

Queensland Government

Captioning policy

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Produced by: Communication Services

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

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Captioning

It is government policy that captions appear on all television commercials and programs, DVDs and CDs produced by all Queensland Government departments.

What are captions?

Captions are used to help people with sensory disabilities to understand the soundtrack of television commercials and programs, DVDs and CDs.

Unlike foreign language subtitles, that are a translation of the dialogue only into English, captions include other elements of the soundtrack, such as sound effects and music. They are also coloured and positioned on screen to help the viewer follow who is speaking.

Captioning should be included in the production of television commercials and programs, DVDs and CDs to allow the audience to “hear” and understand what is being said on screen.

Depending on placement, television commercials and programs can be open captioned (seen by all viewers) or close captioned (seen only by people using a teletext TV or a digital set top box).

In addition, a text alternative such as an accessible word document, accessible pdf or HTML must be provided with audio and video media delivered via the internet, unless it is live streamed (it is not expected that captioning would be done in ‘real-time’).

Refer to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) for more information.

Using captions/text alternatives will:

- maximise exposure of your message/s
- maximise unit sales of DVDs and CDs

Why should you provide captioning/text alternatives?

- Captioning/text alternatives are socially responsible as they provide equal access for all to your content.
- It is compulsory for all Queensland Government departments, including regional offices, to caption television commercials and programs, DVDs and CDs, and sponsorship media material/s that will be viewed by the public, including previously produced materials. This includes general information DVDs playing in a customer service area, public function or trade show, and DVDs the public can request, hire or purchase.
- All Queensland Government departments developing sponsorship media material/s should ensure all media (commercials, programs, DVDs and CDs) with sound is captioned. Additionally a text alternative such as a word document or pdf must be provided with audio and video media delivered via the internet, unless it is a live stream, where live captioning is not expected.

Departments entering into joint sponsorship arrangements with other agencies and/or private sector organisations should ensure captioning/text alternative requirements are noted in contracts and other documentation.

Departments should also ensure that quotes are obtained to satisfy these requirements and are included within all agreements.

- Captioning/text alternatives helps all consumers to better understand your message. Having these onscreen reinforces the intended message, and reports show that using two senses at once increases comprehension.
- The use of captions/text alternatives expands the reach of your advertising message/s. There are 3.5 million deaf and hearing impaired Australians who would benefit from being able to 'read' and understand your message. There are millions more who could use the captions/text alternatives to 'read' and understand your message/s in situations where the background noise is overwhelming, such as airports, shopping centres, sports arenas, entertainment venues, etc.
- Programs shown in prime time (6.00pm-10.30pm), all news and current affairs programs outside those hours, and a range of other programs on all free-to-air Australian television stations are now captioned, as are an increasing number of advertisements. Pay TV also utilises closed-captioning. Presenting advertisements or community messages without captions during prime time periods is the same as pressing the mute button for some viewers.

Who can benefit from using captions/text alternatives?

- Deaf and hearing-impaired people—around 10 per cent of the Australian population.
- People who are hard of hearing—many older people have hearing loss.
- People whose first language is not English—captions help them to understand the message and aid in the learning of English.
- Anyone watching a commercial, program, video, DVD, CD or audio/visual media delivered over the internet in a noisy or crowded area can use captions/text alternatives to be able to 'hear' and understand what is being said on screen.

What should I consider before captioning?

You, and/or the appointed creative agency, should consult with Media Access Australia (details below) before producing commercials and other electronic media with sound to ensure that you minimise costs, select the most effective format and effectively integrate captioning in your message.

If you are re-sending dubs of previously produced commercials that have been on air in the past, they too need to be captioned. If you currently use a public announcement commercial, program, video, DVD or CD that is not captioned then you must have it captioned before using it in public again. The same procedure applies for as-new commercials and other electronic media.

For further information, contact:

Media Access Australia
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Internet site: www.mediaaccess.org.au

Media Access Australia has no commercial interest in media access and works closely with the community organisations representing disabled people, as well as industry and government.