

NZSA Accessibility Policy



POLICY

NZSA is committed to making its events, information, programmes, processes and communication accessible to all members.

A healthy, inclusive writing community is vital for the cultural health of our country and that community must reflect the wider diversity we live in.

Background

Almost one in four (24% of) New Zealanders have impairments, therefore many current members and potential members live with some form of disability. This policy and an action plan that comes from it will help the Society better serve those members – including our growing aging population. Just as importantly, it will encourage people who aren't currently members to join the organisation. It's worth proudly displaying a commitment to accessibility!

This policy fits with the stated purpose of NZSA in their constitution to advance 'the cultural understanding, appreciation and development of the creative art of writing for the benefit of the community' in New Zealand.

What is disability?

Disability results from the interaction between people who have impairments and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

...Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments...

From the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (CRPD)

Accessibility is often seen in terms of ramps and accessible toilets. As the description above indicates, being accessible involves much more than this. It means ensuring information (online and hard-copy) is accessible, and that everyone feels welcome and is able to easily participate.

Next steps

An action plan that sets out realistic goals will help the Society become more accessible in a realistic timeframe. NZSA will include the policy on the Society's normal policy review cycle.

Many of the steps involved are straightforward. The attached resource, '**Access guidelines**', will help branch office holders and those holding elected positions feel confident in what they do. Please note the 'Access guidelines' below come from another source and our Disability Working Group – Crip the Lit - been given permission to share them with NZSA.

It is important to be aware of the needs of current members. It is also important to realise general accessibility guidelines need to take into account a broader range of requirements *for future members*. If current members are reluctant about changes being made for their benefit, it might be useful to emphasise these changes are to ultimately benefit everyone.

NZSA Accessibility Policy GUIDELINES



Making environments accessible

*The information below is adapted from the 'Information, attitude, action' section of Creating Welcoming Churches, reprint July 2018. It is used with the permission of the copyright holder**

Information, attitude, action

Making environments accessible to all is more than just being disability friendly. And it is not a quick process. This section gives you guidelines across a broad range. We suggest you approach any changes in a step by step way that is manageable for your group.

Disabled people are the experts on their own impairment and should be consulted about any changes that will affect them. The principle of 'Nothing about us without us' should guide how your group makes decisions.

For changes involving the physical environment, the current legislation is also the guide. Never do less than is set in the standards but be generous where you can and do more.

When publicising an event, include venue accessibility information to help people decide whether to attend.

A note about online meetings. Many disabled people use Zoom. It is considered an accessible online meeting platform.

Physical environment

Things that can help

- Ramps

- Accessible parking near the door
- Non-slip floor coverings
- Handrails on both sides of stairs and slopes
- Areas to move round/lie down (if people are unable to sit for long periods)

Auditory environment

Things that help

- A good sound system.
- Encouraging people to use the sound system.
- Encouraging people to speak clearly especially if there is no sound system.
- Good lighting which allows people to lipread.
- Using a datashow or overhead projector to support speakers.
- Inviting Sign language interpreters to public and community events and other times if Deaf people attend.
- Letting the Sign language interpreters know beforehand the outline of what will be said (and the detail, if possible). This helps them prepare.
- If Sign language interpreters are used ensure speakers know to read at a normal rather than fast pace.

Visual environment

Things that help

- Good lighting.
- Reducing glare and direct sunlight on areas where speakers are talking.
- Illuminating the faces of people speaking.
- Ensuring the datashow can be read.
- Large print paper copies for people who cannot see the screen.
- Printed material in 12 point at least, and a font such as Arial, which is dense and not spidery. Good contrast between the text and the background is also important.
- Avoid printing text over images.
- Large print copies of printed material.
- Name badges that are easy to read.

Datashow

This can help some people by seeing as well as hearing what is said. Good presentations come from:

- making your presentations clear and uncluttered.
- using clear print Arial bold, at least 24 pt.
- using dark print on a light background.
- avoiding flickering or fast images across the screen as they may trigger seizures in some people.
- providing large print paper copies for those who are unable to read the screen.

Note

Information on making PowerPoint presentations more accessible can be found on the web. Here is one <https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/>

Other things to think about

- Talk with people, particularly those who are affected about accessibility.
- Be prepared to listen and do not be afraid to ask questions.

Enhancing the audio-visual environment

- Provide information in written form even if there is a sound system.
- Seek feedback about the auditory environment particularly from those with hearing loss. Ask specific questions about what they heard.
- Provide quiet spaces for discussion groups particularly for people who have difficulty hearing, speaking or processing information.
- If blind and vision impaired people are present it is helpful to do a round of introductions if the group isn't too large, and for each speaker to identify themselves during the proceedings.

Moving in and around venues

- Encourage people to leave the car parks nearest the entrance for people who are mobility impaired. Notices can be put out to remind people.
- Whenever possible, ramp access should be at the main entrance. The informal greetings that happen as people enter venues is important and people who need to enter by another entrance may feel demeaned and excluded from this process.

- People using wheelchairs may need extra space available so that they can sit with others.

Serving meals and snacks

- As you prepare for occasions where food and drink is served, ask these questions:
 - Are there tables and a range of chairs so people who find difficulty with eating on their laps feel included because there is somewhere to sit down and eat?
 - If people are gluten free, dairy free or vegetarian is there food they can eat?

**** Creating Welcoming Churches – a disability resource for faith communities***

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With thanks to our Accessibility Working Group – members of Crip the Lit for developing this policy.

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