CENTRE FOR ACCESSIBILITY | Celebrating an inclusive world

ANNUAL STORY 2018 –2020

Content

Image: Peter Blockey

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ABOUT
ACCESSIBILITY

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility is the ability for all people no matter their circumstances, to be able to gain access to information and spaces.

People usually have an understanding of physical access as wheelchair ramps and accessible bathrooms. Although we need to continue to improve access in the built environment, there is also a desperate need to inform and advocate for digital accessibility.

Digital accessibility

Imagine if you didn't have access to Netflix, or online banking, or online education or the ability to interact with social media. For people with disability, the internet represents more than the sum of its parts, its independence. Digital access is ensuring people with disability can navigate online spaces (web, apps and documents) and associated devices such as computers, smartphones and tablets.

Two essentials for effective digital access are:

• People with disability need accessibility support on their device of choice. This is usually in the form of software or hardware known as assistive technology.

• Content is created in a way that supports people with disability, including compatibility with assistive technology.

Physical accessibility

Physical accessibility refers to the design of spaces, buildings and environments to ensure they are usable by people with disability. Accessible design and development ensures direct access by people with disability. Accessibility can be simple things like tactile guidance at road crossings, or braille in lifts or toilets. These things are the difference between independent living or dependent living.

Accessibility is a human right.

Dr Scott Hollier, CEO of CFA Australia

Why is accessibility important?

4.4 million people of the Australian population have some form of permanent disability[1]

People with disability in Australia are three times as likely to avoid an organisation because of an organisation's negative diversity reputation[3]

Digital accessibility drives innovation that is widely used and influential[5]

Popular voice control technology
- Amazon Alexa
- Google Assistant
- Apple Siri
- Microsoft Cortana

Disability discrimination accounts for the highest volume of complaints across the board to the Australian Human Rights Commission[2]

Physical accessibility in developed countries (1.2 million public spaces)[4]

Not accessible
- 53% of educational facilities
- 31% of public toilets
- 20% of hospitals (not accessible for people with wheelchairs)
- 32% of public transportation facilities (not accessible for people with wheelchairs)
- 61% of underground train stations

Are accessible
- 81% of supermarkets
- 72% of banks
- 88% of automatic teller machines (ATMs)

Accessibility recognised by the United Nations as a priority[6]

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development disability is included in these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Goal 4. Quality Education
Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing needed assistance for persons with disabilities.

Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
Promoting inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market.

Goal 10. Reduced Inequalities
Emphasizing the social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Creating accessible cities and water resources; affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems; providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces.

Goal 17. Partnerships for the Goals
Underlining the importance of data collection and monitoring of the SDGs, emphasis on disability disaggregated data.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 9 – Accessibility[7]
Mentions the promotion of access for persons with disability to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the internet and the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information.

1 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. 2019. Australian Bureau of Statistics: www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#articles

2 Australian Human Rights Commission 2018-19 Complaint Statistics. 2019. Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-10/AHRC_AR_2018-19_Stats_Tables_%28Final%29.pdf

3 Missing out: The business case for customer diversity. 2017. Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/publications/missing-out-business-case-customer-diversity-2017

4 Accessibility and the status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: Report of the Secretary-General. 2019. United Nations General Assembly: Seventy-fourth session: undocs.org/A/74/146

5 The Business Case for Digital Accessibility. 2018. World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI): https://www.w3.org/WAI/business-case/

6 Infographic Disability-inclusive SDGs. 2020. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Disability: www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf

7 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. 2006. United Nations: https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf

What people have to say
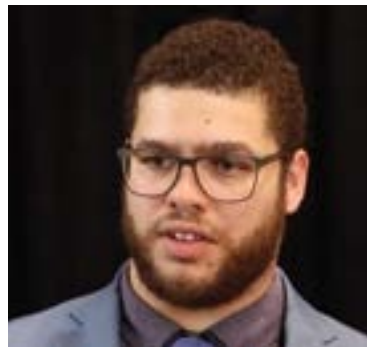
Jordan Steele-John
Senator for Western Australia

There is an old-fashioned idea that there's the real world and the digital world, but actually they are one and the same, they're inextricably linked. You can't have access barriers in either if you want to have an inclusive society.

Grace King
NDIS Planner

If you decide that you want to have a carousel that changes pictures so that my screen reader spits out random stuff while I'm shopping, I'm probably not going to be able to buy your product.

Gerry Neustatl
Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Design Lead, ABC

Online services like news, entertainment, communications, shopping and banking are for everyone, and everyone deserves access.
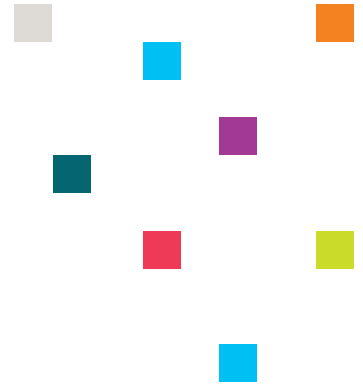
Helen Errington
Former Chair, DADAA

We have ambitions, hopes and dreams like all people. We want to come into life and be welcomed and included.

Adam Pengelly
Head of Lower Senior School, Shenton Park College

As a school that stands for inclusion, as a proudly public school, we are on the right journey, creating the most welcoming environment for kids to learn, and that's what a school should do.

Roman Karachevtsev
Senior Web Developer, Media on Mars

In the real world what you should care about is not just compliance, it is the way your product is being used, it's about user experience.

We need to make every single thing accessible to every single person with a disability.

Stevie Wonder, Musician

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ABOUT CFA AUSTRALIA

Accessibility isn't just about compliance. For myself being legally blind, accessibility is the difference between independently achieving my goals or struggling and relying heavily on others.

Dr Scott Hollier, CEO of CFA Australia

A message from our CEO

As a person with lived experience of disability, I've always been a firm believer that we should play with the cards life deals us.

It's fair to say that 2020 has dealt us quite a hand – a global pandemic, rising unemployment and Australia entering a recession. It may seem like an odd time to incorporate a new organisation. However, in many ways, the current climate highlights that Centre for Accessibility (CFA) Australia is needed now more than ever.

CFA Australia's story began in 2018 with the vision to support organisations to make their content accessible through an online toolkit. This continued into Australia's first digital access awards – 71 nominations came in across the country for an event that brought out the best in organisations across sectors. All of our work so far has been based on the hope that if we build it, people will come.

COVID-19 has strengthened the need for digital access; from working remotely, to online learning – our worlds shifted and became reliant on online delivery. The opportunities this creates are exciting, but it is also critical that people with disability can participate in these environments. During these difficult times, now more than ever, we need to ensure that no one gets left behind.

Dr Scott Hollier, CEO of CFA Australia

It is a basic right to access an essential service like the internet.

Jeff Gray, Web Developer

Image: Julia Hales interviewing Helen Errington.
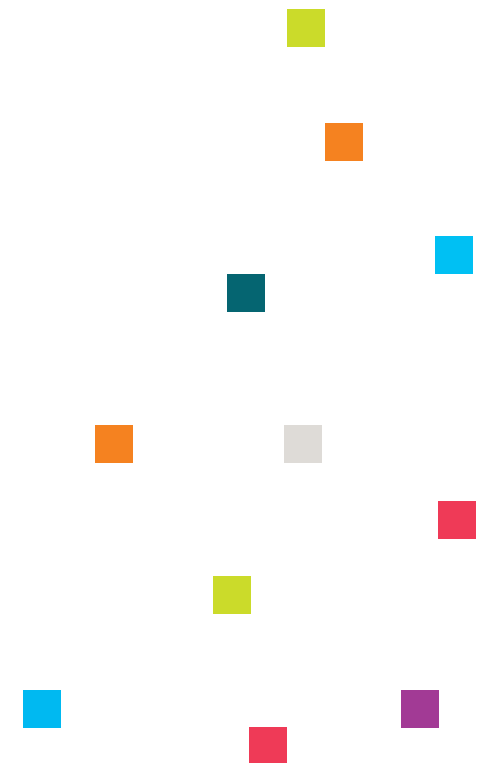
What is CFA Australia?

Centre for Accessibility Australia (CFA Australia) is an award-winning not-for-profit organisation that promotes accessibility throughout Australia.

Our current focus is the incorporation of digital accessibility, so that people with disability can have equal access to technology and the internet. Founded in 2018, the Centre was established to promote the accessibility movement through advocacy, training, research, auditing services and celebrations such as the Australian Access Awards.

The idea of accessibility as a movement stemmed from the need to change the conversation.

Kammi Rapsey, Principal of Media on Mars

The digital world is a rapidly changing environment that all of us increasingly rely upon. The reality is, for people living with disability, much of the internet remains inaccessible (despite the legal policies put in place to facilitate accessibility). To create a more inclusive world, CFA Australia aims to reduce the accessibility gap through positive reinforcement and by sharing success stories that highlight the importance of equal access.

What does CFA Australia do?

We empower the accessibility movement by advocating the implementation of universal equal access. Our vision is an inclusive world without accessibility barriers to content or spaces.

CFA Australia supports people with disability both directly – through the production of resources and our Assistive Technology Helpdesk – and indirectly by supporting mainstream organisations such as government agencies, corporates or education providers to become accessible.

**For content creators and organisations**

- Training to implement accessibility.
- Website auditing services to assess and improve their accessibility.
- Free accessible online resources to promote and respond to digital access.

For people with disability

- Free online resources for people with disability on assistive technology including how-to guides and product advice.
- A free Assistive Technology Helpdesk that provides information and assistance for people with disability.

For organisations and people with disability

- Advocate for equal access via our accessibility campaign.
- Empower digital content developers to implement accessibility when designing online resources.
- Celebrate accessibility success stories through the Australian Access Awards.
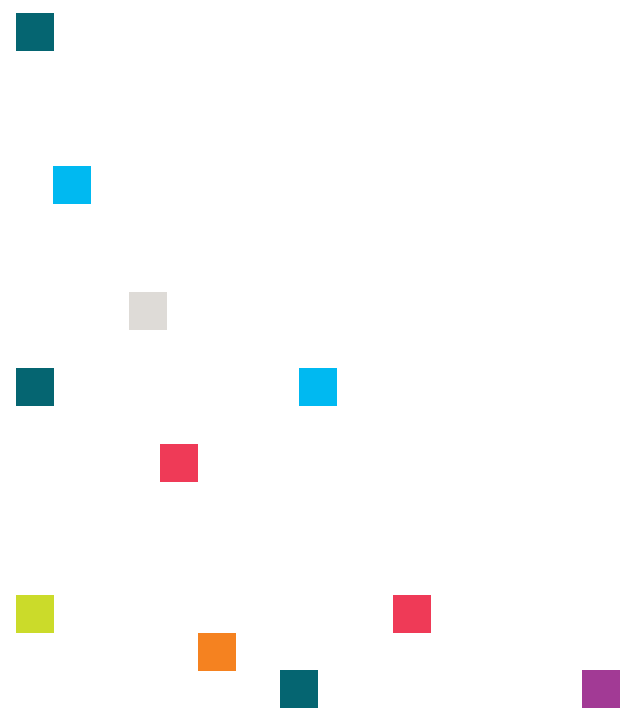
CFA Australia Board (L–R: Katherine Galvin, Stanley Lai, Dr Michelle Bunn, Jackie Weinman, Scott La Vertu, Marina Re, Stewart Luxton, Yuemai Lim, Dr Scott Hollier)

Meet the team

The board at CFA Australia is a diverse, knowledgeable volunteer team with extensive experience in fields of accessibility and disability services.

Board members

Marina Re · Chair

Katherine Galvin · Deputy Chair

Stanley Lai · Treasurer

Dr Michelle Bunn · Secretary

Scott La Vertu · Board Member

Yuemei Lim · Board Member

Stewart Luxton · Board Member

Jackie Weinman · Board Member

CFA Australia founding partners

Dr Scott Hollier

DADAA

Media on Mars

Membership

Be a part of the change that is needed to make the world more inclusive.

Friends of CFA Australia Membership Program

One of the common barriers to accessibility, as seen through our work in the sector, is the ability to provide affordable, ongoing support for organisations. We know accessibility is not static; it needs to be reviewed regularly as it continues to evolve and change.

As a way to support this journey, we have developed a Friends of CFA Australia Membership Program to offer organisations (and individuals) the opportunity to be at the forefront of accessibility. This is through access to affordable training and auditing, the ability to stay connected with the latest accessibility initiatives, and to be a part of a transformative social movement. Members receive significant benefits and directly support the employment of people with lived experience of disability.

This includes our free Assitive Technology Helpdesk, the development of consumer resources, and our focus on disability-led employment. In turn, this will provide you with firsthand knowledge of accessibility barriers and solutions.

We ask you to partner with us to reduce the accessibility gap and to create a more inclusive world. Together we will not just envision an inclusive world – we will make it happen.

Join the movement – find out more about our membership packages

Visit our website
accessibility.org.au/membership

Contact us
membership@accessibility.org.au

Membership Benefits
Friends of CFA Australia

- Accessibility Mini Quick Wins Review (Year 1)*
- Accessibility Mini Check-in Review (Year 2 onwards)*
- Free attendance to one half-day online or face-to-face CFA Australia training session (1 person per organisation)
- 10% discount on subsequent training sessions or for additional staff
- Accessibility Support Pack featuring 2 hours of support for business members (includes access to our disability-led hotline which can be used in 15 minute increments)*
- 20% discount on events
- 10% discount on speaking engagements
- Friends of CFA Australia badges that can be displayed in tender documents, marketing material and on your website
- An exclusive invite to our State of Accessibility Digital Address (twice a year)
- Access to the CFA Australia Newsletter 'Accessibility Tips and Tricks'

*Not included in the Individual Membership

Early Bird Pricing
Per annum / inc GST

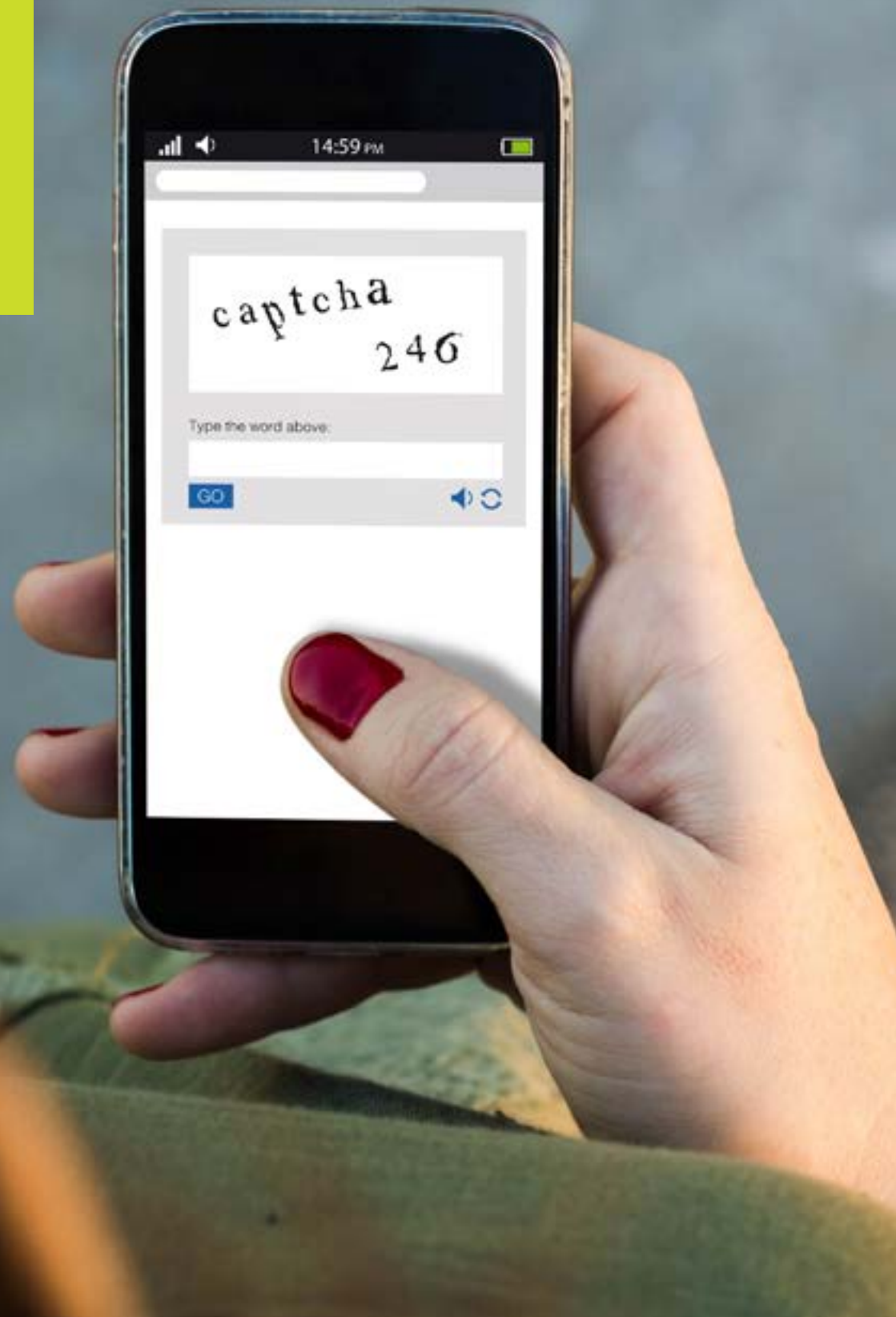|	Business Membership	Not-For-Profit Membership	Individual Membership
	$550	$440	$110

Accessibility is not a destination. It is a journey that needs ongoing support, development and priority.

Roman Karachevtsev, Senior Web Developer at Media on Mars

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CASE STUDIES

ReCAPTCHA challenges

Designed to be easy for humans and near impossible for robots. 'Completely Automated Public Turing Test, to Tell Computers and Humans Apart' (CAPTCHA) is a barrier for people who use assistive technology.

Many of us find typing a word from scribbly, pixelated letters or selecting all the pictures that contain buses or traffic lights annoying but relatively easy. The problem with CAPTCHA is that it assumes everyone is able to discern graphics, audio messages and can speak English – this is not the case for people who are vision or hearing impaired or utilise assistive technology.

Cody is a twenty two year-old who loves to listen to hip hop music. He is also visually impaired and utilises his screen reader when online. When his favourite band came to play in Perth, he was excited – and just as every other fan did, he waited for the tickets to be released online. He was ready to purchase them however, he could not get past the CAPTCHA form that was asking him to select which of the tiled images had buses in them. As his screen reader was unable to detect this, he sat in frustration, trying to get past the barrier CAPTCHA created. Eventually, he called a friend and asked if they could buy him a ticket as he couldn't complete the form. Unfortunately for

Cody, the tickets had sold out.
Accessibility advocate Chancey Fleet told the ABC that CAPTCHA is a form of 'encoded inhospitality', as the program is part of a larger pattern in tech culture that excludes people with disability and people who use assistive technology. Traditionally, CAPTCHA has protected users' data; as a security program, it is becoming increasingly unreliable and ineffective. Working with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Dr Scott Hollier has written advice for web designers (that aligns with the WCAG 2.1 guidelines) suggesting that people with disability who use assistive technology need to be included as part of the process of creating and testing user experience.

To truly enable an accessible experience, people with disability have to have a leading role in the creation of software that would allow them to access content without barriers. CFA Australia aims to ensure people with disability are employed in areas that affect them, and are a part of accessibility initiatives.

CASE STUDY

Parliament House

Previously, if you were someone who used assistive technology to access the Western Australian Parliament House website, you would have found it either impossible or incredibly difficult to access any information on the website; you would not be able to read certain documents or view the sitting calendar.

Considering an estimated 1 in 5 Australians have a disability, CFA Australia's CEO Dr Scott Hollier provided invaluable assistance to the Parliament's project team in implementing the proposed changes to the website.

Redesigning the WA Parliament House website to be accessible also involved training and upskilling staff to create accessible resources and documents. The website now follows the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0. Some changes included simplifying discourse for people watching or reading resources to captioning educational videos for people with auditory impairment.

'From the conception, design and delivery our staff wanted to make sure that there were no issues or barriers to access for members of the community,' said President of the Legislative Council Kate Doust.

Making the Parliament House website accessible was a huge step in enabling political participation for people with disability. The process of upskilling staff, making people aware of digital accessibility, and having people with lived experience of disability at the forefront of the changes reflects CFA Australia's mission. Our priority is to restructure the definition of digital access to mean more than just compliance. As citizens of Australia and participants in society, people with disability have the right to access to information that concerns their future.

CASE STUDY

Coles vs Gisele Mesnage

Since birth, Gisele Mesnage has been legally blind. She uses a screen reader to access websites and information online, grocery shopping is a daily task she completes through the Coles website.

Over the course of a decade, Gisele and Coles discussed and negotiated the website's accessibility. What started in 2008 as a glitch in choosing a delivery time, and then an inaccessible website upgrade on Coles behalf in 2013, led to an unsuccessful case in front of the Australian Human Rights Commission and then a court battle over discrimination.

'[I want] Coles and other online shopping services to remember that there are blind and vision impaired clients using their website and [they] need to be accessible to us,' said Gisele.

In 2015 the court battle ended with Gisele and Coles amicably settling. Coles agreed to make accessibility changes to their website based on the needs/suggestions from Gisele. They thanked Gisele for 'the work she has done to improve accessibility for Australians.'

In 2019, CFA Australia held its first biennial Australian Access Awards. Gisele nominated the Coles online shopping website for Corporate Website of the Year—which they won. This is not only a testament to the work that Coles has done in championing digital accessibility, but to Gisele's efforts to make accessibility visible to organisations that provide essential resources and services.

Both Coles and Gisele (through her organisation Digital Gap Initiative) continue to break down accessibility barriers and develop new initiatives in digital accessibility.

Timeline

2008 Initial glitch reported by Gisele to Coles

2010 Coles fix the problem

2013 Coles upgrade their website making it inaccessible (Gisele takes her case unsuccessfully to AHRC)

2014 Gisele takes Coles to court for discrimination

2015 Gisele and Coles amicably settle with Coles agreeing to make changes

2019 Gisele nominates Coles for an Australian Access Award (Corporate Website of the Year) and they win

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What does accessibility mean in an emergency situation? It means life or death. If you can't access critical information about a bushfire, then you can't act fast enough to survive.

Senator Jordan Steele-John, Senator for Western Australia

TIMELY TOPIC

Accessibility in times of crisis

Emergencies and disasters can strike at any time. In these situations, people with disability are often forgotten or are left without an emergency plan.

The effects of both the 2019-20 Australian bushfires and COVID-19 show that people with disability and the organisations that assist them require support, resources and advocacy in order to be prepared for an emergency.

In the context of digital accessibility, COVID-19 has created more opportunities to work from home. People with disability, who may have previously been overlooked by employers, have the potential to participate in meaningful employment. As software and assistive technology devices have improved, so too has the opportunity for people with disability to work in varying fields with many different skills.

The current pandemic emphasises the need for digital accessibility to be implemented at every opportunity. A good example of accessibility during these difficult times was how the Western Australian Government utilised an Auslan interpreter at every media conference on COVID-19 and the bushfires of 2021. This ensured that everybody was able to access critical information during a potentially dangerous time.

Actions taken around the world to address COVID-19 accessibility[8]

- **USA** Some organisations offer COVID-19 testing at home for persons with disabilities
- **Sweden** Government agencies are making more information accessible such as text and sign-interpreted press conferences and information posted in easy to read formats

8 Inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities: Report of the Secretary-General. 2020. United Nations General Assembly: Seventy-fifth session: https://undocs.org/A/75/187
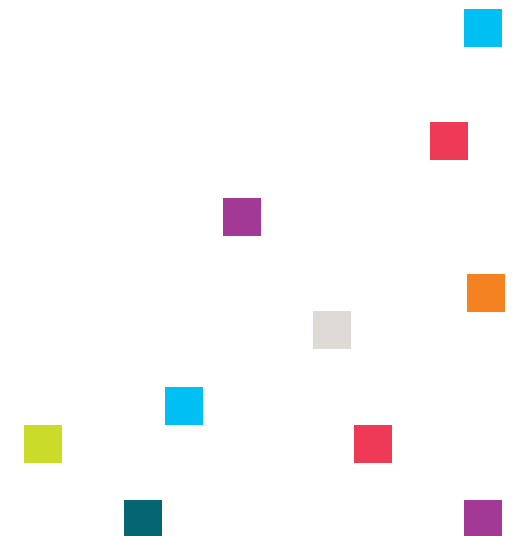
RECOGNITION

Australian Access Awards

We were excited to present the inaugural Australian Access Awards in 2019. This biennial event celebrates organisations that implement accessibility in their digital campaigns and resources.

2019 Australian Access Awards

As the first ever accessibility awards in Australia we questioned if there was enough interest in the concept. Plenty of people told us we were crazy to try and so with trepidation we posted our first call for nominations. Just three months in we were astounded by the postive response. Nominations had arrived from around the country, from a wide cross section including ABC, Coles, ANZ and Shenton College. It seems that recognising people for their great work is an effective way of creating momentum for a good cause.

Independent judges from across the accessibility sector based their decisions on the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) WCAG 2.1 standards. The judging panel selected sample web pages or apps for assessment based on a sliding scale of 1–5.

It was a wonderful event commending and acknowledging the efforts of our finalists, winners, organisers, and the passion that everyone involved had put in to champion digital accessibility. We were also delighted to recognise Gian Wild (AccessibilityOZ) as Accessibility Person of the Year for her tireless commitment to the accessibility movement. For a full list of winners see our website.

2021 Australian Access Awards

CFA Australia is proud to announce the return of this celebrated biennial event in 2021. The Awards play an important role in creating systemic change for people with disabilities by shifting the conversation. We want to reward the organisations and businesses who make positive changes in digital accessibility, rather than have them face legal action. The 2019 Awards sparked an important conversation about the progress being made around digital accessibility and the things that need to change.

In 2021, we encourage everyone to push the boundaries and think about how people with disability can truly interact and participate with their digital resources – accessibility impacts us all.

The call for nominations will open on the 20th of May 2021, coinciding with Global Accessibility Awareness Day. We've already had an influx of nominations, and invite everyone to participate and nominate.

We wish all the participants the best of luck.

Shortlisted participants and winners at the 2019 Australian Access Awards Ceremony.

The Australian Access Awards signify an exciting beginning – coming together and saying, how can we work and collaborate together? Access is a fundamental human right. Inclusion is non-negotiable.

Senator Jordan Steele-John, Senator for Western Australia

TELSTRA

vodafone

OPTUS

amaysim

BELONG

ANNUAL FOCUS

Accessibility in the telecommunications industry

CFA Australia was awarded a grant from Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) to address key accessibility issues.

Accessibility is often perceived as difficult, expensive and hard to understand. The contexts in which we talk about it are usually disconnected from the real people with lived experiences of disability whose daily lives are affected.

CFA Australia was awarded an ACCAN grant to research and address key accessibility issues experienced by people with disability on leading telecommunications providers websites (such as accessing data usage information). The project includes Telstra, Vodafone, Optus, Belong and Amaysim.

We will assess the level of user accessibility of these websites against the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 and will provide training to these organisations so they will be able to improve and maintain standards.

A sector-wide report will be released mid-year to provide insights into digital accessibility and disability user experience. So far, the project has been positively received and CFA Australia is excited to be working with the telecommunications industry to upgrade accessibility and improve the sector.

Our next focus will be on digital accessibility in the education and banking sectors.

If I can't access my bills online, I can't pay them.

Grace King, NDIS Planner
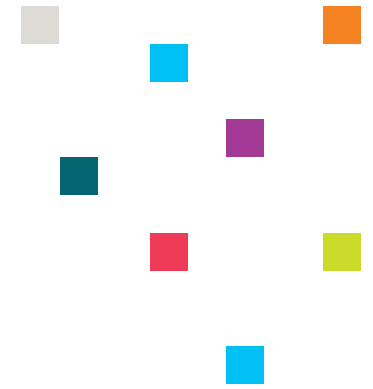
Our next steps

Over the next year we plan on growing the accessibility movement and continuing to advocate for universal access.

Our annual focus

Over the next year we plan on conducting research to address accessibility issues in the education and banking sectors.

Build advocacy capacity

We will develop resources and projects to build capacity for people with disability to improve their ability to access content and self-advocate.

Gather data and knowledge

Through research partnerships, disability-led consultations and evaluations we aim to further understand the state of accessibility in Australia.

Increase employment opportunities for people with disability

Provide accessible, affordable training and workshops for organisations to encourage accessible workplaces and employment of people with disability.

Spark and nurture the accessibility movement

Provide opportunities for people to become actively involved in the movement, and celebrate the good work being done as a way of continuing the accessibility conversation.

Once you see accessibility, you can't unsee it. Our hope is this movement will dramatically improve the lives of people with disability all around the world.

Dr Scott Hollier, CEO of CFA Australia

CFA Australia empowered by Make it Happen

Make it Happen is a social impact venture of Media on Mars designed to ensure good projects get off the ground – and that they are designed for success.

Changing the world, one project at a time.

Make it Happen is grounded in the belief that long-term partnerships and relationship driven collaborations facilitate innovative and inspiring solutions to complex challenges.

Make it Happen is a social impact accelerator designed to drive positive change and measurable impact. In a world where real impact is urgently needed but often hard won we felt compelled to use our skills as communicators to find new way of collaborating for change.

For more information on this venture visit makeithappen.org.au

makeithappen.org.au

make it happen

The Centre for Accessibility Australia is an award-winning not-for-profit that promotes accessibility throughout Australia. We believe accessibility is about more than compliance; it's about people. **accessibility.org.au**