

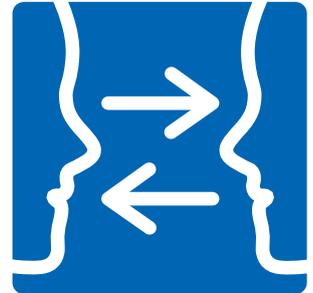
Communication Access for All

*Introducing the
Communication Access Symbol*



Acknowledgement and thanks

The Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre, Scope would like to thank the following people and organisations for the support they have provided in this project:



The many people with communication difficulties who generously provided feedback and advice.

The Communication Access Network (CAN) in Victoria.

Scope Victoria.

Members of the Communication Access Advisory Group:

Autism Victoria, Communication Rights Australia, VALID, ComTEC Yooralla, Speech Pathology Australia, Arts Access Victoria, Deakin University, Disability Access Resource Unit (DARU), Able Australia, Australian Aphasia Association - Victoria Branch, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, AGOSCI, Better Hearing and the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Funding was kindly provided by the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE).

Contents

Communication access - the final piece of the puzzle	4
A new chapter in access	5
Communication access is a human right	7
Stories from our community	9
How communication accessible are you?	18
Why is communication access important?	19
Communication access criteria	20
“Good communication is good business”	21
Tips for successful communication	22
Tips for communicating with people with autism spectrum disorders	23
Want to know more?	25

Communication access - the final piece of the puzzle



A new chapter in access

Imagine if you had to communicate and get your message across without being able to speak...

Did you know that 1 in 500 people in Victoria need communication aids and strategies for successful communication?

People with communication difficulties may communicate using:

- electronic speech devices
- word based or picture-based communication boards or books
- sign and gesture
- spelling.

People with communication difficulties experience many communication barriers to fully participating in community life. They want people in the community to:

- be welcoming and friendly
- look at them and talk directly to them
- give them time to get their message across
- listen to what they have to say
- be willing to use their methods of communicating.

Scope's Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre is promoting the concept of communication access in collaboration with:

- people with communication difficulties
- the Communication Access Network (CAN) in Victoria
- peak bodies and key organisations.

Together we want to create communication accessible communities.

Our Vision

Our vision is to create communities that are universally accessible. This means communities are accessible for all people including people with

- communication difficulties
- physical disabilities, e.g. people who use wheelchairs or mobility aids
- reading difficulties
- vision impairment
- hearing impairment
- intellectual disability.

The Communication Access Symbol

The Communication Access Symbol is the newest access symbol in Australia.

When people see this symbol, they will know that the place or service is communication accessible.

In 2009 the Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre led the development of a symbol to represent communication access.



Over 1700 people participated to select the symbol. The process met the Australian Standard AS 2342-1992 for selecting a new symbol. The symbol was launched in November 2011.

To display the symbol, places and services must meet specific criteria for communication access.

The Communication Access Assessment

Scope trains communication access assessors, who are people with communication difficulties. They use a checklist to assess a business or service to determine if it meets the minimum standards to be awarded the Communication Access Symbol. Contact the Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre for more information about having a communication access assessment at your business or service.

Communication is a basic human right

Governments around the world have developed laws and policies to ensure that everyone is included in their communities. There are five legal documents in Australia that support communication access as a human right.

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006)

The Australian government signed this document in 2008, which means that Australia:

- recognises that communication methods other than speech are part of everyday communication
- calls for removing all discrimination and recognises the rights of people to use technology and human support for communication
- identifies that communication and other forms of access must be provided and barriers must be removed
- calls for freedom of expression, opinion and access to information. This includes providing a range of accessible formats for giving and receiving information.

2. The Federal Disability Discrimination Act (1992)

This Act is made up of laws to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities, including discrimination against people with a communication difficulty.

3. The Victorian State Disability Plan (2013 - 2020)

The vision of the Victorian State Disability Plan is to create accessible environments and inclusive communities.

4. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)

The Charter is Victorian law that sets out the basic rights of all people in Victoria when providing services such as healthcare, education and law enforcement.

It requires the Victorian Government, local councils and other public authorities to consider human rights when they make new policies and laws.

5. The National Disability Strategy 2010 - 2020

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is the first national approach to supporting people with a disability. It aims to create communities across Australia that are inclusive and provide equal opportunity for all people.

It recognises that people with a disability face many barriers which need to be broken down and that these barriers exist in the physical environment, in the social environment between people, and in the attitudes that people have.

Australian and Victorian law require businesses and services to provide equitable access. They are required to comply or risk breaching equal opportunity law.

Stories from our community

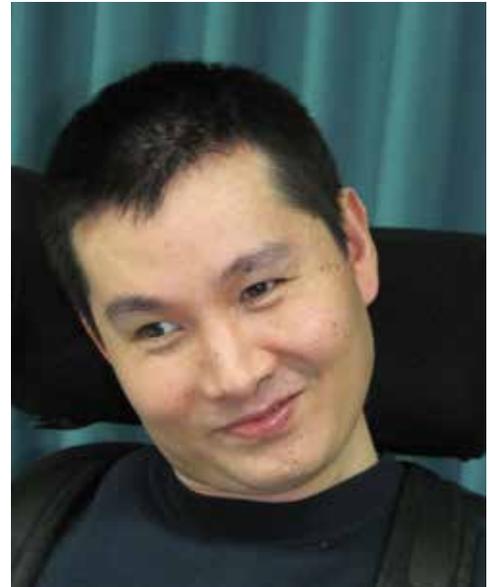
Just because I can't talk, doesn't mean I have nothing to say!

Hoang's Story - Being welcomed at the St Mary's House of Welcome

Hoang is a Vietnamese man who had a brain injury as a teenager. He does not use speech and communicates using body language, facial expression and voice sounds.

Hoang needs support to live in his community. Staff supporting Hoang realised how important it was for him to maintain his connections to his Vietnamese culture and how much he enjoyed spending time around people who spoke Vietnamese.

Over the last few years Scope staff have supported Hoang to attend a Vietnamese social group at the St Mary's House of Welcome in Fitzroy. People at the House of Welcome have taken the time to get to know Hoang. They have now learnt what Hoang's movements, facial expressions and sounds mean. Because they can communicate, Hoang has developed friendships with people in his Vietnamese community.



Being welcomed at the St Mary's House of Welcome

People made this place communication accessible by:

- taking time
- getting to know Hoang
- learning from others who know Hoang well
- knowing how Hoang communicates
- using Hoang's communication method
- treating Hoang with dignity and respect.

Stories from our community

A workplace where being a creative florist and valued employee does not depend on how well you hear!

Marjorie's story about a job she loves.

Marjorie is a florist in Ballarat. She has been working at Stems Flower Market and The Flower Connection for several years now. She enjoys her work preparing the work spaces, supporting colleagues, preparing bouquets and arrangements and helping customers.

When Marjorie speaks with customers, she explains she is deaf. Then she uses simple words, as her speech is difficult to understand if people don't know her well.

She also uses natural gesture, showing or pointing to the flowers in the shop. She always carries pen and paper in her apron, in case a difficulty arises with communication. The pen and paper also works really well when talking to colleagues.

The owners of The Flower Connection provide an inclusive workplace, where Marjorie is part of the team and feels her contribution is valued and respected.

The managers achieve this through supporting staff to understand the best ways to communicate with Marjorie, such as repeating an instruction and positioning yourself so Marjorie can lip read. If they notice that Marjorie is not responding to a customer when they speak to her, they will easily just tell the customers that Marjorie is deaf and they should stand where Marjorie can see them.

Marjorie is skilled at communicating in many different ways. She lip reads extremely well, and uses Auslan signing. Marjorie was raised in Ballarat, where there was a strong focus on teaching Deaf children to use speech. However these days she has many friends from the Deaf community and so she has learnt Auslan as an adult.



Being employed in a job I love

People made this place communication accessible by:

- Treating Marjorie with dignity and respect
- Understanding there are different ways to communicate
- Speaking directly to Marjorie (making sure there is no glare behind the person talking to Marjorie)
- Knowing and using Marjorie's communication method
- Making an effort when they can't understand Marjorie
- Sharing information about how Marjorie communicates

Stories from our community

What makes customer service brilliant for me!

Daniel's story of communication access around the town.

As a young person on the Autism Spectrum, I value customer service where I am easily understood and my needs are well catered for.

In particular, I appreciate communication where:

- customer service staff take the time to understand my needs
- various methods of communication are accepted, including written notes
- where I am treated in the same manner as any other customer
- where customer service staff communicate effectively and go the extra mile!



What makes services brilliant for me!

I have my own business called Speaking Insights and I travel all over Australia.

This story illustrates some examples of good customer service I've had with three businesses in the town where I live: a travel centre, a bank and the local club.

Accessible Travel

I often fly interstate to talk about my experience of living with Autism. Whenever I book my own flights or organise travel insurance, I can rely on Flight Centre to do the job.

Staff are always friendly and confirm with me exactly what flight I wish to take.

Some of the keys towards their successful customer service have been helping me feel like "just another customer" and taking their time to listen to me.

Most recently, they were even brilliant over the phone when I wanted to make a seating request for my flight and to follow up on my flight ticket. They even looked up who my consultant was and got her to phone me to make adjustments to my booking.

Accessible Banking

Recently, I had cash to deposit at Bendigo Bank, so I went to my local branch to make the deposit. Staff made banking very easy. They were friendly, welcoming and courteous.

The teller supported me by taking the cash and debit card and completing my deposit. I did not have to worry about completing a deposit slip. The process of writing a deposit slip would have been very time consuming for me to do. Whenever I need to make a withdrawal, the staff also help by completing a withdrawal slip for me. They always allow me to ensure the withdrawal slip is accurate. I don't have to agonise about filling in the account details accurately.

Accessible Hospitality

I'm a regular customer at the Bendigo Club and have found not only the quality of their meals, but also the quality of their customer service to be of a consistently high standard.

The staff always take time to listen to me, especially when I am indecisive about what I would like to eat.

As a customer requiring gluten free food, I appreciate being able to easily choose what food I would like. Gluten free items are highlighted on the standard menu to make it easy to decide on the meals.

There are also quieter spots where I can sit and eat at the Bendigo Club that are far away from the noise of the gaming machines, which I prefer.

Overall, I really appreciate the friendliness of the staff and being treated as a valued customer.

People made these places communication accessible for me by:

- Being friendly and welcoming
- Checking that they understood Daniel's request
- Giving excellent customer service
- Treated Daniel like 'just another customer'
- Giving Daniel time to communicate his message
- Making the menu accessible
- Having quiet spots available.

Stories from our community

Can't talk - CAN Communicate!

Roger's story - Being included at Knox Leisureworks

In the past, Roger had difficulty accessing his local leisure centre, Knox Leisureworks (KLW). One staff member was able to chat to Roger, however, if this staff member was not there, no one was able to help Roger because they were unsure of how to communicate with him.

The manager of KLW spoke with Scope about how the centre could support Roger. Roger's house coordinator met with the managers at KLW to discuss this. The house coordinator also provided a page on ways to communicate with Roger and questions to ask him. After the meeting, the managers felt confident in speaking with Roger and passed on the information to centre staff. KLW are now working on a communication board which will be at the front desk.

They also want to train all staff to communicate with people who don't use speech.

All of these inclusive changes are due to Roger's persistence of wanting to be included in his community leisure centre.



Being included at Knox Leisureworks

People made this place communication accessible by:

- understanding there are different ways to communicate
- speaking directly to Roger
- getting to know Roger and learning from others who know Roger well
- knowing and using Roger's communication method
- making an effort when they can't understand Roger
- staff sharing information about how Roger communicates.

Stories from our community

'I hear by touch and speak by sign'

Heather's story – When staff are willing to learn, we can talk.

For Heather, touch is most important in her life. Touch is her eye and ear to the world and to people. It is through her sense of touch that she finds ways to communicate with people.

Heather is a deafblind person who is a founding member of Deafblind Victorians.

She is also a committee member.

Heather was born deaf and used Auslan signing as her first language. However, she started to lose her sight in her mid twenties.

At first, she remembers she used to write on paper with a thin regular pen, then she had to use a dark black pen to write and read peoples notes. After some time, she was no longer able to read the thick, dark black pen. It impacted on her badly because she had no communication in the hearing world.

She started practising feeling human fingers writing letters and words on her palm. People used a finger tip to write block letters firmly and slowly on Heathers hand.

Heather has a support worker or interpreter when she goes into the community. When she does go to a shop independently, she shows the shop assistants her special communication book to instruct them how to communicate with her and tell them what she wants. She has braille dymo labels on each card to find the page she needs. Sometimes she writes notes about what she wants, and asks people to reply by writing information on her hand. It may be the price or some information she needs.



'I hear by touch and speak by sign'

Heather communicates in these ways everywhere. At the bank, the tellers have written on her hand to tell her the account balance when she withdraws money. Airline staff have communicated with her through writing on her hand. Staff at Flinders Street station have learnt her way of communicating. It is because they are willing to communicate with her in her way, that it is possible for her to continue to use public transport. She uses gesture and mime to explain she wants to know when the train is coming. Staff will then say 5 minutes on her hand or she feels their fingers by counting them.

It is very important to her that people do it right. They must write on her hand slowly, using big letters and use short sentences. This must be done in the same spot, letter by letter.

It makes her life more relaxed when people communicate with her in the right way.

And that is why she says, 'I hear by touch and speak by sign'. It is through touch that she understands you and through sign and gesture that you understand her.

People made places communication accessible by:

- getting to know Heather and how she communicates
- using Heather's communication method
- doing what Heather asks so she can get her message across
- taking time so Heather can get her message across
- treating Heather with dignity and respect
- treating Heather as a valued customer
- understanding there are different ways to communicate

How communication accessible are you?

If a person with a communication difficulty comes to your service, do you:

- speak to them directly, not to their friend or family member?
- give them time to communicate?
- try other ways to communicate e.g. point to objects or pictures, or provide paper and a pen?

If you answered yes to all of these, you are already on the road to becoming communication accessible.

Now you can be publicly recognised as a communication accessible business or service. You can register for a communication access assessment. We will provide support and information on how to be awarded the Communication Access Symbol.

All communication accessible services and businesses are listed in the Directory of Communication Accessible Places on Scope's website www.scopevic.org.au.



Communication access is when everyone can get their message across.

Why is communication access important?

Communication access is important in four ways.

1

People who have communication difficulties can access their community, be included and participate in community life.

2

Inclusive communities are healthy communities.

3

Accessible businesses attract more customers.

4

Communication access upholds Australia's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006).

Communication access standards

To display the Communication Access Symbol you will need to be assessed and meet the minimum standards for communication access.

Communication access standards include the following criteria:

Skilled staff

- Staff treat the person with dignity and respect
- Staff take time, do not rush the conversation
- Staff talk directly to the person.
- Staff are willing to use different methods of communication.

For example:

- ✓ point to objects and pictures
- ✓ use gestures
- ✓ ask yes and no questions.

An environment that supports communication

- Service desks and items are positioned so customers who use wheelchairs are able to move around easily and point to items.
- Quiet spaces are available where you can have a conversation.
- There is a well lit place to have a conversation.

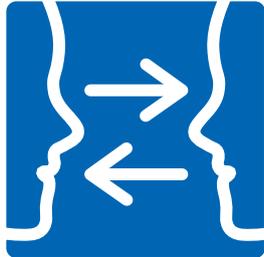
Signs that are clear

- Signs are easy to see. For example, at eye level.
- Signs are easy to read and also have pictures or symbols on them.

Written information that is accessible

- Information is available in different formats. For example plain language or Easy English, Braille, large font or audio versions.
- Staff read and explain written material to people who ask for assistance; for example menus, documents, health information.

“Good communication is good business”



If you were going out for a coffee and one of the cafes along the road displayed the Communication Access Symbol, would you choose that cafe?



Yes, I would!



Tips for successful communication

- ✓ Be welcoming and friendly.
- ✓ Treat the person with dignity and respect.
- ✓ Know there are different ways to communicate.
- ✓ Ask the person what will help with communication.
- ✓ Find a quiet place.
- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Don't pretend to understand.
- ✓ When you can't understand the person, let them know you are having difficulty.
- ✓ If you are having difficulty understanding - try asking questions so the person can answer yes or no.
- ✓ Ask the person to repeat or try another way if you don't understand.
- ✓ Check back that you have understood correctly.
- ✓ Speak directly to the person and make eye contact. (There are some people who may not want you to look at them e.g. some people with autism spectrum disorder).
- ✓ Be patient and give the person time to respond.
- ✓ If you ask a question, wait for the person to reply.
- ✓ If you think the person has not understood, repeat what you have said or say it a different way.
- ✓ Speak normally. You don't have to raise your voice or slow your speech.

Tips for communicating with people with autism spectrum disorders

- ✓ Use simple language.
- ✓ Be patient. Give the person time to answer.
- ✓ Communicate one idea at a time.
- ✓ State your message clearly. Be as clear, concise and concrete as possible.
- ✓ Speak in a normal tone of voice.
- ✓ Give specific choices rather than open ended questions.
- ✓ Some people with autism spectrum disorders may find it difficult to look at you and listen to you at the same time.
- ✓ Say what you mean. People with autism spectrum disorders often have a literal understanding of language. For example if you use the expression “Hold your horses”, the person may respond by asking “Where are the horses?”
- ✓ Avoid using ambiguous language that could be misunderstood, for example, sarcasm, jokes or metaphors (e.g. ‘As good as gold’)

Want to know more?

Contact Scope's Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre.



Phone (03) 9843 2000



Fax (03) 9843 2033



Postal Address

Scope

Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre

PO Box 608

Box Hill Victoria 3128



Email circ@scopevic.org.au



Website www.scopevic.org.au

We will provide information on:

- communication access assessments
- communication aids and resources
- communication accessible venues
- alternative and augmentative communication
- accessible written information.