

Autism Friendly Inclusion Statement guide



Many everyday rules are never written down – they're part of the hidden curriculum we absorb over time. Like keeping your elbows off the table. It's not about hygiene or respect, and for some people, elbows actually support posture or coordination.

Workplaces and community settings have their own hidden curriculum too: unspoken rules about how to sit, where to look, when to speak, and what "paying attention" should look like.

In meetings, this often shows up as expectations to sit still, maintain eye contact, stay on camera, or avoid using fidgets or movement. These unwritten rules can quietly reduce participation for people who need movement, experience pain, process information differently, or find eye contact difficult.

When we make the hidden curriculum visible and replace it with shared expectations that prioritise comfort, focus, and participation, we remove barriers and create better outcomes for everyone.

**Our purpose
a different brilliant®**

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.

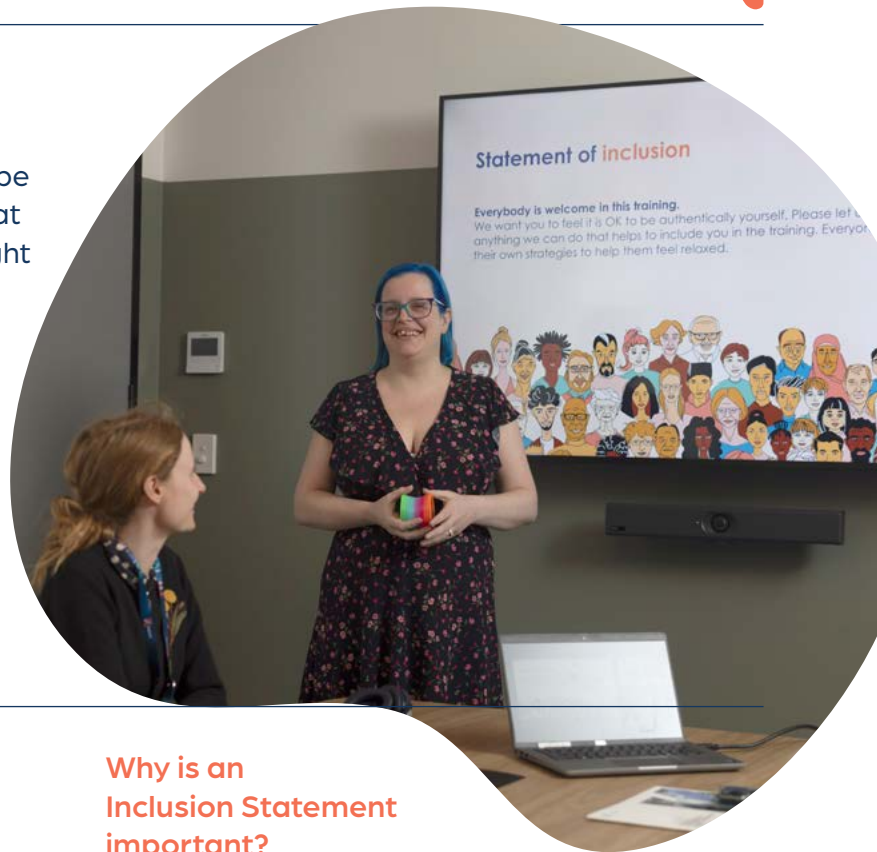
What is an Inclusion Statement?



An Inclusion Statement is a short, explicit welcome that lets everyone know they can be their authentic selves and use strategies that help them participate comfortably. This might include stimming, wearing what feels right, moving around, using fidgets, or turning the camera off in a virtual meeting.

It's shared at the start of meetings and events or displayed on slides or posters (especially in settings where people may be unfamiliar with each other or the environment).

Its purpose is simple: to create a safe space where engagement and well-being matter more than conformity.



The key components of an Inclusion Statement are:

1. A universal welcome

This sets an open, inclusive tone from the start. For example: *"Everybody is welcome in this [training/meeting/office/event]."*

2. Permission to be authentic

This encourages participants to bring their whole selves without fear of judgment. For example: *"We want you to feel it is OK to be authentically yourself."*

3. An invitation to request adjustments

This proactively offers support and signals that adjustments are normal and expected. For example: *"Is there anything we can do that helps to make you feel more comfortable?"*

4. Normalising and listing individual strategies

This validates self-regulation techniques as part of participation for everyone. For example: *"Everyone is welcome to use their own strategies to help them feel engaged and relaxed. This means you can move around, use fidget tools, take a break, ask if we don't explain something clearly etc."*

Common strategies people might use:

People can use whatever helps them take part comfortably. This might include moving or stretching, choosing a different seat or position, using chat instead of speaking, asking for a summary, sitting where they feel safest, using a virtual background, taking a short break, wearing comfortable clothing, or having a drink or snack.

Why is an Inclusion Statement important?

An Inclusion Statement isn't just courtesy. It's a practical tool that improves engagement, well-being, and team performance. Here's why:

• Legal and ethical obligations

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992¹, employers must make reasonable adjustments so Disabled people can do their job. An Inclusion Statement helps create an environment where those adjustments are understood and welcomed.

• Reflecting Australia's diversity

21.4% of Australians have a disability², 22.3% speak a language other than English at home³. Inclusive practices benefit everyone – not just Autistic people.

• Reducing barriers to participation

Unspoken workplace expectations can create stress and exclude people who work differently. When people feel safe to use strategies that help them focus and participate, they spend less energy "fitting in" and more energy contributing.

• Improving team performance

Research and experience show that when individuals feel accepted and supported, participation rises, well-being improves, and collaboration strengthens. Inclusion Statements set the tone for psychological safety, which is proven to drive innovation and productivity⁴.

• Closing the "double empathy" gap

Misunderstandings between neurodivergent and neurotypical people are common. Being explicit about inclusion signals a genuinely welcoming environment.

Using an Inclusion Statement



When to use an Inclusion Statement

Use an Inclusion Statement at moments that set the tone for safety and inclusion:

- **Start of meetings, training sessions, or events** – Use the Inclusion Statement upfront to set a welcoming tone and make it clear that everyone can participate in ways that work for them. A good time to include it is immediately after the Welcome or Acknowledgment of Country, so it becomes part of the opening message and feels natural.
- **Virtual meetings** – Share it either aloud or in the chat, so expectations for comfort and inclusion are explicit.
- **Whenever new people join** – Use an Inclusion Statement during onboarding or introductions to show they can work in ways that help them feel comfortable and included.

Where to use an Inclusion Statement

To make inclusion a visible and consistent part of your culture, place the statement where people will see or hear it often:

- **Meeting rooms and training spaces** – Posters or signage remind participants that inclusion is a priority.
- **Reception and common areas** – Signals a welcoming environment for visitors and staff.
- **On presentation slides** – Include it on opening slides for meetings, workshops, and events.
- **Virtual platforms** – Add it to online meeting invites, shared documents, or chat messages.
- **Learning environments** – Display in classrooms or breakout spaces to support comfort and engagement.
- **Event programs and agendas** – Incorporate an Inclusion Statement prominently in event programs and agendas to promote an inclusive experience.

How to deliver an Inclusion Statement effectively

- **Make it your own:** Say it in your own words so it feels genuine and natural.
- **Model strategies:** Briefly share what you'll do and why (e.g., *"I'll stand while we talk, I'm using captions, and I may take a short stretch break off camera."*). This normalises adjustments for everyone.
- **Offer multiple ways to respond:** Let participants know they can request support via voice, chat, or private message (make sure to acknowledge and respond).
- **Keep tone calm and matter-of-fact:** Avoid over-explaining; keep the statement brief and predictable.
- **Provide anticipated supports:** Proactively consider adjustments like lighting, seating, or noise levels. Confirm changes in a simple, inclusive way, for example: *"I've adjusted the lights – does this feel comfortable for everyone?"*, *"Please let me know if I don't explain something clearly"*
- **Mean what you say:** If you encourage people to use their own strategies, you must genuinely support that. Don't say *"move around or take breaks"* and then expect everyone to stay on camera or seated. Normalise flexibility by modeling your own strategies and respecting others' choices without drawing attention.
- **Adapt for regular meetings:** In recurring team meetings, shorten the Inclusion Statement for predictability without repetition. Example: *"Quick reminder – do what helps you participate. Private requests are welcome via chat or DM."*
- **Protect privacy:** These are group needs. Never single anyone out by saying *"X needs us to do this for them"*
- **Respond to stress:** If you notice signs of stress during a meeting, pause and offer low-effort choices (e.g., *"Would a short break be helpful now?"*).



See it in practice



Written and video examples

Here are some examples of Inclusion Statements in practice so you can see how they sound and how people use them. You will find video examples of an Inclusion statement in the following contexts:

- Reception, welcoming visitors
- Virtual meetings
- In person team meetings
- Events such as Townhalls or AGMs

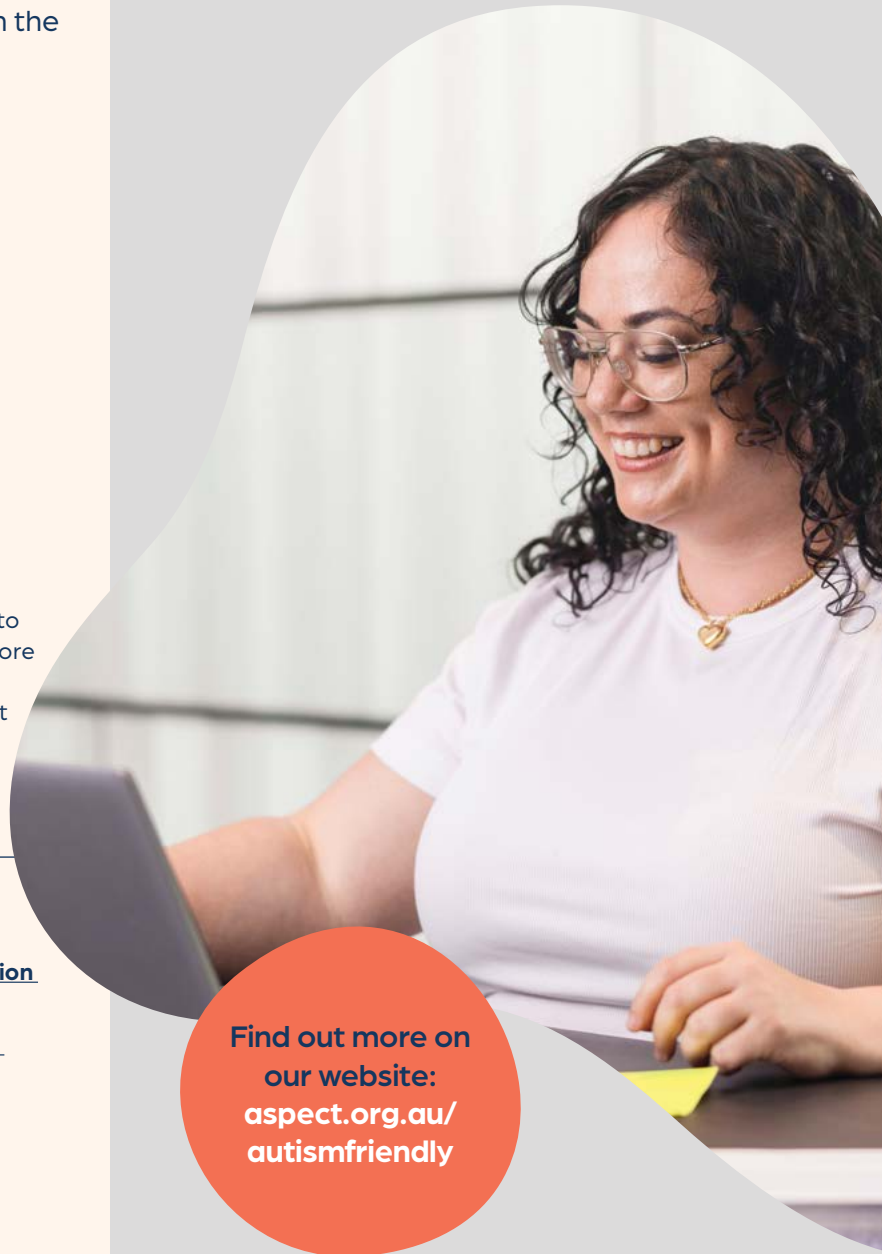


By adopting and integrating an Inclusion Statement into daily business practices, organisations can create a more welcoming environment that values and supports the diverse needs of all employees. An Inclusion Statement is one small component of developing a genuinely inclusive culture.

References

1. Australian Government, 2024, [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 – Federal Register of Legislation](#)
2. ABS, 2022, [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)
3. ABS, 2021, [Language used at home \(LANP\) | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)
4. Patil et al., 2023, [The Power of Psychological Safety: Investigating its Impact on Team Learning, Team Efficacy, and Team Productivity](#)

We are committed to making life better for people on the autism spectrum.



Find out more on our website:
aspect.org.au/autismfriendly

