



CDPP

Australia's Federal Prosecution Service



CDPP Writing Style Guide

February 2026

CONTENTS

A. INTRODUCTION	5
Key resources	5
Other internal resources	5
Structure of this guide	6
B. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	6
Use plain English	6
Write for the audience	6
Use inclusive language	8
Structure content	9
Protective markings	10
C. PLAIN ENGLISH	10
When to use passive voice	11
Words and phrases to avoid	11
Starting a sentence with “and”, “because”, “but” or “however”	13
Adjectives	14
Reflexive pronouns	14
D. SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND TERMINOLOGY	14
Spelling	15
Capitalisation	15
Punctuation	16
Hyphens	17
Terminology	18
Acronyms, abbreviations and defined terms	19
E. FORMATTING	19
Using Templates and styles	19
Numbered paragraphs and lists	20
Footnotes	21
Keeping relevant text together	21
Cross-references and hyperlinks	22
Finalising documents	22
F. LEGAL CITATION	23
Legislation	23
Cases	25
References to judicial officers	26

References to Commonwealth/federal offences	26
Secondary sources	26
G. REFERENCES TO PARTICULAR PEOPLE, ENTITIES AND CONCEPTS	27
The Director	27
The Office	28
Practice Groups, work groups and positions	28
Referring to yourself	29
Partner agencies and investigators	29
Parties to criminal prosecutions	30
Victims and complainants	31
Child abuse material	31
H. NUMBERS, DATES AND TIMES	31
Numbers	31
Dates	32
Time of day	32
I. CORRESPONDENCE	32
When to use a letter or an email	32
Letters	33
Emails	33
J. POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS	33
K. DOCUMENT RELEASE INFORMATION	35

FOREWORD

Our written communication is the expression of our work, whether that is in the form of a submission to a court, a communication to our opponent, an email to a stakeholder, or a recommendation to your manager or other decision maker.

As Hayne J has said:

Two basic considerations inform every piece of [writing]: What is the author trying to do? How is that to be presented? The second of these questions, “how”, is all too often ignored.¹

The first version of this guide was released in April 2024 as the *CDPP Legal Writing Style Guide*. This updated version is released as the *CDPP Writing Style Guide* with application to all areas of the CDPP, both legal and non-legal.

The *CDPP Writing Style Guide* is a resource to assist staff in presenting our work, in all its forms, as we provide and support provision of high quality independent prosecution services for the Commonwealth.

This guide is also designed to ensure consistency: consistency across practice areas, jurisdictions and, where possible, between our legal practice and Enabling Services Group.

Good written communication is clear, concise and accurate. It is more persuasive and effective. It is critical to the CDPP’s reputation as a specialist criminal litigation practice.

I trust this guide will support the Office in producing good written communication which reflects our standing as the peak agency in the Commonwealth criminal justice system.

Raelene Sharp KC

Director of Public Prosecutions

February 2026

¹ The Hon Justice Kenneth Hayne AC, [‘Written Advocacy’](#) (Speech, Victorian Bar, 5 and 26 March 2007) page 3.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This guide is a tool for staff of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) (**CDPP**). The guide may also assist external counsel briefed by the CDPP and the CDPP encourages counsel to apply it as appropriate.
2. It aims to ensure professionalism and consistency in CDPP written communication, whether internal or external, by establishing a style for writing, punctuation and referencing.² It applies to any written internal or external communication prepared in the course of the CDPP's work, including the legal practice and the Enabling Services Group.

Key resources

3. The [Australian Guide to Legal Citation \(4th edition\)](#) (**AGLC4**) provides a uniform system of legal citation in Australia.
4. The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) is for anyone who writes, edits or approves Australian Government content, which is supported by the [Government Writing Handbook](#).
5. The *CDPP Writing Style Guide* generally follows the conventions of each of those resources, giving primacy to the AGLC4, with some variations specific to the needs of the CDPP. Where there is a conflict between this guide and those resources, this guide should prevail.
6. Where written communication is Australian Government content in the context of the CDPP's role as an agency in the Australian Public Service (**APS**) (as distinct, for example, from communications prepared in the context of its legal practice), the communication should conform with the *Australian Government Style Manual* as appropriate. Relevant examples include the annual report, online content, and other similar publications. In those circumstances, parts of this guide still provide relevant guidance, for example how to refer to the Director, the Office, and legal citation. Where you are uncertain about which conventions apply, consider the context of the writing, the audience, and the specific role of the CDPP.³
7. Where there are rules or practice notes regarding legal writing for court documents, they must be given primacy over all other resources.
8. The [Macquarie Dictionary](#) is the primary source for Australian spelling and words.
9. The [CDPP Branding Style Guide](#) provides guidance in relation to ensuring the CDPP presents uniform communication where the logo and colour palette is applied. Please contact the Communication team with any branding enquiries.

Other internal resources

10. Other relevant internal resources include:
 - 10.1. [Microsoft Word Quick Reference Guide](#): providing a brief summary of key functions referred to in the *CDPP Writing Style Guide*.
 - 10.2. [CDPP Library Guide to Case Citations](#): providing more detailed guidance about case citations.

² The CDPP acknowledges the assistance of the style guides provided or published by the Australian Government Solicitor and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW) in developing this resource.

³ The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) (Legal Material) identifies that the AGLC4 provides "an authoritative source for specific legal conventions".

- 10.3. [Victims of Crimes Manual](#): providing guidance tailored towards victims and witnesses.
- 10.4. [CDPP MS Word Template Governance Framework](#).
- 10.5. [Formatting with the Writing Style Guide](#) training program on LearnHub (45 minutes).
- 10.6. [Fact sheet: drafting court documents](#): providing specific guidance on drafting court submissions and statements of facts.

Structure of this guide

11. This guide is structured as follows:
 - 11.1. Guidance on how to write and structure a document, including using plain English, spelling, punctuation, terminology, and formatting is contained in Parts B – E.
 - 11.2. Guidance on referring to specific concepts, including cases, legislation, specific people, and numbers and dates is contained in Parts F – H.
 - 11.3. Guidance on specific document types, including correspondence, and policies and guidance documents, is contained in Parts I and J.

B. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

12. The primary principle of this guide is that all written communication should be professional, concise, unambiguous and in plain English.
13. Consistency within documents is paramount. Consistency in formatting and expression is critical to ensure the reader can focus on content and not be distracted by inconsistencies that might detract from the meaning or importance of the content.
14. In this guide, the term “**templates**” refers to internal CDPP templates, as distinct from prescribed court or statutory forms.

Use plain English

15. Regardless of the audience and the nature of the document, all text should be in plain English.⁴
16. [Part C](#) contains specific guidance about using plain English.

Write for the audience

17. Write with your audience in mind, adjusting tone, assumed knowledge and complexity as appropriate to the particular reader.
18. The formality and tone of any written communication will depend on the audience. For example, a letter to a defendant will be in a more formal tone than a routine email to an investigator. Engaging with a department to arrange consultation will be less formal than a response to a Question on Notice. However, avoid external communication that is overly familiar or casual (refer to [Part I: Correspondence](#)).

⁴ For further information in relation to general principles of writing in plain language, see the *Australian Government Style Manual*, [Clear language and writing style](#).

Legal audiences

19. In its legal work, the CDPP has five key audiences:
 - 19.1. a court;
 - 19.2. our partner agencies;
 - 19.3. other practitioners;
 - 19.4. defendants (when unrepresented); and
 - 19.5. victims, witnesses or other members of the community.
20. When writing to an external audience, the style should be direct but respectful, setting out the CDPP's position with sufficient detail to avoid ambiguity or confusion, consistent with the impartiality of the prosecution. You should assume that any document may become annexed to an affidavit or otherwise provided to the court at some future point.
21. Communication with a court, whether in the form of submissions or contact with the registry or chambers, should be clear, concise, impartial and respectful. In particular, r 29 of the [Australian Solicitors Conduct Rules 2021](#) prescribes:

A prosecutor must fairly assist the court to arrive at the truth, must seek impartially to have the whole of the relevant evidence placed intelligibly before the court, and must seek to assist the court with adequate submissions of law to enable the law properly to be applied to the facts.
22. When communicating with defence representatives the expression must always be in a form that could be understood by a court when reading the document in retrospect.
23. When writing for internal audiences (including decision makers or counsel), it may be appropriate to assume a certain level of knowledge about legal concepts and/or internal CDPP procedure.

Non-legal audiences in the legal practice

24. When writing to a non-legal audience (such as unrepresented defendants, victims, witnesses or other members of the community not regularly involved in the criminal justice system), keep in mind the different levels of English literacy or comprehension within the wider community and make content as accessible as possible.
25. The *Australian Government Style Manual* provides guidance in relation to [accessible content](#).
26. Consider the templates and resources available to assist in communicating with people unfamiliar with the criminal justice system, including the [Victims of Crime Manual](#) and the CDPP's [Victims and Witnesses website](#).
27. On occasion, you will need to send external correspondence in a language other than English (for example to prosecution witnesses). Where appropriate, such as where a letter serves a subpoena, you should engage an appropriately qualified translator. You should draft the English version in plain English to limit the risk of any loss of meaning through translation.
28. The [Victims and Witnesses website](#) contains a Google translation function which may assist at the outset or for simple translations.

Other non-legal audiences

29. As discussed at paragraph [6 above](#), the CDPP also prepares content for a broad range of audiences that are not solely within the work of the legal practice. This may include the general public, the media or potential employees. The Australian Government Style Manual provides further guidance about [writing for those other audiences and purposes](#).

Use inclusive language

30. The *Australian Government Style Manual* provides guidance in relation to [inclusive language](#).

Non-discriminatory language

31. Inclusive language conveys gender equality and is gender neutral. It respects people’s preferences about gender and sexual identity.
32. Avoid gender-specific terms, unless a term is specified in legislation or the individual concerned has expressed a preference for a gender-specific title:

Use this	Not this
chair <u>or</u> chairperson	chairman <u>or</u> chairwoman
police officer	policeman <u>or</u> policewoman
foreperson	foreman or forewoman
ordinary person	ordinary man

33. Where a judgment, legislation or other source document uses outdated or gendered language, you should make clear when you are quoting from that source, and use gender-neutral language in your own drafting.
34. Do not qualify words or phrases by adding gender unless it is relevant:
- Julia Gillard became the first female prime minister of Australia. **[Relevant.]**
- Julia Gillard was sworn in by the Governor-General. **[It is not relevant to establish gender in this instance.]**
35. If a person has identified a preferred pronoun, or if the preferred pronoun is clear from available material, use that pronoun.
36. Use the terms “they”, “their” or “themselves” in the singular form when referring to:
- 36.1. a person by their formal position;
 - 36.2. a person who identifies as non-binary or gender-fluid; or
 - 36.3. a non-specified person or a person whose gender is not specified.
37. For example:
- Each staff member should ensure they schedule a time with their manager to have a performance discussion.

First Nations peoples

38. The *Australian Government Style Manual* provides important [guidance on how to refer to First Nations peoples](#), emphasising the importance of using culturally appropriate and respectful language when writing with, for or about First Nations peoples.
39. The following provides a brief summary of the guidance contained in the Manual (as at February 2026):
 - 39.1. Naming protocols are complicated; specificity is often more respectful. If possible and appropriate, ask for people’s preferences about what they want to be called or how they want to identify.
 - 39.2. While the term “Indigenous Australians” is in common use, many First Australians may not be comfortable with it. Due to its common use, there may be times when you cannot avoid the term. It can be found in court judgments,⁵ discussions with government organisations, or in the names of some organisations. If you are quoting from those sources, use the term that is used in the original source.
 - 39.3. Use the following hierarchy based on who or what you are referring to:
 - (a) For a specific group, use their nation, island or community name.
 - (b) For more than one Aboriginal nation, there may be a regional term that is appropriate, such as Murrumbidgee or Kooris.
 - (c) For many Torres Strait Islander peoples or islands, there may be a regional term that is appropriate, such as Kulkalgal.
 - (d) For both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, use terms such as “First Nations people”, “First Australians” or “Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples”.
 - 39.4. Use capitals when using such terms:

First Nations peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 - 39.5. Use plurals when referring to collectives, which should not be capitalised:

peoples, nations, cultures, languages.
 - 39.6. Do not italicise names or words from First Nations languages. They are Australian languages, not foreign languages.

Structure content

40. Consider the best way to structure your written communication. A well-structured document is clear to the reader and can make the substantive content more persuasive. It assists a reader to both navigate and understand the content.
41. The structure of any document or communication should have a logical flow and include headings.

⁵ For example, *Bugmy v The Queen* [2013] HCA 37; (2013) 249 CLR 571 and *Love v Commonwealth of Australia; Thoms v Commonwealth of Australia* [2020] HCA 3; [2020] 270 CLR 152 use the term “Aboriginal Australians”.

42. Headings signal a topic change to the reader and help define the scope of the section of the document.
43. When using headings, ensure each heading:
 - 43.1. relates to the paragraphs immediately following the heading; and
 - 43.2. identifies something meaningful about the content of those paragraphs.
44. Keep headings short, in active voice and consistent in language style. Do not end a heading with a full stop, exclamation mark or colon. Capitalise the first word and any proper nouns in a heading.
45. Use the applicable heading styles in Word. You should familiarise yourself with [how to use the Microsoft styles function](#).
46. The heading (and paragraph) styles are in the [CDPP Styles Reference Document](#) (available alongside this guide on its Library Catalogue record). For letters and formal emails, use Heading 2 and below. For other documents (such as written submissions and internal memorandums), use all heading levels:

A.	HEADING 1
	Heading 2
1.	Paragraph Level 1.
1.1.	Paragraph level 2.
(a)	Paragraph level 3.
(i)	Paragraph level 4.
	<u>Heading 3</u>
2.	...
	<i>Heading 4</i>
3.	...

Protective markings

47. All documents generated by the CDPP, including templates, must comply with the relevant [security classifications and protective markings](#) and [dissemination limiting markers](#).

C. PLAIN ENGLISH

48. Best practice guidelines for writing in plain English include the following:
 - 48.1. Use everyday words.
 - 48.2. Avoid using legalese. Where you need to use a word with a specific legal meaning, depending on the audience, you may need to explain that meaning, and any of the concepts referred to.
 - 48.3. Use the active voice where possible:

“The defendant collected the parcel.”

Not

“The parcel was collected by the defendant.”

- 48.4. Use short, simple sentences, focusing on maintaining clarity. Effective sentences will generally only contain one or two ideas. Sentences of more than about 25 – 30 words can often divide into two sentences that will be more readily understood by the reader.
- 48.5. If a word can come out of a sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence, take out the word.
- 48.6. Structure sentences to assist readers to understand critical information. For example, use “because” rather than “as” to avoid the reader needing to get to the end of the sentence to fully understand the content.
- 48.7. Identify the date and time of an event at the beginning of a sentence:

“On 1 March 2024, the defendant sent a text message to the complainant.”

Not

“The defendant sent a text message to the complainant on 1 March 2024.”

49. While acronyms⁶ can assist in shortening a sentence, overusing acronyms can negatively impact the reader, especially for external audiences or new staff members who may not have a strong working knowledge. Consider the audience when deciding when and whether to use acronyms.

When to use passive voice

50. Although the active voice should be prioritised, sometimes, passive sentences are appropriate.
51. For example, it may be appropriate to emphasise the receiver of the action:

Following the jury’s deliberations, the accused was found not guilty.

52. It may also be appropriate where:
 - 52.1. the person who is doing the action is not known or identifiable;
 - 52.2. the person who is doing the action is implied; or
 - 52.3. the reader does not need to know (or should not know) who is doing the action.

53. For example:

Her car was stolen. [**Where we do not know who stole the car.**]

His car was written off. [**Where it is not necessary to identify the person doing the action.**]

Words and phrases to avoid

54. Some words and phrases – in particular adverbs or “qualifiers” and compound prepositions – can add length to sentences without improving clarity or affecting the meaning. They are often unnecessary and you should generally avoid them.
55. Typical qualifiers to be used sparingly are words like “very” and “rather”.

⁶ This guide uses the term “acronyms” to mean both “acronyms” and “initialisms”. For a discussion about the distinction, see [Acronyms and initialisms](#) in the *Australian Government Style Manual*.

56. Many compound prepositions and other groups of words can be simplified. For example:

Avoid this	Consider using this
at this point in time	now
by means of	by
for the purpose of	for
from the point of view of	for
having said that	however <u>or</u> but
in excess of	more than
in order to	to
we are in the process of	are <u>or</u> we are
with respect to	in <u>or</u> about

57. Many common phrases are also redundant, for example:

“the fact that ...” is not needed if it is a fact.

“it should be noted that ...” is also usually not needed.

58. The word “that” is also often redundant in a sentence. For example, compare the following (each with the same meaning):

The respondent submitted that the appropriate disposition was... .

The respondent submitted the appropriate disposition was... .

59. Avoid overly embellished phrases or idioms such as “the search revealed” or “the defendant decamped”.

60. Use simple, clear words that will be more readily understood by the reader:

Avoid this	Consider using this
utilise	use
whilst	while

61. Unless required in court forms or in quoting legislation, for clarity and simplicity, do not use archaic terms such as:

aforementioned, aforesaid, chattels, even date, forthwith, henceforth, hereafter, herein, hereinafter, heretofore, herewith, hitherto, howsoever, in lieu of, per, upon.

62. Avoid using corporate jargon:

Avoid this	Consider using this
create a dialogue	speak, discuss, talk
in light of	in response to
learnings	learning opportunities

63. Avoid using “former” and “latter”, which can often make writing feel archaic or force the reader to stop and look back. Use more direct, descriptive alternatives:

Suggested alternative	Example
Repeat the noun.	The Offender pleaded guilty to one offence contrary to s 135.2(1) of the <i>Criminal Code</i> (Cth) and one offence contrary to s 3LA of the <i>Crimes Act 1914</i> (Cth). For the s 135.2(1) offence, the Court imposed a recognizance release order, and for the s 3LA offence, the Court imposed a fine.
Use “first” and “second”.	The Offender pleaded guilty to offence contrary to s 135.2(1) of the <i>Criminal Code</i> (Cth) and one offence contrary to s 3LA of the <i>Crimes Act 1914</i> (Cth). For the first offence, the Court imposed a recognizance release order, and for the second offence, the Court imposed a fine.

64. Do not use the word “said” to refer to something mentioned in an earlier sentence:

Avoid this	Consider using this
with respect to said letter	about that letter
the evidence of said witness	the evidence of that witness

Starting a sentence with “and”, “because”, “but” or “however”

65. For some, this guidance may seem counter intuitive, and contrary to traditional approaches to sentence structures. When used sparingly and intentionally, starting a sentence with these terms can result in shorter sentences, a clear structure, and assist the reader in joining ideas together.
66. Consider using “and” at the start of a sentence to build on an additional idea or fact to the previous sentence, create a sense of flow or add emphasis to the statement:

I have also included a reference to the first sentence handed down by the Federal Court. And yesterday, the High Court refused an application for special leave to appeal.

67. Consider using “because” at the start of a sentence to prioritise or emphasise the cause of an event or thing rather than the effect:

Because the police did not caution the accused, the Court ruled the admission was inadmissible.

rather than

The Court ruled the admission was inadmissible because the police did not caution the accused.

68. Consider using “but” at the start of a sentence to show a contrast or transition, concede a point, pre-empt a counter argument, or add emphasis to the statement:

Forensic officers identified the defendant’s DNA on the outside of the plastic bag. But there are gaps in the continuity evidence regarding the DNA.

69. Consider using “however” at the start of a sentence in contrast with the meaning of the previous sentence, rather than using “however” as a conjunction joining two contrasting clauses:

I am not sure of the outcome. However, I will let you know as soon as I am advised.

rather than

I am not sure of the outcome, however, I will let you know as a soon as I am advised.

Adjectives

70. Adjectives and adjectival phrases should serve a clear purpose and be used sparingly. Their purpose is simply to either describe, define or evaluate the noun:

descriptive: a short adjournment.

defining: a state court.

evaluative: a serious act.

71. Where possible, avoid using two or more adjectives when one will do:

Do not use adjectives to add unnecessary, pointless, meaningless, unhelpful and repetitive qualifications to your noun.

Reflexive pronouns

72. Reflexive pronouns reflect the action of the verb back to the subject. They include “myself”, “yourself”, “themselves”, “herself”, “himself”, etc.⁷

73. Reflexive pronouns should not be used to add formality / respect:

Correct	Incorrect
I discussed the matter with you.	I discussed the matter with yourself.
Counsel and I travelled to court.	Counsel and myself travelled to court.
I sent an email to myself.	I sent an email to me.

D. SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND TERMINOLOGY

74. The *Australian Government Style Manual* provides a useful overview of basic principles of [spelling, grammar and sentence construction](#). This Part provides specific guidance for writing at the CDPP.

⁷ For further information about information, see [Reflexive pronouns](#) in the *Australian Government Style Manual*.

Spelling

Australian English

75. Use Australian English from the [Macquarie Dictionary](#), and the modern spelling of words.

76. However, where terms are used in legislation, use the legislative spelling, for example:

recognizance not recognisance (see pt IB of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth)).

The *Criminal Code Regulations 2019* (Cth) sch 2 item 157 uses “Methamphetamine”, but the *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985* (NSW) sch 1 uses “Methylamphetamine” to refer to the same controlled drug. (emphasis added).

Foreign words or phrases

77. Foreign words included in the *Macquarie Dictionary* are considered to be Australian English and are not italicised. All other foreign words, including Latin legal terms, not listed in the *Macquarie Dictionary* are italicised:

prima facie not *prima facie*.

pro forma not proforma or pro-forma.

ad hoc not *ad hoc* or *ad-hoc*.

The *Police Nationale* and the *Gendarmerie* (being the French police forces).

78. Avoid using foreign words or phrases, including Latin legal expressions, when an English equivalent is available and appropriate to the audience. For example, while terms such as *prima facie*, *ex officio*, *ratio decidendi*, *obiter dictum* and *ex parte* will be readily understood by judges and lawyers, use those phrases carefully with non-legal audiences.

79. As noted at paragraph [39.6 above](#), First Nations languages are not foreign language and should not be italicised.

Capitalisation

80. As a general rule, use capitalisation for proper nouns, defined terms or titles of secondary sources (such as books and journals), as well as policies or other guidelines.

81. The following words are treated as proper nouns and therefore capitalised when used to refer to the specific Australian entity:

Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Government and Opposition, Cabinet, Parliament, the Constitution, Budget (as in federal Budget).

82. Capitalise the terms “State” and “Territory” when referring to a specific state or territory:

The State of South Australia

83. When referring to all jurisdictions collectively, capitalise them:

The laws of the States and Territories

84. Do not use capitals when using the terms generally (including as an adjective):

state and territory courts

state legislation

85. Capitalise specific events and documents:

Second Reading Speech, Explanatory Memorandum, Commonwealth Procurement Rules, APS Code of Conduct.

86. Capitalise the full title or reference to a specific entity or person. Do not capitalise the generic or non-specific use of any such term, for example:

The County Court of Victoria.

A Victorian court.

Victorian courts.

court, judge, minister, department, secretary, committee, agency.

The leading case is *Totaan v R* [2022] NSWCCA 75 where the Court held

87. Capitalise CaseHQ (not caseHQ).

88. See paragraph [192 below](#) for references to internal positions and titles.

Plurals

89. The plural of “accused” is “accused”, without adding an “s”.

90. The plural of “counsel” is “counsel”, without adding an “s”.

91. The plural of “subpoena” is “subpoenas”, not “subpoenae”.

Punctuation

Apostrophes

92. Apostrophes are used to signal possession and the contraction of words (eg can’t), not plurality.

93. Where a noun ends in the letter s, include a further s after the apostrophe, unless it is a plural:

James’s car not James’ car.

The Australian courts’ approach not The Australian courts’s approach.

94. When using an acronym, only use an apostrophe when denoting possession and not a plural:

SELs and PTLs not SEL’s and PTL’s.

The CDPP’s practice group model not the CDPPs practice group model.

95. When referring to periods of time, use an apostrophe, “of” or “for”:

10 years’ imprisonment not 10 years imprisonment.

10 years of imprisonment or imprisonment for 10 years not 10 years’ of imprisonment.

4 weeks’ notice not 4 weeks notice.

4 weeks of notice not 4 weeks’ of notice.

96. When referring to the possession of a person with post nominals, place the apostrophe and s after the post nominal letters:

Jane Doe SC's opinion

The reasoning in King J's judgment

97. When referring to the Magistrates Court or Children's Court in your jurisdiction, use an apostrophe if it forms part of the court's formal name, for example:

Victoria: Magistrates' Court.

South Australia: Magistrates Court.

New South Wales: Children's Court.

Queensland: Childrens Court.

98. See the *Australian Government Style Manual* section on [apostrophes](#) for further guidance.

Full stops

99. Do not use full stops in addresses or headings.
100. Use only one space after a full stop.
101. The position of full stops varies when text is in brackets:

When bracketed text appears within a sentence, the punctuation falls outside the brackets (unless the bracketed text is a complete sentence).

(When a complete sentence is in brackets, the punctuation falls inside the brackets.)

Hyphens

102. Use hyphens to create compound words (especially adjectives) and to attach some prefixes to qualify a word. Hyphens are used inconsistently in different contexts. Where you use a hyphen, be consistent within the document. Inconsistent use of hyphens may cause confusion to the reader.

Parenthetical clauses

103. Parenthetical clauses are additional clauses within a sentence, set between commas, parentheses (brackets) or dashes, and are generally used to add modifying or additional information to the central idea of a sentence. Use them sparingly and correctly. If your sentence is long-winded, recast it or break it into two or more sentences. For example:

Parenthetical clauses (set between commas, brackets or dashes) are often used to add modifying or additional information to the central idea of a sentence. If overused, they can make a sentence too long to comprehend and distract or confuse the reader.

not

Parenthetical clauses, which are often used to add modifying or additional information to the central idea of a sentence – and are most often punctuated by commas or dashes but can also appear in brackets – can be overused and make a sentence too long (for easy comprehension) and this can often distract or confuse the reader.

Quotation marks

104. Use double quotation marks for quotations within text or dialogue. Only use single quotation marks for quotations within quotations.
105. Do not italicise quoted text.
106. If a quotation is longer than one sentence (about 20-25 words), set it separately as a block quotation, using the “long quote” style (size 10, indented and not in italics). Do not include paragraph numbers in the quoted text. Instead, put the pinpoint reference in either the lead-in to the quote or in the relevant citation. Identify any emphasis appropriately by either inserting “(emphasis in original)” or “(emphasis added)” at the end of the quote:

The *Victims of Crime Policy* states (at [2] – [3]):

The CDPP is an independent agency created by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to prosecute offences against Commonwealth law. The CDPP does not act directly for or on behalf of a victim of crime in the way that private solicitors act for their clients. In carrying out its functions, the CDPP acts on behalf of the whole community. However, the CDPP recognises that victims play an important role in the prosecution process.

This Policy identifies the information to be provided to, and the consultation that must take place with, victims during the prosecution process.

Terminology

Specific words

Gaol or jail

107. The *Macquarie Dictionary* says, “[i]n general the spelling of this word has shifted in Australian English from *gaol* to *jail*. However, *gaol* remains fossilised in the names of jails, such as Parramatta Gaol, and in some government usage.” The term “*gaol*” is also used in the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) (see ss 15, 16 and 23W) and various pieces of state and territory legislation.
108. When you are referring to a defined term or a particular place, use the term in the legislation or that applies to the place. Otherwise, you may use either term, but be consistent within the same piece of written communication.

Judgment or judgement

109. A decision of a court does not include an additional **e**:

The judgment of the High Court.

Each staff member is expected to exercise appropriate judgement.

Pleaded

110. The past tense of “plead” in standard Australian English is “pleaded”. Do not use the American English variation, “pled”.

Acronyms, abbreviations and defined terms

111. Put acronyms, abbreviations and defined terms in parentheses (capitalised and bolded) so the reader can easily identify a word as abbreviated or defined, refer back to it, and confirm its meaning. Do not use double quotation marks or the phrase “hereafter referred to as”:

Use this	Not this
Jane Doe (Offender) pleaded guilty to ...	Jane Doe (“the Offender”) pleaded guilty to...
John Doe (Complainant) stated ...	John Doe (hereafter referred to as ‘the complainant’) stated...

112. Do not introduce an acronym or define a term if it is not used again later within the document. Once an acronym or defined term has been introduced, use it for all future references to the term.

113. Do not use full stops in acronyms, abbreviations or contractions:

eg ie ACT NSW ACCC FWA Qld Anzac Qantas.

114. Only use defined terms where necessary to make the reader’s job easier. It may often be easier to repeat the entire phrase if it only appears a few times in a document or to refer to the shorthand phrase without requiring a defined term.

115. For example, if only one letter is referred to throughout the document, you should simply refer to “the letter” or “your letter”; there is no need to do this:

I refer to your letter dated 10 August 2024 (**your letter**).

116. Consider using a simple defined term instead of a long acronym which will make a reader’s job easier to remember its meaning. For example:

Guidelines for Dealings between Investigators and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) (**Guidelines**) not (GFDBIODPP).

117. A list of [commonly used acronyms and abbreviations](#) used at the CDPP is published on the Desk.

E. FORMATTING

Using Templates and styles

118. Use the most recent relevant CDPP template when creating documents.
119. Do not use old templates (including those using the CDPP’s previous gold branding theme). If you have any questions about which template to use, please contact the Communication team or LCP (for legal templates).
120. Exercise caution when cutting and pasting from old documents because they may not have used the same font, colour or spacing:
- Some of the text from this paragraph has been cut and pasted from an earlier precedent that used different fonts, colours and spacing.
121. Update the formatting of text that has been copied from previous documents to ensure consistency within the new document.

122. CDPP templates have a defined set of styles for all text types, including paragraphs and headings. Those styles contain the applicable spacing, margins and font (see [how to use the Microsoft styles function.](#))
123. The standard paragraph (and heading) styles to be used are set out in the [CDPP Styles Reference Document](#) (also located in this guide’s Library Catalogue record).
124. If you are preparing material for court, and a relevant CDPP template is not available, ensure that your document complies with any court rules and/or practice notes relating to font, spacing and margins.
125. If you need to create your own document (subject to any court rules and/or practice notes), use the following formatting (reflected and adopted in this guide):
 - 125.1. Normal font: 11 point Calibri (pure black).
 - 125.2. Margins: 2 cm (top, bottom, left, right).
 - 125.3. Alignment: Left.⁸
 - 125.4. Indentation: Left, 1.2 cm.
 - 125.5. Spacing: Before – 8 pt, After – 6 pt.
 - 125.6. Line spacing: Multiple, at 1.15 cm.
126. Templates on the CDPP Word Ribbon must comply with the [CDPP MS Word Template Governance Framework](#).

Numbered paragraphs and lists

127. Use numbered paragraphs in all memorandums, submissions, statements of facts and letters, and any formal emails longer than a few paragraphs. Numbered paragraphs make it easy for users to scan and understand longer documents, and for the reader and author to refer to the contents of a document.
128. Numbered paragraphs may not be appropriate for certain documents, such as one page letters or short emails, as well as corporate documents such as brochures, user guides or handouts.
129. Within a document, structure and style lists with the reader in mind. Set up a consistent grammatical structure for list items with a lead-in sentence (sometimes called a chapeaux). End the lead-in sentence with a colon (:). Use “para keep with next” for all lead-in sentences (see paragraph [136 below](#) and [Style Guide – Paragraph Tools](#) course on LearnHub).
130. Consistent with the CDPP template paragraph level styles, prefer numbered or lettered lists within a paragraph, not bullet points. This assists with pinpoint references, particularly when making oral submissions referring to written submissions, or in subsequent correspondence.

⁸ To avoid doubt, the CDPP does not use justified alignment because it can negatively impact accessibility, especially for individuals with dyslexia or visual impairments.

131. If using a sentence list (being a list of related complete sentences), start each item with a capital letter and end each item with a full stop:
1. In the record of interview, the Offender made the following admissions:
 - 1.1 On 19 April 2023, she applied to open a PO Box at the Brisbane GPO.
 - 1.2 On 30 April 2023, she visited the Brisbane GPO, and accessed PO Box 123.
132. If using a fragmented list (being a list of words, phrases or incomplete sentences) in legal writing, start each item with a lower case letter and end each item with a semi-colon (;). Include “and” or “or” after the second-last item as appropriate:
1. Section 16A of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) requires the court to consider several factors on sentence, including:
 - 1.1 the nature and circumstances of the offence;
 - 1.2 the personal circumstances of any victim of the offence; and
 - 1.3 the prospect of rehabilitation of the person.

Footnotes

133. For ease of reference to the citation information, use footnotes and not endnotes.
134. Place the footnote reference **after** any punctuation:
- The maximum penalty for the offence is imprisonment for 10 years.¹
- not
- The maximum penalty for the offence is imprisonment for 10 years¹.
135. Footnotes should be in the appropriate style as set out in the CDPP template. If no template is available, use size 10 Calibri font (with a hanging indent at 1.2 cm).

Keeping relevant text together

136. To ensure related information is not split across lines, use non-separating spaces and hyphens, also known as non-breaking spaces/hyphens (hotkey: ctrl + shift + space or alt + shift + hyphen):

A court may make a reparation order in relation to an offence taken into account under **s 16BA** of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth).

not

A court may make a reparation order in relation to an offence taken into account under **s 16BA** of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth).

The Defendant agreed to give evidence for the Crown about the conduct of his **co-accused**.

not

The Defendant agreed to give evidence for the Crown about the conduct of his **co-accused**.

137. Do not use a “soft return” (hotkey: shift+return), or extra spaces, or tabs to force text onto the next line. This creates formatting issues if the text is later amended.

138. To ensure key related information is not split across a page, use the [“keep with next” function](#) for headings and the lead-in sentence of any list, before a block quote or table. If you format lead-in sentences at the time of writing this will reduce the amount of formatting required to finalise a document (see [Style Guide – Paragraph Tools](#) course on LearnHub).
139. To check whether you have a non-separating space, turn on “non-printing characters”, the ¶ button on the toolbar. A non-separating space is represented by a hollow dot: “◌”. A normal space is represented by a plain dot: “.”.

Cross-references and hyperlinks

140. Insert [cross-references](#) to other paragraphs or sections within the document.⁹
141. Where appropriate,¹⁰ insert [hyperlinks](#) (at first reference at a minimum) to:
 - 141.1. the primary source for cases and legislation (see also paragraph [144 below](#));
 - 141.2. legal policies (such as NLDs and NOGs) in the Library Catalogue;
 - 141.3. Enabling Services Group policies (such as finance, governance and HR) via the Library Catalogue or the Desk; and
 - 141.4. relevant attachments (such as indictments, statements of facts and other annexures) in the CaseHQ document library.
142. External audiences will not be able to access hyperlinks to material on internal pages or systems. Consider using hyperlinks to primary source pages for external audiences.
143. For increased accessibility, when creating hyperlinks, use the full title of the linked document or a succinct overview of the website/information etc you are linking to. Avoid using “click here”.
144. Hyperlinks to authorities and legislation in policy and guidance documents should be to subscription-free publicly available versions. Legislation hyperlinks should be to the [Federal Register of Legislation](#) or the relevant state or territory government website. Case hyperlinks should be to the relevant court’s website, or alternatively to [austlii](#) or [BarNet Jade](#). If the decision has been reported, a parallel citation to the most authoritative available version should be included (without a hyperlink). See [CDPP Library Guide to Case Citations](#). For example:

Bugmy v The Queen [\[2013\] HCA 37](#); (2013) 249 CLR 571.

Finalising documents

145. Whenever sharing a final document with a decision maker (for example a legal memorandum) or an external party (for example submissions, court documents or letters), save the document in a portable document format (**PDF**). If the document contains the decision/comments of a decision maker (for example an Enabling Services Group memorandum), save the document as a PDF on completion.

⁹ Before finalising a document, update all cross-references including those within a table of contents (hotkey: ctrl+A to select all within the body of the text then F9). Follow any prompts to resolve error messages. This must be repeated for any footnotes.

¹⁰ In internal communications this will generally assist the reader, but hyperlinks might not be appropriate in documents filed in court proceedings.

F. LEGAL CITATION

146. You should apply the [AGLC4](#) as appropriate. Where there are rules or practice notes regarding citation for court documents, you must comply with them.
147. The [CDPP Library Guide to Case Citations](#) provides summaries of specific guidance from courts in the different jurisdictions (for example, relating to pinpoint references and parallel citations).

Legislation

Titles

148. At its first reference, the short title of an Act including its year should be in italics, with the jurisdiction in parentheses and not italicised. This should be immediately followed by the shortened form you will use in later references (bolded, in parentheses and italicised):

Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983 (Cth) not *Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983* (Cth).

The *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) (***Crimes Act***).

The *Crimes Act* prescribes

149. Because the CDPP prosecutes matters in all states and territories, many of which have similar or identically named legislation, to avoid confusion or ambiguity, for the first reference to any piece of legislation always include the jurisdiction:

“Crimes Act 1914 (Cth)” not *“Crimes Act 1914”*.

150. Use the following for the relevant jurisdiction:

(Cth) (ACT) (NSW) (NT) (Qld) (SA) (Tas) (Vic) (WA).

151. If the document unambiguously refers to only one Act, the Act may be shortened to “the Act” after the first reference (unitalicised):

The *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) (the **Act**).

152. Consider whether an abbreviation of the legislation’s short title is either in common usage or appropriate, and what form it should take:

The *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006* (Cth) (**AML/CTF Act**).

153. For references to multiple Acts, an abbreviation may be appropriate to avoid confusion, so keep it simple, distinguishable and meaningful:

Section 19AA of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) (**Crimes Act**) was inserted by s 9 of the *Crimes Legislation Amendment Act (No 2) 1989* (Cth) (**Amendment Act**).

154. The titles of regulations and other subordinate legislation such as orders are also italicised:

The *Crimes Regulations 2019* (Cth).

155. The titles of Bills are not italicised:

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023 (Cth).

The Criminal Code (Cth) and other codes

156. References to provisions within the *Criminal Code* (Cth) should be to the “*Criminal Code* (Cth)”, and not to the “*Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth)”. You may also use the short title of “the Code” as appropriate:¹¹

Section 135.2(1) of the *Criminal Code* (Cth) not Section 135.2(1) of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth).

Section 307.1(1) of the *Criminal Code* (Cth) (the **Code**).

157. This may be the case with other codes or substantive components of legislation located in a schedule to an Act (for example the *National Credit Code* (Cth)). Refer to the relevant Act for guidance.

Pinpoint references

158. When referring to sections, subsections and paragraphs within a sentence, put a non-separating space (see paragraph [136 above](#)) between the abbreviation and the number.¹² Use the abbreviation that corresponds to the highest “level”:

When referring to	Use this	Not this
The specific section	s 6	s6 <u>or</u> s.6
The specific subsection	s 6(1)	sub-s 6(1) <u>or</u> subsection 6(1)
The specific subsection if the relevant section has been identified	sub-s (1)	sub-s 6(1) <u>or</u> subsection 6(1)
The specific paragraph	s 6(1)(a)	para 6(1)(a) <u>or</u> paragraph 6(1)(a)
The specific paragraph if the relevant section and subsection has been identified	para (a)	para 6(1)(a) <u>or</u> paragraph 6(1)(a)
Multiple sections	ss 6-8 <u>or</u> ss 6, 7, 9 <u>or</u> ss 6(1), 7(2), 8(3)	ss6, 7 and 8 <u>or</u> sub-ss 6(1), 7(2) and 8(3)

159. When starting a sentence with a pinpoint reference, use the word “Section” capitalised and in full for sections, subsections and paragraph references:

Section 5 ... or Section 5(1) ... or Section 5(1)(a).

160. These practices also apply to Regulations and other subordinate legislation and Bills.
161. For further information, including other abbreviations for pinpoint references, see 3.1.4 of the [AGLC4](#).

¹¹ The “Criminal Code” is the Schedule to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth). Section 3(1) prescribes the Schedule has effect as a law of the Commonwealth and s 3(2) provides the Schedule may be cited as the “*Criminal Code*”.

¹² To assist search functionality, many online resources (including The Desk) do not use this convention, instead they do **not** put a space (for example, “s6”). For online legal research, refer to [CDPP Research Training and Support](#).

Legislative definitions

162. Unnumbered definitions should be cited as follows:

Criminal Code (Cth) Dictionary (definition of “harm”).

163. If providing substantive analysis of a term defined in legislation, consider bolding the term and referring to the relevant provision, to assist the reader to identify the term:

The term **import** includes two limbs (see s 300.2 of the *Criminal Code* (Cth)).

Explanatory Memoranda

164. The singular form is explanatory memorandum, and the plural form is explanatory memoranda.

165. These sources should be cited as follows:

Explanatory Memorandum, Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023 (Cth), 10 [101].

Addendum to the Explanatory Memorandum, Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023 (Cth), 3 [4].

166. In some jurisdictions, this document may be called an “Explanatory Statement”, or “Explanatory Note”. Identify the document as it is described in the relevant jurisdiction.

Hansard

167. Hansard should be cited as follows:

Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 22 June 2023, 5015 (Mark Dreyfus KC, Attorney-General).

Cases

168. For documents used in court proceedings, cite the most authorised version of the case.¹³ Where a case is not reported in an authorised law report, citing the unauthorised law report is acceptable.

169. For guidance on citations in policy and guidance documents where a hyperlink is included, see paragraph [144 above](#).

170. The first citation of a case should be set out in full. The parties’ names should be in italics, with the date and the remainder of the citation unitalicised. This should be immediately followed by the shortened form you will use in later references, if any (bolded, in parentheses and italicised). For pinpoint references within cases, use both page numbers and paragraph numbers where the case is reported. When the case is not reported use only the paragraph number. Place the pinpoint after a comma, and do not use the word “at”:

Ansari v The Queen (2010) 241 CLR 299, 312 [35].

Ibrahim v The Queen [2020] NSWCCA 241, [3].

R v Leach [2019] 1 Qd R 459.

¹³ For further information, see the [Quick Reference Guide for Identifying the Most Authorised Version of a Case](#).

R v Nerbas [2014] QCA 259, [41] (**Nerbas**).

not

Ansari v The Queen (2010) 241 CLR 299 at [35].

171. For pinpoint references in text:

171.1. When referring to a page number, use the full word “page”.

171.2. When referring to a paragraph, use either the word paragraph or use square brackets, but not both.

When referring to	Use this	Not this
Page	page 4	p 4
Paragraph	paragraph 16 <u>or</u> [16]	paragraph [16]

172. For more detailed guidance (including citations, specific jurisdictional requirements and common abbreviations), refer to the [CDPP Library Guide to Case Citations](#).

References to judicial officers

173. When referring to a judicial officer, use the relevant post nominal (J, JJ, CJ, etc) if the reference occurs within the sentence. If the reference occurs at the beginning of a sentence, use their full title. When referring to the officer in a footnote, place their name in brackets at the end of the citation:

In text: The judgment of Kirby J

Start of a sentence: Justices Gummow and Heydon referred to

Citation: *R v Tang* (2008) 237 CLR 1, 24 [46] (Gleeson CJ), 55 [134] (Hayne J).

174. For subsequent references, use “her/his Honour” or “their Honours”, without capitalising her/his/their (unless at the start of the sentence):

Her Honour then stated

In considering their Honours’ reasoning

References to Commonwealth/federal offences

175. Federal legislation is inconsistent in referring to both “Commonwealth offences” and “federal offences”.¹⁴ Unless referring to a specific statutory definition or provision, be consistent in how you describe these offences within the same document.

Secondary sources

176. The general rules for citing secondary sources are set out in pt III of the [AGLC4](#).¹⁵

¹⁴ For example, the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) uses and defines “Commonwealth offence” and “federal offences” in different parts.

¹⁵ While the *CDPP Writing Style Guide* adopts using double quotation marks as a general rule, the AGLC4 prescribes using single quotation marks for journal articles, which has been adopted in this guide.

177. Capitalise each word in titles of secondary sources, excluding articles (the, a, an), conjunctions (and, but) and prepositions (on, with, before, within, in):

Troy Anderson, *Commonwealth Criminal Law* (The Federation Press, 3rd ed, 2022) 1 [1.1.1].

Matthew Goode, ‘Sentencing with Mandatory Minima and Element Analysis’ (2024) 47 *Criminal Law Journal* 199, 201.

CDPP policies and guidance

178. As with secondary sources, italicise and capitalise each word in titles of policies and guidelines, excluding articles (the, a, an), conjunctions (and, but) and prepositions (on, with, before, within, in):¹⁶

NLD: Elements.

SFCC PGI 13: Prosecutions in the Federal Court of Australia.

NOG: Section 135.2, Criminal Code (Cth).

Performance Excellence Framework.

Work Health and Safety Policy.

The Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth

179. When writing to an external audience, the first reference should read “the *Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth* (***Prosecution Policy***)” (italicised, capitalised and defined). When writing to an internal audience, you may refer to “the *Prosecution Policy*” without needing to define it:

Audience	Use this
External	The <i>Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth</i> (<i>Prosecution Policy</i>) underpins all decisions made by the CDPP throughout the prosecution process and promotes consistency in decision making.
Internal	The <i>Prosecution Policy</i> underpins all decisions made by the CDPP throughout the prosecution process and promotes consistency in decision making.

G. REFERENCES TO PARTICULAR PEOPLE, ENTITIES AND CONCEPTS

The Director

180. When writing for an external audience, refer to the Director as the “Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth)”. For subsequent references or where there is no ambiguity in context, you may refer to “the Director”.
181. Only refer to the Director’s position if they have personally made a decision in relation to the matter in issue:

The Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) has given consent in this matter. The Director has... .

The Director has declined to commence an appeal in this matter.

¹⁶ The original *CDPP Writing Style Guide* published in April 2024 prescribed that policies should not be italicised. For consistency and simplicity, the 2026 version of this guide prescribes that all policies should be italicised.

182. The Director’s Chambers is comprised of the Director and her immediate support staff. Do not refer to the Director’s Office.

The Office

183. In accordance with s 5 of the *Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983* (Cth), there is a critical distinction between the Office and the Director personally. In external communication, when referring to the Office for the first time, refer to the name of the Office in full and define it as the CDPP:

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) (**CDPP**). The CDPP consists of...

184. In the alternative, the CDPP may also be referred to as “this / the Office” (capitalised). When referring to a specific location, use “office” (not capitalised) or “jurisdictions”, and not “regions” or “regional offices”.

Each jurisdiction must consider ... or each state/territory office ... or each office not each regional office.

185. Depending on local jurisdictional practices for proceedings on indictment, it may also be appropriate to refer to “the Crown”:

This Office’s position in relation to **[Refers to the CDPP.]**

The Perth office is located at **[Refers to a location.]**

The Crown’s position **[Refers to the CDPP in proceedings on indictment.]**

186. When writing to an internal audience (except in formal policies) it is usually not necessary to include a reference to the full name of the Office. It is sufficient to refer to the CDPP or the Office.

187. References to the CDPP should include the definitive article and should refer to the CDPP as a singular entity:

The CDPP has ... not CDPP has ... and not the CDPP have

188. Avoid referring to the Office as “the Agency”. However, it may be appropriate to refer to the Office specifically as an agency when describing the CDPP as an agency in the APS.

Practice Groups, work groups and positions

189. For internal audiences, you can assume the reader will understand our Practice Group or position-based acronyms without needing to write them in full. For external communication (written submissions, letters, etc), assume the reader will not be familiar with internal acronyms.

190. Capitalise the titles of Practice Groups, and other work groups:

Human Exploitation and Border Protection, Enabling Services Group, Director’s Chambers, etc.

191. When identifying a person, state their position first followed by their name (but not separated by a comma):

Commonwealth Solicitor for Public Prosecutions Jane Doe.

National Practice Leader John Doe.

192. Capitalise formal position titles, such as:

Director, Prosecution Team Leader, Senior Executive Lawyer, National Manager, Legal Support Officer, Case Officer, etc.

193. When referring to an acting position, use the full word “Acting”:

Acting Prosecution Team Leader not A/Prosecution Team Leader, A/g Prosecution Team Leader.

194. Do not capitalise descriptive or collective job names, such as:

prosecutors, clerk, registrars, project officers, counsel, etc.

195. When writing to an internal audience, use acronyms if they are common:

FP, SFP, PTL, SEL, NPL, CSPP, LSO, EA, CFO, CPO.

Referring to yourself

Correspondence

196. In external correspondence, you should speak in the first person (I/me). Avoid using “we” or “our” or referring to yourself in the third person. When addressing the reader (for example, a defence representative, investigator, witness, defendant), directly use “you” and “your”:

I refer to your letter of 1 March 2024 ... not We refer to your letter of 1 March 2024... .

Please contact me ... not Please contact the writer.

Internal communication

197. In internal communication, refer to yourself in the first person (I/me), not “myself”. Where a document is jointly written (for example a memorandum prepared by a prosecution team), it may be appropriate to use “we” etc. Use “you” and “your” to address the reader, not “yourself”.

The Office and the individual

198. It is not generally appropriate for you refer to “my view” in external correspondence. If referring to a position of the CDPP, refer to the CDPP or the Office:

This Office’s position on the application is... not Our position on the application is... .

The CDPP filed an application... not We filed an application... .

199. However, it may be appropriate for senior executive officers with formal decision making delegations to refer to their own position or opinions.

200. In making an internal recommendation, your view should not be expressed as the Office’s view. Only refer to the Office’s position if the CDPP has a settled position about an issue, for example when referring to the Office’s position as set out in a National Offence Guide.

Partner agencies and investigators

201. For the first reference in documents for an external audience, refer to the full title of the agency (capitalising each word), followed by an appropriate acronym:

The Australian Federal Police (**AFP**)

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (**ASIC**).

202. Use “partner agency” to refer to any government department or agency the CDPP engages with regarding its functions, including investigative agencies.
203. Use “investigative agency” when referring to the partner agency in its investigative capacity. For example, refer to an investigative agency in a memorandum where an agency has referred a matter to the CDPP and their views are being discussed.
204. As discussed at paragraph [13 above](#), use the terms consistently in the same document.
205. Depending on the jurisdiction’s practices, it may be appropriate to refer to the “investigator”, “informant” or “officer in charge”. Avoid referring to investigators as the “case officer” because this may be confused with the CDPP Case Officer.
206. Capitalise formal positions, titles or ranks:
 Captain, Senior Constable, Inspector etc.
207. Capitalise the titles of work groups:
 Crime Command, Fraud Prevention and Internal Investigations, etc.

Parties to criminal prosecutions

208. Each jurisdiction has its own practice for referring to persons charged with criminal offences, and those terms may change depending on the stage of the proceeding. In all situations, confirm the practice in the relevant jurisdiction. However, in general:

Type of matter	Description of parties
Summary proceedings prior to conviction	prosecution/defendant
Summary sentence proceedings	prosecution/offender
Summary applications	applicant/respondent
Proceedings in the Children’s Court	young person
Trials on indictment	Crown/accused
Indictable sentence proceedings	Crown/offender
Appeals requiring leave	applicant/respondent
Appeals as of right or where leave has been granted	appellant/respondent

209. Avoid referring to “the CDPP” or “the Office” as a party to proceedings.
210. Other than “Crown”, these terms should not be capitalised unless defined in accordance with paragraph [111 above](#) (acronyms, abbreviations and defined terms).
211. In internal legal policies and guidance,¹⁷ it may be appropriate to use the term “defendant” in a generic sense to refer to a person being prosecuted at any stage of proceedings. If the policy or

¹⁷ As prescribed by the [Legal Policies and Guidance Framework](#).

guidance primarily relates to proceedings on indictment it might be appropriate to use “accused” instead.

Victims and complainants

212. In criminal proceedings, avoid referring to individuals as “victims” prior to a finding of guilt in the relevant proceeding. Use the term “complainants”.

Child abuse material

213. Avoid using the acronym “CAM” in external communication to refer to child abuse material. It detracts from the gravity of the material. Use “child abuse material”.
214. Avoid using the term “child pornography material” or “child exploitation material” unless quoting directly from repealed legislation or a case. In 2019, the *Criminal Code* (Cth) was amended to replace each of these terms, instead incorporating them in the definition of “child abuse material”. As the Explanatory Memorandum for the *Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Act 2019* (Cth) explained:¹⁸

... the term ‘child pornography material’ is no longer considered appropriate or accepted terminology. Attaching the term ‘pornography’ to this material is a barrier to conveying the seriousness and gravity of the offences, the inherently abusive nature of the material, and the harm faced by the children. Further, labelling content as ‘child pornography material’ may inadvertently legitimise that material by associating it with legal forms of (adult) pornography. The inference that ‘pornography’ is associated with consenting subjects participating in legal behaviour is entirely inappropriate where the behaviour depicted involves the abuse of children.

H. NUMBERS, DATES AND TIMES

Numbers

215. In general, write the numbers zero to nine in words and use numerals for 10 and above.
216. In some contexts, it will be more appropriate to use numerals for all numbers, including those under 10. For example, this might include documents that require comparison of data, such as reports summarising or analysing data, or the terms of a sentence imposed by a court.
217. When using ordinal numbers (such as first, second, third, etc), spell out the numbers from “first” to “ninth”, and use numerals from 10th onwards.
218. Do not write the numeral in brackets after writing the word (ie “four (4)”).
219. If a number starts a sentence, use the word.

One hundred and seventeen people responded

not

117 people responded

¹⁸ Explanatory Memorandum, *Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Bill 2019* (Cth), 7 [40].

Dates

220. When writing dates in a full sentence:

Use this	Not this
26 August 2020	26th August 2020 26 th of August 2020 August 26, 2020

221. For dates in chronologies and tables, references to dates may be shortened if appropriate:¹⁹

Use this	Not this
6 Sep 2020 [DD Mmm YYYY] 6/9/2020 [DD/MM/YYYY]	06 Sep 20 6.9.2020 06-9-2020 06/9/2020 6/09/2020

222. When referring to financial years, only abbreviate the financial year for internal audiences:

Audience	Use this
External	The 2024–25 financial year.
Internal	The 2024–25 financial year (FY2025).

Time of day

223. Express time in numerals followed by a non-separating space and then am or pm. Use a colon between the hours and minutes:

9 am or 9:00 am not 9.00 am or 09:00 or 9am.

I. CORRESPONDENCE

When to use a letter or an email

224. Letters and emails are used to provide a formal record that information has been provided to the recipient. They are used to tell the recipient what they need to know.
225. Traditionally, the legal profession has viewed letters as being more formal than emails. However, the distinction is becoming blurred. Emails are now used for an increasing amount of formal official correspondence, including service of process and negotiations with defence, correspondence with the court, and correspondence with external stakeholders.
226. Choose the form of communication which has the appropriate level of formality for the recipient, for the purpose and length of the communication.

¹⁹ For technical documents it may be necessary to express dates in a different format (see [Dates and time](#) in the *Australian Government Style Manual*).

227. Letters are more likely to be appropriate for service of physical material (such as initiating proceedings and subpoenas), to give a communication some weight or for longer correspondence that requires a degree of structure. If you believe either a letter or an email is appropriate, you should err towards sending an email.

Letters

228. Do not use the abbreviation “Re:” in the subject line of letters.
229. Consistent with paragraph [128 above](#), it may be appropriate to not use paragraph numbers in a letter of less than three paragraphs.
230. Close letters with:

Format	Example
Yours faithfully	Yours faithfully
[e-signature]	
[Name]	John Doe
[Position]	Federal Prosecutor

231. Do not sign correspondence on behalf of the Director, for example:

John Doe
for Director

Emails

232. Consistent with paragraph [128 above](#), it may be appropriate to not use paragraph numbers in a short email of only a few paragraphs.
233. Close emails with your name, followed by your [email signature block](#), without inserting an e-signature.
234. Your email signature must use the [CDPP branded formatting](#), which must not be altered.

J. POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

235. Policies should be written in the third person:

The Case Officer should inform the defendant...

not

You should inform the defendant... .

236. However, “you” and “we” may be appropriate for certain guides, such as step by step practical/process guides where it may assist the reader to follow instructions:

You can access the Court History Report by... .

237. By way of guidance, policies should use the following terms as appropriate:

- 237.1. **“the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) (CDPP)”**: When referring to the Office as a whole;

- 237.2. **“the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth)”** or **“The Director”**: When referring to the Director individually;
- 237.3. **“Case Officers”**: When referring to a CDDP Case Officer’s actions or responsibilities (for example, “Case Officers must consider...”);
- 237.4. **“decision makers”**: When referring to a relevant person in the DMM, which may be used as a catch all for Principal Federal Prosecutors to National Practice Leaders;
- 237.5. **“prosecutors”**: When referring to prosecutors generally, at any level (for example, “Prosecutors have a fundamental duty of disclosure”). This may include reference to external counsel briefed by the legal practice;
- 237.6. **“investigators”**: When referring to investigators from an external agency (as opposed to referring to them as “case officers”);
- 237.7. **“staff”**: When referring to guidance applicable to all staff members;
- 237.8. **“delegate”**: When referring to decision makers who are exercising delegated powers under relevant instruments, such as the [Human Resources Delegations and Authorisations](#) or the [Financial Delegations](#); and
- 237.9. Individual titles, such as Prosecution Team Leader, Chief People Officer, National Practice Leader, where the policy indicates a specific level of delegation.
238. Identify mandatory policy by “must/must not”, discretions or choices by “may/may not”, and best practice guidance by “should/should not” (for example: “Case Officers must take the following steps...”; or “Decision makers should consider...”).
239. Use the active voice, rather than passive voice, to assist readers understand who is doing what and what each person’s responsibilities are.
240. Cases and legislation should be hyperlinked. [“Cross-references and hyperlinks”](#) contains information about citation practices when using hyperlinks in policy documents.

K. DOCUMENT RELEASE INFORMATION**Document owner**

Position	Director
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Approval for release

Name	Raelene Sharp KC
Position	Director
Date	February 2026
Published on CDPP Partner Agency Portal	No
Published on external CDPP website	Yes

Version control

Version	Date	Author	Approval for release	Description	Next review
1.0	23 April 2024	LCP	Director	First release as "CDPP Legal Writing Style Guide"	
2.0	February 2026	LCP	Director	Retitled "CDPP Writing Style Guide" and adapted to apply to whole of office.	February 2029