plan, has developed positive working relationships with a number of organisations who can assist, that can be found in our [Legacy Program Guide](#).

1.2 PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

People with a Disability Australia (PWDA) is a peak, non-profit, non-government organisation that represents the interests of people with all kinds of disability. PWDA has developed a comprehensive Disability Language Guide to help influence respectful and inclusive language about people with a disability and to improve the lives of people with a disability.

This guide has been developed by people with a disability to assist the public when talking about and to people with a disability. It works to address some of the factors which influence disability-related language, provides advice for professional communicators on how to prepare disability-related content, and identifies commonly misused terms and recommends suitable alternatives.

You can download the 2021 PWDA Language Guide [here](#).

1.3 LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender diverse, Queer and questioning, Intersex and Asexual. The plus (+) represents all those people who identify with a sexual orientation or gender identity that isn't included within the LGBTQIA acronym in a way that is visible and inclusive. LGBTQIA+ inclusive language acknowledges and respects the diverse tapestry of LGBTQIA+ people, including their bodies, genders, and relationships.

Transgender and gender diverse communities are disproportionately affected by prejudice-motivated discrimination and violence. Using LGBTQIA+ inclusive language helps people feel respected and included in conversations, activities and discussions, allowing for a more positive event experience.

LGBTQIA+ inclusive language may change or evolve from person to person and group to group as individuals explore their identities and how they choose to interact and present to the world around them. It can also differ

across cultures and generations, so it is important to stay up to date, accept and incorporate changes as they are communicated.

ICC Sydney is proud to partner with Pride in Diversity. Pride in Diversity is Australia's leading not-for-profit employer support program for all aspects of LGBTQ workplace inclusion. As a social inclusion initiative of AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON), Pride in Diversity works to reduce exclusion, invisibility, homophobia and stigma in the workplace. Pride in Diversity has developed a number of resources to help the broader community understand some of the key concepts and common terms for LGBTQ people. You can access the library of Pride in Diversity resources [here](#).

2. ACCESSIBLE PRESENTATIONS

2.1 PEOPLE WITH DEAFNESS OR WHO ARE HARD OF HEARING

There are many ways you can make an event more accessible and equitable for people who are deaf or people who are hard of hearing.

2.1.1 WRITTEN MATERIALS

If you organise an event with many different speakers and topics, consider the simple power of providing written material to people who are deaf or hard of hearing in your audience. In some cases, it is possible to ask the presenters to provide their speeches before the event.

While live presentations are more nuanced than pre-recorded speeches, people from this community may benefit from transcripts with a general overview of the speaker engagement.

If whole scripts are not available, make sure to provide names, dates, and other essential details that can increase your audience's ability to engage with the speaker and their content. There are many ways to provide the written material: you can either print it out or upload it to online applications so listeners can access them when needed. Sending out an email before an event might be just as helpful.

2.1.2 AUSLAN AND INTERNATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Auslan is the sign language of the Australian deaf and hard of hearing community.

People who communicate by Auslan pay attention to the small details a good interpreter will include to help their audience, especially the speakers' body language and facial expressions. You can help your audience by ensuring the interpreter is given a prominent position on the stage, that they are well lit, and that your Auslan audience members are provided reserved seating as close to the interpreter as possible.

Screens may be provided around the event floor to assist where this is not possible, however this is considered a less preferable option. People may prefer to communicate in a language other than English or Auslan.

If you are anticipating an audience of diverse language background, you may also wish to engage an International Sign Language (ISL) interpreter.

The demand for Auslan interpreters is high. To avoid disappointment, we recommend considering booking an interpreter early in the event planning process. You can find more information about how to book Auslan or other sign-language interpreters [here](#).

2.1.3 LIVE CAPTIONING

Live captioning allows people who are deaf or hard of hearing to access captions composed of text that are created as event presentations or proceedings take place and are displayed on screen, in real time. This enables

people to access content delivered by spoken words and sounds in text format. It is a great solution for situations where high translation accuracy of the spoken word is required, such as in scientifically technical presentations. ICC Sydney's Audio Visual team can assist you with coordinating your live captioning needs. Please speak to your Audio Visual project manager for more information on how you can incorporate live captioning at your next event.

2.1.4 HEARING AUGMENTATION

Hearing Augmentation is the transmission of audio information to a listener's hearing aid, making amplified sound easier for people with hearing aids to hear.

At ICC Sydney, induction loop hearing augmentation systems are provided in the Grand Ballroom and Grand Ballroom Foyer.

Infra-red emitted hearing augmentation systems are provided in all meeting rooms and theatres, including Darling Harbour Theatre and Aware Super Theatre.

Complimentary hearing augmentation devices (hearing loops) are available and can be provided to guests. Please discuss your hearing augmentation device needs with your ICC Sydney Audio Visual project manager.

2.2 PEOPLE WITH A VISION IMPAIRMENT

When welcoming people who are blind or have low vision patrons to your event, it's important to not assume the level of assistance they may require finding their seat. Do not touch them without being invited to do so. Instead, you can let them know who you are, inform them of your location (e.g.: I am standing a metre in front of you), and ask if they require help, and if so, what their preferred method to be supported or guided is.

ICC Sydney is a highly accessible venue; however you may also wish to engage additional ushers or volunteers to assist people in navigating the venue. If so, consider placing people to help instruct or guide people at key navigation points, such as at elevators, escalators and walkway intersections.

2.2.1 VISUAL AND AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

Visual descriptions are an easy way to make a presentation more accessible for people who are Blind or Low Vision, or anyone that may benefit from descriptive information of visual features, from stage design to the physical attributes of a speaker. It is a simple yet effective and validating way to bring awareness while improving accessibility and inclusivity for your guests. An example of a visual description may be as follows "welcome to our conference, my name is Nadiah, I am standing in front of a screen on a large stage decorated with flowers. I have short dark hair, and I am wearing a blue suit.

For major events, you may wish to consider providing more detailed audio description of performances (or if relevant, video content) to include people by providing the ability to experience the visual elements of an event or performance. In this instance, a live narrator or audio recording describes what is visually happening.

2.3 LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

Engaging with culturally and/or linguistically diverse audiences involves catering to varying language preferences, cultural backgrounds and beliefs with the goal of ensuring everyone attending the event can fully participate and understand what is happening, regardless of their language abilities.

Simple actions such as translating your pre-event communications and asking presenters to provide their speeches before the event for sharing either in English or with a translation will allow you to make your event more accessible to your linguistically diverse audience by giving people time to process information more slowly in their own time, or even in their own language.

Depending on the numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse audiences you have you may also wish to engage an interpreter or explore opportunities to incorporate live captioning. Please speak to your ICC Sydney Audio Visual project manager for more information on how you can incorporate live captioning at your next event.

When addressing your culturally and linguistically diverse audience, the Australian Government has developed a guide to help you greet and talk to your guests in a way that is respectful and welcoming. You can read the guide [here](#).

3. INCLUSIVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

ICC Sydney practices inclusivity and accessibility across our social media platforms, ensuring all members of our audience benefit. The following section provides some tips for how you too can compile more accessible and inclusive social media posts.

Hashtags

A simple way of creating inclusive social media messaging is by capitalising the first letter of each word in hashtags associated with your event. This enables screen reader software as well as those that may have difficulty interpreting written material to read the hashtag as intended.

Language

Using plain language helps to ensure posts are easy to read and understand by people who may have learning disabilities or use English as a second language. Social posts should be written in active voice using uncomplicated words, short sentences, and be free of jargon and slang spelling.

Alt text and image descriptions

Alternative text (Alt text) and image descriptions allow those who use screen reader software to have images described to them. Alt text communicates the essential visual information of an image, its content and purpose, and is not normally visible to sighted readers. Image descriptions are more detailed and describe the visual elements of an image or graphic such as layout, colours, font, and someone's appearance. This normally appears in the body or caption of a social post, depending on the platform used. An example of alt text might be "woman standing on a stage" while an example of an image description may be "a woman is standing under a spotlight in the middle of an empty large stage. She is smiling warmly and is wearing a bright purple dress and has short dark hair".

Captions

Sharing videos on social media can drive better engagement, however studies show that up to 85 per cent of video content on social media is consumed with the sound off! To make your videos more accessible and inclusive, the addition of captions or subtitles are recommended. Captions can be either closed or open. Closed captions allow a user to select the option of captions while open captions are embedded within the video and play automatically for all users. Depending on your social media platform of choice, closed captions may or may not be supported.

There are many free online resources that can be used to generate subtitles and captions for your videos. Additionally, many social media platforms including offer free caption and subtitle tools, for more information, follow these links to the [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) how to guides for captions and subtitles.

3.2 SPEAKER AND EXHIBITOR COMMUNICATIONS

Garnering feedback in advance of your event can be helpful in determining any individual requirements for accessibility services or special accommodations. Some people may find it difficult to hold a microphone, stand for long periods of time, be exposed to bright lights, or reach a lectern. Some speakers may even prefer the freedom to walk around a stage rather than stand or sit still. We encourage you to enquire with each of your speakers as to their stage access, set-up and microphone preferences.

Here are a few simple ways you can help your speakers to feel more comfortable prior to and during their presentations:

- Microphones can be provided in a number of ways including stand, lectern, hand-held, or a lapel microphone and battery pack – please talk to your friendly Audio Visual project manager regarding these options

- Spotlights can help speakers who get nervous in front of a large crowd; however, others may find bright lighting uncomfortable. Where possible, please enquire with your speakers regarding any lighting preferences in advance
- Confirm your speaker is comfortable with the timing of their presentation, and that where applicable, appropriate rest breaks have been considered
- Chairs such as stools or bucket chairs can be provided on stage
- Visual countdown timers are provided in front of the stage. Enquire with your speakers if they require an audio queue instead of visual
- Lecterns at ICC Sydney are 123 cm to 127 cm tall. Risers can be provided for speakers who wish to be more elevated behind a lectern
- All permanent stages at ICC Sydney are fitted with wheelchair lifts as an alternative to stairs.

It is also beneficial to report back to your respondents to confirm how their needs have been met ahead of them attending your event.

In addition to the above, ICC Sydney's innovative Speaker Preparation Lounge and Connect Hub provide a space where speakers can prepare, practice, refresh and rest – we encourage you to make use of this excellent service to improve the experience for your speakers. The Speaker Preparation Lounge and Connect Hub is located on the ground floor of Convention, behind the Customer Service desk.

Additionally, it can be helpful to develop pre-event briefing notes to be shared with speakers, exhibitors, volunteers, and event staff to help share understanding and awareness of the individual needs and accommodations of people they may encounter during your event. We invite you to take relevant information from this guide to share as required to help ensure every guest feels welcome and included by all.

ICC Sydney has developed a detailed Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide to help guests plan their visit in advance, making their experience at ICC Sydney as comfortable and stress-free as possible. We welcome you to please also share the link to this online, [Accessibility and Inclusive Events Guide](#) with your event attendees.

3.3 GENERAL COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

When communicating directly with your speakers, customers, delegates or guests, there are a number of things you can consider to improve accessibility and inclusivity.

When developing e-resources such as newsletters, blogs or emails, the format should take into consideration the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG). WCAG is an international standard that works to ensure content is more accessible to people with disabilities.

It is recommended to provide a number of ways for speakers and participants to communicate with you. In addition to email, you may consider a dedicated phone number, an online chat window, or video call option.

4. HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Living with a hidden disability can make accessing events equitably and comfortably more difficult for people because it may be hard for others to recognise, acknowledge or understand the unique challenges they face. Did you know 90 per cent of the 4.4 million people with disabilities in Australia are people with a hidden disability? You can find out more about hidden disabilities from the University of Sydney, [here](#).

ICC Sydney is registered with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program, a globally recognised symbol for hidden or non-obvious disabilities.

By wearing a Sunflower lanyard, pin or wristband, people with hidden disabilities have the choice to let the people around them know they may require additional help, understanding, empathy, guidance, or patience.

Each person with a hidden disability will have their own unique needs. It may mean the person can't stand in a queue for a long time, may need the use of an accessible bathroom or sensory friendly room, patience when communicating, freedom to move around, or even freedom to excuse themselves from proceedings at any time. Be mindful to never ask a person wearing a Sunflower lanyard why they have chosen to wear this symbol. This is private and personal information. Instead, simply make an effort to warmly welcome them to your event and let them know you are here to assist, should they require.

You can read more about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program and how you can acquire Sunflower Lanyards for your next event at [Autism Spectrum Australia](#).

5. ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE VENUE FACILITIES

5.1 SENSORY FRIENDLY ROOMS

Our brains work to govern how we all react to sensory inputs, everything we hear, see, smell, taste and touch. For people who are neurodivergent, the way sensory inputs experienced may result in feelings of discomfort or distress. The way people experience the world is as unique as each individual.

“Sensory-friendly” often refers to a dedicated space that lacks overstimulating sensory input, or a space where people who are given the sensory input, can self-regulate or decompress. Where you provide a number of sensory input tools for guests, this may also be referred to as a Multi-Sensory Room.

A sensory friendly space typically comprises a room that is isolated from the main proceedings, its contents and set up may vary greatly, because each person with neurodivergent needs will likely have different sensory needs.

If you wish to establish an exclusive sensory friendly space for your event and guests, the University of Wollongong has compiled some helpful information regarding what you should consider (location, furnishings, lighting, equipment and more) during planning [here](#).

As a venue of choice for people with accessibility needs, ICC Sydney welcomes collaboration to help you develop a sensory friendly space for your event. Please discuss any sensory room needs with your helpful event planner who can assist with the identification of a suitable room, provision of basic furnishings, and access to the ICC Sydney Sensory Friendly Room Kit which includes a selection of typical sensory room accessories and devices. Please note that suitable rooms and the ICC Sydney Sensory Friendly Room Kit are subject to availability. It is recommended that you discuss any sensory friendly room needs early in your event planning process.

If establishing a sensory friendly space for the exclusive use of your guests is not feasible, ICC Sydney's Sensory Friendly Room can be found on Level 3 of the Exhibition Centre, near the Aware Super Theatre (Business Suite 3).

5.2 BATHROOMS FOR GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

ICC Sydney welcomes gender diverse people and encourages event organisers to consider if their delegation requires additional support to ensure everyone has equitable access to bathroom facilities. This may include providing communications and education that encourages your guests to use the bathroom that best aligns with their own gender identity. In addition, a number of unisex bathrooms are provided throughout the Convention Centre, Exhibition Centre and Aware Super Theatre. These can be used by any guest who may not feel comfortable accessing a gendered bathroom facility.

5.3 PRAYER ROOMS

Two Prayer Rooms are available at ICC Sydney for prayer, meditation, and reflection. The Prayer Rooms are non-denominational, however for those that require, a small number of prayer mats are provided in both rooms.

The two Prayer Rooms can be found on Level 3 of Exhibition Centre, opposite meeting room E3.5 and are always open and available to ICC Sydney guests.

5.4 OTHER

ICC Sydney is a purpose-built accessible venue. As demonstrated in this guide, ICC Sydney features vast range of built-in accessibility features, technologies to inclusionary spaces and event options that cater to all guests.

To assist ICC Sydney's guests plan their visit in advance and enjoy a comfortable, positive and equitable event experience a detailed [Accessibility and Inclusive Events Guide](#) for ICC Sydney guests has been developed. This guide provides advice to guests regarding: getting to the venue; navigating the venue once onsite; accessibility aids and devices; amenities; first aid access; accessible seating; and information on how the ICC Sydney Team are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion for all.

This guide can be found on the ICC Sydney website. We encourage you to share this guide widely with your team, contractors, and guests.

If you would like more information on how we can help you plan your next visit to ICC Sydney to meet your own or your guests unique accessibility and inclusionary needs, please reach out to your