

Department of Regional NSW

Disability Inclusion

Action Plan

2021 - 2024



Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Regional NSW stands on Country that always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

From Creation, all generations have been caring for Country and sharing with each other, surviving and living in harmony as one. Today, we show our respect by acknowledging the ancient protocols and traditions of the First Nations peoples.

We recognise the Elders for continuing Dreamtime lore, protecting the knowledge of all things sacred and spiritual, sustaining all living species that called this place home, and preserving the oldest living culture in the world.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters, and we pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work.

We also extend this commitment to removing barriers to participation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability experience in their respective communities and more broadly. We acknowledge the importance of providing safe places for the provision of disability services and commit to sharing in this journey as we work together in achieving improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability, their families and carers.



Saretta Fielding,
Wonnarua Nation

Saretta Fielding is a Wonaruah woman of the upper Hunter Valley NSW. She has enjoyed the benefit of growing up within a large and close knit extended family and much of her work is influenced by family connection, Country and relationships.

Saretta has always painted, drawn and experimented in a variety of art mediums, as art has long been a passion for her and she loves the challenge of conveying to others, through art, how she is influenced by people, life experiences and nature's beauty.

Reflective in style to many traditional artworks found throughout the Hunter Region and Wonaruah Country, Saretta's artworks are connected to Country in style and design through the use of a sand-based medium. The highly textured pieces embody the age old sandstone engraved artworks created by our ancestors and add a whole new dimension to the works.

"In my artwork, I aim to evoke emotion, enhance connection to spirit and Country, and invite the viewer to ponder and experience something new."

Contents

3	Message from the Secretary
4	Introduction by our DIAP Co-Chairs
5	Message from our Executive Sponsor
6	I am, you are
6	Our commitment to diversity and inclusion
7	Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan
	Our plan
	Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
8	What is disability?
	Redefining disability
	Our definition of disability
9	What are barriers?
10	Disability at a glance
11	Our achievements
	Accessible events
	In our workplace
16	The four pillars and actions
	What will success look like?
	Attitudes and behaviours
	Inclusive employment
	Systems and Processes
	Liveable communities
22	Policy and legislative context
23	Consultation, monitoring and measurement
	Consultation
	Review and monitoring
	Measurement of progress
24	Appendix 1 – Regulatory sources

Published by:

Department of Regional NSW

Title:

Department of Regional NSW Disability
and Inclusion Action Plan 2021 - 2024

First published:

December 2021

Authors:

Disability Inclusion Action
Plan Steering Group

Front Cover Image:

Paul Nunnari with co-explorer
Harriette Tokley, Mt Kosciuszko
summit trail (yes, they got to the
top!) – photo credit Joanne Terlich

Images:

Department of Regional NSW thank
Wagga Wagga City Council, Australian
Super W Rugby, Deni Ute Muster,
Joanne Terlich, NSW Public Service
Commission, SBS, Destination NSW,
Bellingen Shire Council, Taronga Western
Plains Zoo, Don Arnold for the use of
images they have provided throughout.

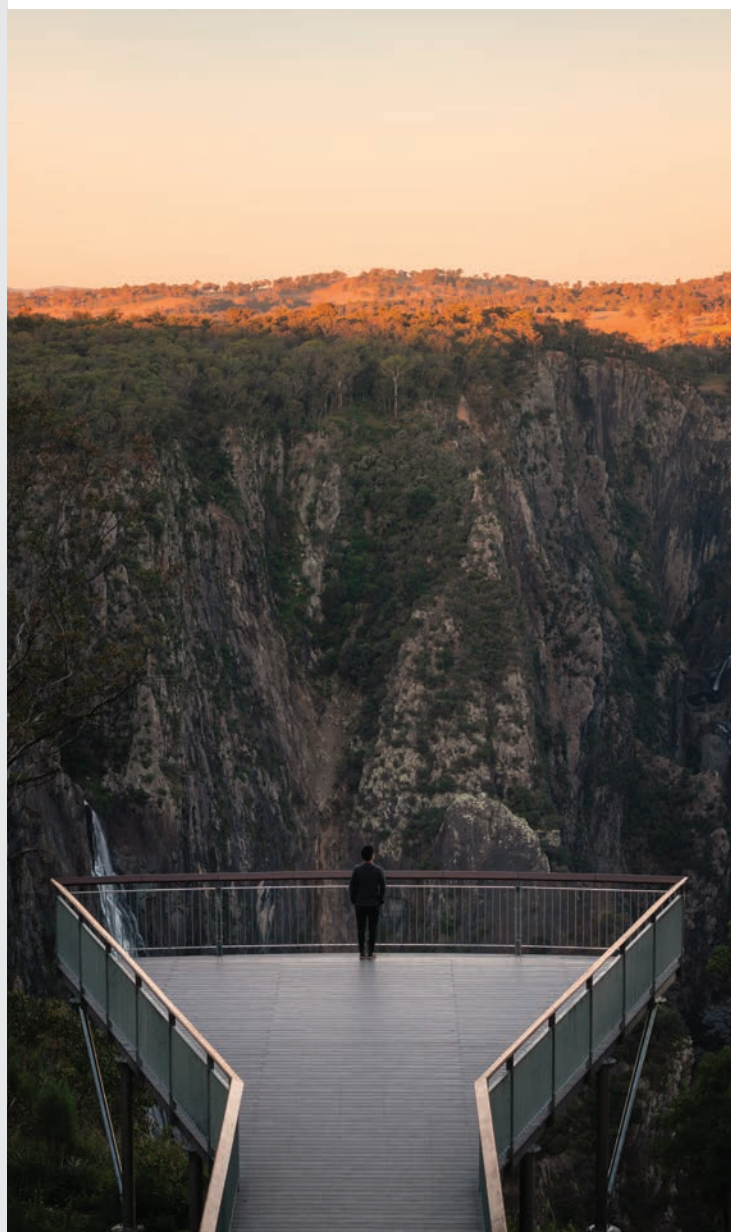
© Copyright State of New South Wales
through Regional NSW 2021. You may copy,
distribute, display, download and otherwise
freely deal with this publication for any
purpose, provided that you attribute the
Regional NSW as the owner. However,
you must obtain permission if you wish to
charge others for access to the publication
(other than at cost); include the publication
in advertising or a product for sale; modify
the publication; or republish the publication
on a website. You may freely link to the
publication on a departmental website.

*Disclaimer: The information contained in
this publication is based on knowledge
and understanding at the time of writing
December 2021 and may not be accurate,
current or complete. The State of New South
Wales (including the Department of Regional
NSW), the author and the publisher take no
responsibility, and will accept no liability,
for the accuracy, currency, reliability or
correctness of any information included in
the document (including material provided
by third parties). Readers should make
their own inquiries and rely on their own
advice when making decisions related to
material contained in this publication.*

Inclusion means letting
someone access where they
rightfully should be, not
making a special place for
them as an add on.

Kris Riley

Mother, Administrator,
Supporter, Enabler
and #1 Cheer Squad



Accessible lookout at Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, photo courtesy of Destination NSW

Message from the Secretary



It's my pleasure to share with you our inaugural Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2024.

Since the Department of Regional NSW was established in April 2020, we have worked hard to deliver for the people of regional NSW. As a department we have endured with our community drought, fires, floods and COVID-19. During the toughest of these times, we have banded together to support the most vulnerable in our community with kindness, empathy and support.

These values drive our culture every day to be the best it can be, not only for ourselves but for each other. As the leader of our department, I am proud that we embrace a culture of dignity, equity and belonging for all our staff.

There are still many barriers to full and equitable participation for our staff with disability. Some of these may be physical; others are cultural.

I want our department to lead in removing all of them. We can make a difference and I am confident this plan will help us make that happen.

Watching our Paralympians compete in Tokyo this year was a timely reminder that when others believe in you, and remove the barriers that hold you back, you can become the world's best.

Not all disabilities are visible. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of maintaining positive mental health and for many of us who

need to manage our mental health daily, I want you to know we are here to support you.

We must foster a culture across our department where our belief in each other, led by empathy, opportunity and acceptance, allows us all to bring our whole selves to work and achieve our full potential.

I look forward to building a better department with you.

Gary Barnes

Secretary,
Department of Regional NSW



As a carer of a teenager with a disability, creating and contributing to an inviting, supportive and inclusive culture is important to me so that I can help pave the way for their future opportunities and success.

Vanessa Moroney

Regional NSW Employee



Introduction from our **DIAP Co-Chairs**

Our Diversity and Inclusion Council approved the drafting of this plan in partnership with the Australian Network on Disability (AND) in December 2021.

AND is a national, membership based, for-purpose organisation that makes it easier for organisations to welcome people with disability in all aspects of business. We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the AND team in composing this plan and thank them for their ongoing advice and guidance.

Additionally, we want to acknowledge and thank all the staff represented on our DIAP Steering Group. Your passion, commitment and openness to learn is the reason this plan will succeed and make a difference to both people with disability, and those caring for someone with disability, in our organisation and those we seek to make a difference to within our communities.

We acknowledge and thank our staff with disability and those with a lived experience of disability who shared their experience in guiding the actions within this plan.

We appreciate your trust and courage in sharing your experiences to make our workplace an even better place to work for all.

Actions in the plan will address a broad range of disability considerations which focus across sensory, neurological, psychological and physical disability. While our plan will support several legislative and policy frameworks, its focus is to deliver on actions that provide person-centred outcomes.

Paul Nunnari

*Disability Inclusion Advocate,
Paralympian and Director of
Inclusive Infrastructure,
Placemaking and Experience*

Mel Watson

*Carer, ally, person with non-visible
disability, and Manager of Diversity and Inclusion*



Message from our Executive Sponsor

As Chair of our Diversity and Inclusion Council, it is my distinct pleasure to be the executive sponsor of our DIAP 2021-2024. Since the formation of the council in 2020 we have worked hard to establish a clear agenda that supports our diversity and inclusion aspirations.

The launch of our DIAP sees a part of this commitment come to fruition. This plan will provide the framework for our department to become more accessible and inclusive not only for people with disability but for all staff.

Like all DIAPs, its worth will be in the actions delivered. We are a relatively new department, however I am very proud of the outcomes we have already achieved.

Our department and our people work hard every day to deliver for the people of regional NSW.

This focus, led by our DIAP, extends to ensuring people with disability also have the same great opportunities to enjoy everything their regional community has as to offer.

This includes equitable and dignified access to sport, recreation, education, housing, employment, events, transport and health

services. Our DIAP supports the Premier's Priority of ensuring 5.6% of government sector roles are held by people with disability and I know we will deliver in supporting this employment priority.

I acknowledge our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability. Our plan aims to achieve improved community participation results and service delivery that is culturally safe, inclusive and easy to access.

I thank all members of the DIAP Steering Group for developing this plan and members of the Diversity and Inclusion Council for the ongoing work you do to support diversity and inclusion across our department.

While the actions within our plan will be led by some of our staff, I encourage all of you to support inclusion in the work you do. Collectively we can deliver even better outcomes for people with disability working, living and visiting across regional NSW.

Chris Hanger

Deputy Secretary Public Works Advisory and Regional Development (PWARD), DIAP Executive Sponsor, Diversity and Inclusion Council Chair

I am you are

The Department of Regional NSW is the department for regional NSW.

Our employees include engineers, scientists, tradespeople, teachers, lawyers, journalists, former representative athletes, writers, farmers, researchers, accountants, artists, and analysts.

We are proud citizens of NSW, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those from a range of multicultural backgrounds. We are people with disability, carers, parents and family members play. We are introverted, extroverted and neurodiverse.

We are all committed to making our regions great places to live, work, and visit.



Image courtesy of Taronga Western Plains Zoo

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion

At the Department of Regional NSW we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that is respectful, welcoming, and flexible – a workplace where our people feel supported, valued and part of our success.

“

Inclusion means though we are all ‘different’, we are all ‘normal’.

Brendan
Primary Industries



Our Disability

Inclusion Action Plan

Our Plan

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) aims to address the barriers to inclusion across the four pillars of attitudes and behaviours, inclusive employment, systems and processes, and liveable communities.

This plan will:

- provide actions to support a more inclusive and supportive environment for all our staff, stakeholders, and customers with disability and carers
- apply to all Department of Regional NSW employees and contractors
- be supported by our Executive Leadership Team, all business units and our Diversity and Inclusion Council
- align to the Department of Regional NSW Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- include actions that support Premier's Priority 14–World Class Public Service, to increase the representation of people with disability in our workforce to 5.6% by 2025
- align with policies, regulation and legislation as outlined in the Policy and Legislative Context section
- create strong foundations for future plans.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Our department's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024 is currently being developed and will outline our priorities and commitment to building an inclusive culture at the Department of Regional NSW. Action plans such as the DIAP will align to these overarching goals.

Our strategy for diversity and inclusion is not static. It will grow as we meet the actions outlined in plans such as the DIAP and set new ambitious goals to make our department a great place to work for everyone.

What is

disability?

Redefining disability

Disability is commonly defined as:¹

1. lack of adequate power, strength, or physical or mental ability.
2. a physical or mental handicap, especially one that hinders or prevents a person from performing tasks of daily living, carrying out work or household responsibilities, or engaging in leisure and social activities.

Thesaurus.com also references the following words as having the same meaning of disability (synonyms).

Ailment, Defect, Impairment, Infirmary, Injury, Affliction, Detriment, Disqualification, Drawback, Inability, Incapacity, Incompetency, Inexperience, Invalidity, Lack, Unfitness, Weakness.

These definitions and words perpetuate negative assumptions and attitudes towards people with disability and fail to capture the true nature and scope of disability. We can all play a role in redefining disability through the words we speak and how we write.

Let's start with disability is...

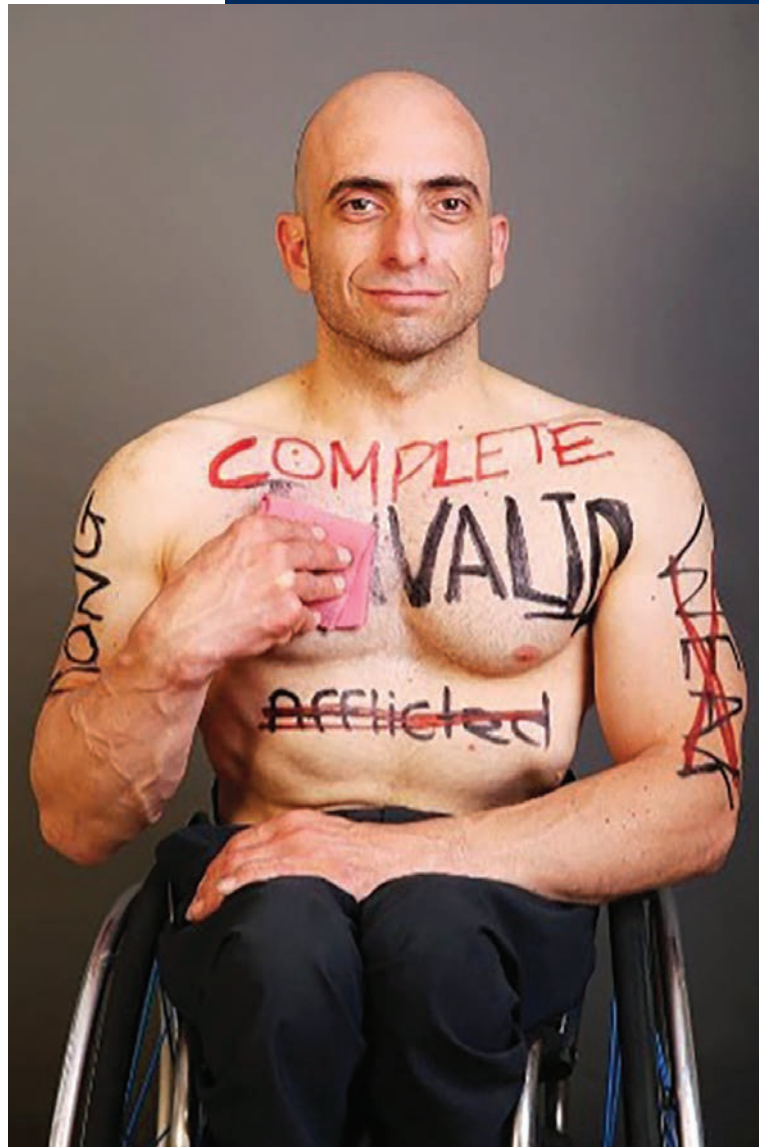
Strong.

Complete.

Valid.

¹Thesaurus.com

Image courtesy of Don Arnold Photography



Our definition of disability

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* defines disability in relation to a person, as including a long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory disability that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others.

We support this definition and its connection to the social model of disability which advocates it is not a person's disability that is the barrier to their participation, but rather it is the external physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent full inclusion and participation.

If the barriers faced by people with disability are removed, they will have the same capability to contribute and participate with equity and dignity as everyone else.

What are barriers?

A barrier is defined as anything that prevents progress or makes it difficult for someone to achieve something.²

In the context of barriers to people with disability, there can be physical, attitudinal, communication and institutional barriers.

Physical barriers

Physical barriers exist in the environment, natural or built. Examples include:

- paths and doorways that are too narrow for a wheelchair, scooter or walker
- desks that can't be adjusted for a person who is using a wheelchair or other mobility device
- buildings without quiet spaces that are difficult to work in for a person with a neurological or sensory condition.

Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers occur when people make assumptions about people with disability and are harder to address than physical barriers. Attitudinal barriers underpin and contribute to all other barrier types and some examples include:

- low expectations of people with disability and conscious and unconscious bias towards people with disability
- expressing views of sympathy or pity about someone's disability or assuming that they are "suffering" in some way

- using language and terms to describe disability that either reinforce negative stereotypes or define someone by their disability rather than recognising them as a person first.

Communication barriers

Communication barriers are caused by inaccessible signage, documents, events and meetings that have not considered the different ways people might communicate, such as hearing, seeing, speaking, feeling, signing, reading and writing. Examples include:

- written messages that are not available in large-print, braille or electronic versions may be inaccessible to people who are blind or are vision impaired
- auditory messages such as presentations and meetings that do not include captioning or Auslan may be inaccessible to people who are deaf or have hearing loss
- complicated messages that use technical language and long sentences that are not provided in plain language or Easy English format may be inaccessible to people with a cognitive or intellectual disability.

Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers include policies and practices that exclude people with disability, even unintentionally. These are sometimes also referred to as systemic barriers. An example is:

- policies that don't recognise both visible and non-visible disabilities, making it difficult for people with non-visible disabilities to access reasonable adjustments such as flexible working arrangements.

In our department we are supportive and accepting of each other. We can lead by example across the regional communities that we serve, endorsing the rights of people with disability and promoting positive attitudes towards disability.

² Macmillan Dictionary, Macmillan Education Limited 2009–2021

Disability

includes:



Physical



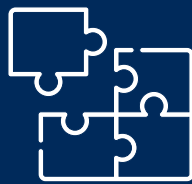
Intellectual



Psychiatric /
Psychological



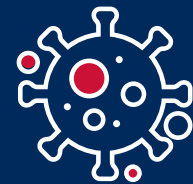
Sensory



Neurological



Cognitive



Immunological

the presence of
organisms causing
disease in the body

Types of disability:



Only 4.4% of people with
disability in Australia are
wheelchair users.



1 in 6 Australians are
affected by hearing loss.

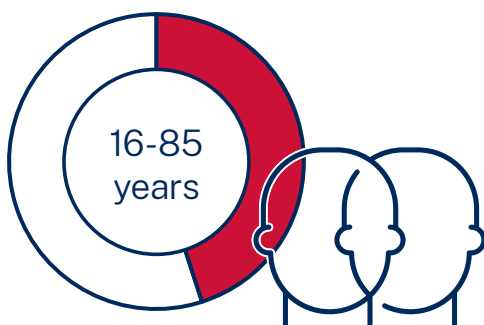


There are about 30,000
Deaf AUSLAN users with
total hearing loss.



Vision Australia estimates
357,000 Australians are
blind or have low vision
and that this will increase to
564,000 by 2030.

(Refractive error not included.)



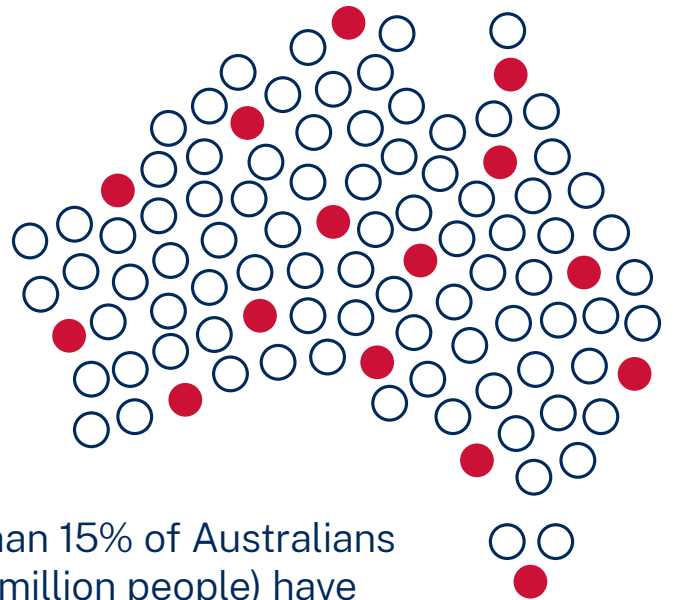
45% of Australians
aged 16-85 years,
experience a mental
health condition in
their lifetime.

Demographics

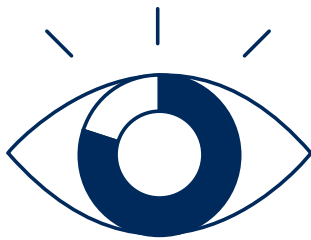


37% of the national population of First Nations peoples

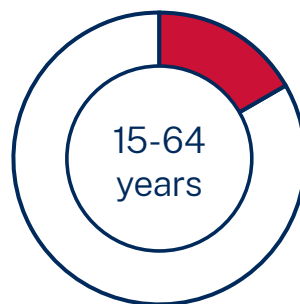
15 years and older have a reported physical disability or a long-term health condition (102,900).



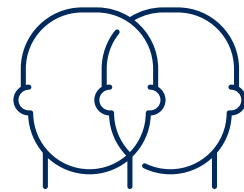
More than 15% of Australians (over 4 million people) have a disability.



At least 80% of disabilities are not visible.



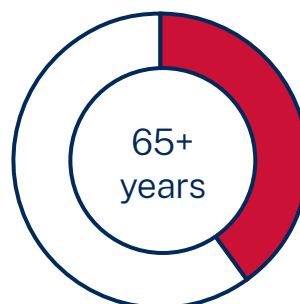
15% of Australians of working age have a disability.



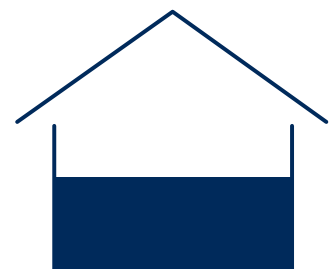
Mental health problems and mental illness are among the greatest causes of disability.



About 1 million are from a non-English speaking background.



40% of people with disability are 65 years or older and the likelihood of living with disability increases with age.



35.9% of Australia's 8.9 million households include a person with disability.

Our

Achievements

Accessible events

Events provide a great opportunity to bring community together to collectively celebrate and engage, but for people with disability, attending events is not always easy, particularly events hosted outside of a fixed venue.

The Department of Regional NSW works with event organisers to ensure they plan and deliver accessible and inclusive events that promote community participation for all. Planning includes providing accessible viewing areas and amenities, bespoke registration and ticketing services, accessible parking,

drop off and pick up areas, captioning, audio description, sensory spaces and disability awareness training for event staff.

We have worked with regional events including the Mundi Mundi Bash, Deni Ute Muster, Parkes Elvis Festival, Tamworth Country Music Festival and various supercar and rally events to increase their accessibility and inclusion event capability. As a result, more people with disability, particularly children, have enjoyed and attended events in regional NSW in a dignified and inclusive way.



Rugby Australia Super W Tournament

Super W is the premier women's rugby competition in Australia. The Regional Events Acceleration Fund supported this event held in Coffs Harbour at the C.ex Coffs International Stadium.

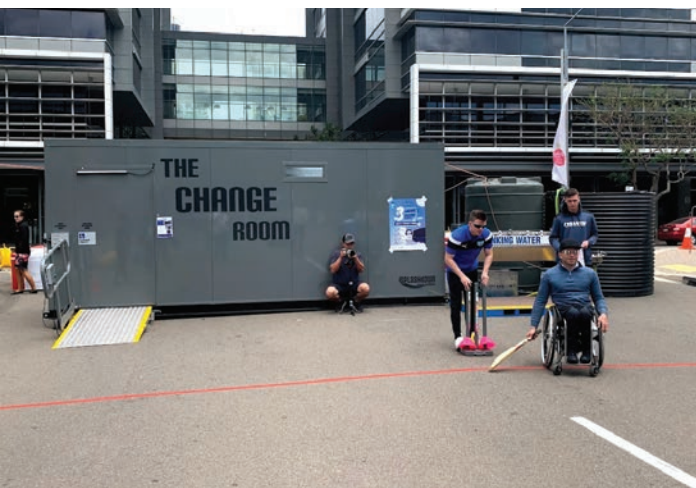
We worked with Coffs Harbour City Council to ensure that when the stadium was upgraded, lifts and access ramps were provided across the entire grandstands. Accessible pathways, amenities and parking have also ensured that all visitors were able to view the tournament.

Lost Lanes Wagga Wagga

The Lost Lanes micro-festival, held in Wagga Wagga, entices visitors and residents to visit, explore and enjoy the city in unsuspecting and surprising ways.

The 2021 event used Regional Event Activation Funds (REAF) for a fully accessible, pop-up ice-skating rink, allowing wheelchair users and people with limited mobility to participate with equity and dignity.





The Change Room

The Change Room provides a bespoke accessible toileting option for people with disability and their families wishing to attend regional events. We have invested in the construction of two mobile Change Room amenities equipped with an adult-size change table, shower and toilet to ensure all aspects of toileting are provided.

Without the provision of The Change Room many people with disability living or visiting regional communities would not have the capacity to attend local events because the current amenity does not meet their accessibility requirements.

As events resume post COVID-19 lockdown, The Change Room's deployment will be integral to ensuring people with disability can participate along with all other members of the community.



Deni Ute Muster

The Deni Ute Muster is an annual two day event that provides significant economic, strategic and social benefits to Deniliquin and the Riverina Murray region. Their REAF application has a strong focus on accessibility and inclusion. Many of the proposed actions have been adopted from recommendations in an accessibility and inclusion report produced for the event in partnership with the Department of Regional NSW and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The recommendations aim to produce a more accessible and inclusive festival for everyone and eliminate barriers that may prevent people attending.





The Overlander

The Kosciuszko National Park is set to welcome even more visitors with the introduction of an Overlander, a four-wheel drive, all terrain powered wheelchair that will boost accessibility and inclusion, thanks to the support of the Department of Regional NSW.

We have provided a \$42,000 grant to Disabled Wintersport Australia (DWA) which will help purchase the Overlander and make it available to people with disability or those with limited mobility during trips to the park.

The Overlander will boost the number of people with limited mobility and disability visiting the Kosciuszko National Park to traverse the world class walking trails and adventure on a trek in the Snowy Mountains region. Our partnership with the Office of Sport also ensures school children with disability from across NSW will have the opportunity for the first time to trek to the summit in a safe, dignified and equitable way. It will also enable broader trekking trips within the park.

Our partnership with DWA and the Office of Sport is a great result for Snowy Mountains residents and visitors, as well as people who want to visit but feel they can't because of accessibility options.

In our workplace

Disability awareness resources and learning

In July 2021 the Department of Regional NSW established their Workforce Capability and Talent function, incorporating recruitment, as well as our own standalone learning and development and diversity and inclusion teams.

One of the team's first priorities was to create a learning system and introduce inclusion and cultural awareness training for all staff, including the mandatory Age of Inclusion Disability Awareness Training and securing the SBS developed Inclusion Program, which includes information on disability awareness and confidence.

We are building on this foundation through several actions captured in our DIAP.

Sharing your story, your way

A pilot project to improve disability inclusion has been identified by the Public Service Commission as best practice and has been resourced for implementation across the NSW public sector. The pilot project was implemented by Local Land Services (LLS), a departmental business unit comprised of approximately 1000 staff. Only 2% of LLS staff identified as having a disability, which was considerably less than the Premier's target of 5.6% of public service roles being held by people with disability by 2025. A communication campaign empowered eight staff with disability to share their experiences and



Hannah Blackburn and Art Perry-Meijer, Department of Regional NSW employees



ways their colleagues can support disability inclusion. During the campaign, a further 4 staff shared their experiences, with more than 20% of LLS staff engaging on Workplace. Fostering a welcoming culture within LLS resulted in 4% of staff identifying as having a disability the following year: a 100% increase. The PSC hosted an information session and developed a communication toolkit to support the campaign's broader implementation under their Age of Inclusion Program. With the endorsement of the DRNSW Diversity and Inclusion Council, 6 department staff shared their experiences in November-December 2021.

Formation of the Diversity and Inclusion Council

Our Diversity and Inclusion Council was formed in 2020 and is currently co-chaired by Chris Hanger, Deputy Secretary Public Works Advisory and Regional Development (PWARD) and Georgina Beattie, Deputy Secretary Mining Exploration and Geoscience (MEG).

The council is comprised of representatives from all business units and employee-led networks. Council members collaboratively support initiatives and projects across the department by promoting them in their sphere of influence and organising several highlight events for significant dates throughout the year. The Diversity and Inclusion Council is a major contributor to the DIAP and will help communicate progress and achievements through the department as well as driving action.

The four pillars and actions

The actions of our DIAP align to the four key pillars of attitudes and behaviours, inclusive employment, systems and processes, and liveable communities. Understanding and addressing the barriers to inclusion across these four pillars is fundamental to providing better outcomes for people with disability.

Some of these actions can be delivered over the initial period of the plan, while others will require long term planning and delivery. Some actions will also provide a foundation to achieve better outcomes beyond 2024.

Our staff will take responsibility for each action and ensure its delivery in the timeframe indicated. While each action has a team or staff member assigned as responsible, every staff member has a role to play in our DIAP's success. We will encourage our staff to ask themselves:

“How can I encourage greater inclusion?”

What will success look like?



Attitudes and behaviours

Government, business and the general community are aware of and demonstrate positive attitudes and actions to inclusion for people with disability.



Employment

People with disability have the opportunity to gain, retain and contribute effectively to their community and experience the positive self and social benefits of employment.



Liveable communities

All people, including those with disability, are able to exercise their rights, live, learn, work and play, feel safe, raise a family and grow old within their community.



Systems and processes

People with disability are able to access information, systems, processes and services, supporting their right to exercise choice and control.

Attitudes

and behaviours



Objective: An inclusive culture where people feel safe to bring their whole selves to work.

We aim to create a workplace culture where every member of staff feels supported, included and that they belong.

We recognise that negative attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability remains a significant barrier to equitable, dignified and inclusive employment outcomes and broader participation.

Our DIAP will focus on raising disability confidence for all staff. We will achieve this through bespoke disability awareness training, recognising visible and non-visible disability, and celebrating disability across the organisation

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD
Develop and implement targeted disability awareness training for all employees	Underway Completion December 2022	Manager, Learning and Development
Develop a communications plan to promote accessibility and inclusion initiatives across the department for the life of the DIAP	March 2022	Internal Communications team
Ensure policies and procedures are accessible and inclusive for people with disability and carers, and support the development of a safe and inclusive workspace	Underway Completion December 2022	Human Resources team
Senior leaders publicly commit to disability inclusion and support disability initiatives	Ongoing	Diversity and Inclusion Council
Raise awareness at events across the year to celebrate, educate and share stories related to disability and caring for someone with disability	Ongoing	Diversity and Inclusion Council and Internal Communications Representative
Establish a Disability Employee Network (DEN) or Employee Resource Group (ERG) for people with disability, carers and allies, and develop resources to support	June 2022	Manager, Diversity and Inclusion and Director, Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience
Review and report on disability initiative progress annually	Ongoing	Manager, Corporate Data and Analytics and Manager, Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusive employment



Objective: Employer of choice with 5.6% of roles at the Department of Regional NSW held by people with disability by 2025.

People with disability face significant barriers to finding employment.³ There are many factors that contribute to this, including a complicated recruitment process, unconscious and conscious bias of employers and barriers to workplace adjustments. Our team acknowledges these barriers and have outlined several actions in our plan to address them and aim to:

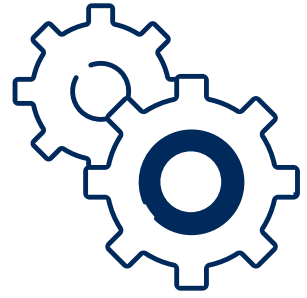
- streamline the recruitment process
- provide an efficient and dignified workplace adjustments experience
- increase awareness and foster an inclusive workplace where employees with disability are treated equally and feel safe to talk about their disability and be themselves
- identify initiatives to increase professional development opportunities for people with disability.

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD
Develop resources and guidelines to assist managers to support people with disability	July 2022	Manager, Learning and Development and Manager, Health and Wellbeing
Develop a Disability Recruitment Strategy for the department and participate in disability employment and mentoring programs	Underway Completion by January 2023	Manager, Recruitment and Director, Capability and Talent
Create an Employer Value Proposition (EVP) and promote inclusive recruitment practice on public careers website to encourage people with disability to apply for roles.	July 2022	Director, Capability and Talent
Embed discussions around wellbeing, flexible work, workplace adjustments and participation in inclusion initiatives as “business as usual” with managers and their teams	July 2022	Director, Human Resources and Manager, Health and Wellbeing
Develop streamlined process to personalise the workplace for new employees during onboarding	July 2022	Onboarding Specialist

³ People aged between 15 and 64 years with disability have both lower participation (53%) and higher unemployment rates (9.4%) than people without disability (83% and 4.9% respectively). There are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Of these, just over 1 million are employed and another 114,900 are looking for work. Graduates with disability take 56.2% longer to gain full time employment than other graduates. Source: Australian Council's results of the National Arts Participation Survey 2009, 2013 and 2016.

Systems

and processes



Objective: Our barrier-free systems and processes enable our people to participate equitably.

A common issue for people with disability is the difficulty in navigating systems and processes to access the services and supports they require within the workplace. Some of these difficulties stem from lack of awareness to these barriers in the workplace. Others may be caused by limited options for communicating, accessing information or providing feedback or input to solving barriers.

Adaptive technology such as a screen reader for a staff member who is blind or has low vision enables these staff to perform the inherent requirements of their role. Our systems and processes may create barriers when they don't support these assistive technologies or when we don't apply the inclusion lens over our activities.

Our actions aim to raise better awareness of how we can all support an inclusive workplace and ensure that the new technologies we acquire also support adaptive technology.

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD
Create a database of access features and barriers of each office location so that people from across the department are able to advise on accessibility when arranging meetings and events	June 2022	Senior Manager, Strategic Property and Fleet
All future office fit outs and upgrades will be self-assessed against the NSW Public Service Commission (PSC) Accessible Office Design framework	Ongoing	Senior Manager, Strategic Property and Fleet
Review all online learning courses to ensure they are accessible and WCAG compliant to the latest standard	Existing courses by July 2022 Ongoing	Manager, Learning and Development
Develop and implement new Workplace Adjustment Policy and Procedure and Digital Workplace Adjustment Passports	December 2022	Manager, Health and Wellbeing
Create an internal guide for accessible communications and marketing	June 2022	Manager, Communications
Offer tailored accessible content training for all staff	Phased approach, completion by July 2023	Manager, Learning and Development

ACTION

TIMELINE

LEAD

Review Regional NSW websites, systems and online content to ensure they are WCAG AA Compliant to the latest standard as a minimum.

December 2022

Director Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience and ICT Solutions Architect

Procurement standards across the department have disability inclusion considerations for every business area

June 2022

Procurement Business Partners



“

I hope the DIAP will promote conversations and clarify what we can all do to make it possible for people with a disability to thrive at DRNSW.”

Margaret

Person with a disability,
Local Land Services

Liveable

communities



Objective: The public can access all Department of Regional NSW services and events.

Increasing community participation for people with disability is a priority under the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-25. Our DIAP supports this priority and has a range of actions that will increase options for people with disability to engage and participate across our regional communities.

We have aligned our community funding grants to support accessibility and inclusion across both infrastructure and programs. This has and will continue to provide improved opportunities for community engagement across events, recreation, sports, tourism, education, housing and universal design.

We are motivated by daring to think differently about the ways in which we can create more liveable communities and to share the positive impacts they are having on people with disability in our workforce and the broader community.

ACTION	TIMELINE	LEAD
Plan, support and deliver accessible and inclusive community and major public regional events	Ongoing	Director, Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience
Support disability inclusion through major projects and social impact investment including community funding programs	Ongoing	Director, Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience
Develop and implement initiatives that make regional events, tourism and attractions in NSW more accessible to people with disability	Ongoing	Director Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience
Create accessibility maps for our Department of Regional NSW major office hubs	December 2022	Director, Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience
Externally promote accessibility initiatives across the community that benchmarks best practice examples	Ongoing	Manager, External Communications

Policy and

legislative context

Nothing about us without us

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021–24 aligns with the principles in the following state, national and international legislation, agreements and standards.

NSW

The NSW Government has committed through several legislative and policy commitments to removing barriers to participation for people with disability.

People with disability face many barriers to civic, social and economic participation. The *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* provides a clear legislative framework to removing such barriers.

- The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025
- *The Disability Inclusion Act 2014* and the Disability Inclusion Regulation (2014) came into effect on 3 December 2014. Part 2 of the Act requires NSW Government departments, local councils and other public authorities (as set out in the regulation) to develop and implement Disability Inclusion Action Plans.

Commonwealth

- The *Disability Discrimination Act 1993* (DDA) recognises the rights of people with disability to equality before the law and makes discrimination based on disability unlawful
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, which came into effect on 1 May 2011, aim to provide people with disability with dignified and equitable access to buildings, and provide certainty to industry that they are complying with the DDA.
- The National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2010-2020 was the commitment of all governments to a unified, national approach to building inclusion for people with disability.

- The NDS was about creating a more inclusive society that enabled Australians with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. It was the main way that Australia implemented the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021 TO 2031 will continue the legacy of the NDS and build on its purpose of continuing to meet our commitments under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ADS will be launched in December 2022.

International

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) ratified by Australia in 2008 acknowledges that people with disability have the same human rights as people without a disability
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) provides recommendations for making web content more accessible to people with disability.

Further information on the relevant laws, standards and guidelines considered in the development of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan can be found in Appendix 1 – Regulatory Sources.

Consultation, monitoring and measurement

Consultation

Key internal and external stakeholder consultations have informed our inaugural DIAP. The consultation identified day-to-day attitudinal barriers and those across the various systems and processes within the department. We also explored current trends and best practice in the area of access and inclusion to benchmark our Plan.

A snapshot of who was involved:

- 813 employees participated in the initial survey sent out to all staff
- 38 employees with disability or who are carers volunteered to participate in consultation sessions and formal and informal feedback
- More than 50 employees were involved in drafting and developing the DIAP, including people with disability, carers, people leaders, and leaders of key operational areas
- The development process was led in partnership with Australian Network on Disability, enabling us to leverage their expertise and incorporate best practice into our actions.

Meaningful consultation does not stop with the launch of our Plan.

We will continue to include people with disability and carers in the implementation of actions and review of the Plan on an ongoing basis. The approach of “Nothing about us, without us” will remain first and foremost.

Review and monitoring

Our DIAP working group who drafted the plan, will now become the foundation for the DIAP Steering Committee. The committee will comprise of staff with lived experience and those who have responsibility and the ability to implement delegated actions into key operational areas.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Manager and the Director Inclusive Infrastructure, Placemaking and Experience will continue to work with this committee to help enable members to deliver their actions within the timeframes committed.

An update on the progress of the DIAP will be made annually to the Diversity & Inclusion Council, the Secretary and the Executive Leadership Committee (ELC). Consultation and development of the next iteration of the plan will begin in 2024 with a revised plan for 2025 to 2028.

Ongoing feedback from our staff, community and partner organisations will be sought throughout the life of the plan, and the feedback from our staff with disability will help determine the success of the plan’s actions. We will also continue to engage with AND as our accessibility and inclusion journey continues.



I feel heard and listened to.
I am thankful that my disability
won't disadvantage me in
my career...

A resilient employee who happens
to have a disability, Local Land Services

Measurement of progress

Our DIAP's success will be assessed against qualitative and quantitative measures, including:

- actions successfully implemented over the life of the Plan – outputs and outcomes will be identified for each initiative to allow progress to be clearly measured
- progress measured against government, legislative, regulatory and compliance reporting requirements
- regularly engaging with the staff that have been consulted and contributed to the development of the Plan to seek their feedback and inform the ongoing direction of the Plan
- the Plan will be registered with the Australian Disability Rights Commission and achievements will be noted in the Regional NSW Annual Report
- analysis of People Matters Employee Surveys (PMES) and other workforce data sources to identify trends, areas of improvement and areas to address.

The Plan will be available on the department's website in both presentation and accessible formats.

Appendix 1

Regulatory sources

The relevant laws, standards and guidelines considered in the development of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan include:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (NSW)
- Government Sector Employment Rules 2014 (NSW)
- Anti Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)
- National Disability Strategy 2010-2020
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) 2010



“

Inclusion is the recognition and celebration of the differences that make us human. Our lived experiences as people who have constantly adjusted or learned to cope with circumstances and environments that we don't quite “fit”, make us a resource for learning about flexibility and resilience.

Regional NSW Employee



Accessible beach walk at Blue Mile Pathway Wollongong, photo courtesy of Destination NSW

“

Inclusion is the recognition and celebration of the differences that make us human.

Our lived experiences as people who have constantly adjusted or learned to cope with circumstances and environments that we don't quite “fit” make us a resource for learning about flexibility and resilience.

Regional NSW Employee

