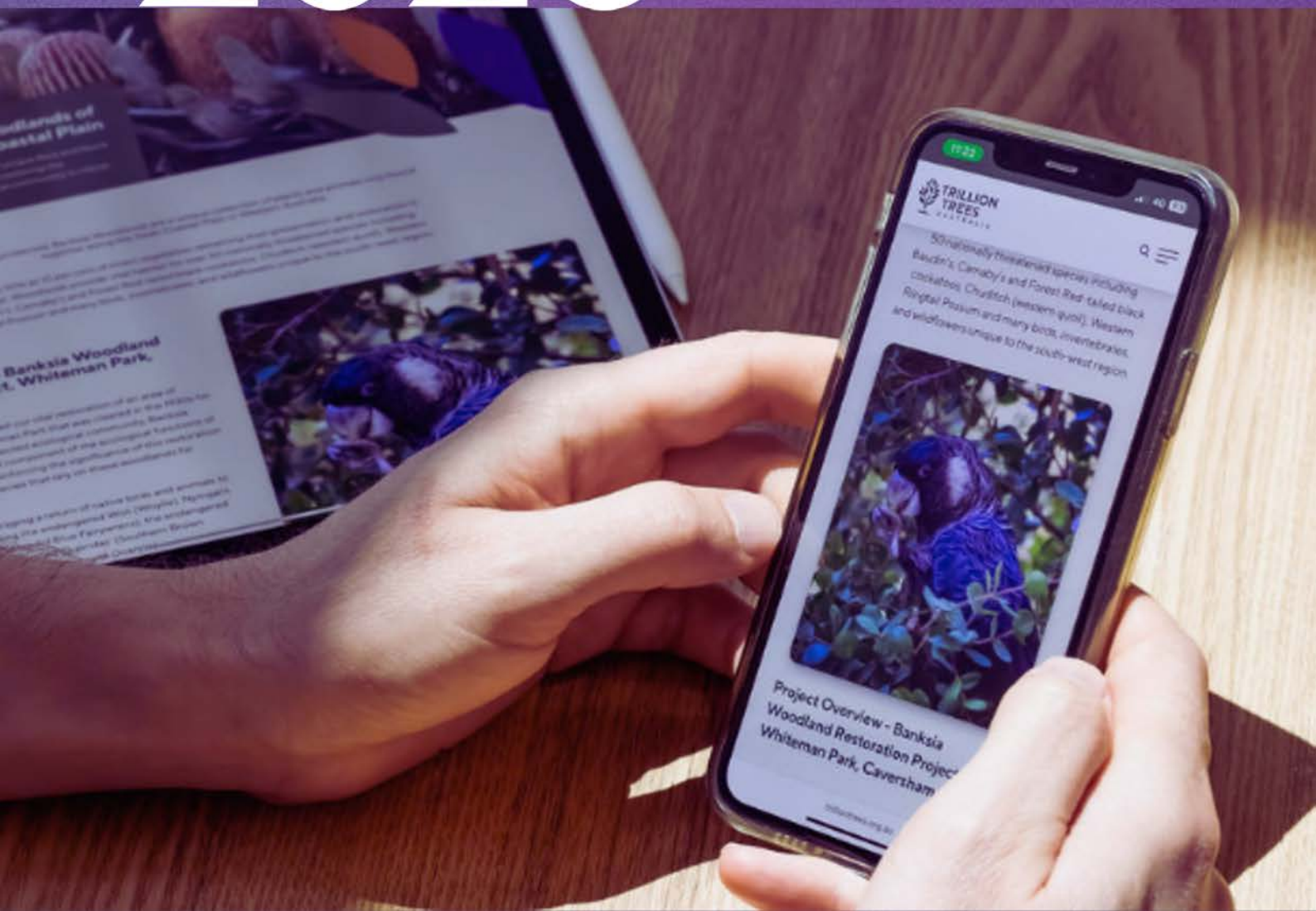
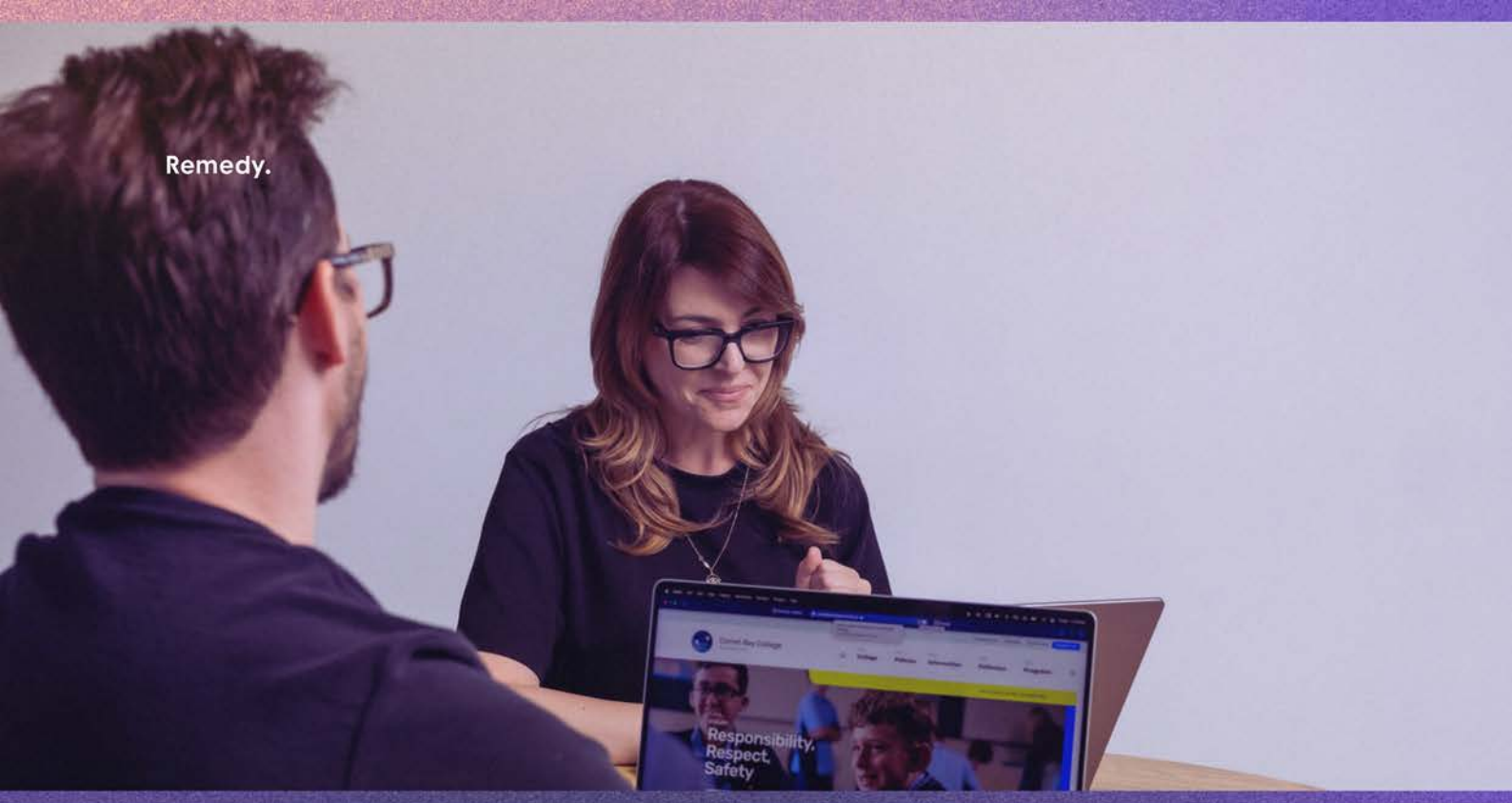


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# State of Websites 2026







# The State of Websites in 2026

## Quick Snapshot

- Leading up to 2025, websites moved from “marketing add-ons” to essential operational tools without most organisations realising it
- Right now, most sites built between 2017–2020 are hitting the same lifecycle pressure point: ageing foundations, rising security needs, and changing user behaviour
- In 2026, organisational websites will need clearer structure, stronger hosting, and supported CMS foundations to stay reliable and community-ready

### What we’re seeing in 2025–2026

In the years leading up to 2025, most organisations built websites as brand platforms: a place to look good, share news, and introduce who they are.

Social media altered that completely. It absorbed the day-to-day visibility work, leaving websites to take on something far more operational.

### That’s where we find ourselves now

Most organisational websites aren’t “brand pieces” anymore, they’re work systems. They hold forms, calendars, resources, enrolments, bookings, policies, and community updates. They’re used daily by staff, families, clients, and stakeholders.

**This report outlines where websites stand today, what’s changing in 2026, and what organisations will need to keep them reliable, secure, and helpful for their audience.**

# The 2025 Turning Point

## Quick Snapshot

- 2025 exposed the gap between websites built for branding and websites now carrying daily operational load
- Audiences shifted: people expect answers instantly, mobile-first structure, and AI-readable content
- Rising security standards and ageing CMS versions mean many 2017–2020 sites are now hitting natural lifecycle limits

## Where we landed in 2025 (and why it matters for 2026)

By late 2025, most organisations realised their website had taken on a completely different job than the one it was built for.

**Social platforms took over quick updates and visibility**, leaving the website to handle the deeper operational work such as bookings, donations, enrolments, resources, policies, calendars, and program updates.

**At the same time, audiences changed how they search.** People increasingly ask direct questions, expect instant answers, and rely on mobile-first structure.

AI tools read websites differently, which means older formats, PDFs, and cluttered layouts now hold organisations back.

Layer in rising security risks, outdated hosting, and CMS versions nearing end-of-support, and 2025 revealed a simple truth:

**The tipping point = the moment the website still “works”... but the systems holding it up can’t keep going as is.**

This is why 2026 is shaping up to be a year of clearer foundations, stronger hosting, and supported CMS pathways, not cosmetic redesigns, but operational alignment.



# What's Changing in 2026

## Quick Snapshot

- People search differently and ask direct questions and expect instant answers
- Higher security standards mean VPS hosting is now the norm for operational sites
- CMS platforms are moving toward stability, fewer plugins, and longer support windows

Change	What's Driving It	What It Means for You
<b>Search behaviour</b>	Visitors no longer browse. They ask. Search behaviour is now question-based, mobile-first, and powered by AI tools that rely on clear structure.	Your website needs simple structure, predictable layouts, and information in real text (not PDFs).
<b>Security &amp; hosting</b>	Increased incidents across community-based organisations. Shared hosting no longer meets expectations.	VPS hosting, tested backups, and basic protection layers are now standard for operational websites.
<b>CMS evolution</b>	CMS ecosystems are moving toward fewer plugins, longer support windows, and clearer upgrade paths.	Choose systems with fewer dependencies and clear upgrade paths to keep your website stable long term.

## Where to from here

These trends aren't abstract. They shape what an organisational website needs to run smoothly in 2026.

**The next step is simple:** understand the foundations that keep your site stable, easy to manage, and ready for daily use.

Let's look at what needs to happen for success. 



# What Websites Need to Succeed in 2026

## Quick Snapshot

- Success in 2026 is built on stability, clarity, and structure
- Supported CMS versions and modern hosting form the backbone of reliable sites
- Simple pathways and low admin load help organisations operate with ease

## Websites that perform well in 2026 have three things in place:

1. Solid foundations
2. Clear structure
3. Simple systems

They're easy for staff to update, easy for people to navigate, and steady enough to support daily operations without fuss.

When those pieces are in place, the website stays reliable, findable, and low-maintenance.

## Here's what that looks like in practice →

### Technical foundations

- Supported CMS version
- VPS hosting
- Reliable, tested backups
- SSL and basic security layers
- Fast load speeds on mobile and desktop

### Content and structure

- Clear pathways (2-3 clicks to key information)
- Consistent, predictable templates
- Information in real text, not buried in PDFs

### Easy-to-use

- Staff can update content without support
- Defined ownership: who manages the site
- Predictable annual costs and renewal cycles
- Simple process for support or escalation

### Future readiness

- Minimal plugin or add-on dependency
- Clean, maintainable codebase
- Clear, documented upgrade path
- Structure readable by AI-driven search tools



# Your Path in 2026

## Quick Snapshot

- Most organisations will fall into one of four natural paths in 2026
- Your next step depends on how new your site is, how well it's holding up, and whether your CMS and hosting are still supported
- This guide helps you plan, budget, and make steady decisions without urgency

## Which path are you on?

Every organisation reaches one of these points eventually. Some will arrive there in 2026, others in the years ahead. The key is simply knowing where your website sits in its lifecycle so you can budget, prepare, and plan without urgency. A quick yearly check-in is all you need to stay ahead.

If this sounds familiar...	Your next step is...	What it means for you
You launched your site within the last 1–2 years. Everything feels steady. Staff can update easily. No structural issues.	<b>Maintain</b>	Keep things as they are. Stay on supported CMS versions, update your hosting when prompted, and follow the annual check-in to stay ahead.
The website still works. Staff can update it easily. No major complaints. You're just being asked to update your CMS or hosting.	<b>Update</b>	Keep your current site. Apply security and system updates so it stays supported and reliable.
The foundation is still fine, but people struggle to find things or staff spend too long updating.	<b>Refresh</b>	Update and improve structure and usability. Modernise key areas while keeping the existing foundation.
You've been told the CMS is no longer supported, the hosting needs upgrading, or updates can't be applied safely anymore.	<b>Rebuild</b>	Start with a new foundation designed for the next 5–7 years: new CMS, new structure, modern hosting.

# Your 2026 Website Quiz

Use this quick check-in to see where your website sits in its lifecycle and what you may need next. It's a simple way to stay ahead, plan calmly, and spot the right path before anything becomes urgent.

Each tick equals 1 point. Add up your total at the end, your score shows where your website sits in its lifecycle and which path you may be moving toward in 2026 (or the years ahead).

## CMS Support

- ☐ We are not sure what CMS version we're on
- ☐ Our CMS version is approaching its end-of-support date
- ☐ We've delayed important updates
- ☐ We've received notices about needing an upgrade

## Hosting

- ☐ We're on shared hosting
- ☐ We don't have tested, restorable backups
- ☐ Our server software (eg. PHP) is outdated
- ☐ We've been told hosting is limiting updates or security

## Staff Experience

- ☐ Staff updates take longer than expected
- ☐ We rely on developers for small changes
- ☐ The CMS feels slow, clunky, or confusing
- ☐ Templates don't match how staff actually work now

## Audience Experience

- ☐ People struggle to find things
- ☐ High-use areas (eg. resources, bookings) feel cluttered
- ☐ Calls are increasing for "where do I find...?"
- ☐ Mobile use feels harder than it should

## Website Performance

- ☐ The site is 5-7 years old
- ☐ We've added a lot of content since launch
- ☐ How we operate has changed significantly
- ☐ We haven't reviewed the site structurally in years

Total \_\_\_\_ / 20

## What Your Score Means

### 0-4 points: You're stable

You're likely in the early years of your website's lifecycle. The foundations are holding, the CMS and hosting are still supported, and the structure is coping with day-to-day use. This is a good place to be. Your next steps are simply annual check-ins, staying aware of CMS end-of-support dates, and keeping an eye on how staff and community use the site.

### 5-8 points: You're approaching a decision

You're starting to see signs that your website is moving into its next stage. Nothing's on fire, but there are early indicators that the foundation or structure will need attention in the next 12-24 months. This is where planning ahead pays off. Begin setting aside budget, review your CMS support window, and get clarity on whether an Update or a Refresh will keep things steady for the next few years.

### 9-12 points: You're at the decision point

Your website has reached the point where decisions matter. Structural strain, rising admin load, ageing hosting, or approaching end-of-support dates suggest the current setup is nearing its limit. At this stage, most organisations choose between a Refresh and a Rebuild. A Refresh can extend the life of the site if the foundations are still sound.

### 13+ points: Your foundation is at end-of-cycle

Your website has reached the natural end of its lifecycle. The CMS, hosting, structure, or overall setup are no longer giving you the stability or support you need. A Rebuild becomes the clearest, most predictable option because it resets everything — CMS, templates, hosting, structure — and gives you a fresh 5-7 year runway. This isn't a failure, and it's not about urgency. It's simply the point where the technology underneath has done its job and it's time for the next chapter.



# Looking Ahead: 2026 & Beyond

## Quick Snapshot

- 2025 made it clear that organisational websites are now core operational tools
- 2026 strengthens the foundations: cleaner structure, supported CMS versions, secure hosting
- The years ahead offer more predictability and control for organisations who review their site yearly

By the end of 2025, most organisations realised their website had quietly become part of their daily operations. Forms, resources, calendars, enrolments, bookings, and updates now live online, which means the website needs the same planning and care as any other piece of organisational infrastructure.

In 2026, the focus shifts toward stability. Supported CMS versions, modern hosting, and clear content pathways help reduce admin load, improve community access, and keep things running smoothly. AI-powered search rewards clear structure, so well-organised websites become easier to find and easier to use.

Looking ahead, the pattern is predictable. Strong foundations, steady updates, and simple annual check-ins give you control over your website's lifecycle and help you plan calmly. You're not catching up. You're simply moving into the next stage with clarity, confidence, and the right support.

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