

**Disability Action Plan**

**2018 – 2021**

**Approved by VicHealth Board August 2018**

**Introduction**

This is VicHealth’s second Disability Action Plan (DAP) reinforcing the organisation’s commitment to participation, inclusion and accessibility for people with disability. This plan describes how we will improve access and inclusion of all employees, grant applicants and recipients, partners, contractors and the broader Victorian community.

This plan is owned by the whole organisation and is championed by VicHealth’s Diversity Committee which is led by the Executive Manager Corporate Services and comprises representation from across the range of VicHealth teams. VicHealth Board members and key disability organisations have also informed the focus of the plan.

In developing this plan, staff across the organisation, including staff with disability, the board and disability organisations were asked for their ideas of ways to improve VicHealth policies and work practices to ensure we continue to develop as an aware and inclusive organisation to better meet the needs of, to be guided by and to utilise the strengths of colleagues and VicHealth stakeholders with disability. The shift to a more strengths based, human rights focused Disability Action Plan comes because of this consultation.

**Context**

The 2018-2021 DAP is guided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), Disability Act 2006 (Victoria), Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020, and incorporates a Social Model of Disability. It also acknowledges the potential impact of the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

VicHealth’s Diversity and Inclusion Framework, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Health Equity Strategy provide an overarching direction and drive for our Disability Action Plan. Strategic outcomes identified in our Diversity and Inclusion framework are:

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| **Embed:** | Diversity and Inclusion principles are ingrained within organisational systems and processes. |
| **Respect:** | The VicHealth Board and workforce act in an inclusive manner, understanding and appreciating difference. |
| **Reflect:** | The VicHealth Board and workforce are broadly reflective of the diversity of the community. |
| **Embrace:** | How we act and what we do embraces the diverse needs of our stakeholders, community and meets compliance requirements. |
| **Value:** | We value and celebrate diversity and inclusion achievements and opportunities. |

***Definition of Disability***

For the purposes of this Disability Action Plan, VicHealth uses the comprehensive definition of disability as it appears in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.* This definition covers disabilities that are physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory and neurological. This definition also covers physical disfigurement and the presence of disease causing organisms such as HIV.

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of a disability that they have, had, or may have in the future or is assumed to have. It also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis that their associate (partner, carer, friend or family member) has a disability.

***VicHealth continues to adopt a Social Model of Disability***

The social model looks at disability as a result of environmental, social and economic factors where people are excluded by disabling barriers in society and the physical environment. Therefore, the disabling elements of the environment must be adjusted to enable people living with disability to participate in society on an equal basis.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The social model does not deny the reality of disability or its impacts, but rather challenges us to think about how we might adjust the physical, social and economic environment to ensure all people can fully participate in society.

**Progress and Achievements**

Since the original Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2013-2015 VicHealth has undergone continuous improvement through focused activity and rigorous auditing. This has led to:

* Operational policy changes occurring resulting in the removal of structural barriers; and
* Reinforcement of broad organisational support.

Of the identified outcome areas outlined in the plan 22 of the 28 actions were completed.

Examples of work undertaken include website changes including priority bookings for events/workshops; a series of building amendments within the constraints of current accommodation such as an externally facing meeting room; the installation of adjustable tables as well as on request signing, live transcripts and hearing loops.

VicHealth has prioritised a number of actions with great success. However, there are still long-term barriers to be addressed such as improving physical accessibility of the office, including encouraging lobbying the building owner to make further accessibility modification. VicHealth will incorporate accessibility improvements to the office leasehold as part of any future building upgrades.

**Focus of this Plan**

VicHealth is committed to building on the work already undertaken on all our facilities, services and ways of working to reflect our commitment to an inclusive workplace and society. This plan emphasises VicHealth’s commitment to human rights and social justice for people with disability. We aim to ensure we listen to, learn from, and give power to individuals and disability sector organisations as they engage with us and guide us in our way of working and what we do to increase accessibility and decrease discrimination contributing to the advancement of people with disability having voice, ensuring better health and wellbeing outcomes.

**Actions 2018-2021**

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** | **When** |
| Increase our capacity to listen, to learn from and engage with people with disability. | * Work with staff and individuals with disability and disability organisations to develop a process to improve VicHealth’s engagement with communities and stakeholders. ‘Nothing about us, without us’ will be embedded as the centre of all our work. * Strengthen relationships with people with disability and groups who represent people with disability by encouraging greater access to a range of people with disability e.g. Staff volunteer program, expert panel and taskforce group membership, Talk on your fork, events etc * Staff representatives to join the Victorian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice | 2019  Ongoing  2018 |
| **Contributes to: RESPECT and EMBRACE Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Outcomes** | | |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:** | | |

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** | **When** |
| Build on our inclusive culture through the valuing of difference in all that we do. | * Regular communications from CEO and Board ‘Champions’ demonstrating leadership and reinforcing positive culture and attitude regarding people with disability * Arrange for thought leaders from disability sector to present at VicHealth staff forums and spend time with teams across the organisation * Educate all staff in the aims and their responsibilities under this DAP and Disability Discrimination Act * Investigate staff training needs and develop a training strategy for disability inclusion – recognising the diversity of disability. This includes unconscious bias training for all staff. * Continue staff survey regarding their attitude towards disability and inclusion * Survey staff regarding the experiences of employees with disability within the workplace, including discrimination, and address issues and improvements identified in the survey results * Ensure people with disability or disability groups are included in and analysed as a cohort in the VicHealth stakeholder survey | Ongoing  Ongoing  Bi-annual  2019  Annually  Ongoing  Annually |
| **Contributes to: EMBRACE and RESPECT Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Outcome** | | |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:** | | |

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** | **When** |
| Recognise and value the contributions current and future staff with disabilities bring to VicHealth. | * Continue to work with disability employment specialists to assist VicHealth to increase opportunity to employ people with disability. * Continue to work with employees with disability to identify and provide reasonable adjustments and supports in the workplace where required. * Complete the Australian Network on Disability ‘Disability Confident Recruiter Program’ to enhance recruitment, workplace adjustment and support. * Ensure operational policies related to human resources and employment are reviewed and updated to ensure approaches are best practice. * Staff involved in recruitment and interviewing are trained in inclusive recruitment standards relating to disclosure of disability. * Managers are trained in best practice regarding working with employees with disability * Consider piloting an internship program or traineeship to provide opportunity for people with disability to gain work experience at VicHealth. | Ongoing  Ongoing  2019  Ongoing  Ongoing  2019  2020 |
| **Contributes to: REFLECT and RESPECT Diversity and Inclusion Outcome** | | |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:** | | |

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** | **When** |
| Contribute to a more inclusive community that values people with disability. | * Review funding guidelines and processes to ensure they encourage and support applications by diverse groups. * Identify opportunities to work with, support and celebrate with disability organisations and networks – EWOC calendar of activity, VicHealth events * Promote and highlight what works for accessibility and disability inclusion amongst VicHealth networks | 2019  Annual  Ongoing |
| **Contributes to: EMBRACE and VALUE Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Outcome** | | |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:** | | |

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** | **When** |
| Continue to make our information, programs, facilities and events accessible for people with disability. | * Modify procurement and grant-making processes to actively consider appointing disability organisations and people with disability when awarding VicHealth contracts * Ensure that priority publicly available information (publications, video, etc) is provided in accessible formats * Ensure all VicHealth related events are accessible and inclusive – Maintain and improve where necessary the VicHealth events checklist * Regularly assess and test VicHealth use of language relating to disability and inclusion in a contemporary and progressive environment * Continue staff and relevant suppliers being trained to write for the website and other publications e.g.: * accessibility requirements for publishing material; and * providing supporting advice and guidance * Continue to use images on the website and in publications that represent the strengths and diversity of people with disability * Continue audit and upgrade of website functionalities for accessibility and apply findings internally (intranet) and externally facing (project websites) * Conduct audit of all website functionalities (e.g. IGAM and Review Connect) that were not included in the original accessibility audit * For future ICT application implementations, ensure that a minimum AA disability accessibility standard are a mandatory part of the systems functionality * Ensure any future upgrade to the office accommodation meets the Building Code of Australia (BCA) Disability Access standards | Ongoing  Ongoing  2018  Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing  Annual  Ongoing  2019  2021 |
| **Contributes to: EMBED Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Outcome** | | |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:** | | |

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| **Focus Area** | **Actions** |  |
| Monitor and measure our progress. | * Ensure regular feedback is obtained by people with disability and/or disability organisations to ensure best practice is maintained * DAP 2018-2021 is annually reviewed against organisational needs * If deemed necessary, the DAP 2018-2021 is updated | Annual |
| **Who will help to undertake these actions:**  **The Diversity and Inclusion Committee will review this plan, monitor actions and ensure that it remains relevant to community standards.** | | |

**Sharing and Promoting the DAP**

We will ensure visibility of the plan and its actions by:

* Lodging the Disability Action Plan with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in compliance with Part 2 of the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*
* Reporting on the implementation of this Disability Action Plan within the Annual Report in compliance with Part 3 of the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*
* Publishing the current Disability Action Plan on VicHealth website and intranet in accessible formats.
* Providing the Disability Action Plan in alternative formats on request.
* Communicating the Disability Action Plan to staff to ensure VicHealth units are familiar with the plan.
* Reviewing progress on implementation of actions in the Disability Action Plan with the accountable members of the Executive Team.

**Appendix 1:**

‘Disability’ for the purposes of this DAP is the term used by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 which refers to any permanent or temporary condition which affects a person’s bodily or mental function.

The objectives of the Act are to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability.

The DDA covers a disability which people:

* Have now or had in the past (for example: a past episode of mental illness).
* May have in the future (for example: a family history of a disability which a person may also develop).
* Are believed to have (for example: if people think someone has AIDS).

The DDA also covers people with a disability who may be discriminated against because:

* They are accompanied by an assistant, interpreter or reader.
* They are accompanied by a trained animal, such as a guide or hearing dog.
* They use equipment or an aid, such as a wheelchair or a hearing aid.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers:

* Almost one in five Australians reported living with disability (18.3% or 4.3 million people).
* The majority (78.5%) of people with disability reported a physical condition, such as back problems, as their main long–term health condition. The other 21.5% reported mental and behavioural disorders.
* More than half of those with disability aged 15 to 64 years participated in the labour force (53.4%), which is considerably fewer than those without disability (83.2%). These results are consistent with those in the 2012 SDAC.
* Within the definition of the word disability it is understood that:
* Disability is not inherent to the individual and their ‘condition’ rather it is the result of the interaction between the enabling or disabling characteristics of the social, political and economic environment the person lives in and their impairment, limitation or restriction.
* The experience of disability is diverse and that no two people with disability are likely to have precisely the same experience.

***Legislation***

The Disability Act 2006 is the legislation for people with disabilities in Victoria and provides for:

* a stronger whole-of-government, whole-of-community response to the rights and needs of people with a disability, and
* a framework for the provision of high quality services and supports for people with a disability.

The Disability Act 2006, Section 38 states that a DAP is prepared for the purpose of:

* 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.

***Victorian State Disability Plan 2017–2020***

The AAP also takes into account the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017–2020 that provides the overarching framework to support mainstream services and environments improve the lives of people with disabilities. The key priorities and actions of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017–2020 are incorporated under four pillars:

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| 1. **Inclusive communities: ‘I feel included’** | |  | 1. **Health, housing and wellbeing: ‘I live well’** |
| The experience of inclusion is central to social interaction, sharing information and having everyday experiences. For this experience to be possible we need accessible public and social infrastructure, including buildings, public transport and communications to be in place. | | Having a stable home and good health and wellbeing are fundamental to a satisfying everyday life. We know there needs to be a significant improvement in access to suitable, affordable housing. Provision of quality, person-centred disability supports, healthcare and other community services is also important. |
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| 1. **Fairness and safety: ‘I get a fair go’** | |  | 1. **Contributing lives: ‘I contribute’** |
| We want to create opportunities for all Victorians. Our responsibility for measures relating to protecting rights and preventing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation form part of this pillar. | | We want to ensure people with a disability can participate easily in education, training, community participation and decision making. This pillar also includes access to employment and all aspects of the economy. |
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| **Key Approaches:** | And incorporates important key approaches around Economic Opportunity / Representation / Universal Design / Attitude Change / Rights and Protections | | |

1. <https://www.monash.edu/disability/for-staff/models> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)