To PDF or not to PDF?

Government website navel gazing

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What’s the problem

Many government agencies ask the same questions:

- Should we keep PDFs?
- Are they useful?
- How should we publish them?
- Are they accessible?

Are PDFs accessible?

PDFs can be made accessible with some concerted effort to utilise the right tools and use markup to specify **identifying elements** such as:

- document structure
- text descriptions for images
- logical reading order of column text
- form labels
- headings, lists and tables.

However, not all PDFs are created this way.

They could be created through various publishing pipelines using various exporting tools.

Legal obligations

Under the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**, Australian Government agencies are required to ensure information and services are provided in a non-discriminatory accessible manner.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Style manual

The Manual is very definite:

“Create content in HTML pages instead of PDFs.”

Usability problems with PDFs

- Scalability: the layout is static, doesn’t reflow
- Speed: size can affect speed of delivery
- Navigation
- Search engine optimisation
- Maintenance

The answer is clear

Content should be published in an open and accessible format.

So HTML wins, right?

Wait! No.

There are some nuances to consider.

User research needed

- Do your website users need PDFs?
- How many of your users need them?
- Why do they need them?
- For which content types?
- How do they use them?
- Do the website analytics tell a different story?

Your research could show that an HTML page won’t meet certain user needs.

People might need to share documents with specific functionality or layout such as a pamphlet or form.

Common scenarios for pdf use

Fancy documents

Those that need desktop publishing tools.

- Annual reports
- Royal Commission reports
- Manuals

So high maintenance!

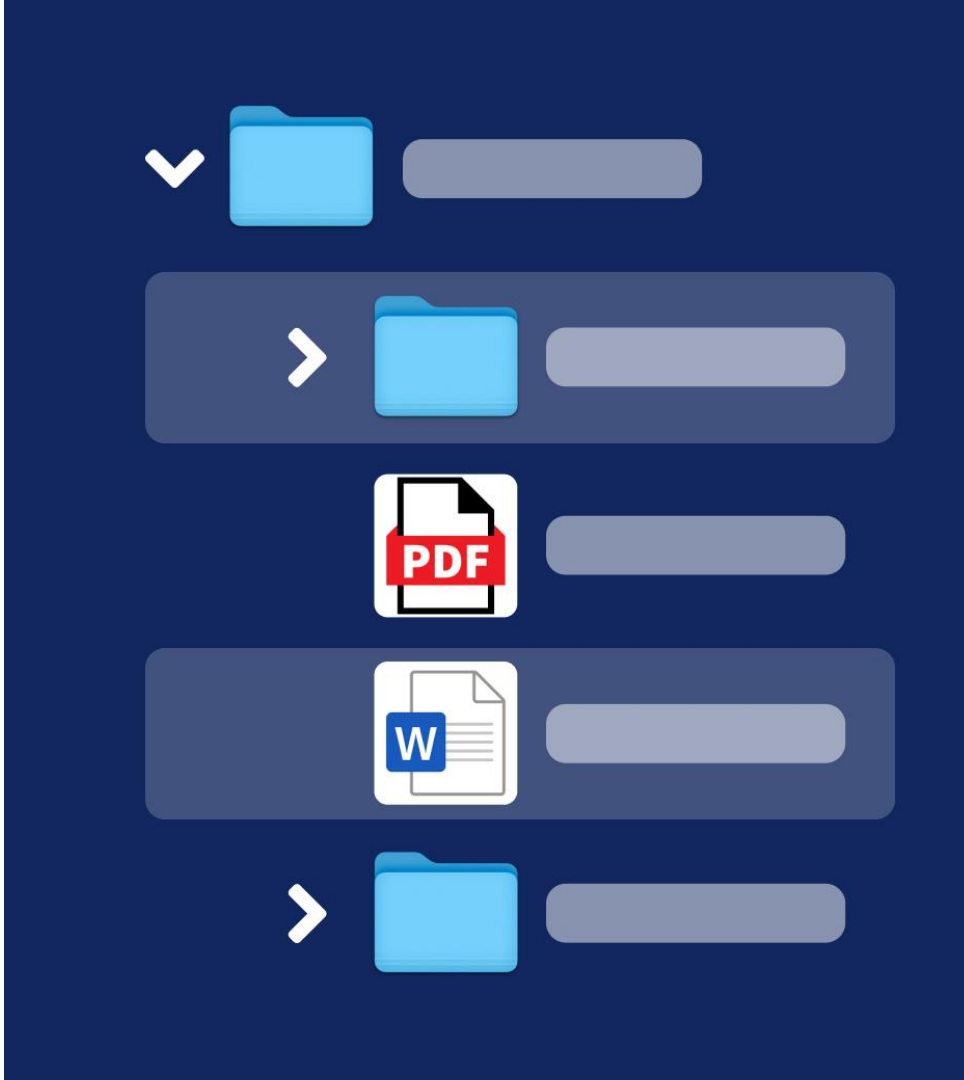
- Mind-bending charts and graphs
- Tables only the author can understand
- Diagrams with annotation

Document management system

- Revisioned and secured documents
- Considered as the canonical reference
- Exported out of the DMS

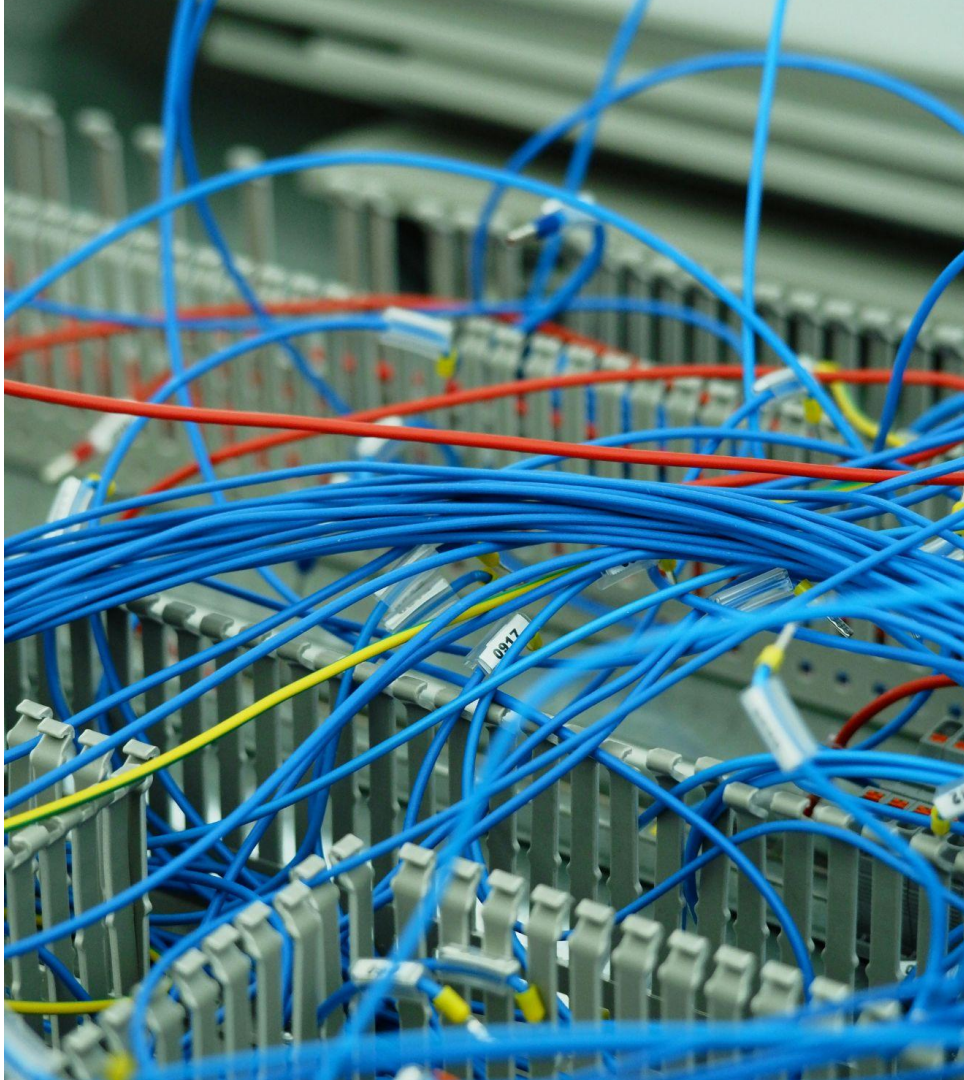
Examples

- Legal documents
- Technical documents
- Regulatory documents
- Point-in-time references



Storage and publishing pipeline

- Content can be stored and managed in external systems
- Owned by a different department
- Use technologies that determine the export format



For all else there are solutions

I can hear a ‘but’ coming: some pain points

The transformers
(the web team)

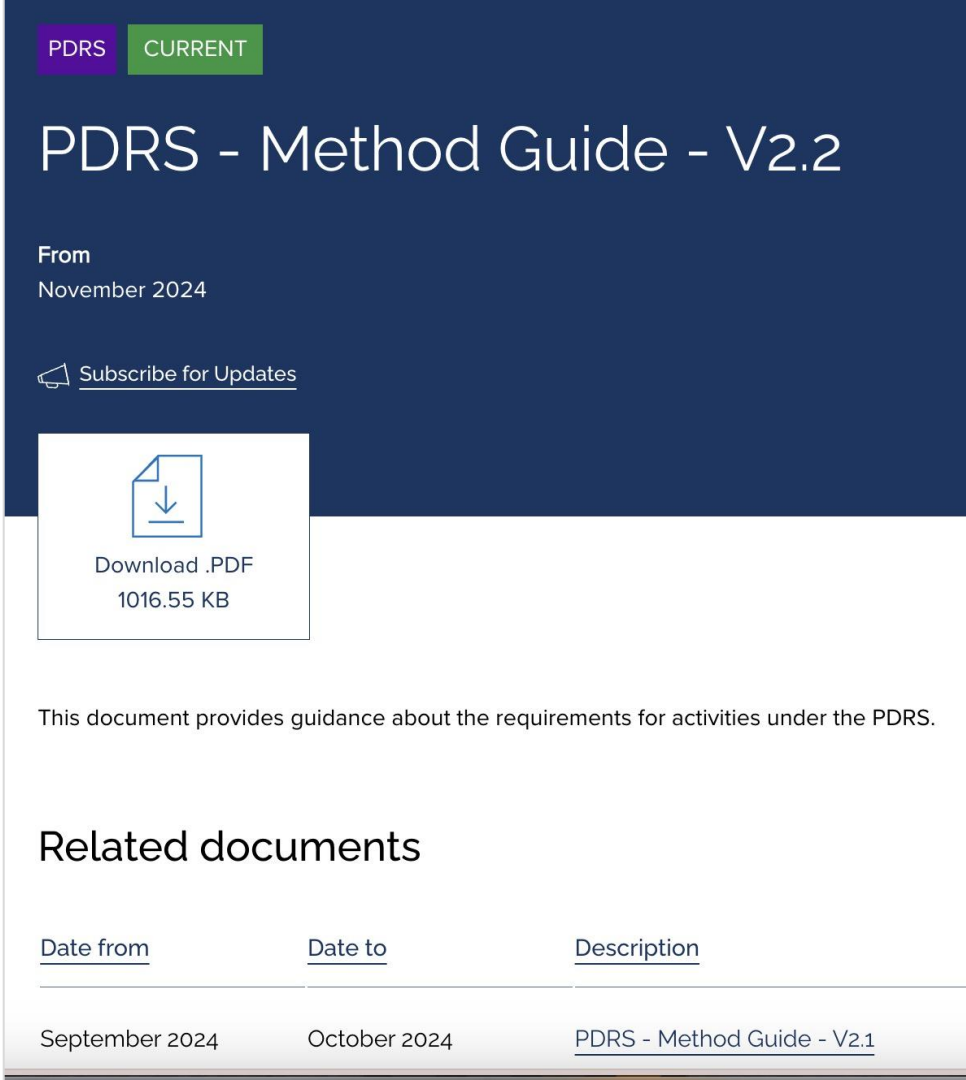
- Content is authored by subject matter experts (SMEs)
- The web team manually converts the content into HTML
- Effort, cost, and potential mistakes
- Sometimes it’s cost-effective to just publish the PDF
- Web team has no more capacity

The SMEs can do it

- Need training in how to use the CMS toolset
- High risk of inconsistent output
- More training required
- SMEs may not be interested in doing this type of work
- Editing goes back to the web team

DMS is the source

- Canonical source remains the document management system
- Users rely on downloading PDFs
- CMS becomes only a ‘wrapper’ as:
  - Media
  - Resources



Here are some pain killers

Semantic HTML

- Craft suitable content types to take the guesswork out of how to structure and transform content
- Review the structural aspects to map content to HTML elements:
  - Headings, paragraphs, lists, links, tables, embedded media
- Some difficulties arise with demanding content:
  - Fancy layouts
  - Large tables
  - Complex tables
  - Footnotes and references

Content design

- Make the most of your toolset:
  - WYSIWYG styles, templates
  - Components/paragraphs
  - Layout options
  - Interactive elements
  - Embedded audiovisuals
  - Not happy with what you've got... demand more
- Produce impactful experiences

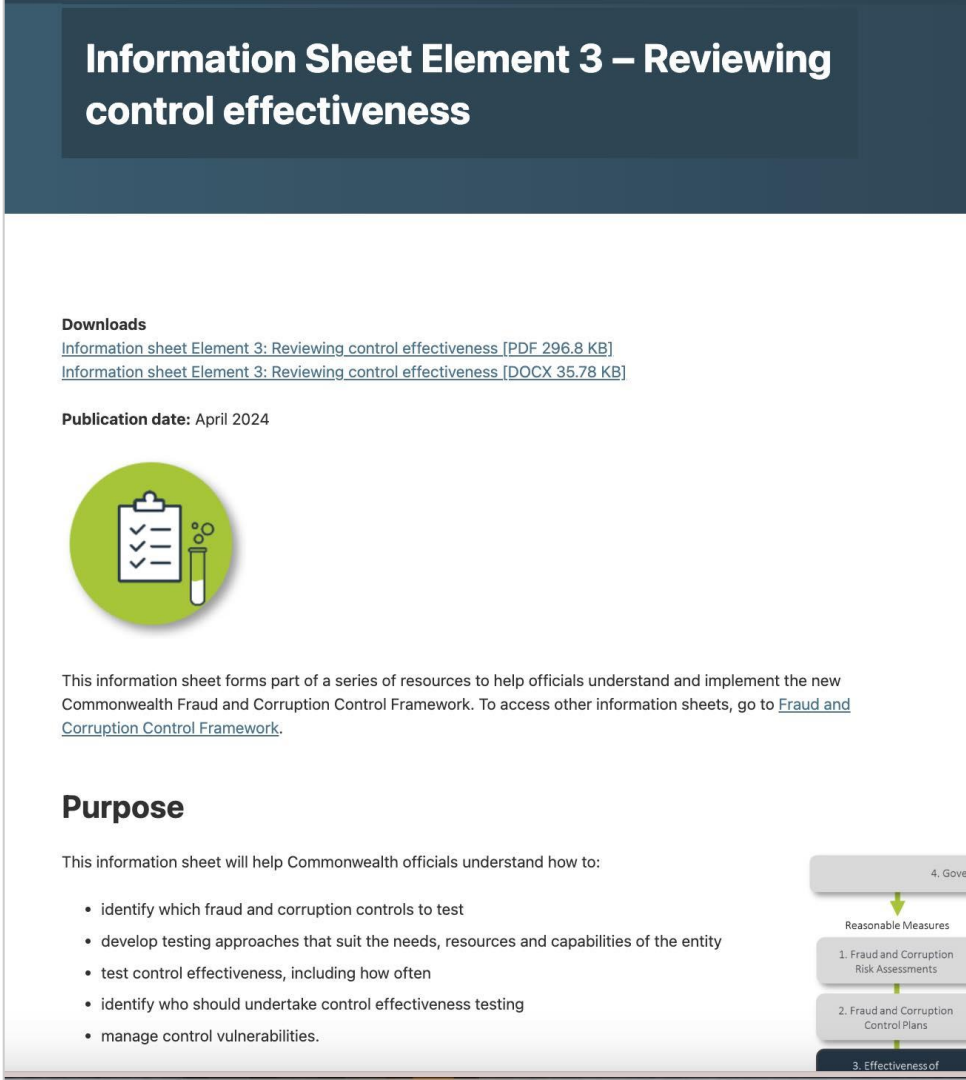
Re-interpret tables

- If it’s not data, does it have to be in a table?
- Save some time and bust the content out of this table
- Prepare for some push back from SMEs

DSR Number	DSR-02465
Project title	Sharing of data originating from the Department of Social Services to support creation of the National Disability Data Asset
Agreement date	2024-05-15
Registration date	2024-05-20
Expiry date	
Data sharing purpose	Informing government policy and programs, Research and development
Project description and public interest statement	The National Disability Data Asset (NDDA) will bring together de-identified data from Australian, state and territory government agencies for research and analysis. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) are partnering to design, develop, and deliver the technical aspects of the NDDA. The NDDA project is being led by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and is overseen by the Disability Reform Ministerial Council (DRMC). Public Interest Statement The NDDA will help people with disability, family members and carers; organisations that service people with disability; researchers; and governments: • access better information; • use, design, and deliver better support, services

Make wrappers useful

- Don’t just drop a link to the file
- Introduce the document
- Make it a good summary of the contents of the document
- Make it make sense for SEO
- This will help users find it



Information Sheet Element 3 – Reviewing control effectiveness

Downloads
Information sheet Element 3: Reviewing control effectiveness [PDF 296.8 KB]
Information sheet Element 3: Reviewing control effectiveness [DOCX 35.78 KB]

Publication date: April 2024

This information sheet forms part of a series of resources to help officials understand and implement the new Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework. To access other information sheets, go to Fraud and Corruption Control Framework.

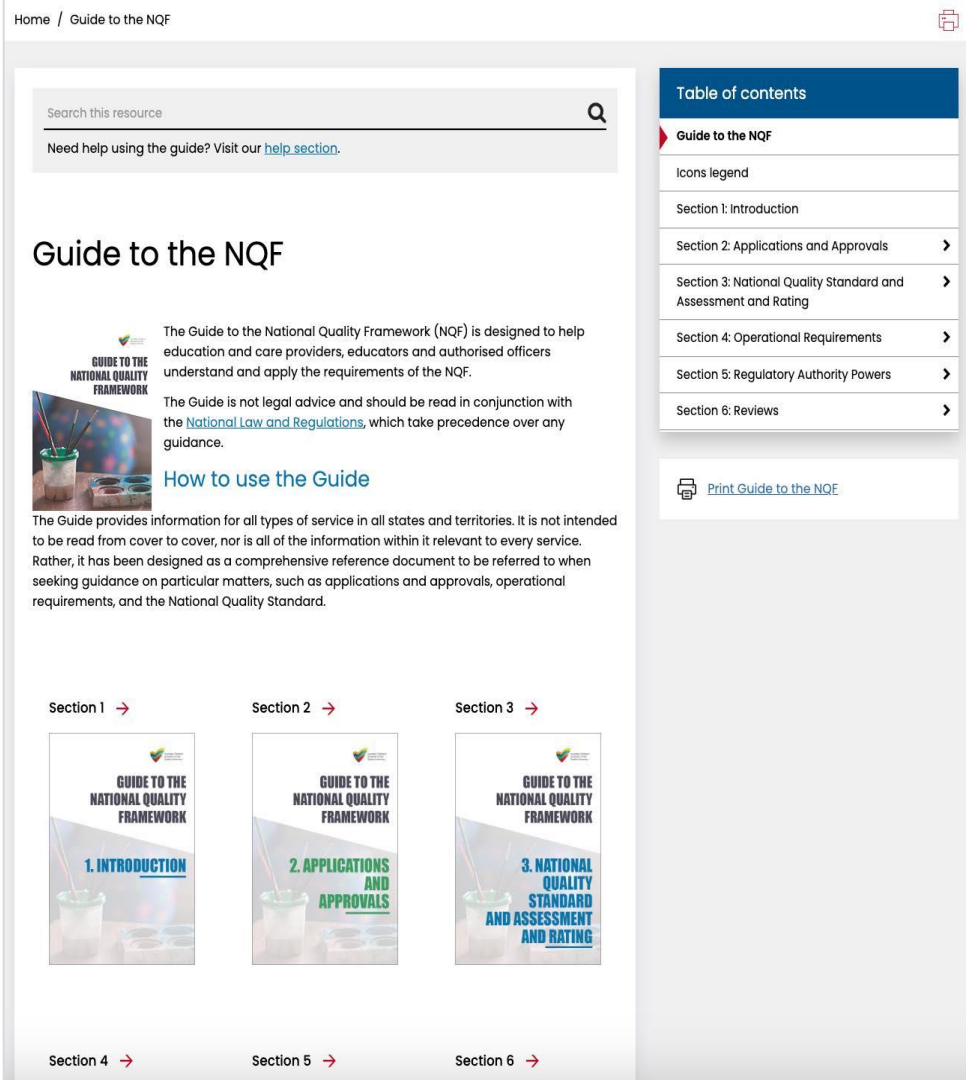
Purpose

This information sheet will help Commonwealth officials understand how to:

- identify which fraud and corruption controls to test
- develop testing approaches that suit the needs, resources and capabilities of the entity
- test control effectiveness, including how often
- identify who should undertake control effectiveness testing
- manage control vulnerabilities.

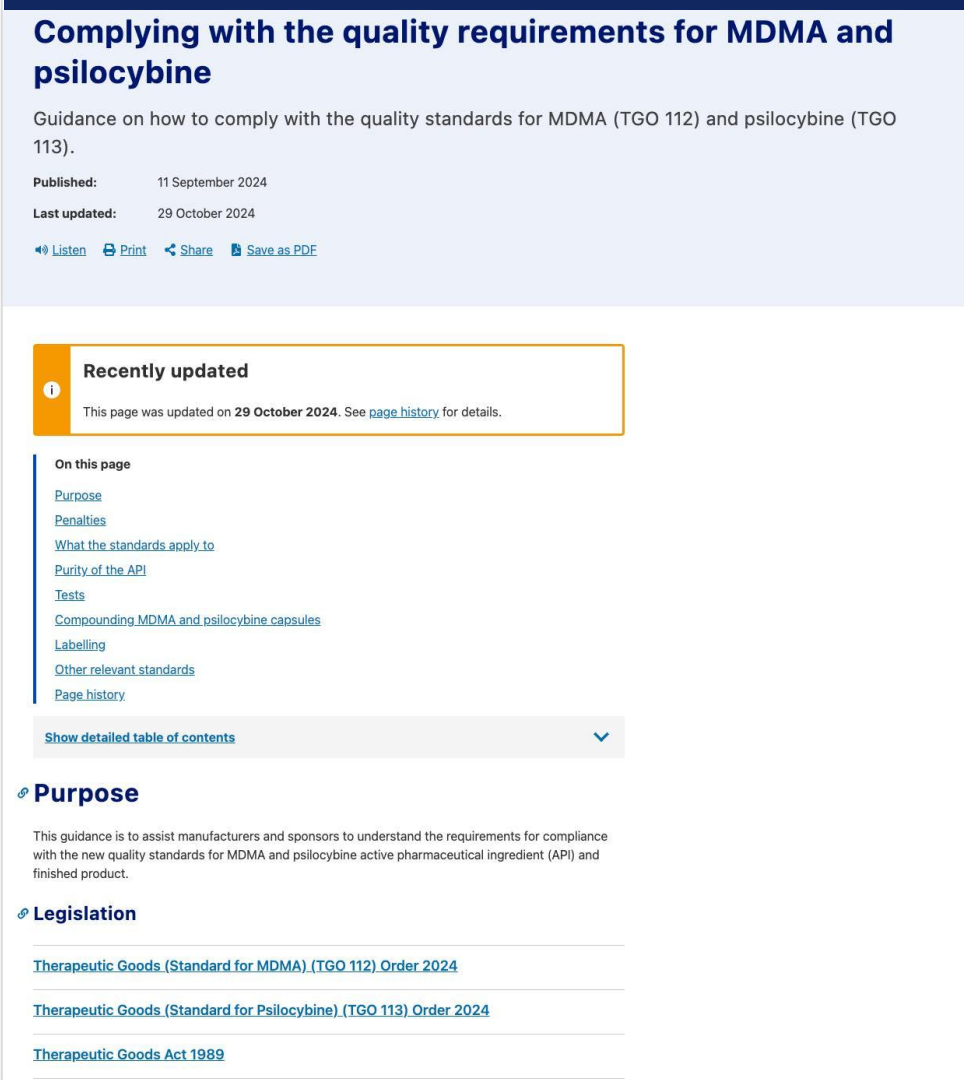
Deep documents

- The Book module is a much-loved solution for complex documents
- Carries its own navigation
- Can generate the full contents of the book into one export
- Users can then print or save as PDF



On page navigation

- Deep content compressed into one page
- On page navigation to the rescue
- Relying on JS library Anchorific



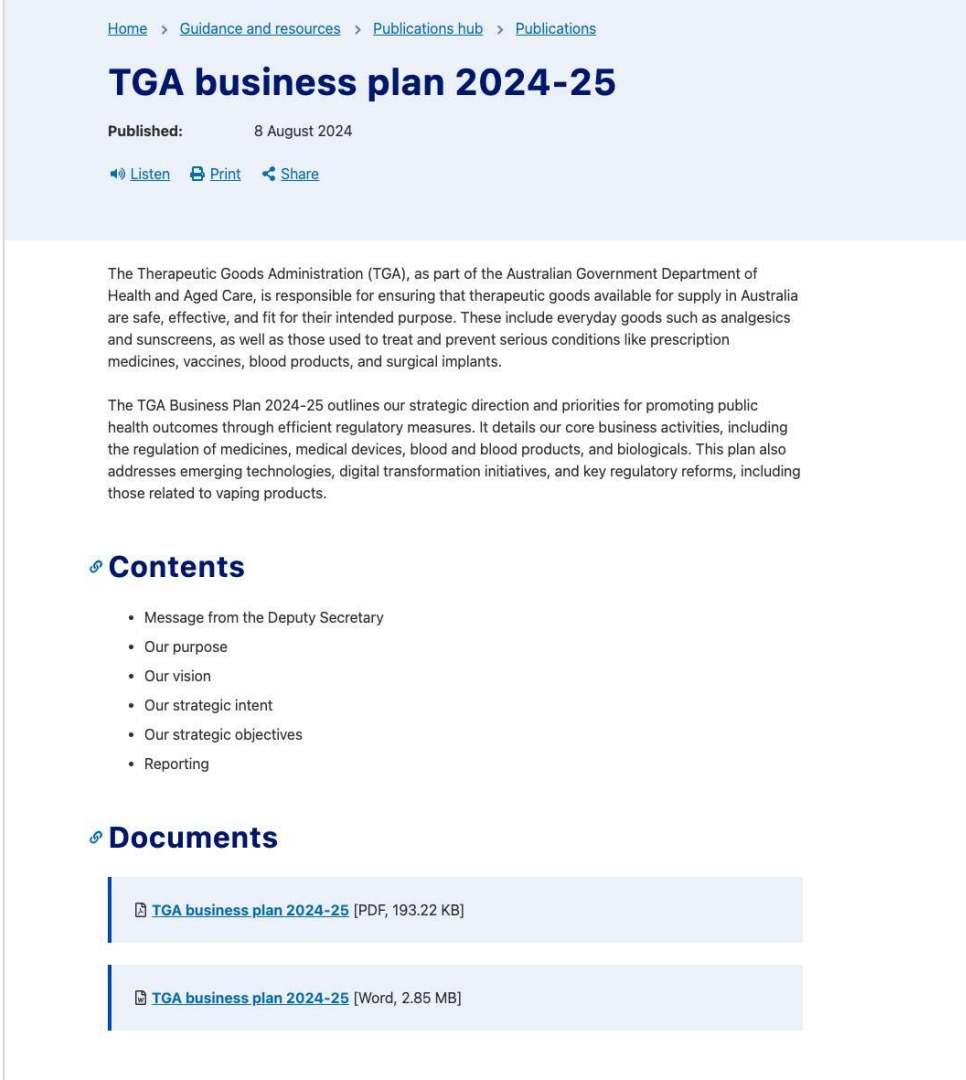
Not quite the same but still beautiful

- Get creative with your content design
- ‘Transformers’ are artists
- Can’t reproduce DTP documents exactly
- An interpretation for a different medium

Brandon Lillibridge

Quiz time

- Should this be a PDF?
- What's missing?
- How would you make it better?



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TGA business plan 2024-25

Published: 8 August 2024

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The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), as part of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, is responsible for ensuring that therapeutic goods available for supply in Australia are safe, effective, and fit for their intended purpose. These include everyday goods such as analgesics and sunscreens, as well as those used to treat and prevent serious conditions like prescription medicines, vaccines, blood products, and surgical implants.

The TGA Business Plan 2024-25 outlines our strategic direction and priorities for promoting public health outcomes through efficient regulatory measures. It details our core business activities, including the regulation of medicines, medical devices, blood and blood products, and biologicals. This plan also addresses emerging technologies, digital transformation initiatives, and key regulatory reforms, including those related to vaping products.

Contents

- Message from the Deputy Secretary
- Our purpose
- Our vision
- Our strategic intent
- Our strategic objectives
- Reporting

Documents

TGA business plan 2024-25 [PDF, 193.22 KB]

TGA business plan 2024-25 [Word, 2.85 MB]

Discuss!

Morpht

Thank you

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