

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION: CATHERINE'S EXPERIENCE

Catherine Catarinich

My name is Catherine Catarinich. I have low vision and I find it hard to read and understand complicated information. I live on my own now that my son has moved into his own place.

Do you get any help to understand information?

When I get a letter in the mail that's full of small text, I either call the company to ask what it's about or, if I don't think it's important, I throw it in the bin.

It's hard to get help when I don't understand things because my son and my sisters have a busy life.

There aren't many people in my neighbourhood who can help either. I am starting to make a few friends at the Vision Australia social groups who might help if I ask.

I could also use NDIS funding to get help to explain bills and letters but I haven't organised that yet.

What do you find hard to read?

I find lots of things hard to read. For example, understanding bills, instructions, food ingredients, train timetables and emails.

So much information is written in small print with nothing to break it up, like space and pictures.

I prefer to read things on paper, not on the computer. I think companies should give people different options, like Easy English. I wish they would make it easier to find Easy English information too.

Why do you prefer Easy English?

Easy English helps people to read and understand small bits of information at a time.

I understand information better when documents are shorter and only have really important points. When



documents are too long I get sore eyes. I get physically tired and lose concentration. I can't remember what the document is about.

I don't like it when a sentence is broken up over two lines. I have to really look hard to find the rest of the sentence.

Sometimes with bullet lists I forget what the topic is about. That's why it's good not to have too many points. I lose my train of thought.

Scope's Easy English documents have changed over the years. Now they have less text and lots of good pictures. I like to read a sentence and look at the picture to get a better understanding.

At the end of a good Easy English document I have a much better understanding of the topic and what I might need to do.

Tell us about your role as a consumer tester

About 14 years ago I started to work for Scope as a consumer tester. I really love working with staff to read documents and give feedback. I hope it helps to make the documents better for people who find it hard to read.

Because I have low vision, staff know to print the documents at a larger size on A3 paper with size 16 or 18 text.



I might give feedback about:

- images that don't make sense
- confusing images - I might say an image needs to change and explain why
- hard words that haven't been explained
- information that is repeated or not important
- my own personal experiences - sometimes I even give new ideas

I've also given feedback in focus groups about the best pictures and words to use in Easy English documents. It's good that I can give my ideas to make Easy English better.

How often do you do consumer testing?

I do lots of activities now I'm in the NDIS, so I can't do as much consumer testing. I can work one morning a week. I think I do a good job because I keep getting asked to come back!

Tell us about your awards

Last year I won three awards for the work I've done at Scope. I won two Scope awards: a seasonal and annual award. I also won a DHHS Victorian Disability Award as part of Scope's Accessible Information team. The award was called Excellence in Employment Outcomes. It was wonderful to have my family, including my sisters and son, come along and see me accept the awards on stage.

I was also given a beautiful painting by an artist called, Barb Edis, who is part of the Scope community. I love it. It's a painting of trees in a paddock. It's hanging up in my kitchen so I can see it when I'm preparing dinner. It makes me feel proud of the work I've done.

Catherine Caterinich in conversation with Caroline Livanos

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