Style Guide

August 2020

Contents

1   Introduction

Effective communication is fundamental to achieving the aims and objectives of the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission).

Written communication is essential for building awareness of rights and freedoms across the community and encouraging a culture of respect and responsibility that values dignity.

Clear communication means that all publications reach our intended audiences and are easily understandable and consistent.

This Style Guide covers a number of critical areas essential for effective communications, including:

- content structure
- writing style
- accessibility and inclusivity
- punctuation and grammar
- terms and phrases
- numbers and measurements
- formatting
- clear and consistent referencing.

The Commission mainly follows the Content Guide produced by the Commonwealth Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), and aligns with the Australian Government digital style guide, available at: https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/ The Australian Government style guide provides useful detail and examples across a number of topics covered in this guide.

The primary role of the DTA is to help non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake digital transformation and meet the digital service standard relating to the design of simple, clear and fast content.

The Commission has incorporated, where appropriate, the DTA Content Guide into its style guide. The most frequently used style conventions are included in these guidelines with additional guidance available at https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/.

Where the DTA Content Guide is not specific about how to do something, the Commission uses the *Commonwealth Style manual for authors, editors and printers* to guide its decisions.

2   Content Structure

When structuring a document it is important to consider the variety of devices used to access it, including mobile phones, tablet devices, laptops and desktop computers. This consideration affects the layout of the document.

2.1   Templates

When creating a new document you must select one of the Commission templates. Commission templates have the required style elements and layout, paragraphs and spacing, headers and footers, and page numbers preset in them. Using templates allows the Commission to achieve consistency and quality in its documentation, and efficiently producing documents without having to spend time thinking about style issues.

Templates are available for a range of written communications including:

- commission reports
- submissions
- letters to be printed
- letters to be sent electronically
- legal advice
- memos
- coversheets
- event invitations
- media releases
- presentations.

To access a Word template, open Word and select:

> File > New > My templates > [template title].doc

To access a PowerPoint presentation template, open PowerPoint and select:

> File > New > My templates > Commission Presentation.ppt

2.2   Publication titles

All publications must have a clear and concise title that conveys the main message and purpose of the document. Ideally, the title describes the document type. The correct heading styles are included in the Commission templates.

For example:

> Good practice guidelines for internal complaint processes

Ending workplace sexual harassment: a resource for small, medium and large employers.

Use minimal capitalisation in publication titles. Only capitalise the first word of a title, any proper nouns and names. Titles of annual reports, inquiries, legislation, programs or campaigns can be capitalised.

For example:

Annual Report: 2018–2019

Native Title and Social Justice Report 2018

Children's Rights Report 2018

The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention (2014)

2.3   Headings

Headings are important signposts for readers. Scanning headings can provide a quick understanding of the content.

To be effective, headings have a logical hierarchy and use clear and concise wording. They are short and succinct enough to stand alone when read out of context, for example in search results and on social media.

As with publication titles, unless they are proper nouns, words in headings are not capitalised.

Good example	Poor example
Agenda	What is the Commission's agenda?
Priorities	What are our priorities?
Strategic goals	Strategic goals of the Commission
Organisational structure	How is our organisation structured?

Heading hierarchy is through numbering and variation in font size and style. The correct heading styles are included in the Commission templates. To make sure you are using the correct heading level and style, select 'Heading 1' from the 'styles' bar at the top of your screen. To create later sub-headings, select 'Heading 2' and 'Heading 3'.

Heading	Example
Heading 1 (Numeral) Bold open sans 18 point	**1 First heading level**
Heading 2 (Decimal) Bold open sans 14 point	**1.1 Second heading level**
Heading 3 (Alphabet) open sans 12 point	(a) Third heading level
Heading 4 (Roman numeral) open sans 12 point	Forth heading level
Heading 5 (Dash) open sans 12 point	- Fifth heading level

2.4 List of contents and page numbers

Title the list of contents as 'Contents' rather than 'Table of Contents'.

The contents list sets out the main divisions and subdivisions of the document. Do not extend beyond three heading levels. For example, chapter heading, section heading and subsection heading.

Commission templates have page numbers preset in them. When using the templates, you will see the right hand pages of documents take the odd numbers in the right hand corner and the left hand pages take the even numbers in the left hand corner.

2.5 Font

Consistent with the DTA Design Guide, the Commission uses Open Sans in all documents created by the Commission, including electronic communication such as emails.

Open Sans is a sans-serif font selected for accessibility and readability. The standard font size for text in the body of a document is 12 point Open Sans and is preset into all templates. It is the 'Normal' font size in the 'styles' bar at the top of your screen.

2.6 Endnotes

The Commission uses endnotes not footnotes. Footnotes pose accessibility issues for people with vision impairment.

In text, the endnote reference goes at the end of a sentence, quote or bullet point. It follows any punctuation marks. There is no space between the punctuation mark and the endnote.

All Commission templates are preset with the style for endnotes. When using the template, the endnote reference is 10 point in the text and 10 point in the reference list.

2.7 Paragraphs and spacing

When using a Commission template, you will see that:

- the text in the body of the document is left justified, with single spacing
- paragraphs automatically have a 12 point space before and after each return, do not put an extra space between paragraphs
- line spacing between bullet points is set at 6 points after the bullet.

New paragraphs are not indented and start on the left margin of the page. Do not add an indent with a tab space.

Use only one space between a full stop and the beginning of a new sentence.

Avoid using sentences with multiple clauses.

Use short, simple paragraphs.

Limit paragraphs to two or three sentences containing one idea or break text up into bullet point lists.

2.8   Bullet points and numbering

When inserting bullet points or numbers use the automatic 'Bullets' and 'Numbering' tools in Word.

Use bullet points rather than numbers or letters in lists because they are easier to read and take up less space.

In cases where it is necessary to show priority or chronology, or when you need to identify items for later reference, use numbers and letters.

When using numbers or letters, use the following multilevel list:

1. Agenda
2. Work plan
3. Strategic goals
    a) Goal 1: Leadership
    b) Goal 2: Rights and freedoms are protected

There are some general rules for punctuation when using bullet points:

- If each bullet point is a full sentence, then capitalise at the beginning. Do not capitalise if the points are a fragment of the sentence.
- Avoid punctuating between bullet points unless they are full sentences. Do not use a semi colon or comma to separate points.
- Put a full stop at the end of the final bullet point.
- Do not put 'comma and' at the second last dot point.

2.9   Headers and footers

A header with 'Australian Human Rights Commission' right justified, in Open Sans 11 point is included in all Commission templates.

For some templates, where the header has a document title and date, fill them both in. Open Sans 9 point and bold for the title and Open Sans 9 point for the date are set in the template.

2.10   Formatting

This section outlines the accepted conventions.

(a)   Italics

Don't use italics when another style or formatting option is available, because screen readers interpret italics in different ways. For example, single quotation marks can work for emphasis unless they're serving a different stylistic use.

Use italics when referring to the title of:

- published documents such as books, reports, magazines, community guides, fact sheets, newspapers and journals
- case names and the names of tribunal determinations and rulings
- acts and regulations (but not bills)
- treaty names
- UN guidelines, principles and declarations.

Capitalise, but do not italicise, when referring to the name of:

- bills of parliament
- organisations
- government departments
- committees
- guidelines, standards and codes
- projects, dialogues and campaigns
- conferences, forums, workshops and seminars
- chapters in books
- journal article titles.

(b)   Bold

Use bold sparingly, for headings and if applicable, key terms. For example, in an easy read document, 'difficult words' (three syllables or more) are written in bold.

(c)   Underline

Do not underline or underscore any text. Underlining makes text look like a link and can make text harder to read.

2.11   Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks automatically appear with underlining. Use precise link text. Think about the user and their context when reading information. Do not use terms such as 'click here', 'read more' or 'useful links'.

3   Writing Style

3.1   Using plain English

Writing in plain English means using simpler and more direct language. Plain English improves readability for all users. Recommended strategies for writing in plain English include:

- use familiar words that readers will understand
- be clear and precise in your statements
- vary sentence length, but keep them concise
- use active voice rather than passive voice
- use verbs instead of nouns based on verbs (for example, 'explain' rather than 'provide an explanation', 'apply' rather than 'make an application')
- avoid using euphemisms, clichés and jargon
- avoid using adjectives and adverbs which can reveal opinion, bias and subjectivity (for example, extremely, always)
- avoid convoluted sentences such as double negatives (for example, 'not unlikely').

3.2   Active voice

Use active voice instead of passive voice in all Commission documents.

Active voice	Passive voice
The President announced today	The announcement was made by the President
The President signed the contract this morning	The contract was signed this morning by the President

Active voice generally encourages the use of stronger verbs and brings an action to life. It gives clarity and directness.

Passive voice can create ambiguity by suppressing or hiding responsibility for an action.

4   Accessibility and inclusivity

4.1   Accessibility

All documents produced by the Commission must be easily accessible to those with a disability. This is a legal obligation under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

All documents and publications produced by the Commission must be accessible and in a format suitable for screen readers.

Always use a Commission template as it is preset with all style requirements.

When screen reader or text-to-speech software are used or where images fail to load or are disabled, alternative text must appear for the user (in Word, right click on the object and select: *'Format object > Alt Text'*).

Recommended strategies for making information accessible:

- use a simple table structure
- avoid image watermarks
- use plain English and avoid jargon
- create a contents list for longer documents
- minimise the use of columns
- avoid text boxes
- use endnotes.

4.2   Inclusive language

Commission publications always use inclusive language. Language must be non-discriminatory and sensitive to a group's preferences when writing about them.

Language and terminology changes, so that a term considered acceptable a few years ago may differ from the currently accepted term.

Take particular care when referring to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- people with disability
- sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

    Avoid gender and age-specific language.

The Australian Government digital style guide also provides further advice on inclusive language at https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/format-writing-and-structure/inclusive-language.

(a)   First Australians, First Nations, First Peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous Australians

The terms 'First Australians', 'First Nations', 'First Peoples' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' (note the plural) include distinct and diverse cultural groups. These terms do not represent a homogenous group. Always ask for people's preferences about what they want to be called or how they want to identify. It is usually more respectful to be specific. While the term 'Indigenous Australians' is in common use, many First Australians may not be comfortable

with it. It's best only to use 'Indigenous Australians' when writing generally about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Do not use:

- Aboriginals, Aborigine—these words are associated with colonisation and assimilation and are distressing to many people
- ATSI —the acronym ATSI is now considered disrespectful
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Use the word 'Indigenous' (with capital 'I') in the following contexts:

- Indigenous Affairs (when referring to government departments or policy)
- non-Indigenous.

Use lower case 'i' in the international context of indigenous peoples.

(b)   Referring to people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

You can use the general term 'multicultural communities' to write about people from different cultural backgrounds. You can also use the phrase 'people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)', but the acronym 'CALD' should be avoided unless you're speaking to a specialist audience.

CALD describes people who identify as having a specific cultural or linguistic affiliation due to their place of birth, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, language(s) spoken at home, or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.

To refer to people who have recently arrived in Australia, use the words:

- 'migrants'
- 'immigrants'
- 'new arrivals'.

These words don't say anything about a person's culture or language. Don't use these words once people have settled and become Australian citizens. They suggest a temporary or marginal status.

(c)   Referring to people with disability

Note that preferred terminology varies internationally. In the the United Kingdom, the social model terminology is 'disabled people'. This is also called 'identity first' language – it acknowledges disability as an important aspect of a person's identity.[1]

In Australia, the widely accepted social model terminology for individuals is 'person with disability' or 'people with disability', and is the Commission's preferred usage. When referring to people with disability as a plural, use the phrase 'people with disability'. When referring to a person, use the phrase 'person with a disability'.

You can also state the specific disability, but you must use the appropriate terminology. For example, write 'child with autism' not 'autistic child'.

Our preferred terminology	Terminology to be avoided
person with a disability	disabled person, handicapped person
people with a disability	disabled, handicapped
access for people with disability	disabled access
accessible parking/toilet/entrance	disabled parking/toilet/entrance
has a disability	suffers from a disability, victim of a disability
person with a developmental disability	developmentally delayed
person with a psychiatric disability, person with a mental illness, person who has [name of diagnosis or condition]	mentally ill, insane, crazy
person with a vision impairment, person with a hearing impairment	visually impaired, hearing impaired

person with an intellectual disability person with a cognitive impairment	retarded, delayed, slow, intellectually disabled, has a mental age of #
students with disability, passengers with disability, customers with disability	disabled students, disabled passengers, disabled customers
wheelchair user, person who uses a wheelchair	wheelchair bound, confined in a wheelchair, in a wheelchair

(d)   Referring to sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics (SOGISC)

In 2017, the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) developed guidelines for APF member national human rights institutions (NHRIs) on mainstreaming work relating to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGISC). The Commission uses the terms and definitions included in the APF guidelines.

SOGISC terms and definitions:

Sexual orientation refers to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, another person. A person who is attracted solely to someone of the same sex might identify as gay or, if female, as lesbian. Someone who is attracted to another person regardless of their sex, might use the term bisexual.
Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being a man or a woman or a third or other alternative gender, or a combination of genders. Transgender, trans and gender diverse are three umbrella terms to describe people whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth.
A related term is gender expression. It refers to a person's ways of communicating masculinity or femininity (or both or neither) externally through physical appearance (including clothing, hairstyles and the use of cosmetics) and mannerisms, ways of speaking and behavioural patterns when interacting with others. As gender expression is visible, it is often an element in discrimination

against any lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) person who is considered to be stepping outside gender-based norms.

Sex characteristics refers to the chromosomal, gonadal and anatomical features of a person. Some are primary characteristics (for example, reproductive organs, genitalia, chromosomes, and hormones). Some are secondary characteristics (such as muscle mass, hair distribution or breast development). Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

Umbrella identity terms such as LGB, T and/or I include anyone who shares a specific characteristic. They do not replace local terms from a specific cultural tradition or language, including terms that have existed for a long time.

Use umbrella terms accurately. For example, a broad umbrella term such as SOGISC (or SOGIESC to encompass gender expression too) or LGBTI is appropriate when the work covers all of these issues and communities. Otherwise, it is better to use narrower terms to reflect the particular focus of your work.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are each a spectrum. They are not limited to two binary concepts such as homosexual or heterosexual, female or male, feminine or masculine. Similarly, there is a broad range of variations in sex characteristics.

Replace masculine and feminine pronouns (he, his, him; she, her, hers) wherever possible with gender-neutral language (unless referring to a specific person).

'They' (and them, their, theirs) is now acceptable even for a singular subject. For example, 'Each participant indicated their preferences' is preferable to 'Each participant indicated his or her preferences'. You can also use 'themselves' or 'themself' instead of 'himself' or 'herself'. 'Themself' is an extension of using 'they' for a single person.

Note that the prefix 'Mx' can be used to refer to non-binary people and those who do not wish to be referred to by their gender. Use 'Mx' when a person indicates this is what they prefer, but not otherwise.

Where possible, avoid the issue of pronoun disagreement by rephrasing the sentence or use plural.

Alternatives to gender-specific pronouns:

Alternatives to gender-specific pronouns	Examples
Recast the sentence in the plural	Employees must provide copies of the application to their managers.
Leave the pronoun out altogether	Every employee must provide copies of the application to managers.
Recast the sentence to avoid pronouns (Example of the limited use of passive voice)	Copies of applications must be provided to managers.
Repeat the noun	Every employee must provide copies of the application to the employee's manager.
Replace with a personal pronoun such as you/your or they/their	You must provide copies of applications to your manager. They must provide copies of applications to their managers.

5   Punctuation and grammar

Use the following advice about punctuation and grammar when drafting Commission documents.

5.1   Capitalisation

Generally, keep capitalisation to a minimum. Capital letters are hard to read. Capitalise the first word and then use lower case for the rest. With acronyms, capitalise if the shortened form is for a proper noun, but not otherwise, so for example 'NSW' is 'New South Wales', but 'EIS' is 'environmental impact statement'.

5.2   Apostrophes (')

Use the apostrophe with possessives and contractions.

a) Possessive

Use the apostrophe to show when singular or plural common nouns are possessive. Use the following rules in these instances:

Use of apostrophes	Examples
Singular common nouns Singular common nouns ending in 's'	the Australian Government's policies the atlas's size the lens's range
Plural common nouns	children's rights
Plural common nouns ending in s	the students' answers the Commissioners' reports
Personal names	Fiona's work Chris's work
Names of institutions Note: possessive apostrophe not required unless it forms part of the formal name. Check to see if it forms part of the formal name.	Teachers Federation Women Lawyers' Association
Compound titles Note: apostrophe 's' on the final word	the Leader of the Opposition's statement

b) Contractions

Do not use contractions. On the rare occasion where you do use them, use an apostrophe for contractions. The apostrophe appears precisely in the position of the omitted letters. For example:

it's	it is *or* it has
we'll	we will *or* we shall
they've	they have
can't	can not
he'd	he would *or* he had
aren't	are not. g

Note that the word 'its' is a possessive pronoun meaning 'belonging to'. There are seven possessive pronouns in modern English: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, and theirs. A possessive pronoun never takes an apostrophe.

5.3   Full stops (.)

A full stop is the standard mark to end a sentence. Use only one space after a full stop. Do not use a full stop after headings or in page headers.

Use full stops as a decimal point in numbers, in expressions of time (9.30 am) or in numbering sections of a document (for example, 3.4 Sentence punctuation).

5.4   Question marks and exclamation marks (? !)

Question marks always follow direct questions and rhetorical questions. Do not use question marks after indirect questions or requests seeking no response.

Do not use exclamation marks in formal Commission documents.

5.5   Ampersands (&)

Do not use an ampersand in a sentence, except if it is part of an organisation's name. Limit the use of ampersands in headings, subheadings, navigation labels or graphics.

5.6   Gerunds (-ing)

Avoid using gerunds (-ings) where possible.

For example:

'The system **uses** data that can be easily updated' rather than 'The system requires **using** data that can be easily updated'

5.7   At symbols (@)

Use the '@' symbol in email addresses and social media handles only.

5.8   Hyphens (-)

Hyphens are useful for clarifying meaning or preventing misreading. Use the following rules when using hyphens:

Use of hyphenation	Examples
Clarifying meaning	re-signed (signed again) not resigned (relinquished)
Prefix followed by capital letter	non-Indigenous
Doubled-up vowels (last letter of the prefix is a vowel and the following word begins with the same vowel)	Pre-eminent not preeminent
Verb-plus-adverb compound	go-ahead, make-up, look-out
Noun-plus-noun compound	city-state, owner-occupier
Noun compound in a prepositional phrase	editor-in-chief, mother-in-law
Co- (joint) or ex- (former) formation	co-worker, ex-president
Compound adjective consisting of two adjectives or a noun-plus-adjective	blue-green algae large-scale development
Compound adjective consisting of short adverbial phrases	an up-to-date account, 18 year old woman
Compound adjective involving numbers	20-year history, four-part series

5.9   En-dashes (–)

Insert an en-dash in Microsoft Word in the following ways:

* use the shortcut keys 'Ctrl' + 'Num-'
* use the shortcut keys 'Alt' + 'Ctrl' + '0150'.

An en-dash (–) can be used to indicate:

* a span of time and ranges of numbers (e.g. 2018–2019)
* an entity composed of equal units (e.g. the Murray–Darling Basin)
* an interruption or parenthetical remark.

En-dashes for spans of time and ranges:

An unspaced en-dash between two numbers or dates indicates a span of time or a range of numbers, for example:

'There were 25–30 head of cattle in quarantine in June.' (number range)
ss 13–17 (page range)
April–June (time period)
2012–2014 (time period)*

*Note that year ranges should use the full year either side of the en-dash.

En-dashes for an entity composes of equal units (co-ordinate nouns)

Use en-dashes between two nouns than both retain their original meaning. These are called 'coordinate nouns'. For example:

The Murray–Darling Basin [The Murray River and the Darling River combine to form the basin river system.]

A Sydney–Melbourne flight [Sydney and Melbourne combine to form a single travel route.]

En dashes for interruptions or parenthetical remarks

It's now recommended to use a spaced en-dash to indicate an interruption in a sentence, in place of a colon, or in pairs on both sides of a parenthetical remark. The shift from em-dash to en-dash reflects contemporary writing practice and the new focus on digital content. Examples:

- There was no time to plan – a shortcoming that would later cost millions. [interruption]
- The message was clear – it was time for change. [in place of a colon]
- Three rivers – the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee – were discussed in the report. [parenthetical remark]

5.10 Em-dashes (—)

In Microsoft Word, insert em-dashes in the following ways:

- type two hyphens in a space and continue with the next word—Word autoFormat will insert an em (—) dash over the hyphens
- use the shortcut key Alt+Ctrl+ 'Num-'

Em-dashes are used to show a sudden interruption in quotations and reported speech, or to show when information has been omitted.

Em-dashes for sudden interruptions

Use 2 em dashes in a row. The 2 em dashes follow a space.

E.g:

'Any more questions before ——' [The double em dashes show an interruption in a quotation.]

Em-dashes to show omission of information

If using em-dashes also show when a name or other information is omitted in normal paragraph text (this can be useful when something needs to be withheld for privacy or other legal reasons) use a space if the em dashes replace a whole word, but don't include a space between the dashes and part of the word. Ellipses (…) cannot be used for this purpose, as they show the writer has deliberately left out quoted speech.

E.g: The deed, signed by ——, was legally binding.

S—— signed the deed in 2017.

Use of the em-dash outside of Commission publications

While still correct, it is no longer the Commission's preferred usage to use an em-dash to:

- to indicate an interruption in a sentence,

- in place of a colon,
- or in pairs on both sides of a parenthetical remark

An em-dash may be used in these scenarios where this style is required, as is the case for some journals, but should otherwise be avoided as it is less compatible with digital content. Importantly, whichever style is adopted for a document must be applied consistently throughout.

5.11 Colons (:)

Use a colon after a statement to add information or to introduce indented material such as block quotations or dot-points.

Use of colons	Examples
Amplifying, summarising or contrasting information	We were concerned: the number of discrimination complaints had dramatically risen. Note: You could also use em—dash here instead of a colon.
Introducing a series of items	Four portfolios were discussed: • age discrimination • disability • children's rights • sex discrimination.
Introducing block quotations	Before being elected, then Opposition Leader Tony Abbott stated: I am reluctant to decree further upheaval in an area that's been subject to one and a half generations of largely ineffectual 'reform'.
Before formal statements or recommendations	Recommendation 1: The Australian Government revise its current position on targets as part of Closing the Gap, to include holistic justice targets aimed at promoting safer communities.

Differentiating a title and subtitle	The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention (2014) Note: You could also use en-dash here instead of a colon.

5.12 Semicolons (;)

Avoid linking sentences with a semicolon. Do not use them at the end of bullet and numbered list items. Use semicolons to link two clauses that could be treated as separate sentences but have a logical link. For example:

> The Government responded; however, the Commission's recommendations were rejected.

Also, when one or more of the items contains internal commas, use semicolons in a run-on list. For example:

> Consultations were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra; communities across regional NSW; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

5.13 Commas (,)

Use commas to avoid ambiguity. Use them to separate items in a run-on list or string of adjectives. Commas can also be used to coordinate clauses that are equal in weight and are linked by conjunctions such as 'and', 'but', 'yet', 'or' and 'nor'.

Do not use commas to link incomplete thoughts.

Some writers use commas liberally while others use them sparingly. In either case, use commas in a consistent fashion.

Correct use of commas	**Poor use of commas**
He called on all states and territories, as well as the Commonwealth, to introduce a comprehensive disability strategy.	He called on all states and territories as well as the

	Commonwealth, to introduce a comprehensive disability strategy.
The details required are name, organisation, position and phone number.	The details required are name, organisation, position, phone number.
At the time of writing, confusion and uncertainty about ongoing funding are hampering the work of many people.	At the time of writing confusion and uncertainty, about ongoing funding, are hampering the work of many people.
We have made progress in some areas, but further work is required. We must continue to raise awareness of our rights and freedoms.	We have made progress in some areas but further work is required, we must continue to raise awareness of our rights and freedoms.

5.14 Ellipses (…)

Use ellipsis points (…) to mark the omission of words from quoted materials. An ellipse is not three full-stops. Alt+Ctrl+. (fullstop) is the Word shortcut for an ellipse.

For example:

> Vital to this Report has been the inclusion of internationally recognised medical experts in all detention centre visits … The medical evidence, some subsequently reported in the *Australian Medical Journal*, provides an authoritative basis for many of the findings in this Report and amply confirms the data collected by the Commission from the children themselves.

Take care to ensure the omission doesn't mislead readers about the content or tone of the quoted statement. A space should precede and follow an ellipsis however a space should not separate an ellipsis and an endnote number.

5.15 Quotation marks (' ' and " ")

Use single quotation marks in Commission publications. For example:

> One paediatrician concluded that 'almost all the children on Christmas Island are sick'.

Punctuation in and after quotation marks depends on the punctuation of the quoted text and how it is used in the content. If the punctuation mark is part of the quoted text, place the punctuation mark before the closing quotation mark. If the punctuation is not part of the quoted text, it should be placed after the closing quotation mark.

When writing a quote within a short quotation use double quotation marks ("…"). For example:

> The team leader said, 'We need to follow the director's advice that "balancing work and home life is an important part of our organisation's success" in order to build good services'.

Use the template dropdown for quotations more than 30 words in length. This automatically indents from the text margin and sets in a smaller font size (11 point). It does not use quotation marks or italic.

When writing a quote within an indented quotation, use single quotation marks ('…').

Use single quotation marks to enclose and emphasise an unusual or colloquial expression.

5.16 Brackets

Information in parentheses is less important than information that is between spaced en dashes or pairs of commas.

Use two types of brackets in written communications:

- parentheses ( )
- square brackets [ ]

Use parentheses to enclose definitions, abbreviations, acronyms, clarifications or comments. Do not use one set of parentheses within another set. Use a pair of en—dashes instead. For example:

> The Commissioner – on a trip to Broome (Western Australia) – held consultations with community groups.

Use square brackets to signify editorial insertions or changes within quoted material.

The Commissioner said 'consultations were held in Broome [Western Australia] with community groups'.

5.17 Forward slash

Use the forward slash:

- to show alternatives
- in shortened forms
- in mathematical expressions (only when abbreviating units of measurement)
- as a substitute for 'per', 'an' or 'a'

For example:

- AC/DC
- c/-
- 60 km/h (or 60 kilometres per hour, don't use a forward slash if measurements are spelt out in full.)

Do not use: and/or.

6   Terms and phrases

6.1   Abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms

Generally, avoid abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms in written communications. You may use them in some contexts. When you use them, clearly set them up in brackets following the first full reference. Do not use inverted commas or full stops within the brackets.

An abbreviation is any shortened form of a word. Do not use abbreviations such as eg, ie, etc and nb in text. Rewrite and restructure your content instead.

An acronym is a form of abbreviation pronounced as a word, such as NASA, ASIC. An acronym does not need 'the' before it. For example, 'The Chairman of ASIC, Greg Medcraft'.

An intitalism is an abbreviation of a word formed from initials of a longer name where each individual letter is pronounced, such as ABC, ABS, SBS. Use 'the' before initialisms. For example, 'The ABC recommends'.

6.2 States and territories

Abbreviate the names of some states and territories following the first full reference to them in the text. For example:

> A division of the Australian Federal Police provides policing services in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Always spell Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria out in full, except where indicating the jurisdiction of legislation or a government department. For example:

- Department of Health and Human Services (Vic)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Qld)
- Office of the Public Guardian (Tas).

If New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia have been previously defined, use NSW, WA and SA when starting a sentence.

When listing states and territories, do so alphabetically. Use alphabetical order by default.

6.3 Terms associated with government

Use the following guidelines for consistency when referring to government institutions:

Correct terminology	Example
The federal government is referred to as the Australian Government and is always capitalised	The Australian Government
Commonwealth is always capitalised	The Commonwealth
Senate, House of Representatives and Cabinet are always capitalised	Senate, House of Representatives and Cabinet

Parliament is generally capitalised, but parliamentary is not capitalised	Parliament parliamentary
Government is generally in lower case unless part of a specific title	The government proposes to This government's policy will The Victorian Government is responsible for child protection.
State and federal (as adjectives) are in lower case	Defence is a federal responsibility.
States and territories (as nouns) are in lower case unless a part of a specific title	The state government The Victorian Government
Federal (as a noun) is generally in lower case, but will be capitalised when part of a specific title	The Federal Court of Australia
The federal government is a broad descriptive term for the Australian Government and does not need to be capitalised	The federal government is responsible for funding.
Local government, state government or territory government are not capitalised when used as a general descriptive term for a particular government	local government, state government or territory government

6.4   Terms associated with the Commission

(a)   Commission legislation

Do not use acronyms for the Commission's legislation, especially where you are addressing an audience that may not be familiar with abbreviated legislation names. In these situations, spell the name out in full (in italics and including the

date) the first time you refer to them. After that, shorten the legislation by dropping the date. Do not italicize the shortened versions.

For example:

> *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (Disability Discrimination Act)
>
> *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (Race Discrimination Act)

(b)   The President and Commissioners

Use the President's or a Commissioner's full name the first time you refer to them. Then shorten the name to 'the President' or 'the Commissioner'.

Refer to the President and Commissioners acting collectively as 'the Commission'.

(c)   Abbreviations of Treaties

Name of Treaty	Abbreviation
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984	CAT
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979	CEDAW
Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989	CRC
Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities 2006	CRPD
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966	ICCPR

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966	ICESCR
International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 1965	ICERD
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	UN DRIP

6.5　Commission inquiries

An inquiry is a function of the Commission, not an independent organisation or body.

Correct: As part of its Inquiry, the Commission visited Christmas Island.

Incorrect: The Inquiry visited Christmas Island.

6.6　Digital terms

These are common digital terms:

- blog post
- email
- e-learning
- HTML
- homepage
- internet—not Internet
- intranet—not Intranet
- online
- PDF
- standalone
- sub-site
- text message—not SMS
- URL
- web—not Web
- web page
- website
- wi-fi—not wifi, WiFi or Wi-fi
- world wide web — not World Wide Web

- XML.

6.7 Titles, honours and forms of address

When referring to a Minister or public servant in the main body of the text, use only the title. Do not use the name of the individual Minister. For example:

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations issued a media release.

The Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet referred to the submission made by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

If you do refer to a person by name, make sure that their title, honour and form of address are correct:

- Ministers, Premiers and Parliamentary Secretaries have the title 'The Honourable' (or 'The Hon')
- The names of Members of the Commonwealth House of Representatives are followed by 'MP'
- Commonwealth Senators are given the title 'Senator' and are not followed by 'MP'
- When a Senator is also a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or the President of the Senate, they are addressed as 'Senator the Hon'
- Members of state and territory parliaments take the title 'MLC' ('Member of the Legislative Council') or 'MLA' ('Member of the Legislative Assembly') or MHA (Member of the House of Assembly) after their name
- Ambassadors and High Commissioners are called 'His Excellency' or 'Her Excellency'
- Judges in the High Court, Federal Court, and state Supreme Courts are addressed as 'Justice' and have the title 'Honourable' (or the 'Hon')
- Judges in district and county courts are addressed as 'Judge' and have the title 'His Honour' or 'Her Honour'.

The Australian Government Style Guide contains further guidance on titles, honours and forms of address: https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rules-and-conventions/titles-honours-forms-address

6.8 Spelling and dictionaries

Use the most recent edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary* for checking correct spellings.

Dictionary and language settings in MS Word templates are set to 'English (Australian)'.

The wrong spelling of certain words means they are misused. Common examples include:

adverse (antagonistic)	averse (disinclined)
advice (noun)	advise (verb)
affect (influence)	effect (result or cause)
ante (before)	anti (against)
apologise (to say sorry v.)	apologies (plural sorries n.)
assure (promise)	ensure (make certain)
chose (past tense)	choose (present and future tense)
complement (add to, complete)	compliment (praise)
discrete (distinct)	discreet (cautious)
precede (go before)	proceed (go ahead)
prescribe (lay down rules)	proscribe (prohibit)
stationary (motionless)	stationery (pens, paper, pencils)
uninterested (not interested)	disinterested (unbiased)
leaned	leant

Using 'leaned' avoids the problem of 'leant' being confused with 'lent' which is the past tense of 'lend'	
lend (verb)	loan (noun)
peoples

The terms 'First Australians' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' peoples (note the plural) include distinct and diverse cultural groups. These terms do not represent a homogenous group. | people

Use the correct language group name to indicate distinct identities, histories and cultural traditions. For example:

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. |

Words frequently misspelt:

Correct	Incorrect
focused	focussed
Publicly	publically
coordination	co-ordination

Terms frequently used incorrectly:

Correct	Incorrect
different to	different from

different than |
| compare to

When 'compare' is used to say that one thing resembles another, or to make an analogy between two different things, 'to' is obligatory | compare with |
| 'in respect of' and 'with respect to' | 'in respect to'. |
| 'with regard to' and 'in regard to'. | 'with regard**s** to' or 'in regard**s** to' |

Words to avoid using:

Correct	Incorrect
under	pursuant to
twice a year	biannually
every two years	biennially

6.9   Using 'which', 'who' and 'that'

Use the relative pronouns, 'that' and 'which' to talk about things. Use 'who' only to refer to a person or people. This rule also applies to organisations. For example:

> The police helped a man who was trapped in the car.

> There are numerous charities which need good advice.

Often, 'which' and 'that' are used interchangeably. This is technically incorrect.

If the sentence does not need the clause that the word in question is connecting, use 'which', and if it does, use 'that'. For example:

> Our office, which has two lunchrooms, is located in Sydney.

> Our office that has two lunchrooms is located in Sydney.

These sentences are not the same.

The first sentence tells us that you have just one office, and it is located in Sydney. The clause 'which has two lunchrooms' gives us additional information, but it does not change the meaning of the sentence. Removing the clause and the location of our one office would still be clear: our office is located in Sydney.

The second sentence suggests that we have multiple offices, but 'the office with two lunchrooms' is located in Sydney. The phrase 'that has two lunchrooms' is known as a restrictive clause because another part of the sentence (our office) depends on it. You cannot remove that clause without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Excellent explanations about the use of 'which', 'who' and 'that' can be located at: https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/01/19/that-or-which/ and also at https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2012/09/07/that-who-which/

6.10   Using 'whose' versus 'who's'

'Who's' is a contraction. It is formed from the pronoun 'who' plus 'is' (the third person singular of the verb 'to be'), or has (the third person singular of the verb 'to have'). The apostrophe stands for the omitted 'i' of 'is' or the 'ha' of 'has'. One easy way to work out whether to use 'whose' or 'who's' is by seeing if you can expand the contraction into two words or not.

> I am the one who's going to be held responsible. (short for 'who is')

> Paul is a student who's been in Canada on a student visa since 2009. (short for 'who has')

'Whose' is a possessive determiner and pronoun which means 'belonging to whom':

> 87% of the respondents are supportive of fines for parents whose children engage in antisocial behaviour.

> Whose turn is it to drive?

6.11   Using 'into' or 'in to'

The one-word form of 'into' is a preposition. Prepositions go in front of nouns or pronouns. 'Into' describes movement or action that results in someone or something becoming enclosed, surrounded by, or being in contact with something else. For example:

> Martin put the butter into the fridge.

> The main road leads into the city centre.

'In' and 'to' are both adverbs and prepositions. 'In' is also an adjective and a noun. When 'in' and 'to' occur together in a sentence, they are written separately because they are fulfilling different functions. For example:

> Mum called us in to supper (adverb 'in', preposition 'to')

> He caved in to their demands (phrasal verb 'cave in', preposition 'to')

> The whole family pitched in to clean the house (phrasal verb pitch 'in', infinitive 'to clean')

> I came in to have a cup of coffee (adverb 'in', infinitive to 'have').

7   Numbers and measurements

7.1   Dates and times

Use the following guidelines for correctly referring to dates and times.

Reference	Correct	Incorrect
Calendar dates	4 April 2015	4th April 201, 4/04/15, the 4 April 2015
Financial years	2015–2016 (note en–dash)	financial year 2015, 2015–16
Decades	1980s	80s, 1980's
Time	4.30 pm (note space between digit and pm)	4.30pm, 4:30 pm, 4.30 p.m.

7.2   Numbers

Generally write numerals for 2 and above. Use words for ordinal numbers up to ninth and for fractions.However, a sentence cannot begin with a numeral. Write it out in full instead, or restructure the sentence.

Use the numeral when numbers accompany a symbol or quantity (for example, 8km or 45 minutes). Do not use a space when referring to distances.

Write numbers of more than four digits with a comma between each grouping of three. For example, 3,000, 30,000 and 300,000.

For larger numbers, use a combination of numerals and words (for example, 2.4 million).

For dollar amounts, only use a decimal place if it is necessary to specify cents.

Percentages appear as figures, with a percentage symbol (29%). Do not place a space between the number and percentage symbol. At the beginning of a sentence use text instead of a figure (for example, Twenty-nine per cent of residents said that they agreed with the statement).

Only take decimal points to the first point unless the particular context requires more detail (13.4%).

Appendix 1: Written communications checklist

☐ Have you identified your audience and purpose?

☐ Does the structure of your document suit your audience and purpose?

☐ Are you using the relevant document template?

☐ Have you used minimal capitalisation in the document title?

☐ Are you using the right heading styles?

☐ Does your header contain the right information?

☐ If your document is more than five pages, have you included a contents list?

☐ Are your headings brief, informative, logical and consistent?

☐ Are your sentences clear and concise?

☐ Are you using plain English and avoiding jargon?

☐ Are you using active rather than passive language?

☐ Are you using bullets rather than numbers within the text?

Appendix 2: Commonly used Microsoft Word shortcut keys

Shortcut	Description
Ctrl+0	Toggles 6pts of spacing before a paragraph.
Ctrl+A	Select all contents of the page.
Ctrl+B	Bold highlighted selection.
Ctrl+C	Copy selected text.
Ctrl+D	Open the font preferences window.
Ctrl+E	Aligns the line or selected text to the center of the screen.
Ctrl+H	Opens the Find And Replace dialog box with the Replace tab selected.
Ctrl+F	Open find box.
Ctrl+I	Italic highlighted selection.
Ctrl+J	Aligns the selected text or line to justify the screen.
Ctrl+K	Insert a hyperlink.
Ctrl+L	Aligns the line or selected text to the left of the screen.
Ctrl+M	Indent the paragraph.
Ctrl+N	Opens new, blank document window.
Ctrl+O	Opens the dialog box or page for selecting a file to open.
Ctrl+Q	Removes paragraph formatting that is not part of the style assigned to a selected paragraph.
Ctrl+P	Open the print window.
Ctrl+R	Aligns the line or selected text to the right of the screen.
Ctrl+S	Save the open document. Just like Shift+F12.
Ctrl+T	Create a hanging indent.
Ctrl+U	Underline the selected text.
Ctrl+V	Paste.
Ctrl+W	Close the currently open document.
Ctrl+X	Cut selected text.
Ctrl+Y	Redo the last action performed.
Ctrl+Z	Undo last action.

Ctrl+Shift+C	Copies the formatting of selected text.
Ctrl+Shift+L	Quickly create a bullet point.
Ctrl+Shift+F	Change the font.
Ctrl+Shift+>	Increase selected font +1pts up to 12pt and then increase font +2pts.
Ctrl+]	Increase selected font +1pts.
Ctrl+Shift+<	Decrease selected font -1pts if 12pt or lower; if above 12, decreases font by +2pt.
Ctrl+[	Decrease selected font -1pts.
Ctrl+/+c	Insert a cent sign (¢).
Ctrl+'+<char>	Insert a character with an accent (grave) mark, where <char> is the character you want. For example, if you wanted an accented è you would use **Ctrl+'+e** as your shortcut key. To reverse the accent mark use the opposite accent mark, often on the tilde key.
Ctrl+Shift+*	View or hide non-printing characters.
Ctrl+<left arrow>	Moves one word to the left.
Ctrl+<right arrow>	Moves one word to the right.
Ctrl+<up arrow>	Moves to the beginning of the line or paragraph.
Ctrl+<down arrow>	Moves to the end of the paragraph.
Ctrl+Del	Deletes word to right of cursor.
Ctrl+Backspace	Deletes word to left of cursor.
Ctrl+End	Moves the cursor to the end of the document.
Ctrl+Home	Moves the cursor to the beginning of the document.
Ctrl+Spacebar	Reset highlighted text to the default font.
Ctrl+mousewheel	Enlarging or reducing zoom.
Ctrl+1	Single-space lines.
Ctrl+2	Double-space lines.
Ctrl+5	1.5-line spacing.
Ctrl+Alt+1	Changes text to heading 1.
Ctrl+Alt+2	Changes text to heading 2.
Ctrl+Alt+3	Changes text to heading 3.
Alt+Ctrl+F2	Open new document.
Ctrl+F1	Open the Task Pane.
Ctrl+F2	Display the print preview.

Ctrl+Shift+>	Increases the selected text size by one font size.
Ctrl+Shift+<	Decreases the selected text size by one font size.
Ctrl+Shift+F6	Switches to another open Microsoft Word document.
Ctrl+Shift+F12	Prints the document.
F1	Open Help.
F4	Repeat the last action performed (Word 2000+)
F5	Open the Find, Replace, and Go To window in Microsoft Word.
F7	Spellcheck and grammar check selected text or document.
F12	Save As.
Shift+F3	Change the text in Microsoft Word from uppercase to lowercase or a capital letter at the beginning of every word.
Shift+F7	Runs a Thesaurus check on the selected word.
Shift+F12	Save the open document. Just like Ctrl+S.
Shift+Enter	Create a soft break instead of a new paragraph.
Shift+Insert	Paste.
Shift+Alt+D	Insert the current date.
Shift+Alt+T	Insert the current time.
Alt+Ctrl+Num- **Alt+Ctrl+0151**	Em—dash. You must use this Em—dash shortcut in Zotero.
Alt+Ctrl+.	Ellipses
Ctrl + Num- **Alt+Ctrl+0150**	En–dash. You must use this En–dash shortcut in Zotero.

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[1] Disabled People's Organisation Australia (DPOA) Terminology, accessed August 2020, url: https://dpoa.org.au/about/terminology/