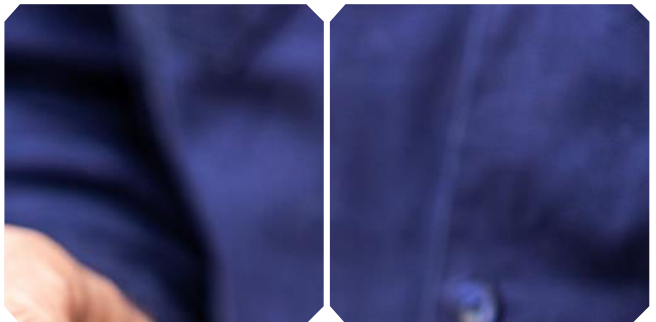




Australian Government
Clean Energy Regulator

CER Writing Style Guide

August 2023





Contents

- Contents 2**
- General information 3**
 - Purpose..... 3
 - About this guide 3
- Clean Energy Regulator writing preferences 3**
 - Referring to the Clean Energy Regulator and its schemes 3
- Readability level 4**
- Voice and tone 5**
 - The Clean Energy Regulator voice 5
 - The Clean Energy Regulator tone 6
 - Tone guidance 6
 - Personal pronouns..... 7
- Grammar, punctuation and conventions 7**
 - Latin shortened forms 8
 - Numbers 8
 - Units of measurement..... 8
- Structuring content 9**
 - Headings 9
 - Lists 9
 - Hyperlinks and directing users to more information 10
 - Internal links – links to content on our website 10
 - External links – links to other websites 11
 - Callout boxes 11
- Accessibility12**
- Referencing.....12**
- Website content checklist12**
- Appendix A. Clean Energy Regulator term capitalisation13**



General information

Purpose

This guide provides advice on how to write in the Clean Energy Regulator (CER) style across all communication channels. It ensures a consistent agency-wide approach to writing content. This will strengthen our professional credibility and increase the quality of the content created.

There may be some exceptions to the advice in this guide when writing contracts, referencing contract terms or writing briefs for stakeholders.

About this guide

This guide covers:

- writing preferences
- readability level
- voice and tone
- grammar, punctuation and conventions
- structuring content
- accessibility
- referencing.

Clean Energy Regulator writing preferences

Staff should always refer to the Australian Government [Style Manual](#) and use [plain language](#). Use the guidance below to apply the Style Manual with CER-specific direction.

Aim to write in a way that is easy to understand (not 'legalistic') and avoid including quotes from legislation. Use [hyperlinks](#) to direct users to legislation or CER guidance.

Referring to the Clean Energy Regulator and its schemes

In general:

- use minimal punctuation
- capitalise a scheme but not a certificate, unit or credit
- capitalise the first word in a sentence and use lowercase for all other words except proper nouns.

Only use acronyms and initialisms if it makes it easier for people to read and understand. Otherwise spell out the term in full first, then use the generic term.



Example

The Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme incentivises people to reduce emissions or store carbon. The scheme allows landholders, communities and businesses to run projects in Australia.

Do use	Don't use	Notes
the Clean Energy Regulator (CER) We, us, our	the Regulator	When deciding whether to use 'CER' or 'the CER', consider if you would say 'Clean Energy Regulator' or 'the Clean Energy Regulator'. Some legal content may use 'the Regulator'. See advice on how to use personal pronouns .
agency	Agency	For internal use only.
Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme	Australian carbon credit unit scheme Emissions Reduction Fund	
Large-scale Renewable Energy Target (LRET)	large-scale renewable energy target	
National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme (NGER)	national greenhouse and energy reporting scheme	
Renewable Energy Target (RET)	renewable energy target	
Safeguard Mechanism	safeguard mechanism	
Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme (SRES)	small-scale renewable energy scheme	

For a full list of CER term capitalisation, see [appendix A](#).

Readability level

Readability refers to how easy text is to read and understand. It is often measured in terms of reading level.

Content for the general public needs to be accessible by everyone. Aim to write at a reading level of Year 7.



Specialised content is more accessible for technical users when written in plain language. Aim to write at a reading level of Year 9 to 10.

Regardless of literacy levels, all users should be able to interact with government easily. Read about [how literacy affects access to government services and information](#).

Voice and tone

The voice and tone of an organisation are vital in reaching its audiences. An organisation’s voice is its personality or persona, while tone is its mood. Tone will change depending on the channel, situation and content. Voice remains consistent.

The Clean Energy Regulator voice

The CER voice should make it easy for people to understand what they need to know or do. We define it by the following characteristics:

- Clear and direct.
 - » uses plain language
 - » uses active voice
 - » is concise.

Write this	Not this
We will review your application within 6 months.	Applications will be subject to review by the relevant team within a timeframe of 6 months.
We can't pre-approve systems. We will determine the system's eligibility when we receive your application.	It should be noted that the scheme does not have provisions to gain pre-approval of systems and eligibility is only determined once a complete application is received.

- Objective and impartial.
 - » relies on facts
 - » doesn't include opinion
 - » is balanced and non-biased.

Write this	Not this	Notes
This process is faster and takes 3 weeks.	You should do this as it only takes 3 weeks.	'You should' conveys an opinion. 'Only' implies subjectivity.
Carbon offsets can help companies decarbonise.	Carbon offsets are the best way for companies to decarbonise.	Stating that something is the 'best' option conveys bias.



The Clean Energy Regulator tone

The CER tone changes depending on the type of content and channel. There are 3 levels of formality:

- Formal – creates distance between the content’s persona and the content’s reader.
- Standard – sits between formal and informal.
- Informal – suggests a relationship that is more casual and intimate.

The CER voice still applies to all channels. You can use it with tone guidance.

Tone guidance

When writing using a standard tone:

- you can use common contractions (for example, don’t, it’s, we’ve, aren’t and isn’t)
- you can use [personal pronouns](#)
- don’t use metaphors, idioms or slang
- don’t use exclamation marks.

When writing using an informal tone:

- use contractions
- use personal pronouns
- use metaphors, idioms and slang sparingly.

When writing using a formal tone:

- use [third person](#)
- don’t use contractions
- don’t use metaphors, idioms or slang
- don’t use exclamation marks.

Channel	Tone guidance
Website	Minimum tone: standard.
	No use of emojis.
	Use a formal tone for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance and enforcement activities (such as legal proceedings) • media releases.
	Minimum tone: informal.



Social media	<p>Use a standard tone for scheme information.</p> <p>Use emojis sparingly.</p> <p>No use of formal tone.</p>
Intranet	<p>Minimum tone: informal.</p> <p>Use a standard tone for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • announcements that impact staff • staffing changes.
Online Services	<p>Minimum tone: standard.</p>

Personal pronouns

Always use the personal pronoun that is clearest and most direct in the context.

Personal pronoun	Type of use	Example
First person (plural)	To refer to our agency in most instances. This is clear and approachable.	We need 2 supporting documents.
Second person	To engage users or get them to complete a task. This is active and user-friendly.	Find out if you are eligible to apply.
Third person	When needed for accuracy or in a formal context.	The Clean Energy Regulator is the approved certifier of the trade mark.

Sometimes you will need to identify your audience using third person. Continue to use second person after this.

Example

Liabe entities need to report relevant acquisitions through an energy acquisition statement. Lodge your energy acquisition statement in the [REC Registry](#).

Grammar, punctuation and conventions

In general:

- write one thought per sentence
- write one theme per paragraph
- spell out acronyms and initialisms in the first instance
- use minimal punctuation and capitalisation



- don't capitalise a term just because an acronym is also used – for more information, see [referring to the Clean Energy Regulator and its schemes](#)
- limit the use of italics unless it is a legal case or Act. For other special circumstances, see [italics | Style Manual](#)
- limit the use of bold text unless it is a heading or to emphasise a critical word or date
 - » we've designed agency-branded templates to apply bolding to headings when you use the CER style
- only underline text if it is a hyperlink.

For more information, see [grammar, punctuation and conventions | Style Manual](#).

Latin shortened forms

The Style Manual advises that Latin shortened forms are not accessible. Only use them if there is limited space (such as tables).

In general:

- write 'for example' instead of 'e.g.'
- write 'that is' instead of 'i.e.'
- write 'including', 'such as' or 'for example', instead of using 'etc.' at the end of a sentence
 - » if you think you need to include 'etc.' because there is more to say, add these ideas in your sentence instead.

For more information, see [Latin shortened forms | Style Manual](#).

Numbers

In general, use numerals for:

- writing '2' and above
- all units of measurement (for example, 1 kilowatt hour/1 kWh)
- showing mathematical relationships (such as equations and ratios) and for decimals
- when you are comparing numbers
- tables and charts
- dates and times
- a series of numbers
- specific contexts, such as steps, instructions, age and school years
- in scientific content.

Write the numbers 'zero' and 'one' in words in any other circumstance.

For more information, see [choosing numerals or words | Style Manual](#).

Units of measurement

In general:



- always use numerals next to a unit of measurement
- include a space between a numeral and a unit of measurement (for example, say 1 kWh instead of 1kWh)
- spell out units of measurement in the first instance, then use symbols
 - » if it is a well-known unit of measurement, you don't need to spell it out. For more information, see [use symbols for common units of measurement | Style Manual](#)
- don't combine symbols and words for units.

Example

We publish data if corporate totals have combined scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions equal to or greater than 50 kilotonnes (kt) carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂-e).

For reporting transfer certificate holders, we publish data if a facility has greenhouse gas emissions with a CO₂-e of 25 kt or more.

For more information, see [measurement and units | Style Manual](#).

Structuring content

Headings

In general:

- write headings that are clear and short
- begin each heading with keywords
- use fewer than 70 characters (including spaces)
- avoid using legalistic language or quoting text from legislation
- avoid questions as headings
- avoid generic or duplicated headings.

For more information, see [headings | Style Manual](#).

Lists

In general:

- use bullet lists when the order of the list items is not important
- use numbered lists or lettered lists when the order is essential such as a list of instructions
 - » legal content is an exception to this
- there are 3 list types you can use – [choose a type of list | Style Manual](#)
 - » you must introduce a list with a sentence lead-in or a heading immediately above the list
- don't use a list if you have only one item. Lists are only for a series of items.



For more information, see [lists | Style Manual](#).

Hyperlinks and directing users to more information

Use hyperlinks to direct users to supplementary or related content where necessary. Overuse can reduce readability.

When creating content, find out if similar content exists on the CER website. If it does, link to it rather than duplicate it.

If you need to link to an external non-government website, be careful not to imply endorsement. Include external links when the user needs to:

- complete their task on an external website
- access original, authoritative information provided by another government agency or external source
- view specific legislative provisions.

Write link text that makes the destination clear. Links need to make sense when read out of the context of the surrounding content. Links like ‘click here’ or ‘more information’ don’t give the user information about the destination. They are not accessible by screen readers or relevant on touchscreen devices.

Put most links at the end of sentences. This improves readability and creates a call to action.

Internal links – links to content on our website

Internal links should be either the name of the pages being linked to or the action the user is to carry out.

If needed, link to CER posture guidance on our website where we have explained our preferred interpretation of legislative provisions.

Example

To become a registered person, you must meet the criteria of being a fit and proper person. For more information, see our [fit and proper person posture](#).

Do not refer to pages with the word ‘page’. It’s assumed that you’re linking to a page unless stated otherwise.

Write this	Not this
We have released the January 2023 market data update .	To view the latest update, click here .
Ready to start your application? Login to apply .	Visit our login to apply page to start your application.
For more information about upcoming activities, visit our consultation hub .	Visit our consultation hub page for more information .



External links – links to other websites

When directing users to an external site, let them know where they are being directed. This shows them it’s a link to a website they can trust.

Write this	Not this
Visit the Clean Energy Council’s website for information on choosing an installer .	Choose an installer to start the process.
Estimate your electricity usage using the Australian Government’s Energy Made Easy tool.	Estimate your electricity using the Australian Government’s tool.

Callout boxes

Limit the use of callouts, as they can distract our users if overused.

All callouts should have a title describing their purpose. This helps the user scan the page for relevant sections.

Write this

Updated legislation effective from 1 January 2023

We’ve put in place the amendments to the Renewable Energy Regulations. The amendments address recommendations made to the Australian Government to improve the scheme’s integrity.

Not this

Important!

The amendments to the Renewable Energy Regulations have now been implemented. The amendments address recommendations made to the Australian Government to improve the integrity of the scheme.

Callout content should be supporting content, not the main content. This is because readers treat them as separate from the main content.

For CER content, use callouts to:

- announce related consultations
- announce recent or upcoming changes
- provide summaries
- link to related information
- highlight checklists



- show definitions
- provide examples.

Remove temporary callouts when the information in them is no longer relevant or recent. If the content in the callout is needed for a longer time and essential, consider incorporating it into existing content.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a mandatory standard for government agencies. The Style Manual covers this in [apply accessibility principles](#).

We ensure our website is built for accessibility. We also need to ensure our content is inclusive and accessible. Familiarise yourself with Style Manual guidance on:

- [literacy and access](#)
- [how people read](#)
- [inclusive language](#).

Referencing

Use Style Manual guidance on referencing [legal material](#) or use [documentary–note](#) for all other sources.

When referencing with the documentary–note system, use superscript reference markers in the text and footnotes with the full information about the source. Use endnotes if there are too many references to use footnotes in a print document.

Website content checklist

This example checklist can help ensure your content aligns with the CER writing style and meets the Australian Government Style Manual standards.

- Headings are short (70 characters or less, including spaces)
- Lists are formatted correctly, aligning with [lists | Style Manual](#)
- Content meets [readability requirements](#)
- Content uses the [CER voice](#) throughout
- Content uses [standard tone](#) throughout
- Content does not quote directly from the legislation



Appendix A. Clean Energy Regulator term capitalisation

A

Do use	Don't use	Notes
Independent Review of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU Review)	Chubb Review	
agency	the Agency	For internal use only.
auction	Auction	When referring to ACCU Scheme auctions.
Australian carbon credit units (ACCU)	Australian Carbon Credit Units carbon credits	
Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme	Australian carbon credit unit scheme Emissions Reduction Fund	
Australian Government	Commonwealth government	See government terms Style Manual.
Australian National Registry of Emissions Units (ANREU)	Australian national registry of emissions units	
authorised representative	Authorised Representative	

B

Do use	Don't use	Notes
Blue Carbon Accounting Model (BlueCAM)	blue carbon accounting model	
blue carbon	Blue Carbon	

C

Do use	Don't use	Notes
carbon abatement	Carbon Abatement	



carbon abatement contract	Carbon Abatement Contract	
carbon capture and storage	Carbon Capture and Storage	
carbon capture, use and storage	Carbon Capture Use and Storage	
carbon estimation area (CEA)	Carbon Estimation Area	
Carbon Farming Initiative	carbon farming initiative	
certified emissions reduction units	Certified Emissions Reduction Units (CERs)	Although the acronym for certified emissions reduction units is CERs, spell out the name to avoid confusion with our agency, CER.
Chair and CEO	Chair & CEO chair CEO	
the Clean Energy Regulator (CER) We, us, our	the Regulator	When deciding whether to use 'CER' or 'the CER', consider if you would say 'Clean Energy Regulator' or 'the Clean Energy Regulator'. Some legal content may use the Regulator. See advice on how to use personal pronouns .
Client Portal	client portal	
Climate Active	climate active	When referring to the partnership between the Australian Government and Australian businesses to encourage voluntary climate action.
Climate Active Carbon Neutral Standard	climate active carbon neutral standard	
Corporate Emissions Reduction Transparency (CERT) Report	corporate emissions reduction transparency report	

D

Do use	Don't use	Notes
--------	-----------	-------



deeming period	Deeming Period	
designated large facility	Designated Large Facility	
Developer Portal	developer portal	

E

Do use	Don't use	Notes
electricity generation return	Electricity Generation Return	
Emissions and Energy Reporting System (EERS)	emissions and energy reporting system	
Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee (ERAC)	emissions reduction assurance committee	
emissions reduction units	Emissions Reduction Units	
emissions-intensive trade-exposed (EITE)	Emissions Intensive Trade Exposed emissions intensive trade exposed	
energy acquisition statement	Energy Acquisition Statement	
exemption certificate	Exemption Certificate	
exemption determination tool	Exemption Determination Tool	

F

Do use	Don't use	Notes
fit and proper person (FPP)	Fit and Proper Person	
forward abatement estimate	Forward Abatement Estimate	



Full Carbon Accounting Model (FullCAM)	full carbon accounting model	
--	------------------------------	--

G

Do use	Don't use	Notes
global warming potential (GWP)	Global Warming Potential	
GreenPower	greenpower Green Power	
Guarantee of Origin (GO)	guarantee of origin	

H

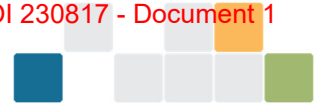
Do use	Don't use	Notes
human-induced regeneration method	Human-induced Regeneration Method Human Induced Regeneration Method	

J

Do use	Don't use	Notes
jurisdictional surrenders	Jurisdictional Surrenders	

L

Do use	Don't use	Notes
landfill baseline	Landfill Baseline	



large-scale generation certificate (LGC)	Large-scale Generation Certificate	
Large-scale Renewable Energy Target (LRET)	large-scale renewable energy target	

M

Do use	Don't use	Notes
multi-year monitoring period	Multi-year Monitoring Period	

N

Do use	Don't use	Notes
National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Scheme	national greenhouse and energy reporting scheme	
notice of certifiable amount	Notice of Certifiable Amount	

O

Do use	Don't use	Notes
Online Services	Online Services Portal Client Portal Beta	When referring to the portal, Online Services.

P

Do use	Don't use	Notes
participant	Participant	
power purchase agreement	Power Purchase Agreement	
program	programme	



Q

Do use	Don't use	Notes
Quarterly Carbon Market Report (QCMR)	quarterly carbon market report Quarterly Carbon Market report	

R

Do use	Don't use	Notes
register of solar water heaters	Register of Solar Water Heaters	
removal units	Removal Units	
Renewable Energy Certificate Registry (REC Registry)	renewable energy certificate registry	
Renewable Energy Target (RET)	renewable energy target	
renewable power percentage	Renewable Power Percentage	
reporting transfer certificate	Reporting Transfer Certificate	
residual mix factor	Residual Mix Factor	

S

Do use	Don't use	Notes
Safeguard Mechanism	safeguard mechanism	
Safeguard Mechanism credit unit	Safeguard Mechanism Credit Unit	
savanna burning	Savanna Burning savannah burning	



scheme	Scheme	Use lowercase unless using the full scheme's title, e.g. ACCU Scheme.
small generation unit	Small Generation Unit	
Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme (SRES)	small-scale renewable energy scheme	
small-scale technology certificate (STC)	Small-scale Technology Certificate	
small-scale technology certificate clearing house	Small-scale Technology Certificate Clearing House	
small-scale technology percentage	Small-scale Technology Percentage	
Solar Panel Validation (SPV) Initiative	solar panel validation initiative	
SRES Smart	SRES smart	

T

Do use	Don't use	Notes
trade-exposed baseline-adjusted (TEBA)	Trade-exposed Baseline-adjusted Trade Exposed Baseline Adjusted	

V

Do use	Don't use	Notes
verified carbon unit	Verified Carbon Unit	
verified emission reductions	Verified Emission Reductions	