

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025

Department of Premier and Cabinet



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Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025

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The Whole of Victorian Government Digital Standards Framework is now best practice for Victorian Government digital services practitioners. The digital standards framework is made up of Digital Design Principles and how-to guides covering all Victorian Government digital activities. The framework and its standards cover external digital assets, including example websites, social media accounts and mobile applications. They also apply to ‘internal’ digital assets such as intranets and staff-focused applications.

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Message from the Secretary

The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025 provides the blueprint for how we will continue to be an employer of choice for people living with disability.

This is a robust and thoroughly researched plan that establishes our ambition to be a leader in the disability and inclusion space, in both the Victorian public sector and across the Victorian community more generally. This includes reaching — and hopefully exceeding — our 12 per cent employment target for people with disability by 2025.

The plan also provides an opportunity to place disability and inclusion at the forefront of our approach to return to workplaces following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

Although the department had an 'all roles flex' approach prior to the pandemic, it was not widely used. What is now very clear is that people can work effectively from home or, in the future, a location closer to home like a VPS Hub. For many people with disability, reduced travel requirements or varying start and finish times can make a significant difference to their quality of life, as well as to their work productivity and efficiency.

While attending the office will remain a feature of DPC's work requirements, we are more focused than ever on striking the right balance between the requirements of the job while supporting people to work flexibly. This shift in the underlying assumptions of how we work increases choice and control for all our staff in their professional lives.

It is incumbent upon us to continue to learn from this lived experience and develop a model of hybrid work that accommodates all staff. Indeed, a key cornerstone of this action plan is continued engagement with staff with disability. As Secretary, I am committed to working with all key stakeholders — including the DPC Enablers Network and VPS Enablers Network — to deliver the changes and the systems needed to build a truly diverse, capable and resilient workforce.

I encourage all DPC staff to read this plan and to reflect on the ways you can contribute to making this department a more inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for all.



Jeremi Moule
Secretary, DPC

Message from the Disability Champion

I am pleased to present the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025.

It has been incredibly rewarding to work with the department's Enablers Network and other stakeholders to develop this action plan. In my role as DPC's Disability Champion, I am committed to regular engagement across the department to support a culture of inclusiveness and mutual respect. Through ongoing communication and advocacy, we can continue to remove workplace barriers for people with disability.

It may surprise you to learn that more than 18 per cent of Victorians identify as living with disability. The lived experiences of each of these people are unique, which emphasises why it is important that we take an adaptable approach to remove barriers and promote employment opportunities.

As a significant Victorian employer, it is essential that the Victorian Government actively encourages and supports people with disability to participate in the workforce. To that end, the department is working towards a 12 per cent employment target for people with disability. We are well on the way to achieving that goal by 2025 and demonstrating to the broader community that the barriers to employment experienced by people with disability are often surmountable.

The department's first disability action plan resulted in real changes and improvements to recruitment practices, workplace modifications and general perceptions. DPC has achieved positive results in recent People Matter Surveys, demonstrating improved workplace practices and culture. Furthermore, the work of the Enablers Network has been a valuable channel for open and productive conversations. Sharing experiences has helped identify areas where we can improve support and replicate good outcomes.

This new action plan will build on the strong foundation the department has developed in fostering a positive attitude towards disability employment. The focus in the coming years will be on providing strong leadership to promote an inclusive and diverse workplace that truly represents the community we serve. This will result in improved employee experiences and will position DPC as a model employer for the broader public sector and the Victorian community.

I encourage you all to review the action plan and consider how you can promote a diverse and inclusive approach to employment in your day-to-day work. Together we can ensure disability is seen as an opportunity, rather than a challenge, in our department.



Matt O'Connor

Deputy Secretary, Industrial Relations Victoria, DPC Disability Champion

Message from the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Network on Disability

The Australian Network on Disability is a not-for-profit organisation focused on advancing the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business. We support our members and clients to welcome people with disability as employees, customers and suppliers. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is a highly valued member of the Australian Network on Disability, and it has been a pleasure partnering with them to develop their second Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. We congratulate you on your long-term commitment to improving the lives of people with disability.

I applaud the development of, and support for, the department's network of employees with disability: DPC Enablers. Their contributions to the development of the plan and ongoing consultation will ensure the department is living and breathing the ethos of 'nothing about us, without us'.

The department has a powerful role to play in ensuring people with disability are welcomed in their day-to-day operations and empowered to be social and economic contributors to society. Removing barriers to access and inclusion helps create a level playing field for people with disability and boosts our economy.

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan seeks to build a more representative and inclusive workforce through greater disability and accessibility awareness and engagement. We know that organisations that have the vision to welcome people with disability and carers in their day-to-day operations have a powerful impact on the whole of society.

The Australian Network on Disability looks forward to supporting the implementation of this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

Corene Strauss

CEO, Australian Network on Disability

Introduction

The Department of Premier and Cabinet's (DPC) mission is to support the people of Victoria by:

- helping government achieve its strategic objectives
- providing leadership to the public sector to improve its effectiveness
- promoting collaboration across government to drive performance and improve outcomes.

DPC supports the Victorian Government's commitment to a stronger, fairer, better Victoria by pursuing excellence in whole of Victorian Government service delivery and reform. We strive to ensure government policy and programs are inclusive for all Victorians, including people with disability, and are committed to a workforce that is genuinely inclusive and better reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

Within DPC, the number of people who identify as having a disability, according to the 2021 People Matter Survey results, has increased from 3 per cent in 2017 to 7 per cent in 2021. DPC is committed to working towards the 12 per cent employment target set for people with disability by 2025 as set out in *Getting to Work: the Victorian Public Sector Disability Employment Action Plan 2018–2025*. As a central agency, DPC has an opportunity to lead the push towards the 12 per cent target.

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025 has been developed against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic which has, over the past 18 months, significantly disrupted office-based working practices across DPC. As a result, flexible and remote working became a reality for most employees. Embedding and normalising remote and flexible working has had positive benefits for many people with disability for whom this flexibility is essential. We acknowledge, however, that for some people with disability and carers, working from home has created more barriers. With the foreseeable return to office-based and hybrid working practices, it will be important to preserve recent flexibility gains achieved for staff, in particular because of the benefits it has provided for people with disability.

While significant improvements have been made to representation and experience for people with disability under the previous Disability Action Plan 2017–2020, our recent People Matter Survey measures still show opportunities for improvement in the experience of work for people with disability at DPC. In the 2021 People Matter Survey results, people with disability responded comparably with all staff to factors such as job satisfaction, engagement, organisational culture with respect to people with disability, and diversity and inclusion. However, people with disability responded less favourably to questions about securing effective workplace adjustments, career development and opportunities for promotion. In addition, people with disability continue to experience bullying and discrimination at a higher rate than other staff.

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019–2021 acknowledges and reflects on the challenges and opportunities for people working in an environment that is not yet reflective of the communities it represents. As a key plan under the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, this access and inclusion plan aims to:

- improve the representation and integration of people with disability across all groups and levels
- improve the employment experience of people with disability, including their access to physical and digital environments
- improve the attitudes and confidence of managers and staff related to working with people with disability

- promote a more positive workplace culture and psychologically safe culture related to people with disability
- enhance inclusive practices throughout the employment life cycle.

Disability definition

The Victorian Public Sector Commission, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recognises the definition of disability as including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The definition of disability under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth) is broad. It includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible or invisible. Some conditions and impairments are present from birth. Other people acquire or develop disability during their lifetime from an accident, condition, illness or injury. For some people, support requirements can increase over time. Others can experience fluctuating or episodic disability. Some people may have multiple disabilities, giving rise to different support requirements.

Disability, sexuality, cultural diversity, it's not 'special', or 'unusual' or 'not our problem'. It is the lived reality of a human being and therefore everybody's responsibility to ensure all are given an equal chance to experience their educational and social potential in a non-judgemental, inclusive, transparent, accountable and empowering way.

Consultation participant — Absolutely Everyone: State Disability Plan 2017–2020

This social model of disability, which understands that negative attitudes and environmental barriers impact on the ability to participate in work and life, underpins this plan, which builds capacity and removes barriers to the workforce and respects the human rights of people with disability.

What is disability discrimination?

The Disability Discrimination Act states that discrimination based on disability occurs when a person with disability is either:

- treated less favourably than a person without disability (direct discrimination), or
- made to comply with a general requirement or condition that the person is unable to comply with because of their disability, and that leads to the person being disadvantaged (indirect discrimination).

Internal and regulatory framework

The following diagram demonstrates the internal framework of diversity and inclusion plans at DPC and shows where the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan fits into that framework. It also shows the relevant laws, standards and guidelines considered in developing this plan.



Consultation and development

DPC partnered with the Australian Network on Disability to facilitate consultation for this plan. This included a desktop review of the previous Disability Action Plan, an online staff survey, individual interviews, focus groups and an analysis of recent People Matter Survey results (refer to diagram below).



The plan’s development also considered a Victorian Public Sector Commission analysis of Victorian public service (VPS) People Matter Survey results from 2018, 2019 and 2021. This analysis showed that successfully implementing workplace adjustments is a key determinant of people with disability’s level of satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

Further, the plan considers the findings of the VPS Enablers Network Research Project — a two-year project that focused on the experiences of staff with disability and staff who are carers of people with disability in the VPS. This project identified nine opportunities for improvements across workplaces, and this plan seeks to integrate these opportunities within its action areas.

Themes

During consultation, DPC employees indicated a positive attitude towards people with disability generally and wanted to support people with disability where they could. Many believed DPC was already reasonably accessible and inclusive but felt there was more to be done. The clear priorities for DPC that emerged from consultations were inclusive recruitment, accessible premises, visibility of workplace adjustments and career development opportunities.

Key opportunities identified during consultations included:

- promoting the support available for people with disability
- establishing ways to support candidates with disability during the recruitment process
- introducing professional development opportunities for people with disability
- developing accessibility resources across DPC
- increasing awareness of disability through disability confidence training.

Achievements under the Disability Action Plan 2017–2020

Under the previous Disability Action Plan, several initiatives were delivered to improve the employee experience and increase representation of people with disability. These included:

- establishing a Deputy Secretary executive disability champion and sponsor for the DPC Enablers Network
- creating a seven-year VPS funding arrangement for a senior adviser to lead and support the work of the VPS Enablers Network and the Getting to Work initiatives (this is a rotating role within Victorian Government where the role is hosted at DPC for the first two years of the arrangement)
- creating a senior adviser disability access and inclusion role dedicated to implementing the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (as per Action 3 in Getting to Work)
- refurbishing and designing the 35 Collins Street occupancy with a strong focus on inclusion and accessibility
- implementing a new briefing and correspondence management system with early consultation with people with disability to incorporate accessibility features
- developing the Digital Employee Experience Roadmap, with a focus on making employment applications more flexible and accessible (there has been a conscious shift to embed accessibility features as the standard process)
- commissioning an accessibility audit for 1 Treasury Place, which identified the access issues associated with the internal confines of the building
- implementing Teem, a meeting room, wayfinding, visitor management and desk booking solution
- revising the Workplace Adjustment policy and procedure
- continuing participation in the Stay Engaged program, which provides a six-week paid work placement for people with disability (DPC has hosted 23 people since 2017, resulting in ongoing work for several participants)
- continuing participation in the Australian Network on Disability's 'Stepping Into' internship program, which has hosted six winter interns, six summer interns and proposes four further summer interns.

Action areas

Following consultation and analysis, the following four action areas have been identified for the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025:

1. **Our leadership’s commitment to inclusion** — our disability initiatives are championed by senior leaders who drive progress and change to meet our 2025 target of 12 per cent employees with disability.
2. **Our people experience** — our inclusive employment policies and practices strengthen career opportunities for people with disability.
3. **Our accessible workplace** — our physical and digital environment provides an inclusive employee experience.
4. **Our inclusive culture** — our department is a leader in accessibility and inclusion for people with disability and is welcoming of people with disability when we work with our partners and the community.

DPC groups will partner with each other to implement initiatives that are relevant to their respective functions and operation. All groups will be encouraged to identify initiatives to include in their group’s strategic plan.

Governance

This plan is underpinned by activities to ensure strong governance and reporting. All actions will be set out in an implementation plan, a detailed internal monitoring and tracking document that details the progress of the plan. Progress against the plan will be reported on annually to our Board of Management.

We will apply the following process:

1. Establish a governance committee that is accountable for reporting on the plan’s progress.
2. Establish a formal consultation framework with the DPC Enablers Network (comprising people with lived experience of disability) to ensure people with disability are consulted when making decisions that affect people with disability.
3. Create a communication plan to promote the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, and raise awareness through success stories and case studies.

Action area 1: Our leadership's commitment to inclusion

Our disability initiatives are championed by senior leaders who drive progress and change to meet our 2025 target of 12 per cent employees with disability.

Goal	Strategies	Timing
Ensure our leaders champion diversity initiatives	Continue our commitment to an Executive Disability Champion who champions access and inclusion for people with disability and carers and who sponsors the DPC Enablers Network	Year 1 ¹
	Support senior leaders to become disability confident, promote the plan and drive actions within their groups to achieve the 2025 target of 12 per cent employees with disability	Year 1 and ongoing
Report on progress against the plan	Report annually to the DPC Board of Management and DPC Enablers Network on performance against the plan	Annual
	Develop a data collection and reporting framework within existing corporate systems to measure actions to support people with disability and to provide indicator measures for the plan	Year 1

¹ References to years are as follows: Year 1: 2022; Year 2: 2023; Year 3: 2024.

Action area 2: Our people experience

Our inclusive employment policies and practices strengthen career opportunities for people with disability to achieve 12 per cent employees with disability by 2025.

Goal	Strategies	Timing
Increase the representation of people with disability across the entire organisation to achieve 12 per cent employees with disability by 2025	Regularly promote DPC's commitment to enabling workplace adjustments and illustrate the need and the benefit of workplace adjustments through case studies and articles to increase retention of people with disability	Year 1
	As the department continues to move to a hybrid working model, embed learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure flexible working arrangements are equally available to people with disability and complement any workplace adjustments	Year 1
	Leverage Special Measures, recruitment channels and employment programs to attract talented candidates to DPC at all levels	Year 2
	Educate people managers about recruitment and workplace adjustments for candidates with disability and implement unconscious bias / disability confidence training for hiring managers and those on interview panels	Year 2
	Regularly review the accessibility of the end-to-end recruitment and selection processes (including application, interview, onboarding and induction) to identify and rectify any unintended barriers	Year 2
	Train people managers to be disability confident with a focus on workplace adjustments throughout the employee life cycle	Year 2
Create more sustainable professional development opportunities for people with disability	Design and implement pathways for people with disability to take up accessible professional development programs and participate in the whole of VPS mentoring program pilot, in conjunction with the VPS Enablers Network	Year 2
	Review the accessibility and inclusivity of mandatory e-learning modules	Year 3

Action area 3: Our accessible workplace

Our physical and digital environment provides an inclusive employee experience.

Goal	Strategies	Timing
Improve and enhance the physical accessibility of our built environment	Advocate that building owners comply with the relevant 'Access to Premises Standards' under Building Codes of Australia and the Disability Discrimination Act and apply universal design principles to exceed compliance where possible	Ongoing
	Ensure internal and community DPC events and workshops are accessible to people with disability and accessibility features are promoted as standard in all advertising materials	Year 1
	Review the accessibility of the built environment and develop an inclusive design plan that considers Design for Dignity Principles to prioritise, invest in and improve access in the existing infrastructure	Year 2
Improve and enhance the accessibility of our digital technology and communications content	Partner with the owners of the Digital Employee Experience Roadmap to ensure a stronger dependency on robust accessibility testing by consulting with people with lived experience of disability	Ongoing
	Review the creation process for all online documents to ensure the required item is in an accessible format and/or available in alternative formats	Year 1
	Contribute to a whole of VPS strategy to improve the accessibility of government communication and information	Year 2
	Regularly review our websites (internet and intranet) to ensure compliance with the Victorian Government access standards as defined by the whole of government Web Digital Standards Framework	Year 2
	Ensure the DPC Procurement Strategy aligns with the Social Procurement Framework and that goods and services products procured are accessible	Year 3

Action area 4: Our inclusive culture

Our department is a leader in accessibility and inclusion for people with disability and is welcoming of people with disability when we work with our partners and the community.

Goal	Strategies	Timing
All staff are committed to contribute to a respectful and inclusive work environment	Embed disability awareness training into the induction process and make this available to all staff and managers for refresher training	Year 1
	Campaign to encourage staff to complete workforce data surveys and to share information about living with disability that will improve understanding of our workforce	Year 1
	Create a safe environment for employees to raise awareness through sharing personal stories about living with disability that will benefit the employee experience and improve corporate knowledge	Year 2
DPC celebrates diversity and includes people with disability	Conduct forums and events to showcase and celebrate best practice in inclusion of people with disability	Year 2
	Showcase the achievements of people with disability through DPC publications	Year 3