

**RADIO READING  
RESOURCES FOR  
STATIONS**



# Access for All

Great reasons to include  
more people



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RPH Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we work and live and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We embrace diversity in working to build inclusive and connected communities.

These resources have been created by **Kim Stewart** for RPH Australia utilising original materials developed by the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO). Produced with the assistance of the **Department of Communications and the Arts** through the **Community Broadcasting Foundation**.

We also thank our project partners: **Tagged PDF** and the **CMTO**.



## Introduction

Almost one in five Australians have a disability. You probably live or work with someone who has a disability but you may not even know it! Some disabilities, like those that necessitate using a wheelchair or a white cane, are relatively easy to see. Others, like autism, anxiety, chronic pain or learning disability are not so easy to see. In fact, many people with an invisible disability can be quite good at hiding it.

People who have a disability want you to treat them like you do everyone else – with respect and consideration of their varying needs, as varying and different as every human being is.

Community radio stations are often a cross-section of the local community. In regional areas retirees are avid and dedicated volunteers and many of them are living with a disability. Older people might have mobility issues. They may walk slowly or have difficulty with stairs, or may not speak or learn as quickly as they once did. You may come across school aged volunteers doing work experience who might be encouraged to do some vocational learning because they are less able academically, such as some young people with dyslexia.

We would try to help older volunteers who have trouble with stairs by providing lifts, or choosing low-set locations for them to work

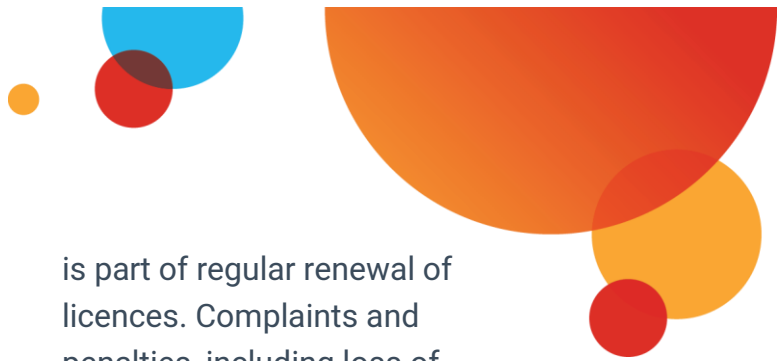
in. If older volunteers are reluctant to learn new digital technologies, we might find ways for them to continue to volunteer with the help of others who are more digitally-savvy, or allow them more time to learn. The practices we already may use to help our long-term older volunteers to continue to participate in community radio are the same kinds of things we can use to allow people with any kind of disability to participate: find out what they can do, and what they need help with.

## Why be more inclusive?

Community stations like yours are all about including the local community, no matter where you are located. You may have volunteers from various community organisations like Rotary or Lions, volunteers from your local ethnic communities, and work experience students volunteering at your station. All of those communities are relatively active and visible in the public sphere in every town.

However, some groups of people are less easy to get involved, and may not even be aware that they can volunteer or participate. For those groups, we might need to make an extra effort to include them.

**People with disabilities in particular are often misrepresented in or absent from the mainstream media, and you can provide an opportunity to change this.**



When you reach out to them, they can become some of your most steadfast volunteers.

Three important reasons you will want to include more people with disabilities at your station are:

- It aligns with the values of our sector
- People with disabilities are our community of interest
- It aligns with the human rights of all people



### 1. The values of our sector

As members of the community radio sector, your station probably understands your commitments under the 'Broadcasting Services Act'<sup>1</sup> (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) and the **Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice**<sup>2</sup> (Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, 2008).

The 'Broadcasting Services Act' (1992) says in Section 84 that community broadcast licences are given to those who:

- "meet the existing and perceived future needs of the community" and consider
- "the nature and diversity of the interests of that community"

The Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) have the power to examine the extent to which a station meets its community of interest requirements, and this

is part of regular renewal of licences. Complaints and penalties, including loss of licences, have occurred as a result of a station neglecting its community participation requirements.

Schedule 2, part 5(2) of the Broadcasting Services Act (1992) also requires as a part of licensing that community radio stations "encourage members of the community that it serves to participate".

The Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice, a co-regulatory guide produced by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) says in the Guiding Principles that:

"Community broadcasters...will work to:

- Promote harmony and diversity and contribute to an inclusive, cohesive and culturally-diverse Australian community;
- Pursue the principles of democracy, access and equity, especially for people and issues not adequately represented in other media;
- Enhance the diversity of programming choices available to the public and present programs that expand the variety of viewpoints broadcast in Australia"; and
- "Increase community involvement in broadcasting".

Probably the most important section of the Codes of Practice for the inclusion of people

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00375>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbaa.org.au/resource/community-radio-broadcasting-codes-practice>

with varying abilities is Code 2: Principles of diversity and independence:

“2.1 Our station will make sure that people in our community who are not adequately served by other media are encouraged and assisted to participate in providing our service. We will have in place policies and procedures to support this commitment. We will document evidence of our efforts to encourage community participation.” and

“2.5 In all station activities and our behaviour we will oppose and break down prejudice on the basis of ethnicity, race, language, gender, sexuality, age, physical or mental ability, occupation, religious, cultural or political beliefs.

As you can see, disability intersects with many of those diversity categories, including “age, physical or mental ability” and more, depending on the individual. The more categories of disadvantage a person faces, the more difficult it will be for them to participate, and we need to find ways to make that easier.

Both the ‘Broadcasting Services Act’ and the ‘Codes of Practice’ reinforce our commitment as a sector to include the widest range of community members that we can, as a true representative cross-section of our society.

These are the values of our sector. The Code expects that we will attempt to realise those values in our

programming, policies and procedures, conflict resolution, and in management of the station. This provides us with many opportunities to include people with varying capacities and abilities in the running of our stations from administration, marketing, music selection, and news making, through to the public face of our stations as the voice of the community.

The Code also says we must train our volunteers regarding these obligations, and that is what this document is all about.

**Pictured Below:** The Ability Radio Project dealt with problems of building access by providing interview and recording opportunities at other community organisations that were accessible, like this radio group at a neighbourhood centre in Brisbane.





## 2. People with disabilities are our community of interest

Of the 27 percent of Australians that listen to community radio, people with disabilities are a large component.

### Listener surveys show people with disabilities are our community of interest:

- **35 percent of people who have a print disability are listening to community radio every week**
- **10% have a physical disability**
- **8% have a hearing impairment**
- **11% have a speech impairment**
- **2% have a speech impairment**
- **5% have reading difficulty**

(McNair Yellow Squares, 2018).

People with disabilities experience higher rates of depression and anxiety, which can be attributed to the frustration and loneliness of social exclusion (ABS, 2007)

The percentage of people with mental health issues, intellectual or learning disability, or on the autism spectrum was not measured in the McNair Yellow Squares survey, however in the general Australian population rates are:

Mental health issues

- Anxiety disorders 14%
- Depression, bipolar 6.2%
- 45-50% experience mental health issues at some time in their lives
- 20% in the last 12 months (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)
- Intellectual disability 3% of all Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012)
- Autism spectrum disorders 1.1% (males), 0.3% (females) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).



## 3. Human rights

People with disabilities experience some of the highest rates of social exclusion in Australia.

They experience more poverty and loneliness and are underrepresented in the workforce. Stigma and lack of understanding are part of the cause.

In addition, the challenges of transportation, accessibility of buildings and technology, and a lack of understanding from others in everyday life act as barriers to full participation in work and social activities.

Numerous studies have also have established the psychological consequences of social exclusion, including media exclusion, on people with disabilities.

In 2017 the Australian Human Rights Commission reported that twenty-eight percent of people with disabilities had experienced discrimination (Deloitte, 2017).

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) recognise the role the media can play, in

exacerbating social conditions that can lead to anxiety and depression. The APS says that the media's role in cultivating social "values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours" can reinforce stereotypes of difference and affect the mental health of the vulnerable (Sanson et al., 2013. p3).

The media has real power to normalise disability, challenge community stereotypes and help address the exclusion and disadvantage experienced by people with disability.

As a sector dedicated to community, we have a real opportunity to include people with disabilities in what we do, giving them a voice and opportunities that can be life-changing.

## What are the costs?

**Some of the first steps you can take involve reviewing how accessible your station is, and this often costs you nothing.**

You might think it will be expensive to make the changes needed to include more people with disabilities at your station. While capital works to change your building may be costly, not all changes need to cost anything. In addition, changes needed are specific to the needs of individuals you want to include.

Below are some of the things you can do around your station that won't cost you any

money (just a little time). You will probably find that you are already doing a lot of things right!

See some low or no cost options below.

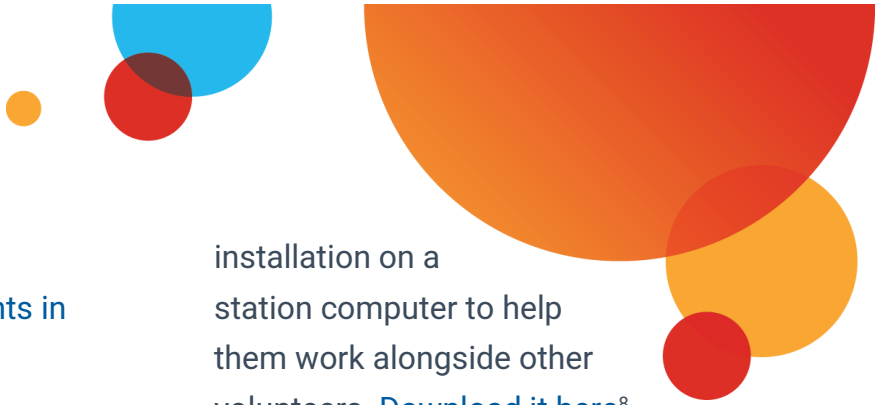
### Reviewing the access needs of your current volunteers:

- Do any of your current volunteers have mobility issues or low hand dexterity?
- How are they coping now? What is your station doing to make it easier for them?
- Do you have volunteers with low vision or blindness?
- What are you doing to assist them?
- What are they doing to work around problems?
- Is there anyone with an "invisible disability" like autism, depression or low social skills that you are already making adjustments for?
- What are you doing to make it easier for them to participate?

### Reviewing your building accessibility:

- Try an accessibility checklist. Some examples from other organisations are available online [here](#)<sup>3</sup>
- You can also pay for an accessibility audit. Organisations including [Access Arts](#) and other "disability access consultants" provide accessibility audits for a fee. The Australian Human Rights

<sup>3</sup> <https://crisponair.blog/2018/11/14/is-your-station-accessible-some-excellent-checklists-to-find-out/>



Commission recommends the Australian Association of Consultants in Access<sup>4</sup>

**Make sure your website and all documents are accessible to people who use screen readers for low vision or blindness.**

- This can include making sure all forms, reports, policy documents are available to the public or membership in both paper and electronic form
- Ensure your website complies with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)<sup>5</sup> (WCAG 2.0) using [the Wave tool](#)<sup>6</sup>
- Some free resources for document and web accessibility include:
- Vision Australia have developed a Digital Accessibility Toolbar you add to Microsoft Word. [Download it here](#)<sup>7</sup>
- Consider free or paid training for your volunteers who want to master web accessibility. There are a range of free online courses, or paid professional certificates that can be considered professional development for your volunteers. Visit [GitHub.com](#) and search for “A11y” courses;
- For people who are blind, have low vision or learning difficulties, a free screen reading software Non Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) is available for

installation on a station computer to help them work alongside other volunteers. [Download it here](#)<sup>8</sup>

**Write a Disability Action Plan (DAP)**

Many Australian organisations and businesses, as diverse as AFL Australia and Lifeline are developing or implementing Disability Action Plans (DAP). For a radio station, this might include concrete actions that specific individuals can do (which may not even cost you any money to implement) like:

- Conducting a survey of all your volunteers for their accessibility needs
- Reviewing all your forms and documents for screen reader accessibility
- Adding some braille labels to your equipment
- Adding tactile ground surface indicators to your passageways that direct blind or vision impaired people
- If you have stairs or steps, planning and resourcing adding ramps
- Are meetings held in a place with a lift, or no stairs?
- Is there a quiet place for stressed individuals to go, or support practices for new volunteers who are unsure about how to do things or take longer to learn?

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.access.asn.au>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://wave.webaim.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/digital-access/document-accessibility-toolbar>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nvaccess.org/download/>



- Is there a process for making suggestions and complaints? Does everyone know about it?
- Assigning deadlines and people to complete those tasks.

You don't have to try to figure it out on your own. The Human Rights Commission provides advice, specifically for small businesses and organisations

- [Australian Human Rights Commission –Disability Rights – action plans](#)<sup>9</sup>

Read more about writing a DAP or access plan here:

- [Australian Network on Disability – What is an accessibility action plan?](#)<sup>10</sup>

### Other no-cost adjustments

In Stewarts' 2018 survey of people with disabilities in Australian community radio, many of the adjustments made were behavioural. Station volunteers from Melbourne's 3CR were able to deal with the need to assist other volunteers with mobility issues by good communication around building access (e.g. A bell was installed to permit low level access to a back door if needed). Meetings were held in accessible locations to avoid staircases, tactile markers and braille was added to studio panels.

Other volunteers can be encouraged to discuss how best to talk about disability issue without causing offence. This provides an opportunity to upskill your content creators on the law and codes regarding how to represent and talk about disability in the news. The [Community Media Training Organisation](#)<sup>11</sup> can provide resources for this training. It can be particularly useful if you face a cultural shift by referring to the relevant section of the Codes of Practice:

**“We will not broadcast material that is likely to stereotype, incite, vilify, or perpetuate hatred against, or attempt to demean any person or group, on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, language, gender, sexuality, religion, age, physical or mental ability, occupation, cultural belief or political affiliation. “**

(Community Broadcasting Codes Of Practice s3.3)

People with Disabilities Australia also have a [Language Guide](#) here<sup>12</sup>

Other no-cost changes might include having a flexible volunteering timetable to take into

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/action-plans-and-action-plan-guides> <sup>10</sup> <https://www.and.org.au/pages/what-is-an-accessibility-action-plan.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://cmto.org>

<sup>12</sup> <https://pwd.org.au/resources/language-guide/>

consideration people's needs to attend medical or other appointments. Another effective use of personnel that provides additional volunteering positions is running a mentoring or buddy system for those that need assistance performing station tasks.

Younger volunteers and unemployed volunteers can be provided with professional development opportunities to increase both the facilitation of support for other volunteers that need it, as well as improving their own CVs. Volunteer students from social work, occupational therapy, or community welfare courses can be encouraged to do placement as a support person to your new volunteer. New volunteers with a disability may have their own support workers who can learn station procedures alongside them. Perhaps the most important key to the success of this system is identifying a person or persons who can be patient, compassionate and work alongside a person with a disability in a collaborative way.



## ● **What are the benefits?**

Including more volunteers with a disability and improving the accessibility of your station has multiple benefits. Volunteers with a disability are stayers, an accessible station invites more of the public to participate, and you cement your status as a community hub through your inclusivity.

## **Increasing the accessibility of your station to volunteers and new subscribers makes good business sense:**

- Increase the potential pool of new volunteers and improve conditions for existing ones
- Enable more paying subscribers to access your premises, merchandise and events information
- Improve the safety of your premises of the public, reducing accidents
- Improve public perception of your service as one that cares about the community.

Reaching out to your latent community of interest can increase the success of your station. Research on community broadcasting indicates that stations with a high level of community participation and connection attract more volunteers, more sponsorship and membership than stations of comparable size and demographics who concentrate on programming only (van Vuuren, 2008).

Other research looking at the volunteering of people with disabilities in community organisations found that people with disabilities infrequently volunteer, although those that do, participate for similar durations as non-disabled people (Shandra, 2017). People with autism or learning disabilities volunteered at a higher rate than those with physical or multiple disabilities,

however discrimination, stigma and low incomes were barriers to participation. Organisations saw volunteers with a disability to be an expense in time or money, which outweighed benefits, however the research predicted that well supported individuals would participate at much higher rates, so that their disability became less relevant to their participation. In fact, people with physical disabilities would participate with more “intensity” and “duration” if empowered to do so by supports (p.205). Although not a conclusion of Shandra, advocacy and accessibility measures are two ways that barriers to participation may be reduced.

Researching [community broadcasting and social connection](#)<sup>13</sup>, for the Community Broadcasting Foundation, Order (2017) notes that social cohesion is an important role of Australian community radio and volunteers feel a sense of belonging that is an antidote to loneliness. Order talked to volunteers at RTR in Perth, who remarked that the station community felt like “family”, with one participant saying they didn’t feel part of the community until their volunteer experience at RTR. This belonging can be linked to the longevity and intensity of participation, making people with disabilities more likely to be reliable and dedicated volunteers.

**In Stewarts’ 2018 research, the majority of the 16 people with disabilities participating in community radio interviewed had volunteered between 15-25 years.**

Finally, adherence to the legislation and commitment to the spirit of the Codes of Practice are factors that ensure ongoing licencing and increase a station’s competitiveness in grant-finding. In addition, accessible buildings, clear and easy to understand documents and a culture of inclusion benefit everyone at the station.

## **What do I need to do to prepare?**

It’s not as overwhelming as it looks. There are three main steps in increasing your volunteer base, regardless of their demographic group: Locating your potential community of interest, investigating what they can do and what you both need and finding ways for them to participate.

- 1. LOCATE: find your latent community of interest**
- 2. INVESTIGATE: Assess the intersection between both your needs, skills, capacities and adjustments**
- 3. PARTICIPATE: try training, flexible timetabling, mentoring, or outside broadcasts and recording groups**

<sup>13</sup> <https://cbf.org.au/documents/2018/08/joy-social-connection.pdf/>

Preparing for a new volunteer with a disability first starts with questions!

Arrange an in-person interview with your prospective volunteer who has a disability. This will allow you to see how they move and if you will need to adjust furniture to accommodate them. It will also allow you to assess their speech and understanding. Don't forget everyone gets nervous in an interview, so go easy.

You can ask:

- What brings them to be interested in volunteering?
- What sorts of things are they good at?
- What sorts of things do they want to learn?
- Are they good with people or prefer to work alone?
  - Are they good with computers?

- Do they prefer to learn from written material or by practicing?
- Do they need an assistive technology? (long cane, wheelchair, screen reader etc)
- Is there anything they can't or don't want to do?
- List the available roles around the station they might like to help with (admin, answering phones, marketing, production, announcing, news and events research, fundraising etc.)

Offer a work experience trial to see how everyone goes and what adjustments might be needed.

Volunteering may progress through stages:

- Shadowing (or following and watching/listening to someone else do tasks)
- Doing with help
- Doing with someone watching
- Doing alone
- Some people may not want to or be able to work alone





## The Disability Discrimination Act

• We have already discussed the legislation and codes that apply to community radio stations specifically regarding access and participations. The other important piece of legislation you need to be aware of is the ‘[Disability Discrimination Act](#)<sup>14</sup>’ (1992) (DDA).

The Disability Discrimination Act is Australian-wide legislation and complaints are administered by the Australian Human Rights Commission, who report that the majority of complaints they receive are under the Act.

The DDA:

- Makes it the duty of employers and service providers to make “reasonable adjustments” to allow people with disabilities to access their services or work in their workplace;
- Makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their disability;
- Provides a way for people to make a complaint if they are unable to access a service.

This includes people who might want to access your station to subscribe, for events

and fundraisers, and those who might want to volunteer.

Section 23 of the DDA requires non-discriminatory access to premises which the public or a section of the public is entitled or allowed to use.

All new buildings in Australia are expected to provide accessibility to people with disability and mobility issues.

The AHRC notes that discrimination is unlawful under section 23, “except where it can be shown that removing a barrier to access would impose unjustifiable hardship. While retrofitting older buildings may be necessary to comply with the DDA, institutions can avoid building modifications if they plead “hardship”.

More information can be found on [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)<sup>15</sup> website.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/employers/good-practice-good-business-factsheets/disability-discrimination>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-access-premises>



**Pictured above:** Steve did his second outside broadcast in 2019 on New Year's Day for the Hot 100. He is pictured with Alice and Jack from 'Zedgiest' and the 'Brisbane Line', two programs he volunteers on. He also volunteers on 'Only Human', a program about disability and other social justice issues.



**Steve has been volunteering at 4ZZZ for two years.**

**He is blind.**

**Starting out in digital media, Steve has tried his hand at many station roles.**

Steve has an interest in local music, and talking about disability rights issues. In the two years he has been volunteering he has learnt to use the phone recording booth and can conduct pre-recorded interviews without assistance.

4ZZZ installed a free screen reader on the phone recording booth computer, while a volunteer sat by his side for the first few months until he could do it alone.

He has taught himself to edit with Audacity after shadowing a volunteer who explained the steps to him. He is currently studying a Cert III in media with the Community Media Training Organisation.

## Building Codes

Commonwealth and State building codes are affected by the need to provide access to people with disability. It is the job of your board to ensure the station meets legislative standards.

- The 2010 [Disability \(Access to Premises – Buildings\) Standards](#)<sup>16</sup> provides the standard that builders need to comply with when creating accessible new buildings
- New buildings must also comply with the [National Construction Code](#)<sup>17</sup>
- Each state has its own building codes you should also refer to if making building improvements for access
- The Australian Human Rights Commission website [outlines access requirements](#).<sup>18</sup>

Section 23 of the D.D.A. requires non-discriminatory access to premises which the public or a section of the public is entitled or allowed to use.

## Building access issues specific to people with low vision or blindness:

- Not obstructing footpaths or hallways with signage or objects
- Provide a path of travel with a minimum width of 1000 mm
- Incorporate appropriate Tactile Ground Surface Indicators where necessary to ensure adequate safety and orientation at street crossings (you can apply to your local council to provide this)
- Surfaces to be as smooth as possible without raised or cracked paving or tree root damage
- Have a slip resistant surface during dry and wet conditions.

## Funding

Some of the changes you might want to make around your station will cost money.

Accessibility for public places sits in that as yet not well-defined space between legislative requirements and funding. While the Disability Discrimination Act and building codes require accessibility, there isn't much money out there for capital works.

You can create a fundraiser, a donation drive or you may be able to access grants to help.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2010L00668>

<sup>17</sup> <https://abcb.gov.au/ncc-online/ncc>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/frequently-asked-questions-access-premises>

You might be eligible for funding for accessibility via:

- [Government grants](#)<sup>19</sup>
- [ProBono Australia's Grants portal](#)<sup>20</sup>
- Community grants at Commonwealth, State or local government level
- State based Arts councils
- Philanthropic bank or superannuation fund grants – see organisations in your region
- Australian governments [International day for People with Disability grants](#)<sup>21</sup>
- The [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#)<sup>22</sup> may be leveraged for support for individuals who regularly access community radio volunteering as a core activity.
- [Community Broadcasting Foundation Development and Operations Grants](#).

Some local councils may offer grant writing workshops to assist you in assessing your eligibility and applying.

The [Community Media Training Organisation](#) offers one-day Sponsorship and Fundraising training for stations.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants>

<sup>20</sup> <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/category/grants/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.idpwd.com.au/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ndis.gov.au/>

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## About this resource

You can find more [Radio Reading Resources for stations](#) and for [volunteers](#) on our website.

We developed these community media training resources to support the Regional Development project, which aims to broaden the national reach of Radio Reading services to reach people with a print disability living in regional and remote areas.

RPH Australia is supporting stations, outside the current Radio Reading Network, to produce new, diverse, quality local programming made by and for people with a print disability in their community. [Contact us](#) to find out more.

## About us

RPH Australia is the peak body for the Radio Reading Network; community radio services dedicated to providing access to information for the estimated 5 million Australians with a print disability. We champion the rights of all people to access printed material, empowering equal participation in cultural, political and social life.

Radio Reading programming aims to meet the information needs of people with a print disability (those who are unable to effectively access printed material due to visual, physical or cognitive impairment, age or low literacy).

It provides a voice for people in our community with a print disability and caters directly to their information needs and interests.

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AUSTRALIA  
the radio reading network



Turning print into sound



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