



April 2019



Government of South Australia

Department of the Premier  
and Cabinet

# Creating good A3s

## What is an A3?

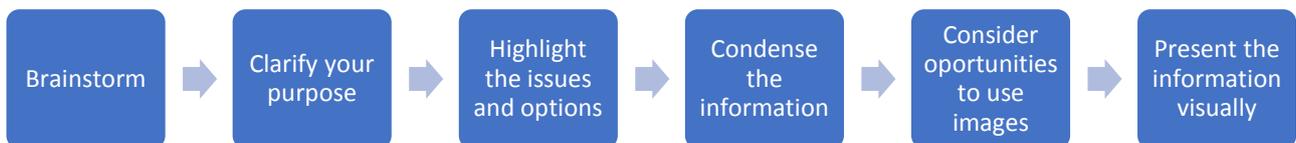
An A3 is a Cabinet Strategic discussion paper which provides information in a simple, easy-to-grasp way, in order to promote strategic discussion and explore across-government solutions. They are used to work through complex policy issues, where there are multiple options to be explored.

A3s do not replace Cabinet submissions or notes. Issues that are discussed through a strategic discussion paper that subsequently require a decision must be presented in a future Cabinet submission.

A3s should make use of info-graphics, graphs, maps and images to illustrate the issues and avoid presenting densely packed text.

## How to create a good A3

1. Start with the story (brainstorming content)
2. Clarify your purpose
3. Highlight the wider issues and options
4. Condense the information
5. Consider if data could better be portrayed through images and infographics
6. Present the information visually, consider enlisting the skills of your communications team (but remember that A3s are Cabinet documents and must be treated as such – see the confidentiality page for more information).



## What should an A3 consider

A3s should describe the issue, potential responses and analyse the risks and benefits.

- What is the issue and what is causing it?
- Who does the issue impact?
- Who needs to be directly involved in addressing the issue?
- What are we doing already to address the problem, and why isn't it working?
- Who are the stakeholders and what do they think should happen?
- Are there options? What are the costs involved?
- When do decisions need to be made and actions implemented?
- Are there any legislative requirements that need to be considered?

## What should an A3 achieve

A3s should provide good advice and help decision makers be clear about the problem or opportunity and explore what the likely outcomes might be of the different levers or options available to government. They should set out all the available evidence, and present options that balance what is desirable, possible and cost-effective.

A3s should:

- provide a visual overview to simplify complex ideas and issues
- be designed to facilitate discussion or debate, not simply provide information
- paint a picture of the policy issues and provide a breakdown of options
- be attractive and easy to read
- reduce the issue to its essence, with less text and more pictures
- use an informal communication style, talk to people directly, use plain language.

## Using visuals

People remember information better when it is combined with images. Complex and excessive text tires the brain, but attractive images and simple text will please your reader on a subconscious level.

Influence your reader's reaction by:

- using a layout that seems familiar and meets your reader's expectations
- using smooth connections between the parts of your message – the sequence of information should be obvious
- considering the alignment of lines and boxes – if done poorly, your audience can feel subconsciously that something isn't right
- not filling the background with an image or block colours, our eyes like to see white space
- using headings and sub-headings to summarise the main points of information
- always using left-aligned text, reading justified text tires our brain
- Keeping lists short - the more dot points you have the less people read.

## Other considerations

Think of this as a 'story on a page' version of your topic.

Find out how much your reader already knows. This will help you identify the main question your reader will have and which information to include and which to leave out.

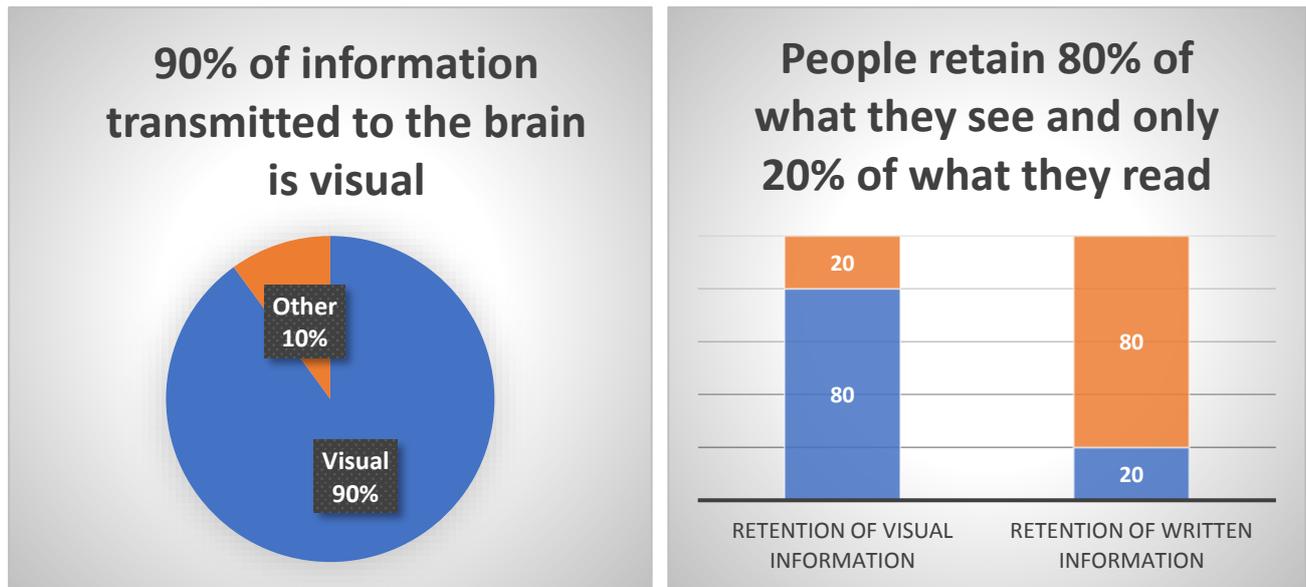
Sometimes stories can be effective at keeping your reader's interest. Case studies work well because they hook your readers' attention with stories about people.

Group your information into boxes and ask: 'If I could only keep one box, which would it be?' The box you choose is your main message. Let that message shape your A3.

Is there a natural structure in your information? For example, a sequence might suggest a timeline, a cycle: a circular shape, a layered approach: a pyramid.

A3s are generally read from top-left to bottom-right, so consider using the bottom-right corner for your conclusion. Don't leave them wondering 'So what?'

## The research



People absorb information faster with corresponding graphics

Viewers tend to be triggered emotionally by images

People process images 90,000 times faster than plain text and respond 40% better.

Think about it. Would you rather learn about a topic by reading 10,000-words or by looking at an infographic that conveys the same information?

**For more information:**  
**Cabinet Office**

**W [dpc.sa.gov.au](http://dpc.sa.gov.au)**  
**E [CabinetOffice@sa.gov.au](mailto:CabinetOffice@sa.gov.au)**