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The Reading Writing Hotline is calling for officials and governments to ensure all their public health messaging and materials are accessible in–reader-friendly plain language.

Hotline Manager Vanessa Iles says it has seen a concerning trend of people unable to navigate changing and complex public health messages and restrictions.

“For the 3 million Australians who have low literacy, reader-friendly plain language is absolutely essential, so they are not excluded from important information” Ms Iles said.

“Currently a lot of health messaging is written at a very high level and unnecessarily complicated. It needs to be rewritten with the needs of the whole community in mind and made easily available to everyone.

“This is not a fringe issue where only a small number of people are affected. 44% of adult Australians have a level of literacy that makes the complex language and messages we are seeing very hard to comprehend.

“Whilst messages have been translated into many community languages, more consideration needs to be given to those with low levels of literacy.

“When people with lower literacy can’t read an important rule or announcement, stigma and judgement can prevent them from asking for help. Lack of inclusive messaging places people at real risk.”

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