



Victorian Equal Opportunity
& Human Rights Commission

Disability Action Plan

>2015/17

Published by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Level 3, 204 Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053.

Contact us

Enquiry Line 1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583
Fax 1300 891 858
Hearing impaired (TTY) 1300 289 621
Interpreters 1300 152 494
Email information@veohrc.vic.gov.au
Website www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Disability Action Plan 2015-2017

Copyright © State of Victoria 2015

This publication is copyright. No part of it may be reproduced by any process except with permission from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) or in accordance with the *Copyright Act 1968*.

On request the Commission may give permission for this material to be reproduced provided it is for a purpose consistent with the objectives of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and the Commission is acknowledged as the source.

Contact communications@veohrc.vic.gov.au for permission to reproduce material from the publication.

Accessible formats

This document is available for downloading from our website at www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/resources in PDF and RTF. The document is also available in the following accessible formats: Easy English, Auslan, audio. Please contact communications@veohrc.vic.gov.au if you require alternative formats.

Acknowledgements

Privacy

The Commission complies with Victorian privacy laws and the confidentiality provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act. Our privacy policy is available online at www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/privacy or by contacting us.

Disclaimer

This information is intended as a guide only. It is not a substitute for legal advice.

Contents

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2015-2017 1

ABOUT THE DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 4

Our commitment 4

About the Commission 4

What do we mean by disability? 4

How did the Disability Action Plan come about? 5

What was achieved under the last Disability Action Plan? 6

ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES 7

Our objective is to reduce barriers to accessing the Commission’s goods, services and facilities 7

Our objective is to reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment with the Commission 8

Our objective is to promote inclusion and participation in the community and achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices, which discriminate against people with disabilities 9

HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND REPORT ON THE ACTION PLAN? 11

NEED MORE INFORMATION? 12

About the Disability Action Plan

Our commitment

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is committed to the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities.

This Disability Action Plan reflects our obligations under the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) by:

- reducing barriers to people with disabilities accessing the Commission's goods, services and facilities;
- reducing barriers to people with disabilities obtaining and maintaining employment with the Commission;
- promoting inclusion and participation in the community of people with disabilities; and
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices, which discriminate against people with disabilities.

We intend to lodge the Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission as incorporating policies and programs to achieve the objects of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

The Plan will also form part of the Commission's overall strategy of meeting its obligations under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) including the duty under section 15 of the Act to take steps to prevent and eliminate discrimination.

About the Commission

The Commission is an independent statutory body established under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. We have functions and responsibilities under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. We provide services to help people meet their obligations under these laws and understand their rights, including:

- a free telephone enquiry line;
- a free, fair and timely dispute resolution service;
- research, information and education about equal opportunity, racial and religious vilification and human rights; and
- education, training and consultancy services.

Our vision is to create a community where every person values, understands and respects human rights and equal opportunity.

Our values are to be fair, proactive, collaborative, transparent and effective.

These factors inform our approach to the creation of this Disability Action Plan.

What do we mean by disability?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the diversity of persons. It recognises that disability is an evolving concept and that 'disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Federal and Victorian discrimination laws use a broad definition of disability and share many similarities in their definitions. This plan adopts the definition of disability in section 4 of the federal Disability Discrimination Act under which disability means:

- a. total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b. total or partial loss of a 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 disfigurement of a part of the 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
- g. a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- h. presently exists; or
- i. previously existed but no longer exists; or
- j. may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- k. is imputed to a person.

Disability also includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of a disability under the Equal Opportunity Act.

The Commission recognises that not all disabilities are visible and that stigma about different forms of disability leads to discrimination.

How did the Disability Action Plan come about?

This is our fourth Disability Action Plan. This reflects the continual need to update a Disability Action Plan, which is intended to be a process of improvement that develops over time, with progress reporting on a periodical basis and inbuilt reviews.

In developing this plan we:

- critically reflected on our performance against our last Action Plan and reviewed our achievements;
- consulted with staff and the Commission's Disability Reference Group to identify areas where we could have most impact and the actions needed to be taken;
- commissioned independent audits on physical accessibility and access for people with communication disabilities at the Commission - these audits provided detailed work programs to address gaps in access; and
- reviewed how we communicate about, monitor and report on the Action Plan inside and outside the Commission.

This plan was also reviewed by the Commission's Disability Reference Group. The members of this group have broad expertise in and lived experience of disability. The Disability Reference Group assists the Commission to identify human rights and systemic disability discrimination issues and to develop policies and procedures for effective service delivery to people with disabilities.

What was achieved under the last Disability Action Plan?

Producing Disability Action Plans allows us to keep driving positive change. Under our last Action Plan we:

- included people with disabilities as a priority group in Commission's *Strategic Plan 2014-16*;
- provided dispute resolution services to more than 2700 people with disabilities every year – with disability discrimination remaining our highest area of complaint;
- collaborated closely with the Disability Reference Group to set the Commission's program of work on systemic discrimination for people with disabilities;
- established a cross Commission working group to coordinate efforts to address discrimination against people with disabilities and promote access;
- updated our technology to facilitate better access for people with disabilities, including hearing loops, communication boards, tablets and software to support access;
- maintained a C3A website access compliance rating, and made greater use of Auslan clips and easy English materials on our website;
- trained every staff member on communicating with people with complex communication needs;
- worked with Dream Theatre to deliver the Rights! Camera, Action video (your rights and the Equal Opportunity Act);
- delivered groundbreaking research into accessibility of major public services including *Beyond Doubt: the experiences of people reporting crime*, and *Held Back: the experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian schools*;
- developed the *Come in We're Accessible* campaign to improve the accessibility of retail and hospitality services (including on-line resources and self-audit tool);
- issued the publications *Guideline: Mental Illness > Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 in employment* and *Guideline for General Practices > Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 when providing services*; and
- had a particular focus on disability discrimination in education in the Commission's interventions under the Equal Opportunity Act to help advocate for the law.

Actions and responsibilities

The 2015-2017 Disability Action Plan sets out 16 actions, which we have structured to meet the objectives in s 38 of the *Disability Act 2006*.

Our objective is to reduce barriers to accessing the Commission's goods, services and facilities

Action 1: Implementing access audits

Under the leadership of the Director, Commissioner's Office, the Senior Management Team will ensure the actions identified in the 2014 premises and communications access audits are completed by June 2015 to the extent that those actions are within the Commission's influence and control.

We will know we have succeeded when the Commission gains and maintains Communications Access Accreditation by SCOPE for the life of this plan and through feedback from services users, stakeholders and the Disability Reference Group on improved accessibility for people with disabilities.

Action 2: Ensuring accessible information

The Communications Unit will produce core Commission internal and external information materials in multiple formats (this may include Easy English, Auslan, video, audio description, close captions formats, for example). They will consult with the Disability Reference Group and external stakeholders to develop criteria for determining and prioritising what information needs to be produced in these formats by June 2015.

We will know we have succeeded when, following a rolling program of production, all core materials are available in appropriate formats by June 2016.

Action 3: Ensuring accessible events

The Communications Unit will drive ongoing improvement to ensure that all Commission events (internal and external) are accessible and that attendees' accessibility and support needs are met (eg Auslan or tactile interpreters, hearing loop, transcription). As part of this action, we will update our checklist and feedback forms in consultation with the Disability Reference Group.

We will measure our progress through feedback from participants that they have confidence that Commission events will meet their access needs and by improved results in our next access audit in 2017.

Action 4: Inclusion in education services

Education and Consultancy Services will identify and implement effective practices, tools and aids to improve access for people with disabilities to our training and education programs. This will include consulting with disability organisations and other stakeholder groups on what adjustments would be effective for specific programs, changes to practices, procedures and materials, and the skilling of staff in the making of these adjustments.

We will know we have succeeded when more people with disabilities who participate in our programs report that their access needs have been met effectively.

Action 5: Access to Dispute Resolution services

The Dispute Resolution Unit will review enquiries and complaints data up to June 2015 to identify if people with some forms of disability are less likely to use these services. Using this, we will consult with the Disability Reference Group about improving access to our Dispute Resolution Services. Further, the Dispute Resolution Unit will implement a customer satisfaction survey in relation to its services and analyse that data for ways to improve access. We will use this information to identify and address any barriers.

We will know we have succeeded when the changes in practice made to address current barriers lead to more people with disabilities types who were previously underrepresented using DRU services.

Action 6: Participation in major projects

A major project is defined by the following characteristics:

- it involves the Commission undertaking extensive work
- the work concerns a systemic discrimination or human rights issue
- the work is conducted with duty holders and those directly affected by the issue.

Although often research-based, major projects may include social marketing or information campaigns, or longer-term consultancy and education work with private and public organisations, including government departments and local government.

From February 2015 the Strategic Projects and Policy Unit will incorporate an assessment of reasonable adjustments required for project and research methodologies to promote participation in those initiatives by people with disabilities. They will work with the Communications Unit to assess and deliver communication requirements (including Auslan and Easy English promotion and materials) for all major projects in the Commission's Business Plan.

We will know we have succeeded when people with disabilities know about and participate in all the Commission's major projects regardless of whether the issue is related to disability or not. We will gather data on participation in Commission research by people with disabilities in 2015, and measure progress against this base line.

Our objective is to reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment with the Commission

Action 7: Access to employment at the Commission

In 2015, the Corporate Services Unit will consult on and institute best practice recruitment guidelines aimed at ensuring genuine employment opportunities for people with disabilities at the Commission. This action will include having adjustments and resources in place when a person with a disability commences employment.

We will know we have succeeded when the percentage of staff disclosing their disability increases and they report that they have the resources needed to do their job.

Action 8: Improving staff capacity

Senior Managers will support staff to reflect on and improve their work with people with disabilities through ongoing professional development. Professional development will include skills based training as appropriate to their role, complemented by training for all staff on disability awareness by December 2015. The Corporate Services Unit will consult with the Disability Reference Group, Office of Disability and other stakeholders to identify appropriate providers of disability awareness training for staff.

We will know we have succeeded when the results of our survey of staff show an improvement in confidence and a positive change in practice (see Action 11). We will also measure our progress by improved consumer feedback and the results of our next access audit in 2017.

Action 9: Inclusive work environment

The Senior Management Team will undertake training and professional development on effective support and strategies to improve the retention and career development of employees with disabilities. They will complete this training by October 2015.

We will know we have succeeded when the knowledge gained is used to make changes in practice that lead to more employees with disabilities developing their careers through their work at the Commission.

Action 10: Reasonable adjustments

Over the life of this Action Plan the Corporate Services Unit will make adjustments available to employees with a range of disabilities to enable them to do their job and participate in Commission activities, including reviewing and making changes to on-line and other learning modules, meeting practices and facilities and Commission events.

We will know we have succeeded when employees with a range of disabilities can fully participate in the working and social life of the Commission, regardless of the nature of their disability.

Action 11: Getting feedback

Every two years, the Director, Commissioner's Office will ensure that there is a Diversity and Flexibility Survey of employees, which will provide information about staff attitudes and understanding of disability discrimination issues, including barriers and best practice in employment and management practices at the Commission.

We will know we have succeeded when the results of this survey are used to track learning and development needs for staff and to improve management and employment practices at the Commission.

Our objective is to promote inclusion and participation in the community and achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices, which discriminate against people with disabilities

Action 12: Disability Reference Group

The Commissioner will seek advice and feedback from the Disability Reference Group on strategies to promote greater inclusion and participation in the community.

The Strategic Projects and Policy Unit will enable the active participation of all members of the Disability Reference Group in this role.

Measures of success will include feedback from members about whether the Commission supports members' active participation, adapts Commission practices and responds to advice on promoting inclusion and participation.

Action 13: Promote and lead attitudinal change

The Commission will promote the positive contribution people with disabilities make to our community and economy in media releases, social media, speeches and presentations, networking events, and through stakeholder relationships to support the Commission's vision of achieving a Victorian community where every person respects, understands and values equal opportunity and human rights, including for people with disabilities.

Measures of success will include maintaining people with disabilities as a priority in our next Strategic Plan and ensuring that Action 13 is included and evaluated in the Commissioner's Stakeholder Engagement Plans from 2015-2017.

Action 14: Advocating for improvements across government and the community

The Strategic Projects and Policy Unit and the Legal Unit will continue to pursue law, policy and practice reform on issues affecting the rights of people with disabilities, including barriers faced by women with disabilities, Aboriginal people with disabilities and other groups. In determining priorities, they will consult with stakeholders, including the Disability Reference Group.

We will know we have succeeded when the Commission's systemic projects achieve a reduction in barriers currently experienced by people with disabilities in key areas of public life. This includes measuring progress against recommendations made to agencies in previous projects addressing barriers in the justice, education, transport and health systems.

Action 15: Building the capacity of legal sector advocates

In 2016, the Legal Unit will deliver targeted professional development to the legal profession and advocates to build capacity to advocate effectively for the rights of people with disabilities under discrimination and human rights law.

We will know we have succeeded when advocates report that they have increased their skills and have put them into practice to achieve positive outcomes for the rights of people with disabilities.

Action 16: Extending the reach and impact of our education programs

Education and Consultancy Services will work with people with disabilities organisations, peak bodies, advocacy and stakeholder groups to identify the needs of key groups and communities that our current programs and services are either not addressing or not having sufficient impact on. We will work with them to develop and deliver improvements to programs and approaches in order to achieve greater coverage and impact for people with disabilities and their carers and advocates and to better support them in self-advocacy.

We will know we have succeeded when the education needs of a more diverse range of participants are being met to a greater degree. This will be identified through improvements in the results from program / resource feedback from participants and their supporters.

How will we monitor and report on the Action Plan?

Responsibility for delivering actions under this plan is a shared responsibility across the Commission. All staff, the Commissioner and the Board have a role to play. To make sure we are on track and delivering on our commitments, the Senior Management Team will monitor progress against the Action Plan, including setting detailed actions within individual and unit work plans. Using this information, the Commissioner will report on progress to the Board every six months.

We will also undertake a staff Diversity and Flexibility Survey half-way through the plan (2016) to track and guide progress. We will also continue to seek feedback from users of the Commission's services and will review this input to check that we are on track to meeting our goals.

We are also committed to being publicly accountable for our performance against this Action Plan. We will:

- report on progress twice a year to the Commission's Disability Reference Group and seek their feedback on how we can improve
- provide real time updates on our website as key actions are completed
- provide an annual report card on the Action Plan on our website and in our Annual Report which is tabled in Parliament.

We will undertake a formal detailed review of our progress at the expiry of the plan in 2017. This review will include an independent audit of access. This review will help us to shape our next plan.

Need more information?

The Commission welcomes your feedback on this Action Plan and our performance against it. If you would like information about this Action Plan, or just want to let the Commission know about your experience of accessing our services or employment with us please contact our Enquiry Line on 1300 292 153, or by email to: information@veohrc.vic.gov.au.

More information about what you can expect when you use our services is available at <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/about-us/our-service-standards>

Contact us

Enquiry Line	1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583
Fax	1300 891 858
Hearing impaired (TTY)	1300 289 621
Interpreters	1300 152 494
Email	information@veohrc.vic.gov.au
Website	www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au
Follow us on Twitter	www.twitter.com/VEOHRC
Find us at	www.facebook.com/VEOHRC

humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au



Victorian Equal Opportunity
& Human Rights Commission