

# Website Accessibility and the Victorian Government

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# Overview

- Multimedia Victoria (MMV)
- Vic Govt policy development
- Online requirements review
- Website Guidelines
- Accessibility Toolkit
- Accessibility FAQs
- Accessibility Survey
- Next Steps.....

# Multimedia Victoria (MMV)

- MMV – agency within Dept of Infrastructure
- Office of the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) – agency reporting to the ED of MMV (est. 2003)
- Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) – agency within the Dept of Premier and Cabinet (est. 2003)
- Victoria Online – project within the CTO – runs the Victorian Government Portal, assists with the implementation of government website policy

# Why did the Victorian Government develop an accessibility policy?

- Victoria had been looking at developing an accessibility policy for some time before the SOCOG incident
- Did not want to be subject to a “SOCOG” type legal case
- Wanted to be proactive in this area and “encourage their department and agencies to comply with the W3C guidelines on accessibility
- Online Council agreement

# Accessibility Policy

- In Sept 2000 Vic Govt released: IT&T39 – www accessibility (Disability) policy. The policy specified that
  - Departments and agency web sites should design their web sites to promote equal access for people with disabilities.  
(<http://www.mmv.vic.gov.au/accessibility>)
- The policy did not require mandatory compliance

# Accessibility Policy

- Conformance with level A of the W3C guidelines
- Priority assigned to
  - High traffic pages
  - Pages of interest to people with disabilities
- Websites should be checked with accessibility compliance tools

# Online Requirements Review (ORR)

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- How did we know if sites were complying with the policy?
- We didn't
- So during November - December 2001 we performed the "Online Requirements Review".

# Online Requirements Review (ORR) (cont.)

- To achieve what:
  - Check current state of vic gov web sites
  - Part of moves to ensure they were meeting adequate and consistent standards.
  - Identify what gaps existed in the standard of web site presentation to the public
  - Background info for strategy development
  - Only govt sites in the vic.gov.au domain were included in the review.



# ORR – Accessibility Component

- Criteria 3 of the review related to Web Site Accessibility
- A total of 299 sites were reviewed (including both the Victorian state government and local government (some 78 council websites))
- A maximum of 20 pages were reviewed on each site.
- The reviews used the “Bobby” Accessibility tool to gauge accessibility compliance (<http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp>)
- Only 3.4% were potentially at min. Level A Accessible.

# ORR - Limitations of the Review

- Restrictions – timeframe and resourcing meant that only an automatic accessibility checker was used
- Indicative results only – each website really needed to be formally assessed before being certified
- Failures – 6 sites could not be assessed after repeated tries.

# ORR - Comments

- Home pages – initial review by “Bobby” resulted in 93 home pages being passed
  - Only 10 of the 93 websites passed further investigation
- Use of accessibility logos – 12 sites indicated that their site was accessible – only 1 of these passed the “Bobby” test.
- “Bobby” is not the ‘ultimate’ authority on accessibility
- Results were indicative only

## ORR – Comments (cont.)

- Sites often and easily fall out of ‘technical’ accessibility compliance during routine maintenance and updating.
- Bobby does not tell us if people with disabilities can effectively access the content and services of a web site
- The timeframe and resources allocated to the review could not investigate the reasonableness of errors identified by Bobby.

# Website Guidelines

- In February 2002 the Whole of Victorian Government Website Guidelines were released by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- Specific reference to the application of W3C accessibility guidelines to Victorian Government websites – Section 2.5 – (<http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/wovgwebsiteguidelines>)
- These guidelines referenced compliance with
  - the Disability Discrimination Act
  - the Accessibility Policy
  - Rural and Regional Telecommunications Issues
  - Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

# Accessibility Toolkit

- Why?
  - Vic govt good at writing policy – not so good at helping agencies implement it.
- So we undertook to develop the “Accessibility Toolkit”
- Toolkit showed departments and agencies how to conform to the accessibility policy and the W3C Accessibility Guidelines to Level A compliance
- Was designed for business managers and web site owners

# Accessibility Toolkit (cont.)

- Contents
  - How to make a website accessible
  - Understanding the W3C Accessibility Level A checkpoints
  - Quick and easy fixes
  - Top issues – standard solutions and workarounds
- Toolkit was published in July 2002
- <http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/Victoria/StrategiesPoliciesandReports/Reports/Accessibility-Toolkit/Accessibility-Toolkit.htm>

# Accessibility FAQs

- But what about burning accessibility issues website managers had that they needed answers to?
- The FAQs accessibility service was established in September 2002.
- Objective - To provide answers on an on-going basis to questions posed by Victorian government website managers on accessibility issues
- (<http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/Victoria/StrategiesPoliciesandReports/Reports/Accessibility-FAQs/Accessibility-FAQs.htm>)



# Accessibility FAQs (cont)

- Currently the following faqs have been addressed:
  - [1. Why are PDFs not accessible?](#)
  - [2. How do you make tables accessible?](#)
  - [3. How do you make sure a site works without style sheets?](#)
  - [4. How do you make forms accessible?](#)
  - [5. Can a frames site be accessible?](#)
  - [6. Accessibility Guidelines for Websites versus Online Training programs](#)
  - [7. Accessibility and multimedia - specifically in regards to using animation \(Macromedia Flash\), audio and video](#)
  - [8. Form Elements and Labels](#)
  - [9. Which websites are the most accessible?](#)
  - [10. ALT Tags](#)

# Accessibility Policy - revisited

- In February 2003 the policy was revised and slightly reworded as “www accessibility policy”
  - Departments and agencies web sites should be designed for equality of access and use for all persons requiring Victorian Government services
  - The policy did not require mandatory compliance – it still did not say “must”!

# What is happening now?

- So far we have addressed the issue of accessibility of websites from the following viewpoints
  - We think we should
  - We are legally bound to do so
  - We want to offer equal access to services and information
- But how many customers of Victorian government websites are there who have an accessibility issue?

# Accessibility Survey

- End of Sept 2003 we commenced the Integrated Web Measurement Demographic Profiling Project.
- Utilising a service by Red Sheriff (now Nielsen NetRatings) under contract to Deloitte - called “Continuous User Profiling”
- We have between 100 and 150 Vic Govt websites currently participating in the project
- How does this work???.....

# Accessibility Survey (cont.)

- Each website is utilising Red Sheriff web measurement code on their web pages
- In addition they also incorporate code which launches a pop up survey.
- Participants who complete the survey have a cookie placed in their browser which tracks their ongoing usage of the participating websites
- The survey has been running since September 2003

# Accessibility Survey (cont.)

- There were two accessibility questions asked:
  - What type of connection are you currently using to access the internet?
  - Do you have any accessibility issues (i.e. vision impairment, hearing impairment, movement impairment etc) that affect your use of the Internet on a permanent basis?

## Accessibility Survey (cont.)

- Results as at 23 November 2004
- 169,134 respondents
- From Sept 2003 – June 2004 - 33% response rate to the survey. Since July 2004 response rate has been around 16-17%
- 4.76% of respondents say they are using a modem slower than 56k – 27.12 are using a 56k modem - but 22.78% don't know what their speed of access is.
- 2.53% of respondents say they have an accessibility issue

## Accessibility Survey (cont.)

- The current results are interesting – it tells us that either the survey is inaccessible and only a few people managed to access it, or the majority of Victorian Government customers do not have an accessibility problem.
- The results of the survey from September – February 2004 have been published on the eGovernment Resource Centre
- <http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/Victoria/StrategiesPoliciesandReports/Reports/webmeasurement/integrated-website-measurement.htm>



# Next Steps

- In 2004 the Chief Information Office ran a project called the “Website Management Framework”
- It has a number of objectives.....
  - Better delivery of services by making online information and services easier to find and easier to use
  - Better alignment of online services with Govt’s communications strategies and service delivery strategies
  - Better management of the cost, quality and security of online services
  - Improvement of compliance to policies, standards, guidelines and reporting

## Next Steps (cont.)

- This project has drafted an accessibility standard which has been circulated for comment around Victorian Government and will become endorsed on December 8.
- The ultimate question?
  - How successful have we been in implementing our accessibility policy?
  - Gut feel – our sites are more accessible now than before the policy and only as a result of this policy and the associated projects being put in place.
  - However we are yet to test again!

# Questions??

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