What works for people with dementia? Guidelines for resource development

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These recommendations are based on a review of literature around accessibility, with some specifically referencing dementia. This was then built on with consumer consultation as a part of the *Engage, Enable, Empower* project. This consultation included the following:

- Focus groups with people with dementia (2014)
- Trialling materials with Victorian *Living With Dementia* groups (2015)
- Website testing period (76 people with dementia) (2015)
- Input from people with dementia as members of both Alzheimer's Australia Vic's Project Advisory Group and Expert Advisory Committee (2014/15)
- Consulting with both Alzheimer's Australia Victorian and National consumer groups (2014/15)

Print-based

The accessibility principles guided the dementia-friendly approach; with readability being the key consideration. Accessibility considerations include:

- Use of plain language and appropriate reading level (Weih, Reinhold, Richter-Schmidinger, Sulimma, & Kormhuber, 2008)
    - The mean reading ability of patients with dementia or older people tends to be at about 6th to 8th grade levels (Weih et al., 2008)
- Sentence length (less than 20 words in a sentence) (Weih et al., 2008)
- Font size recommended for optimal readability by older recipients (Weih et al., 2008)

Any references to this work must be cited appropriately

- o See detailed notes on font below
- Use of a sans serif font (WA Government Disability Services Commission, 2012)
- Sentence casing (WA Government Disability Services Commission, 2012)
- Use of high-contrast colours (Cernin, Keller, & Stoner, 2003)
  - o See detailed notes on colour & contrast below
- Use of vivid colour cues and "form" shape cues (Cernin, Keller, & Stoner, 2003)
- Use of engaging and positive imagery and stories of people living with dementia
- Photographs may be easier to interpret than line drawings (Freeman, Clare, Savitch,   Royan, Litherland & Lindsay, 2005)
- Use visual cues such as relevant pictures or icons
- Use uncluttered design and avoid overlapping or complex arrangements of objects or shapes (Freeman et al, 2005)
- Print resources on matt, non-reflective paper (WA Government Disability Services Commission, 2012)
- Use of generous margins (VISABILITY, 2016)

Digital

- Use of plain language and appropriate reading level (Weih, Reinhold, Richter-Schmidinger, Sulimma, & Kormhuber, 2008)
  - o The mean reading ability of patients with dementia or older people tends to be at about 6th to 8th grade levels (Weih et al., 2008)
- Sentence length (less than 20 words in a sentence) (Weih et al., 2008)
- Font size recommended for optimal readability by older recipients (Weih et al., 2008)
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- Use of a sans serif font (WA Government Disability Services Commission, 2012)
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- Use of high-contrast colours (Cernin, Keller, & Stoner, 2003)
  - o See detailed notes on colour below

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- Use of vivid colour cues and "form" shape cues (Cernin, Keller, & Stoner, 2003)
- Use of engaging and positive imagery and stories of people living with dementia
- Photographs may be easier to interpret than line drawings (Freeman et al, 2005)
- Images used with alternative text for screen readers (VISABILITY, 2016)
- Use visual cues such as relevant pictures or icons
- Simple navigation and accessibility, including:
    o minimising need to scroll down pages;
    o minimising hyperlinks;
    o and providing navigation cues with no end-point for the website
- Use of clear and uncluttered call to action buttons, rather than relying solely on menu navigation
- Limit use of section/page headings presented as a question i.e. What is Dementia?, research has shown people with dementia have demonstrated difficulty with this (Savitch & Zaphiris, 2006)
- Avoid using CAPTCHA (encryption/security elements) (W3C, 2008).
- Easy-to-use video features (avoid very small buttons or links to other sites such as Youtube)
- Use of vivid colour cues and "form" shape cues (Cernin, Keller, & Stoner, 2003)
- Repeated elements may increase navigation function (eg. multiple ways to return to home page)

Detailed recommendations pertaining to colour, contrast and font are included below.

Colour & Contrast

- Colour and contrast may help to focus the reader's attention (Freeman et al, 2005)
- People with dementia find it difficult to distinguish between similar colours, particularly in the blue-indigo range of the spectrum (Shayler, 2011)

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- All colours need to be contrasting and engaging in print as well as on screen. Avoid differing shades of teal or grey.
  - o Focus group participants reported that only using black, white and teal had a corporate feel and they did not feel as though a resource using these colours had been designed specifically for them.

Font

- Recommend use of sentence casing in headings.
  - o Focus group participants commented that large headings in all capital letters are difficult to interpret.
- Use standard San Serif font.
- The default font size as recommended for optimal reading in older populations (Weih et al., 2008). For large text print (brochures, advertisement) font size 18 is recommended (VISABILITY, 2016)
  - o Focus group participants preferred font size 18 and had difficulty reading size 14 or smaller.
- Use bold font sparingly and avoid using hyphenation and italics

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