## Accessibility NSW’s aims

To be the world’s most customer centric government, NSW’s people and customers must be enabled to do what they need to do without barriers. Accessible products and services are useable by the widest range of people with the widest range of abilities in the widest range of circumstances. Providing accessible products and services ensures our people and customers have equal access.

To enable this, [Accessibility NSW](https://www.digital.nsw.gov.au/delivery/accessibility-and-inclusivity) is supporting NSW Government staff to create, build and buy digital content, products, and services that are accessible. Our aim is to provide practical tools, resources, and policy to support NSW Government staff to make their work accessible for all NSW customers.

## NSW Government’s obligations for equal access of use

All NSW Government departments, agencies and organisations are responsible for affording citizens with equal access of use of the information and services we provide.

Accessibility is a right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (under Article 1-Purpose, Article 3-General Principles and Article 9 - Accessibility). Accessibility is critical to the enjoyment of a range of other civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, such as participating in the democratic process through voting.

Accessibility is also required by law under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW). Adhering to these obligations ensures citizens with disability are given the same opportunities of use as other citizens.

## Inclusive design and development of accessible voting systems

Accessibility should be a principal consideration in the design and development of accessible voting systems. Accessibility is essential in enabling all citizens of New South Wales free and fair participation in electoral processes.

Accessibility NSW supports a citizen-centric, omnichannel approach to design, rather than digital first. Technology can include some people but exclude others for a range of reasons. As such, an omnichannel approach empowers citizens with the choice and control to vote in a way that suits their needs and circumstances. This approach will also enable the NSW Electorate Commission to consider holistic accessible voting systems that go beyond technology assisted voting.

Accessibility NSW also recommends including diverse customers with a range of abilities and personal circumstances from the beginning of the design process through inclusive user research and consultation. The cohort should include customers with diverse functional needs, demographics and abilities, including customers who no or limited vision, no or limited hearing, customers who have difficulty reading or understanding, and customers with limited dexterity. Solutions should be co-designed and tested with these cohorts. Diverse representatives, including people with lived experience of facing accessibility barriers, should also be part of any steering committees that drive decisions at key milestones.

Finally, Accessibility NSW recommend that the criteria considered in the design of any technology assisted voting solutions should be informed by the *Australian Standard on accessibility requirements for ICT products and services* ([AS EN 301 549](https://infostore.saiglobal.com/en-au/standards/as-en-301-549-2020-100620_saig_as_as_2905383/)). At a minimum, the technology must conform to the relevant accessibility requirements within the current version of the Australian Standard. The features of any digital solutions should meet two key functional performance statements from the Australian Standard:

1. The digital product enables all users to locate, identify, and operate functions, and access the content provided as well as related support information, regardless of physical, cognitive, or sensory abilities.
2. Any accessibility features within the product maintains the privacy of people using those features at the same level as others

Compliance with this standard goes a long way to ensuring accessibility, but this must be confirmed by people with diverse abilities and needs through functional accessibility testing, in line with industry best practice and [W3C advice on involving users in evaluating accessibility](https://www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/involving-users/).

## Working together

Accessibility NSW would be happy to provide further advice and guidance to the NSW Electoral Commission. We look forward to working with the Commission and people with lived experience of disability to develop voting systems that are accessible for all NSW citizens.