



Customer Success Stories

# Empowering First Nations Communities: How Services Australia used VisibleThread

Delivering accessible historical content to an audience with a reading grade level between 7 and 9

Head Quarters  
Canberra, Australia

Size of Company  
34,000+ employees

Industry  
Government Agency

[VisibleThread.com](https://VisibleThread.com)



## About Services Australia

Services Australia is the Australian Government's primary service delivery agency. It delivers payments and support to eligible Australian citizens and permanent residents.

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**“We are making government services simple so our customers can get on with their lives.”**

## About Customer Success at VisibleThread



Angus has been working as part of the Customer Success Team at VisibleThread for over 4 years. In his role he supports organizations across the globe, working with customers to drive efficiencies with VisibleThread's solutions. For this project he worked closely with Emily Edmunds, Assistant Director in the Communications Division at Services Australia. Together, they orchestrated a collaborative effort, leveraging their respective skills and knowledge to drive impactful outcomes for the project.

## Project Overview

In Services Australia's 2018–22 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), the agency committed to delivering a new website. This website depicts how First Nations communities gained access to social service benefits. A team of researchers worked with the agency's communications team to deliver the content for this new site.

**“The aim was to show how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fought for change in Australia. It uses first-hand accounts and historical artefacts that center First Nations stories. There are letters from activists, copies of old policies, and excerpts from the Acts that had to be changed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain eligibility.”**

- Emily Edmunds, Assistant Director, Communications Division, [Services Australia](#).

Throughout this project, Services Australia used VisibleThread to help achieve the desired reading grade level between 7 and 9.



# The Challenges

## 1. Refining historical content for Reading Grade Level between 7 and 9.

At the outset, the agency's historians found relevant artefacts in libraries and archives about the time period. The researchers developed summaries of each piece. They then worked with the writers from the agency's Communications Division to make the content easy to read.

Their biggest challenge was writing accessible content for the intended audience. Services Australia needed a software solution to analyze all content and score its readability by paragraph.

**“When we put the original research notes into VT Writer, we found we were working with writing to the reading grade of 25. We knew that most Australians read at a grade level of between 7 and 12. Literacy data also shows us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lower literacy levels. So, grade 25 wasn't going to be accessible for our audiences. Australian Government guidelines recommend writing to a reading level of 7 if possible.”**

## 2. Getting buy-in from highly educated writers.

Providing feedback on content can be a challenge for any team due to its perceived subjectivity. Skilled academic researchers wrote the original content for this project. Services Australia needed a software solution that scored their writing with objective metrics. This would help the original writers understand why their writing required editing.

## 3. Measuring clarity for different audiences

Services Australia already used VisibleThread for measuring the readability of general agency content outside of this project. However, the environment most staff used had set metrics that the project team couldn't adjust. They needed a new environment to set specific metrics for the project. This would ensure content met the needs of the audience.

**“Across Services Australia we had one environment for all of comms. We couldn't adjust the writing benchmarks for our project without impacting the whole agency. So, we needed a solution that could segment the different cohorts.”**



# The Solution

## 1. Working with the VisibleThread Customer Success Team.

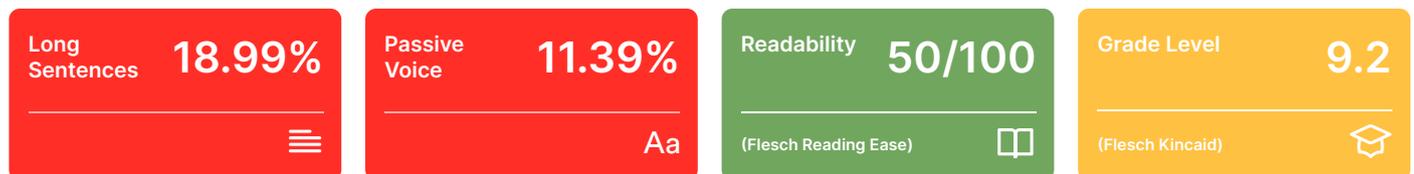
Angus from the VisibleThread Customer Success Team worked with Services Australia on this project. Angus set up a new VT Writer environment and was responsive to issues. As the Communications team has experienced users of VT Writer, they trained any new users in-house.

This new workspace enabled Services Australia to set specific language thresholds and configure the list of 'ignored terms'. These are multi-syllable phrases that can skew readability calculations. They included words used a lot across the site, such as 'Community' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'. For larger organizations like Services Australia, this ability to set the targets in VT Writer is vital.

## 2. Helping writers to grasp the metrics.

During the early days of the project, one researcher provided the writers with a complex draft. VT Writer scored the draft at a reading grade level of 25. It had 100% long sentences, meaning all sentences were greater than 25 words, and 100% passive voice.

This document became integral when training junior writers on how to use VT Writer. They commented that the 'traffic light' system in VT Writer was a helpful visual representation of the document's quality. They used this to track improvements to readability.



### The content targets they specified in VT Writer were as follows:



They transformed their writing process, placing the original score of the research notes at the bottom of their template. After editing the draft, the writer re-analyzed the content and made a note of the new score. This highlights the power of VT Writer when delivering tight and clean content with a consistent tone.



# The Impact

## 1. Improved editorial engagement with objective metrics

VT Writer helped align the Services Australia team. This project involved working with researchers who frequently write research papers using an academic tone. The VT Writer reports helped editors negotiate the writing style objectively, adopting an evidence-based editorial approach. The team improved efficiency by meeting face-to-face instead of going back and forth over tracked changes.

**“VT Writer is a helpful solution to negotiate the writing style without it being personal.”**

## 2. Consistent writing style across the team & faster edit cycles

Within Communications, the team consisted of writers who had varying writing styles. VT Writer was a useful tool to clearly show the language thresholds the team were working to. By being able to assess their own writing before sending it for review, the team shortened editing cycles. They created more understandable content, faster.

## 3. Confidence in meeting user reading level requirements

Over the course of this project, the team adapted and improved their writing style to meet the grade level targets. VT Writer flagged areas for improvement, especially around long sentences and the use of passive voice. Using the VT Writer report focusing on readability and grade level scores, the team delivered accessible historical content.

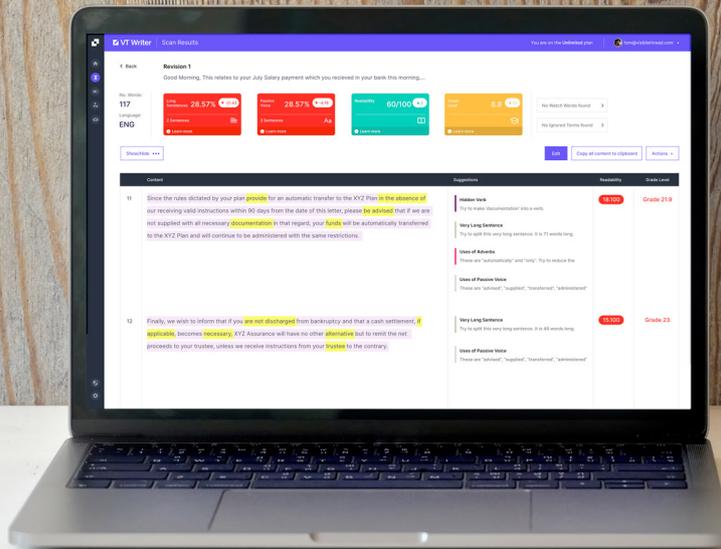
**“In every piece of content, we have done our best to meet the user’s need, to include the user, to make it accessible for our audience. As a comms professional that is key, knowing that we’ve achieved that is really important.”**



# Conclusion

Throughout the project, the team adapted their writing through VT Writer. By writing in active voice and using shorter sentences they improved their writing style and overall communication. This resulted in a shorter editing cycle which enabled writers to take on more work and hit project deadlines!

Overall, VT Writer helped Services Australia create clear content for the specific audience. It tells the history of First Nation communities' access to social services benefits. VT Writer enhanced Services Australia's ability to write clear and accessible content.





# Interested in learning how VisibleThread can transform your organization's writing?

You can trial VT Writer for free. To see how it can work for you, here's our [Quick Start guide](#). For more information, why not book a call with our Customer Success Team.

[VT Writer Free Trial](#)

**Need help or have a question?**



Talk to us by mailing [info@VisibleThread.com](mailto:info@VisibleThread.com) to find out more about the core capabilities of VT Docs