Legislation - Aotearoa New Zealand

New Zealand does not have specific accessibility legislation, but it does have a government mandated standard that applies to the government's own departments only. Wider legislation focuses on avoiding discrimination towards disabled people.

Relevant Acts

New Zealand Web Accessibility Standard

The New Zealand Web Accessibility Standard is not a law itself, but a government-mandated standard that is legally binding for public sector agencies in New Zealand. Effective from 17 March 2025, it mandates that government agencies (and any organisations doing business with them) meet WCAG 2.2 Level AA compliance. It is referred to as 'The Standard'.

Human Rights Act 1993

The Human Rights Act is the only relevant legislation available, and it states that it is not lawful to discriminate against disabled people by refusing to provide them with goods, facilities and services. The act mentions exceptions for if this needs to be done in a special way, and it wouldn't be reasonable for the service provider to do this.

Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill - a proposed law

The Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill is a proposed law that seeks to establish a consistent framework to address systemic accessibility barriers for people with disabilities in New Zealand. The Act would establish an Accessibility Committee of up to 8 members, who are tasked with identifying, preventing, and removing accessibility barriers. A majority of the members of the Accessibility Committee must be people with disabilities, and at least one candidate must be

nominated by a Māori nominations panel.

Interpretation of whether these acts apply to small publishers and eBooks

The Standard states it concerns public service departments, which are specifically listed here: The New Zealand Public Service On this list are Tertiary Institutions and various Crown entities, such as funders and research councils. If the press is involved with any of these entities in any capacity, then you can assume the Standard applies.

Although the Standard specifically says web pages, it later defines a web page as a file downloaded from a single URI (Uniform Resource Identifier); a definition which does include static ebook files.

This does not constitute legal advice.

Standards referenced in these acts and how they are audited

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA

The Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) will notify the organisation when they expect accessibility to be assessed. A report has to be submitted to the GCDO that details conformance to the Standard, and where content does not conform, a risk assessment and risk management plan is also submitted. The GCDO will provide each mandated organisation with a methodology for completing this.

Accessibility Statements

There is no mention of accessibility statements in the Standard.

Exemptions

The Standard has exemptions for complicated maps and for some specific WCAG criteria. More information is available about exemptions on this page: New Zealand Web Accessibility Standard

Copyright Legislation

Copyright in New Zealand is covered by the Copyright Act 1994. Exceptions to copyright are required under international legislation covered by the Marrakesh Treaty for print disabled/visually impaired people. New Zealand legislation has adopted this through the Copyright (Marrakesh Treaty Implementation) Amendment Act 2019

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