



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Aged Care**

# health.gov.au style guide

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This document has been released by the  
Department of Health and Aged Care administratively.

We follow the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) and use the Macquarie Dictionary for spelling and hyphenation guidance.

This document lists exceptions and terms and phrases specific to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

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# Use we/us/you

On health.gov.au, we/us means the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Do not use 'the department' or 'the Department', or 'the Department of Health and Aged Care'. This is in line with the Style Manual advice to [use personal pronouns \(like 'we', 'you', 'us'\) when it suits the voice and tone](#).

## Formatting

### Italics

Do not use italics for emphasis. Follow [Style Manual advice on italics](#).

### Bold

Avoid using bold for long sections of text. Use a callout instead.

### Legislation

To ensure Acts of Parliament appear italicised, use the Cite style in GovCMS within the source code.

Ensure you identify the jurisdiction of the Act as either national or state based by the lead in sentence, not by using (Cth) or (NSW)

Linking to legislation – use the 'latest' link. Right click and copy the 'go to latest' link.

### Transcripts

For audio/video resources [follow this example](#).

### Abbreviations and acronyms

Spell out once per page. For abbreviations/acronyms used in the title, spell out either in the page title (preferred) or in the summary (if spelling it out in the title is too long). Add an s for plural and an 's when possessive.

## Capitalisation

In general, use [minimal capitals](#).

### Committees

When referring to working parties, committees, expert panels and so on:

- Use title case for the full name of the group (e.g. Life Saving Drugs Program Expert Panel).
- Use lowercase thereafter for general references to the group (e.g. 'the panel decided...', 'the committee met...').

We no longer capitalise panel, committee, working group and so on in general text references, as per the new [Style Manual government style manual guidance](#).

## Reports, strategies, frameworks, plans

Do not capitalise these terms in general text references (for example, ‘the Strategy’ or ‘the Report’). As per the Australian Government Style Manual, [minimise capitals for common nouns](#).

## Job titles

You can find the rules and guidance for capitalising job titles in the Style Manual under [titles](#), [honours and forms of address](#), [punctuation and capitalisation](#), [government terms](#), and their blog article [Capital letters: less is more](#).

[Style Manual](#) says: ‘Use initial capitals for the official titles of ministers and departmental secretaries. Use lower case for generic references. Apply this rule to the titles of other government office holders and department officials.’

Examples:

- National Rural Health Commissioner, Professor Ruth Stewart
- The commissioner presented her report...
- The Chief Medical Officer stated that...
- The Minister for Health and Aged Care met with...
- The minister announced funding for...

## Publications

### Title case

[Style Manual](#) says to use initial capitals for ‘treaties, protocols and similar agreements.’

In our context, use initial capitals for the full titles of these publication subtypes:

Publication subtype	Example title
Book	The Red Book
Report (only if a major report)	Department of Health and Aged Care Annual Report 2022–23
Strategy or framework	Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy 2024–2029
Agreement	Eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement

### Sentence case

Use sentence case for titles of the following publication subtypes. Use a capital after en dashes used to separate parts of titles. Capitalise proper nouns, such as names of initiatives, programs, committees or groups.

Use spaced en dashes to separate items and non-spaced en dashes in date ranges (copy and paste an en dash from Word, or hold down the ALT key and type 0150 on your number pad to enter one directly into GovCMS).

<b>Publication subtype</b>	<b>Example title</b>
Agenda	LSDP Expert Panel meeting agenda – 26 May 2023
Brochure	National Bowel Cancer Screening Program – Lifesaver brochure
Collection	Certification statements for advertising campaigns
Campaign certification statement	Certification statement – Childhood immunisation campaign 2024 – Phase 3
Case definition	Invasive meningococcal disease – Surveillance case definition
Dataset	First Nations COVID-19 vaccination coverage – National data – 14 June 2024
Digital image	Changes to vaping in Australia from 1 July 2024 – Social media tiles
Fact sheet	Innovative Models of Care (IMOC) Program – Yolŋu-led family focussed maternity care
Form	Second-tier default benefits eligibility – Application form
Government response to inquiry	Inquiry into approval processes for new drugs and novel medical technologies in Australia
Guideline	ATAGI advice on use of sedation for COVID-19 vaccination
Infographic	My Aged Care process overview – Aged care assessment workforce (Integrated Assessment Tool)
Letter	Minister Colbeck's letter to aged care service providers about infection prevention and control leads
Meeting minutes	ATAGI 104th meeting bulletin – 17 April 2024
Poster	BreastScreen Australia – 1 in 7 women will develop breast cancer poster
Presentation	Delivering high quality, person-centred palliative care in aged care – Presentation slides

Publication subtype	Example title
Procedure	Hearing Services Program portal user guide – Submit a claim
Public interest certificate	Procurement of suppliers to provide Regional Assessment Services (RAS) in Victoria
Report (minor reports)	Fourth report on key performance measures for the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement
Standard	PHDB data specification – Hospital to department – 2024–25
Statement	Statement on the clinical use of zoster vaccine in older adults in Australia
Template	Hearing Services Program device quote template
Terms of reference	Strengthening Medicare Implementation Oversight Committee – Terms of reference

## Grammar and punctuation

### Hyphens

Use [hyphens](#) in compound adjectives placed **before** a noun, but not when it placed after the **noun**. For example:

- ‘I am seeking full-time work’; but ‘I work full time’
- ‘the up-to-date accounts’, but ‘the accounts are up to date’
- ‘an 11-year-old child, but ‘a child who is 11 years old’

Only use hyphens to hyphenate words. Don’t use en or em dashes for that purpose.

### Dashes

Use **spaced en dashes** within content for parenthetical purposes (using a dash instead of brackets or parentheses). In MS Word, you can enter an en dash by holding the Ctrl key and entering the – on the number pad. MS Word will usually autocorrect a space-hyphen-space to a space-en dash-space. In MS Word and GovCMS you can enter an en dash by holding down the Alt key and entering 0150 on the number pad.

Use **en dashes** for year ranges (no spaces), in publication titles (with spaces), and in multiple-word modifiers. For example:

2020–21

Publication title – A user guide

Australian Government–funded

See the Style Manual for more on [dashes](#).

## List punctuation

We previously omitted the full stop at the end of bulleted lists because the DTA content guide advised this. They have since changed that guidance and new style manual says to [use full stops at the end of fragment lists](#) to end the sentence.

## Percentage symbol

Use % on the web, not 'per cent'.

## Organisations take singular verbs

References to committees, departments, organisations, companies and so on [use singular verbs](#) and pronouns, not plural:

- 'The committee is deciding' not 'The committee are deciding'
- 'It is working on' not 'they are working on'

## Linking

### Link text

Write link text that makes the destination clear ([see Style Manual](#)). Don't write 'Click [here](#)'.

Write this: [Register for the webinar](#)

Not this: To register for the webinar, [click here](#).

## Legislation

Always link to the **latest version** of the Act or Regulation. For example:

[www.legislation.gov.au/Latest/C2019C00023](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Latest/C2019C00023)

To get this URL, right-click on the 'go to latest' link in the top-right corner of an Act or Regulation page

More info: [Federal Register information on linking](#)

**Link to a section within legislation if needed** – In the table of contents, right-click on the section and copy the URL. Take the last bit of the URL including the slash (for example:

**/Text#\_Toc12283716**) and append it to the 'latest' URL (for example:

[https://www.legislation.gov.au/Latest/C2019C00199/Text#\\_Toc12283716](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Latest/C2019C00199/Text#_Toc12283716))

The link text should be the name of the section. For example:

[Part 3 – Home care services](#) of the User Rights Principles 2014

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

The [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network](#) have approved an editorial style guide. Please [refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health guide](#).

# Aged care

Aged Care have put out their own editorial style guide. Please [refer to the aged care guide](#).

## Explaining Medicare

- **Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)** – this scheme is **not** part of Medicare. You can say *a Medicare card gives you access to the PBS* or something similar.
- **Free treatment as a public patient in hospital** – not ‘free treatment as a public patient in a *public* hospital’. This is because 40% of public patients are treated in private hospitals as part of overflow when public hospitals are full or unavailable.
- **The *public health system* provides free hospital treatment as a public patient** – not Medicare.

## Life Saving Drugs Program

See the guides and templates in this folder: [Life Saving Drugs Program](#).

## Word list

This list shows how words have been presented on health.gov.au and in Budget papers. We aim for consistency with this list.

### A

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms and phrases – See the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health guide](#)

after hours – ‘care is available after hours’ but ‘after-hours care’, ‘after-hours primary care’ but ‘Primary Health Network After Hours Program’ (as they must have forgotten the hyphen when they named it)

aged care – See the [aged care guide](#).

antibiotic-resistant bacteria

anti-smoking campaign

anti-vaping campaign

antiviral

Australian Centre for Disease Control

Australian Digital Health Agency

Australian Government (and then ‘government’ afterwards but not Commonwealth Government or Federal Government)

age ranges – people 65 years and over; children aged 6 months to less than 5 years



## B

bloodborne – one word in general text (bloodborne virus). Two words in committee names because they are wedded to this. Acronym still BBV for bloodborne virus, for consistency with past use.

breastmilk

breastmilk bank

Budget – capital B in running text ('the Budget')

bulk billing

bulk billing incentive, bulk billing GP

## C

check-up

chronic condition – not chronic disease

clinical quality registries (but National Clinical Quality Registries Program)

Closing the Gap PBS co-payment

co-design

communicue – no accent on the e; if possible use 'Meeting summary' or 'Meeting minutes' instead

concession cardholders

co-payment

coronavirus – no capital unless starting a sentence

cost of living (noun) – 'ease the cost of living for Australians'

cost-of-living (adjective) – 'We want to ease the cost-of-living pressures on Australians.'

COVID-19 – not Covid or covid or any other shortened version

COVIDSafe – adjective describing behaviours to reduce the spread of COVID-19

cross-border health issues

cutting edge (noun) – 'This care is cutting edge.'

cutting-edge (adjective) – 'This is cutting-edge care.'

## D

data – singular (data is), not plural (data are)

decision-making

## E

Ebola – capitalise first letter (because it is named after the Ebola River; most diseases do not take capitals – see [Medical terms](#))

end-stage kidney disease

e-cigarettes

## F

fact sheet – not factsheet

fellowship – lower case in running text: 'When you complete your GP training with the ACRRM or RACGP, you'll achieve your GP fellowship. As a fellow, you can work unsupervised as a GP anywhere in Australia.' Uppercase when referring to the full name: Fellowship of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine

face-to-face consultations

fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)

First Nations – See the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health guide](#)

## G

GP (no need to spell this out first time before using abbreviation)

government – lower case when using as subsequent references to the Australian Government, and as an adjective (government spending, government programs)

GP-led respiratory clinics (lower case)

## H

health care – use 2 words when the term is being used a noun. For example, delivering better health care, improve rural health care, providing health care remotely, improving access to primary health care.

healthcare – use 1 word when it is being used as an adjective. For example, healthcare providers, healthcare billing compliance, healthcare workers

health insurer – not health fund

health professionals

- for a specific context, use the specific term – e.g. 'ask the dentist who is doing your root canal if you can have pain relief'
- for a generic context where providers can be grouped, use one generic (ie if you might consult a specialist or a GP or a surgeon or a psychiatrist = 'the doctor will bill Medicare on your behalf'; OR if you spoke to a physiotherapist, nurse, or Aboriginal community health worker = 'show the health professional your injury')
- if the context covers both 'doctor' or 'health professional' use both – e.g. 'when you get to the community clinic tell the doctor or health professional you see about your rash'.

Say you were writing a page about mental health medication. You could use the specific terms GP and psychiatrist in the summary for accuracy – 'your GP or psychiatrist can prescribe you an antidepressant' – but use the generic after that to keep the page simple – 'ask the doctor about possible side effects if you are worried'. This should help ensure the page shows up in a search using any of the 3 terms.

healthdirect – healthdirect, all lower case, is the name of the service. So when describing the healthdirect website, the healthdirect Symptom Checker or the healthdirect helpline, use

lower case. If you are writing about Healthdirect Australia (the organisation that operates a number of health services on behalf of Australian governments), that name should be capitalised.

home page – always 2 words, never homepage

## I

## J

## K

## L

life-saving (but 'life saving' in Life Saving Drugs Program, Surf Life Saving Australia)

life-threatening

log in and login – not sign in or log on. Use log in (verb) for buttons and links, and login (noun) for content such as 'your login details'.

long-stay older patients

long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)

low-intensity digital service

LGBTQIA+

## M

Minister for Health and Aged Care – not Health and Aged Care Minister

Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics (then abbreviate to Medicare UCCs)

Medicare-eligible MRIs

Medicare-funded healthcare providers

Monthly Care Statements

MyMedicare

My Health Record

My Health Record data

## N

national one-stop shop

national strategies for bloodborne viruses and sexually transmissible infections

nationwide

non-life-threatening, for example 'non-life-threatening care'

nurse practitioners (NPs), but try to avoid abbreviations

## O

out of pocket (noun) – ‘You won’t be out of pocket’

out-of-pocket (adjective) – ‘fewer out-of-pocket costs’

## P

Privacy notice – use this term, not collection notice or collection statement, for privacy notices used with webforms.

## Q

## R

recordkeeping – not record keeping or record-keeping (as per the National Archives of Australia’s website)

rollout – not roll out or roll-out

Rural Workforce Agencies

## S

Smartraveller – when referring to the website, one word and upper case ‘S’

smoke-free – hyphenated, not smokefree or smoke free

socio-economic

Star Ratings (in aged care)

## T

team-based primary care

telehealth

time frame – 2 words (Macq)

## U

under serviced (noun) – ‘areas that are under serviced’

under-serviced (adjective) – ‘under-serviced areas’

underway

## V

videoconference

## W

webpage – 1 word (Macq)

website – 1 word (Macq); not site or web site

wellbeing – 1 word, no hyphen

world-class

wraparound care

**X**

X-ray – upper case 'X'

**Y**

**Z**

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