

# Brief online

## Brief style guide: May 2025

Tailored for journalistic, legal, and general publishing for Brief online.

### 1. Language and tone

#### 1.1 Voice

- Neutral, authoritative and plain-speaking.
- Prioritise clarity over flourish (unless called for).
- Avoid jargon unless essential.

#### 1.2 Spelling and grammar

- Follow Australian English conventions: organise, realise, labour, defence.
- Use Macquarie Dictionary for reference.

#### 1.3 Sentence style

- Keep sentences tight and active.
- Use contractions sparingly in legal articles (acceptable in journalistic and opinion content).
- Avoid sentences that are too long.

### 2. Structure and formatting

#### 2.1 Headlines

- Sentence case: capitalise first word and proper nouns only.
- Avoid articles (a, the) unless needed for clarity.
- No ampersands (&) unless part of a proper noun (e.g. Hall & Wilcox).

#### 2.2 Subheadings

- Sentence case: capitalise first word and proper nouns only.
- No ampersands (&) unless part of a proper noun (e.g. Hall & Wilcox).
- Use sparingly to break up long-form content.

#### 2.3 Paragraphs

- One idea per paragraph.
- Keep paragraphs short: two to four sentences is ideal for digital.
- Use subheadings every three to five paragraphs in online content.

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### 3. Referencing, sources and attribution

#### 3.1 General guidelines

- No footnotes or endnotes — all references must be within the body copy.
- Clearly attribute sources, documents, statements, and data.
- Include embedded hyperlinks to publicly available sources.

### 4. Legal and political style

#### 4.1 Case law (AGLC-aligned)

- Follow the Australian Guide to Legal Citation.
- Use italicised case names in body copy.
- Format: *Party v Party* (year) volume Law Report abbreviation page.
- Example: *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* (1992) 175 CLR 1.
- Jurisdiction and pinpoint references can be added in parentheses:
- ... as held in *Dietrich v The Queen* (1992) 177 CLR 292, 298 (Mason CJ) ...

#### 4.2 Legislation

- Use full Act title and year on first mention: *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).
- Subsequent mentions: the *Privacy Act*.
- Italics for legislation names, including subsequent mentions.

#### 4.3 Legal honorifics and titles

- First mention: include full honorific and name.
- e.g. The Honourable Chief Justice Peter Quinlan SC
- Later references: Chief Justice Quinlan.
- Use “the Honourable” where necessary with a lower case “the” unless at start of sentence.

#### 4.4 Political titles

- Use full title and name at first reference: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Premier Roger Cook.
- Thereafter, use surname only.
- Do not abbreviate titles or roles.

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### 5. Punctuation and formatting

Element	Style
Commas	No Oxford comma unless required for clarity
Ampersands (and)	Not used unless part of a name (e.g. AT&T)
Dashes	Use em dashes (—) with spaces
Quotes	Use double quotation marks; single for quotes within quotes
Ellipses	Use spaced ellipses (three dots and a space on either side): ...
Numbers	Spell out one to nine; numerals from 10 onwards. Exceptions include days of the month, figures containing decimals, part of titles, times of day, fractions and units of time, space and distance, and use with per cent e.g. 6 per cent
Percentages	Write as “per cent” (not %)
Time	12-hour clock with no space before “am/pm” (e.g. 5:00pm)
Dates	14 November 2025 or Wednesday, 14 November 2025 where day of the week is required
Et cetera	e.g.
That is	i.e.
Names of print publications/mastheads	Italicised
Names of other media, including websites	Not italicised

### 6. Digital publishing

#### 6.1 Hyperlinks

- Use descriptive anchor text, never raw URLs.
-  View the full report from the Australian Law Reform Commission (embed link in underlined text)
-  <https://www.alrc.gov.au/report-pdf>

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### 7. Common style decisions

Term	Use
Email	No hyphen
Internet	Lowercase
Program	Not “programme”
Adviser	Not “advisor”
Indigenous	Capitalised for people and culture
Government	Capitalised when specific (e.g. the Australian Government)
States and territories	Lower case unless a specific name e.g. the State Library, the State Government
COVID-19	All caps, no “the”
Courtroom	Not “court room”
Wellbeing	Not “well-being”
Law Society references	The Law Society of Western Australia if starting a sentence, or the Law Society of Western Australia if mid-sentence.  Just the Law Society following the first reference.
Law Society committees	Only capitalise “committee” if referring to the name of a specific committee e.g. the Criminal Law Committee

ENDS