



# **Sunshine Coast Access Advisory Network Inc.**

**A Place For Everybody**

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**February 16 2018**

## **Documents and forms in alternate format for people with vision impairment who have print handicap**

**To whom it may concern,**

**Sunshine Coast Access Advisory Network (SCAAN) Inc. is an incorporated association that has been operating on the Sunshine Coast for 7 years. Our group advocates for people with disability to help improve access to facilities and services on the Sunshine Coast, so that they may lead a more inclusive life in the community. The group consists of a number of people with varying disabilities, as well as others in the community who have a special interest in advocating for our group. Although our focus is primarily on the Sunshine Coast, our concerns are also for the wider community. Overall, our aim is to help reduce the barriers that people with disability face in everyday life.**

**Therefore, we are writing to seek your support on a current issue that is important to those of us who have a vision impairment, or print handicap. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992, has undoubtedly made a positive impact across a range of areas of life for people with disability in the 25 years since its introduction. However, access to education, health, justice, goods and services remains elusive for many people with disability where barriers still exist. For vision impaired people (VIPs), one such barrier is the difficulty in completing organisational forms because documents are not available in a format that allows VIPs to complete forms independently without assistance from a third party. Relying on a third party affects independence and dignity. In addition, if the task becomes too difficult, there is the likelihood that the task will be dismissed.**

**It is evident that in response to the DDA 1992 direction that organisational and public documents be made more accessible, much has been achieved in recent years through the use of assistive technologies and availability of documents in**

**Word and audio format across government departments and other significant organisations in Australia. However, our lived experience suggests that filling in forms continues to be a problem, something that others take for granted.**

**A significant number of Australians are potentially impacted by this problem. Vision Australia estimates there are currently 357,000 people in Australia who are blind or have low vision. They project that this number will grow to 564,000 by 2030, which suggests that addressing the problem now, is very timely.**

**Examples of organisational forms include job applications, Centrelink forms, hospital and any health service forms, complaint forms, passport applications, application for a birth certificate, and the growing number of occasions where username and passwords are required to gain access to a website. The problem is not limited to filling out forms. Issues also relate to access to public documents. Examples of public documents include: timetables, programs, council minutes, annual reports, signs, maps, directories, library books, brochures, accounts, and websites. There are many more instances where difficulties arise, such as responding to household correspondence and tax invoices that become everyday challenges to VIPS.**

**There are three acceptable means of providing documents in alternate format, as follows:**

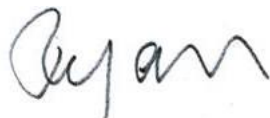
- 1. Large text version - Arial Bold (or sans serif), 16-18 point or larger**
- 2. Audio recording, compact disk (CD), or similar for people who are blind, are able to hear, and can understand the content and meaning of the form. For people who are blind, information should be freely available in Braille.**
- 3. Electronically available in Word format for computer literate people who have assistive software technology. Note that many older people may not have access to this technology, which further disadvantages this group.**

**SCAAN is currently working in partnership with CQUniversity and University of the Sunshine Coast on a research project concerning documents and forms in accessible format from a lived experience perspective. We would be happy to share the findings on completion of the project.**

**In the meantime, SCAAN Inc. invites you to provide your thoughts and suggestions on how we can work together to develop documents in alternative format options to enable adults with vision impairment to complete forms independently, just like anyone else in the community.**

**We would greatly appreciate your assistance with this issue and would be pleased if you could contact us so that we may work in partnership on this issue. Our passion is to promote inclusion so that people with disability can take their rightful place in society alongside everyone else.**

**Yours in service to the community,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Ryan', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Peter Ryan**

**President**

**SCAAN Inc.**