



Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2019 – 2022



Western Health

*Together, caring for the West
Our patients, staff, community and environment*

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Acknowledgement of Country

Western Health's hospitals are located across the north-west to south-west of Melbourne within the suburbs of Footscray, St Albans (Sunshine Hospital), Williamstown, and Sunbury. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, Boon Wurrung people and other peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these lands, and pay respect for the wisdom and diversity of their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Introduction

Western Health (WH) manages three acute public Hospitals: Footscray Hospital, Sunshine Hospital and the Williamstown Hospital. It also operates the Sunbury Day Hospital and a transition care program at Hazeldean in Williamstown. A wide range of community services are also managed by Western Health, along with a large Drug Health and Addiction Medicine Service.

Western Health provides a comprehensive, integrated range of services from its various sites ranging from acute tertiary services in areas of emergency medicine, intensive care, medical and surgical services, through to subacute care and specialist ambulatory clinics. Western Health provides a combination of hospital and community-based services to aged, adult and paediatric patients, and newborn babies.

Supporting the health care needs of a population of over 900,000 and employing approximately 7,000 staff and more than 600 volunteers, Western Health holds a significant responsibility to meet the diverse needs of people with disability who use, visit or work with or for our organisation.

The following action plan will help our organisation to play its part in reducing discrimination, and meet our obligations under federal and state anti-discrimination legislation. It will promote the equality of people with disability, and help our organisation be consistent with the **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006** and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

Our Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan (DAIAP) outlines what Western Health will do to help make our services, interactions, and culture more accessible and welcoming.

Implementing our DAIAP will help us to identify and change practices that may be discriminatory, restrict or prevent staff, volunteers, and patients from contributing to high quality and safe healthcare services, and being cared for in ways which uphold the rights and dignity of people with disability.



What is a Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan?

A disability access and inclusion action plan or simply, disability action plan, is a plan by which organisations devise and implement actions to ensure that their facilities, services and programs do not exclude people with disability, or treat them less favourably than other people.

DAIAPs encourage organisations to think widely, and to avoid assumptions about what people can and cannot do.

Under **section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006**, the Victorian Government has identified four outcomes that a DAIAP should address:

- reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;
- reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;
- promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability; and
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

These are called the Four Outcome Areas. Western Health's DAIAP discusses these, and outlines current practice and a plan to enhance the way we address each.



Why Develop a Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan?

“The primary experience of a human being with a disability, at least the primary experience in relation to community, is one of thoughtless, unnecessary and hurtful exclusion from nearly every social, political, educational, cultural, commercial or communication transaction.

To encounter a barrier to freedom of movement or interaction once in a lifetime seems to send some people into a frenzy of punitive litigation; to encounter such barriers all day every day is the ordinary experience of people who have a disability.”

The late **Elizabeth Hastings**, former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, ‘Access on the agenda: no longer an afterthought’.
Speech to the Creating Accessible Communities Conference, Fremantle, Western Australia

Under federal legislation (the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**) and under Victorian legislation (the **Equal Opportunity Act 1995**) it is against the law to discriminate on the grounds of disability. A DAIAP helps our organisation to meet its obligations under these legislations.

As an active planning document, a DAIAP is an effective way to ensure improved access across all the departments, services and patient care areas of our organisation. The incidence of disability in the general population is estimated to be 20 per cent, or one person in five. With the ageing of the population and the projected increase in the prevalence of disability, preparing a DAIAP makes sound business sense. A DAIAP will help us to meet the diverse needs of patients, carers, employees and volunteers who have disability.

People with disability can face many different barriers to accessing goods and services and fully participating in community life. There are barriers that are physical, barriers that are attitudinal in the form of negative assumptions, and barriers to effective communication. DAIAPs confront these barriers and spell out how, when and by whom they will be removed.

A DAIAP will help ensure Western Health services are accessible, have a welcoming attitude, and have staff who are informed about disability.



Defining Disability

The **Commonwealth Disability and Discrimination Act 1992** (DDA) defines disability in relation to a person as:

- a) Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b) Total or partial loss of part of the body; or
- c) The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) The malfunction, malformation or disfiguration of part of a person's body; or
- f) A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:
- g) Presently exists; or
- h) Previously existed but no longer exists; or
- i) May exist in the future; or
- j) Is imputed to the person.

There are four broad categories of impairment:

- Physical impairment
- Sensory impairment
- Intellectual and cognitive impairment
- Psychiatric impairment

Statistics

The **2015 Disability, Ageing and Carers: summary of findings report** by the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** (ABS) revealed that nearly 1.1 million people in Victoria have some form of disability – 20 per cent of the population. Of this population, over one third has a profound or severe core-activity limitation according to ABS definitions.

A note on language

Language is a powerful tool in effecting changing attitudes towards disability. Whilst definitions of disability can emphasise limitations, people with disability are not defined by their impairment. Therefore, the focus in the use of language in our DAIAP is on the person rather than the disability.

Development of our Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan

1. Consultation

To support the development of our DAIAP, Western Health established a Disability Working Group comprised of consumers and staff with disability or with an interest in disability.

2. Review of current practices

Development of our DAIAP involved considering the practices of our organisation, the health services we deliver, the facilities in which we provide care, and our partnership with our community. We have considered what is required to obtain and maintain employment. We have reflected on how our organisation communicates with and includes people with disability as well as how it influences the community.

3. Setting goals and actions

Having considered our practices, we have developed goals and actions to help make our services, interactions, and culture more accessible and welcoming for people with disability.

At the heart of our DAIAP is the process to:

- Identify goals (What)
- Determine actions (How)
- Allocate responsibilities (Who)
- Define timelines (When)
- Describe performance indicators

4. Plan to monitor, evaluate and review

The implementation of actions and performance measures within our DAIAP will be monitored on an ongoing basis, with a six-monthly progress report on achievements and performance submitted at Executive and Board level.

5. Communicate the plan

Communication about the DAIAP to our organisation and the community will be supported by hospital orientation and information on the Western Health intranet and internet.

In addition, an annual report on DAIAP implementation will be included in Western Health's annual Quality Account publication.



The Four Outcome Areas

The **Victorian Disability Act 2006** sets out four purposes of disability action plans. These are called the Four Outcome Areas.

Outcome Area 1:

Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities –
S 38 (1) (a)

What does this mean?

This outcome area considers the barriers which prevent people with disability from using services, buildings and facilities, and programs and projects.

Why is it important?

For people with disability, it is often not so much the disability that makes life difficult, it is more that the physical or information environment places barriers that exclude them from the community and from using mainstream services.

What does Western Health currently have in place to support this outcome?

Western Health is guided by the DDA in the construction and redevelopment of buildings and facilities. This includes but is not limited to wayfinding, bathroom facilities and car parking facilities. The recent and planned development of new buildings within Western Health supports and enhances DDA building compliance. A range of mobility and communication aids and services are also available to support patients with disabilities within our facilities.

Western Health continually evolves its models of patient care to meet the diverse and complex health needs of our community, as demonstrated by the three-year pilot of the Western HealthLinks Program that supports patients with complex and chronic disease and disability to spend more time in their own homes. While Western Health is not a National Disability Insurance Scheme (**NDIS**) provider, we are proactive in supporting suitable patients to start the assessment process and assisting patients already on the scheme to connect with the NDIS pathway.



How can Western Health improve support for this outcome?

Goal	Action	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1 Barriers to physical accessibility are identified and minimised	Progress design work for the New Footscray Hospital that is guided by DDA requirements and uses contemporary/innovative design (e.g. <i>Changing Places</i> design guidelines) to support disability friendly facilities	Disability friendly facilities incorporated within the design of the New Footscray Hospital	Director New Footscray Hospital	2019 – 2021
	Explore the installation of automated/accessible doors to at least one current disability toilet in a public area within each Western Health hospital	Where practical, at least one current disability toilet in a public area has an automated/accessible door.	Engineering Services / Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity	2019 - 2020
	Identify and action a methodology for engagement of disability stakeholders (e.g. consumers, relevant staff and volunteers) input into capital redevelopment projects at Western Health	Disability stakeholders consulted during capital projects	Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity	2019 - 2020
1.2 Communication accessibility improved for patients and visitors	Undertake the Scope Australia '10 steps to Communication Access' to work toward the award of the Communication Access Symbol for Western Health services	Scope Australia Communication Access accreditation awarded for key work areas	Manager, Community Engagement & Volunteers	2019 - 2021
1.3 Better support young adults with complex disabilities transitioning to, through, and from Western Health	Identify gaps and explore opportunities within and current services and benchmark across healthcare providers	Opportunities and gaps identified for improvement of NDIS interface with Western Health services	Sub-acute Division / NDIS Operational Working Group	2019 - 2020
1.4 Meal times support is available for patients	Review the coverage of the Volunteer Meal Assistance Program (VMAP) and enhance as indicated to meet the needs of patients with disability	Strategies are in place to offer meal time support to patients	Community Engagement & Volunteers Division	2019 - 2021
	Explore evolving technology to enable patients with disabilities and carers to be more easily engaged in menu ordering/management	Positive feedback on food experience for patients with disability	Director, Health Support Services	2019 - 2020



Outcome Area 2:

Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment –
S 38 (1) (b)

What does this mean?

This outcome area encourages organisations to ensure that their procedures and practices treat people with disability fairly who are employees or who are candidates for advertised positions within the organisation.

Why is it important?

People with disability have lower participation rates in the workforce, higher unemployment rates, and when they do work, earn less compared with employees without disability. People with disability represent an untapped potential in the Australian workforce. The importance of employment as a means of earning income, and as a part of one's personal identity, ensures this is a critical area.

What does Western Health currently have in place to support this outcome?

Western Health is an Equality Opportunity employer and is committed to ensuring all employees, contractors, volunteers and students are well supported, and that fair and productive workplace practices are in place. The organisation is guided by the principle of equal opportunity in all of its activities and aims to create a positive and equitable work environment that is safe, flexible and culturally appropriate. Reasonable adjustment measures are undertaken to support employees with disability such as providing height adjustable work stations and flexible work arrangements.

How can Western Health improve support for this outcome?

Goals	Action	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1 Strategies are in place to ensure and enhance equitable employment opportunity for employees and candidates with disability	Explore and evaluate strategies for recruitment of candidates with disability with other health services and local advocacy, and employment organisations	Recruitment strategies explored and evaluated for application at Western Health	People, Culture & Safety	2020 - 2021
	Document and promulgate a procedure to capture Western Health's reasonable adjustment practices	Documented reasonable adjustment procedure in place and accessible to staff. Evidence of procedure utilised to support staff with disability.	People, Culture & Safety	2019 - 2021
2.2 Existing employees who have disability are supported to remain at Western Health	Incorporate a focus on employees who have disability in the development of the new Western Health Staff Health & Wellbeing Plan	A focus on employees with disability in the new Western Health Staff Wellbeing Plan	Workplace Strategy & Wellbeing	2019 - 2020
	Implement the new Western Health Staff Health & Wellbeing Plan	Implementation activity that supports the needs of disabled persons in the workforce	Workplace Strategy & Wellbeing	2020 - 2022



Outcome Area 3:

Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability –
S 38 (1) (c)

What does this mean?

This outcome area encourages organisations to use their positions of influence in the community to promote practices that include people with disability and which allow them to participate. It calls on organisations to ensure that people with disability, whether clients, customers or employees, are able to take part in its activities.

Why is it important?

For a long time, people with disability were left out of community life because of attitudes, assumptions and barriers to participation. Communities are the poorer for being deprived of the diversity and insights offered by a significant proportion of the population.

What does Western Health currently have in place to support this outcome?

Western Health has an active Community Engagement and Volunteer program. This program encourages persons with disability to join the Volunteer team and has set up partnerships with community facilities to support participation of persons with disability in volunteer activities. For example, as part of the *Western Health Community Projects with Persons with Disability*, a class from the Jackson Special Needs School comes to the Sunshine Hospital and helps maintain the garden in subacute wards. Our Consumer Partnership and Diversity Programs also include engaging persons with disability to become consumer representatives at Western Health. Consumer representatives are provided with opportunities to become members on a range of health service committees, participate in our patient story program and a range of health service projects and initiatives.



How can Western Health improve support for this outcome?

Goals	Action	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timeframe
3.1 Strategies are in place to promote inclusion of persons with disability in volunteer programs at Western Health	Expand the Western Health Garden Support Community Project with Persons with Disability	Expanded program	Community Engagement & Volunteers Division	2019 - 2020
	Explore memorandums of understanding with residential facilities for residents with disabilities to undertake volunteer roles at Western Health	Residents from community residential facilities undertaking volunteer roles at Western Health	Community Engagement & Volunteers team	2019 - 2020
3.2 Encourage diversity and inclusion in consumer representation	Liaise with local disability advocacy/ support groups / networks and organisations to identify and action further opportunities to recruit Western Health consumer representatives and volunteers	Opportunities identified and developed	Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity / Community Engagement & Volunteers Division	2020 - 2021
3.3 Explore the provision of accessible communication equipment	Explore suitability of installation of hearing loop systems within the New Footscray Hospital project and Sunshine Hospital	Suitability of hearing loops systems for key areas identified and actioned.	ICT / Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity	2020 - 2021

Outcome Area 4:

Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability – S 38 (1) (d)

What does this mean?

This outcome area focuses on provide training in disability awareness for staff.

Why is it important?

While physical barriers are the most obvious, attitudinal barriers such as ignorance and stereotypical thinking contribute to prejudice and actions which discriminate against and exclude people with disability. Training in disability gives facts and information which counteract prejudicial attitudes and promote understanding.

What does Western Health currently have in place to support this outcome?

Western Health partners with consumer representatives to provide disability awareness training for clinicians. In addition, training is available for staff to care for the special needs of patients with health conditions such as stroke and dementia.

Western Health also offers a number of resources to support being a 'diversity ready' organisation. This includes diversity awareness training and videos (including orientation), the use of patient stories, and community data. A number of events are also undertaken to raise staff awareness and celebrate our diverse community.



How can Western Health improve support for this outcome?

Goals	Action	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timeframe
4.1 Disability awareness is promoted throughout Western Health	Review and enhance disability focused training and 'voice of the patient' resources available to staff and volunteers	The voice of consumers with disability is heard in, and informs, training for staff and volunteers	Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity / Centre for Education / Public Affairs	2020 - 2021
	Review and enhance disability focused information and resources for staff and volunteers on the Diversity site of the Western Health intranet/internet	Disability information and resources for staff and volunteers are accessible on the Western Health intranet/internet	Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity / Centre of Education / Public Affairs	2019 - 2021
	Explore ways to make the Western Health website disability-friendly	Practical tools such as the use of 'alt tags' are identified and incorporated in Western Health's website.	Public Affairs / Manager Consumer Partnerships & Diversity	2019 - 2021
	Promote and celebrate significant events related to disability across Western Health	International Day of People with Disability, Mental Health Week, and Positive Workplace Week are celebrated each year	Consumer Partnerships & Diversity Manager/ People, Culture and Safety / Public Affairs	2019 - 22 & ongoing
	Progress the DHHS-sponsored project on 'Improving the hospital experience for inpatients with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A co-design project'	Resources developed to improve the experience of this patient cohort	Director Allied Health	2019 - 2020



References / Resources

1. aDAPting to Disability – A guide to disability action plans in Victoria

www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/developing_a_dap.htm

2. Office for Disability website

www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au

- The home page includes a section entitled About disability which provides a definition of disability
- Disability action plans / How to develop your DAP
www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/disability_action_plans.htm
Overview of the four outcome areas and links to resources, including this guide
- Research and resources
www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/research_and_resources.htm
Good practice guidance, details of organisations and film clips relevant to each outcome area of a DAP
- Policies and legislation
www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/policies_and_legislation.htm
Relevant policies and legislation related to disability

3. Inclusive consultation and communication with people with a disability guide and checklists

www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/research_and_resources.htm#communication

4. Website accessibility fact sheets

www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/research_and_resources.htm#websites

Quick reference checklists for key topics on website accessibility

5. A United Step Forward - A Guide to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

http://www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/policies_and_legislation.htm

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics – Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings Report 2015

www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0

7. Disability Action Plans

- Austin Health 2015 – 2020
- Melbourne Health 2019 – 2022
- Peter Mac 2019 – 2022

