Disability employment strategy
2018–2020
Acknowledgements

Contributors to the strategy
Thank you to the following contributors who helped develop this disability employment strategy:

- members of the VPS Enablers Network for people with disability
- staff of the Office for Disability
- members of the department’s Committee for Disability.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners
The Department of Health and Human Services would like to respectfully acknowledge Traditional Owners throughout Victoria and acknowledge their ancestors and Elders past and present.
Secretary’s foreword

It is my pleasure to launch the Disability employment strategy 2018–2020 for the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Disability employment strategy provides a foundation for building an inclusive and diverse workforce. It is about creating positive workplaces that are welcoming and inclusive of people with disability and about growing a culture of respect and zero tolerance to discrimination.

Continuing the People strategy 2020 theme of an ‘investment in us by us’, the Disability employment strategy shines a light on areas for improvement and focus.

Our values promote an environment that represents a commitment to inclusivity and diversity. Although we have made great headway in the diversity space with initiatives such as the LGBTI inclusion plan 2017–2018 and the Aboriginal employment strategy 2016–2021, we know there is still work to do to be seen as a leader in the employment of people with disability.

This strategy will guide the department to continue to increase our number of employees with disability through a range of employment initiatives. We will invest in training and development so more employees with disability progress into senior roles across the department. We will also create a more ‘disability confident’ environment by ensuring that people with disability and employing managers are well supported and disability-aware.

Kym Peake
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
Our commitment

We strive to develop a dynamic and diverse workforce that delivers inclusive policy development and service delivery to our communities.

Our leaders will empower our workforce to be disability-confident and build an accessible, equitable, inclusive and safe workplace for people with disability.

Our organisation will embrace innovative actions to enable increased employment of people with disability.

A disability-confident Department of Health and Human Services knows how to choose premises, technology and working arrangements that are accessible to everyone – including people with disability. It has people with disability in senior leadership roles and harnesses our knowledge to design and deliver services to the Victorian community that are accessible to everyone.
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‘I love the people. They are passionate about the work, and care about others.’

Clem
The *Disability employment strategy 2018–2020* communicates our commitment to increasing the recruitment, development and retention of people with disability. We want the department to be seen as a leader in employment of people with disability, offering innovative career pathways and providing access to real development opportunities.

We know that achieving this goal requires more than just recruiting people with disability. To be successful it requires us to tackle the barriers to employment that people with disability face every day. It requires leadership to drive change and to create an organisation that values and supports disability initiatives. Most importantly it requires us to listen to the people with disability who are currently in our workplace and to ensure they are well supported and that development opportunities are equitable.

The strategy sets out five focus areas to achieve this goal:

- profile and leadership
- recruitment
- induction
- inclusive workplaces
- retention.

Actions in this strategy will be incorporated into the department’s *Disability action plan 2018–2020* to be released later in 2018. This will be critical in ensuring that creating an accessible, equitable, inclusive and safe workplace is at the centre of our department’s broader approach to disability inclusion.
A catalyst for change

The Disability employment strategy is an action under our People strategy 2020, which sets a target of increasing the employment of people with disability to five per cent by 30 June 2018. The economic participation plan for people with disability sets a target for employing people with disability in the public service to six per cent by 2020 and to 12 per cent by 2025. While targets can be a contentious issue for some people with disability, measureable targets have proven to be a catalyst for change in areas such an Aboriginal employment and increasing the number of women in the workforce. Targets are an important part of the strategy because they publicly demonstrate that the department is willing to show leadership and to make change to improve employment outcomes for people with disability.

The employment of people with disability will benefit the department and the Victorian community through enhancing our disability awareness, improving policies and programs and having a workforce that is more reflective of the communities we serve.

Employees with disabilities are:

**Reliable**
On average, people with disability take fewer days off, take less sick leave and have a higher retention rate than other workers.

**Productive**
Once in a the right job, people with disability perform equally as well as other employees.

**Lower risk**
People with disability have fewer compensation incidents and accidents at work in comparison with other employees.

**Good for business**
People with disability build strong relationships with customers and boost staff morale and loyalty – and they enhance the company image among staff, customers and the community.

(Australian Safety and Compensation Council 2006, JobAccess 2016)
‘DHHS needs to become the employer of choice for people with a disability because the arrival of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the ageing of the Victorian community are creating unprecedented expectations that healthcare and human services will be more accessible to everyone – including people with a disability.

‘DHHS should be listening more to people with a disability and ensuring that our premises, technology and working style do not create unintended barriers and handicaps. We also need to be doing more to assist colleagues with a disability to develop our careers and take on leadership roles – especially in areas developing public policy affecting people with a disability.’

Sean
'I enjoy my work tremendously as I get to be part of something, collaborate with my team members and feel valued. I also get to attend a few events and learn more about the interesting work the department is doing.'

Amelia
Rise at DHHS

Approximately one in 68 people worldwide has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but people on the spectrum are underrepresented in the labour market. Many are working in jobs for which they are overeducated and face barriers to employment such as interview processes that are reliant on social skills – the area where people on the autism spectrum often present differently.

In August 2017 the Department of Health and Human Services, working with Specialisterne Australia, introduced the Rise at DHHS program, employing eight people with autism spectrum disorders on a two-year fixed-term basis as part of a large records management project. Rise at DHHS focuses on creating a repeatable VPS employment approach for people on the autism spectrum.

The Rise at DHHS program allows job candidates to show their role-related skills over an extended recruitment period. The program provides people with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and strengths and to demonstrate that they are fit for a role. The specialised three-week assessment has also removed the need for participants to undergo an interview, with assessment of the individual focusing on their application to the role.

‘The RISE program has been an absolute godsend for me. It has been life changing. I previously struggled to find work. I had plenty of interviews, but something about me wasn’t translating adequately to the interviewers. My Asperger’s can be a great benefit. It gives me attention to detail, focus, diligence, passion and single-mindedness to a task. But somehow this wasn’t getting across to interviewers. The RISE program allows for those with autism to demonstrate their positive strengths and talents in an environment which understands, nurtures and supports our unique strengths and differences.’

‘I’m on the spectrum. There is a team of us on the spectrum as part of the RISE program. It’s important for us to be able to work and be able to contribute. We enjoy feeling valued and part of the community.’
‘Working is very important to me because it provides me with a routine, regular social contact, opportunities for growth and networking, and most of all, a sense of purpose.’

Adam
The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* 2006 adopts a broad categorisation of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.1

There are more than one million people with disability living in Victoria. They have a wide range of conditions and impairments. What they have in common is a shared experience of encountering negative attitudes and barriers to full participation in everyday activities.

Some conditions and impairments are present from birth. Other people acquire or develop disability during their lifetime from an accident, condition, illness or injury. For some people, support needs can increase over time. Others can experience fluctuating or episodic disability. This can particularly be the case for some people with mental illness. Some people are said to have a dual disability, such as intellectual disability and mental illness, giving rise to different support needs.

People with disability can be treated unfairly based on other parts of their identity, not just their disability. This discrimination can affect women and girls with disability, Aboriginal people, people from diverse cultural backgrounds including those from refugee backgrounds and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex (LGBTI) community.

We need to recognise that the disadvantage associated with disability is often compounded by other sources of discrimination. Recognising and responding to this multi-layered impact requires particular attention.

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In the workforce (paid or unpaid)

53% of people WITH disability

82% of people WITHOUT disability

Employment rate

The employment rate for people with a disability is:

4% in the Dept of Health and Human Services

9% in the broader Victorian workforce

Earning a salary

66% of people WITHOUT disability

36% of people WITH disability

Graduates who are employed

50% of people WITH disability

76% of people WITHOUT disability

Work adjustments

12% of employed people with a disability need some type of change to their work arrangements

Board members

<1% of people serving on public entity boards and committees identify as having a disability

Completed year 12

66% of people WITHOUT disability

43% of people WITH disability
Focus area 1: PROFILE AND LEADERSHIP

Senior leadership is fundamental for enabling a workplace culture of diversity and inclusion. Senior leaders model the organisation’s values and role-model zero tolerance of discrimination.

Disability Champions for Access and Inclusion provide leadership for driving disability employment initiatives and organisational change to create workplaces that value and support people with disability.

Actions
To raise the profile and develop leadership for the Disability employment strategy, we will:

• provide supportive leadership by appointing Executive Disability Champions for Access and Inclusion to endorse, support and communicate employment and other disability initiatives
• develop, publish and communicate case studies, stories and images that profile the VPS Enablers Network, employees with disability and the opportunities and benefits of employing people with disability (minimum of four stories per year)
• provide support to the VPS Enablers Network by contributing resources or funding for events
• host one event per year for the Executive Board to meet with the Enablers Network
• partner with and contribute to interdepartmental events such as the International Day of People with Disability.
Focus area 2: RECRUITMENT

The department will continue work to create a diverse and inclusive workforce. A number of new initiatives and approaches will be implemented to increase the recruitment pathways for people with disability.

Actions

To increase the participation of people with disability within the department, we will:

- review recruitment policies and forms to remove barriers and ensure accessibility
- investigate options to provide a safe and confidential mechanism to disclose disability
- develop and offer disability confidence training (including coaching and mentoring) to managers
- ensure external recruitment providers have achieved Disability Confident status through the Australian Network on Disability
- build strategic partnerships with appropriate providers to strengthen the pipeline for disability
- investigate and pilot ‘RecruitAbility’ (an employability scale and rating system) for candidates meeting minimum job requirements to progress automatically to an interview
- implement a department-specific graduate program targeting graduates with disability
- participate in the Stepping Into Internship program for people with disability
- participate in the Youth Employment Scheme for young people with disability
- identify five youth traineeship opportunities for people on the autism spectrum through a collaboration with Specialisterne
- investigate guidelines and policies to enable managers to designate special measure roles (those only open to people with disability)
- continue offering Unconscious Bias workshops across the department.
Focus area 3: INDUCTION

New starters can sometimes feel overwhelmed by a new workplace. Ensuring they are well supported by managers who have a strong knowledge of workplace adjustment and flexible working practices is key to creating a barrier-free and disability-confident workplace.

Providing new employees with disability with the support of a workplace buddy can help them to settle in more comfortably and ensure access needs are met.

Actions

To improve the induction process for people with disability, we will:

• review the induction program to ensure it is accessible for employees with disability
• ensure all new employees are asked if they require any reasonable adjustments before they start working in their role
• explore establishing a centralised budget for funding reasonable adjustments
• for new starters requiring a reasonable adjustment, ensure local occupational health representatives facilitate adjustments to enable a positive employee experience from day one in the role (this will include tracking employee feedback and satisfaction)
• develop a ‘reasonable adjustment passbook’ for all employees to use throughout the employment lifecycle
• ensure all new employees with disability are offered a workplace buddy or person who can advise on how to access support if required
• ensure all new starters are connected to the VPS Enablers Network for allies of and people with disability.
Focus area 4: INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

Creating a workplace that is free of discrimination and provides true career opportunities for people with disability requires managers and staff to feel disability-aware and disability-confident and to positively support any adjustments that may be required by employees with disability.

A strong knowledge of unconscious bias, workplace adjustment and flexible working policies are key to creating a barrier-free and disability-confident workplace. These resources help managers support staff to perform at their best, to ensure they have everything they need and to make certain they are able to thrive in their roles.

Actions

To build a workplace that is more inclusive of people with disability, we will:

- ensure the Reasonable adjustment policy is current, published and communicated to all employees and is available on the intranet
- ensure managers have a point of contact for one-on-one support to provide advice about supporting people with disability
- ensure accessibility guidelines for publishing and printing are current, published, communicated and available on the intranet
- ensure the department’s Leading with Respect development program suitably encompasses and progresses disability confidence and awareness
- ensure the Disability language guide is published, communicated and available on the intranet
- develop a guide for managers for being more inclusive of people with disability in the workplace and publish it, communicate it and make it available on the intranet
- provide managers and teams with disability awareness, disability confidence, unconscious bias and any other specific training or experiences (such as Auslan sign language classes and a Dialogue in the Dark visual impairment experience) to help create inclusive and safe workplaces
- develop a pool of employee volunteers with skills in Auslan
- analyse relevant People Matter survey results to measure issues such as discrimination and career satisfaction as compared with people without disability
- participate in the Australian Network on Disability Access and Inclusion Index to measure inclusive workplace outcomes
- promote and engage with the Mental health charter to support people with a mental illness.

The department’s Disability action plan 2018–2020 includes broader commitments to create an accessible and inclusive workplace including accessible communications and technology.
Focus area 5: RETENTION

The retention of staff is strongly linked to how included, safe and valued they feel in the workplace. Access to varied experience, skills and education increases career development opportunities and job satisfaction, which in turn leads to increased retention.

Actions
To retain employees with disability, we will:

- develop and implement professional development programs for employees with disability that focuses on talent and individual needs and potential
- investigate opportunities for a dedicated secondment program for long-term employees with disability
- develop, communicate and publish a contact list of people who employees with disability can contact for information and support
- develop a checklist to ensure key events, internal and external training and e-courses are inclusive and accessible for employees with disability including inclusive venues, inclusive materials, inclusive course activities and inclusive e-learning modules.
## Implementation plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>YEAR 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus area 1: PROFILE AND LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>• Provide supportive leadership by appointing Executive Disability Champions for Access and Inclusion to endorse, support and communicate employment and other disability initiatives</td>
<td>Q2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop, publish and communicate case studies, stories and images that profile the VPS Enablers Network, employees with disability and the opportunities and benefits of employing people with disability (minimum of four stories per year)</td>
<td>Q4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide support to the VPS Enablers Network by contributing resources or funding for events</td>
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<td>• Host one event per year for the Executive Board to meet with the Enablers Network</td>
<td>Q2</td>
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<td>• Partner with and contribute to interdepartmental events such as the International Day of People with Disability</td>
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## Focus area 2: RECRUITMENT

The department has recruitment initiatives and employment pathways to increase employment opportunities for people with disability and to build a diverse and inclusive workplace.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Review recruitment policies and forms to remove barriers and ensure accessibility</strong></td>
<td>Q4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate options to provide a safe and confidential mechanism to disclose disability</strong></td>
<td>Q4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develop and offer disability confidence training (including coaching and mentoring) to managers</strong></td>
<td>Q3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure external recruitment providers have achieved Disability Confident status through the Australian Network on Disability</strong></td>
<td>Q3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Build strategic partnerships with appropriate providers to strengthen the pipeline for disability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate and pilot ‘RecruitAbility’ (an employability scale and rating system) for candidates meeting minimum job requirements to progress automatically to an interview</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Implement a department-specific graduate program targeting graduates with disability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Participate in the Stepping into Internship program for people with disability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Participate in the Youth Employment Scheme for young people with disability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Identify five youth traineeship opportunities for people on the autism spectrum through a collaboration with Specialisterne</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Investigate guidelines and policies to enable managers to designate special measure roles (those only open to people with disability)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Continue offering Unconscious Bias workshops across the department</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Focus area 3: INDUCTION</strong></td>
<td>All new starters are supported by disability-confident managers and any reasonable adjustments are actioned in a timely manner. People with disability starting in the department are connected to the Enablers Network and a workplace buddy.</td>
<td>• Review the induction program to ensure it is accessible for employees with disability</td>
<td>Q4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Ensure all new employees are asked if they require any reasonable adjustments before they start working in their role</td>
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<td>• Explore establishing a centralised budget for funding reasonable adjustments</td>
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<td>• For new starters requiring a reasonable adjustment, ensure local occupational health representatives facilitate adjustments to enable a positive employee experience from day one in the role (this will include tracking employee feedback and satisfaction)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Develop a ‘reasonable adjustment passbook’ for all employees to use throughout the employment lifecycle</td>
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<td>• Ensure all new employees with disability are offered a workplace buddy or person who can advise on how to access support if required</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Ensure all new starters are connected to the VPS Enablers Network for allies of and people with disability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Focus area 4: INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

**Our workplace is free of discrimination and provides true career opportunities for people with disability.**

Managers and staff are disability-aware and disability-confident and positively support any adjustments that are required by employees with a disability.

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<td>• Ensure the Reasonable adjustment policy is current, published and communicated to all employees and is available on the intranet</td>
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<td>Q3</td>
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<td>• Ensure managers have a point of contact for one-on-one support to provide advice on supporting people with disability</td>
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<td>• Ensure accessibility guidelines for publishing and printing are current, published, communicated and available on the intranet</td>
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<td>• Ensure the department’s Leading with Respect development program suitably encompasses and progresses disability confidence and awareness</td>
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<td>Q3</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure the Disability language guide is published, communicated and available on the intranet</td>
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<td>• Develop a guide for managers for being more inclusive of people with disability in the workplace and publish it, communicate it and make it available on the intranet</td>
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<td>• Provide managers and teams with disability awareness, disability confidence, unconscious bias and any other specific training or experiences (such as Auslan sign language classes and a Dialogue in the Dark visual impairment experience) to help create inclusive and safe workplaces</td>
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<td>• Develop a pool of employee volunteers with skills in Auslan</td>
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<td>• Participate in the Australian Network on Disability Access and Inclusion Index to measure inclusive workplace outcomes</td>
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<td>• Promote and engage with the <em>Mental health charter</em> to support people with a mental illness</td>
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Focus area 5: RETENTION

People with disability have access to development opportunities and feel included, safe and valued leading to increased retention.

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<td>• Develop and implement professional development programs for employees with disability that focuses on talent and individual needs and potential</td>
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<td>• Investigate opportunities for a dedicated secondment program for long-term employees with disability</td>
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<td>• Develop, communicate and publish a contact list of people who employees with disability can contact for information and support</td>
<td>Q4</td>
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<td>• Develop a checklist to ensure key events, internal and external training and e-courses are inclusive and accessible for employees with disability including inclusive venues, inclusive materials, inclusive course activities and inclusive e-learning modules</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure the annual People Matter survey results are analysed for people with disability in comparison with people without to provide insights into improved career development and retention</td>
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Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting on this strategy is critical for achieving it outcomes.

Progress on each action will be reported by the Diversity and Inclusion Unit, People and Culture Branch twice per year to the department’s Committee for Disability and the department’s People and Culture Committee.