

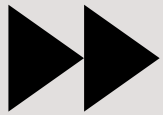
Guide Dogs.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024 – 2027



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Acknowledgment of Country.

**Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
acknowledges Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples
as the First Peoples and
the Traditional Owners and
Custodians of the lands on
which we live and work.**

Our flagship office in St Leonards is located on Cammeraygal land.

We pay our respects to Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Message from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT CEO.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, I am proud of our commitment to leading innovation and continued improvement in accessibility and inclusion across all our environments. We will adapt to our Client and community needs and drive social change through demonstrating best practice and using our knowledge and passionate to advocate and educate.

For more than 60 years, Guide Dogs has worked toward making a world that is inclusive and accessible for everyone with low vision or blindness.

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan builds on this commitment. Guided by this plan, we aim to actively encourage, value and welcome staff with a disability; ensure our built, digital and communication environments are accessible; and embrace inclusion innovation for our staff, Clients and stakeholders.

Finally, we were thrilled to have our expertise recognised at the Australian Financial Review's 2023 Most Innovative Companies Awards, where we picked up two accolades. One for Most



Innovative Company – Government, Education and Not-For-Profit and the other for Best Internal Innovation for the design of our flagship St Leonards office.

I, our Board, and our entire team at Guide Dogs are dedicated to creating opportunities for, and championing the rights of, people with low vision or blindness – and to build a community of individuals who share our mindset and ambition for accessibility and inclusivity.

**Dale Cleaver,
CEO, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT**



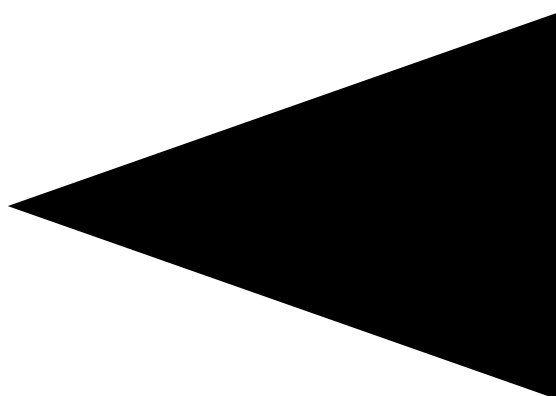
A message from our Board.

On behalf of the Board of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, I wish to acknowledge the successes we have achieved in being an accessible and inclusive workplace and join with our executive and all employees in building on our wider commitment to continue to drive innovation and demonstrate best practice.

In addition to the collective expertise provided by our Executive Leadership Team and others, our Board has benefitted from listening to, and learning from, the advice provided by our directors with lived experience of disability. As such, we are committed to broadening the diversity of our Board and organisational leadership.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan, to be implemented in the next three years, will help us actively engage in widening our individual and collective disability awareness and foster accessible and inclusive practices.

**Kieran Lane,
Chair, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT**





Executive Summary.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's commitment to access and inclusion is at the core of what we do.

Everyone at Guide Dogs believes we all have a right to equality and inclusion – to be respected and empowered to make our own choices about the lives we lead and enjoy equal access to places, services and opportunities.

We recognise and respect that people with disability are the experts in their own lives. As such, in our decisions and actions we will always be guided by the expertise of those with lived experience.

The initiatives within this document build on our history of service provision, advocacy and creating social change whilst recognising we have more we can do and seeking to address these gaps through continued action and innovation.

From our Board and our Executive Leadership Team through to all our staff and volunteers we will live our values and demonstrate best practice in achieving our commitments within this Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) and incorporating best practice in accessibility and inclusion.

We primarily prescribe to, and are driven by, the desire to remove

attitudinal, physical, systemic and other barriers to genuine equity and inclusion.

We take a holistic view of disability. This includes considering visible and invisible disabilities, as well as temporary and situational impairment people may experience during their lifetime. We also subscribe to the **social model of disability** that redefines disability as the environment creating the physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers that people living with disability face.

We believe our own practices must ensure all people with disability can engage with us whether as a client, employee, volunteer, donor or other stakeholder.

This DIAP is informed by lived experience and best practice. In preparing this document, we have engaged with and learnt from:

- an independent Audit of our current practices and subsequent recommendations provided by the highly-regarded Australian Network on Disability.
- our clients, volunteers and donors with lived experience of disability.
- our employees who have lived experience of disability.
- our Customer Advisory Panel.

- our Client-facing and advisory staff, who bring a wealth of knowledge gained through formal qualifications and experience gained working with individual Clients, advising external bodies and contributing to external policy reviews.

- our engagement and collaboration with the Disability Sector.

Our DIAP forms a key pillar of our broader organisational commitment to diversity.



This DIAP is built on three key strategic priorities set out below, each of which contains specific actions and measures.

1. **People.**

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will become an employer of choice for people with disability through our accessible and inclusive workplace and practices. We actively welcome, value and encourage staff and volunteers with disability and provide tools for their career success. We embed inclusiveness into all our human resource practices and policies across recruitment, onboarding and career development. We also provide the tools, training and support needed to ensure employees with disability can confidently progress their careers.

To achieve this, we will support success of current and future employees through eliminate remaining barriers to employment and career progression and creating innovative pathways and partnerships to ensure we are recognised as an employer of choice for people with disability. We are committed to seeing people with lived experience of disability employed across all levels and business units within Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

By 2027, a minimum of 15 percent of our staff will identify as having a disability. We are committed to seeing this lived experience at all levels of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.



2. Practices.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will ensure our built, digital and communication environments are accessible to all.

To achieve this goal, we will embed accessibility principles into our procurement, communications, and property approaches, and build capability of staff to deliver to these guidelines. We will create frameworks and governance processes to identify and continually improve accessibility.

By 2027, external, independent audit results by appropriately qualified professionals will demonstrate the high-level accessibility of our premises, systems, processes and communications.



3. Leadership.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will demonstrate best practice and embrace inclusion innovation for our staff, clients and stakeholders and be recognised as leader in this space.

To achieve this goal, we will build relationships and networks, and use our experience, success and influence to raise awareness and champion systemic improvements to accessibility and disability inclusion.

By 2027, we will demonstrate active involvement with key external networks influencing industry and government policy and practice.

Compliance obligations and frameworks.

Our Commitment to Access and Inclusion exists regardless of our obligations under numerous legislative, regulatory and other compliance frameworks.

However, we are cognisant of our obligations for compliance in all our activities and are informed by the following Legislation and Government Strategies, policies and directives.

The **United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability**, of which Australia is a signatory, sets out the fundamental rights of people with Disability. These comprehensive rights promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all fundamental freedoms and human rights by all persons with disability.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 recognises that all levels of Government must play a role in providing mainstream, specialised supports and services, and accessible Infrastructure and systems to all people with disability regardless of their eligibility for the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) or other structured support systems. It provides national leadership and guides public policy, mainstream services and systems and communities to achieve a more inclusive society.

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)** prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, education, publicly accessed premises, in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, transport including aircraft and taxi and rideshare services, accommodation, clubs and association and in other areas.

The Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010 is legislated under the Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) to ensure that people with disability, their family members and friends have equal access to public buildings. To achieve this, it is imperative that building certifiers, developers and manager fulfil their responsibilities to people with disability under the Act.

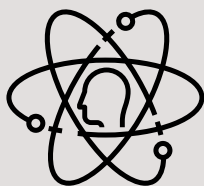
The **Disability Inclusion Act (NSW) 2014** commits the NSW Government to making NSW communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability now and into the future. It applies to NSW Government, Local Government (Councils) and some other public authorities and requires them to develop and implement a Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

The **Discrimination Act 1991 (ACT)** prohibits direct or indirect discrimination against someone with a disability, medical condition, or work-related injury.

The **Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)** enables adverse action to be taken against employers or potential employers if they act in a discriminatory manner against an employee or potential employee because of their disability.



Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's Mission and Values.



Our clients come first in everything we do.

Our core values are all underpinned by our focus and dedication towards those in our communities who need us the most.



Walk the talk.

The buck stops with us. So we keep our word and keep going, no matter what.

To demonstrate our commitment to this value, we will:

- be accountable and empowered to take ownership of outcomes;
- be proactive, resilient and persevere when things are difficult;
- communicate respectfully, openly and honestly;
- act and deliver on our commitments.

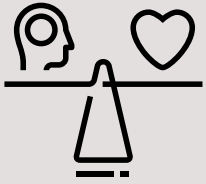


Lift each other.

From a guiding hand to a high five, we unleash and acknowledge everyone's potential.

To demonstrate our commitment to living this value, we will:

- partner with Client and stakeholders as equals;
- be collaborative and develop relationships with other teams;
- consider the perspective of Clients, donors, volunteers and staff in all decisions;
- partner with others to create better Client outcomes.

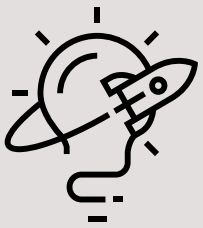


Lead with head and heart.

Forever focused on our purpose and mission, we combine care and careful planning to deliver successes worth celebrating.

To demonstrate our commitment to living this value, we will:

- engage with passion and commitment to the purpose;
- adapt our approach in response to new priorities;
- gather information and data to make informed decisions;
- celebrate others' successes and achievements.

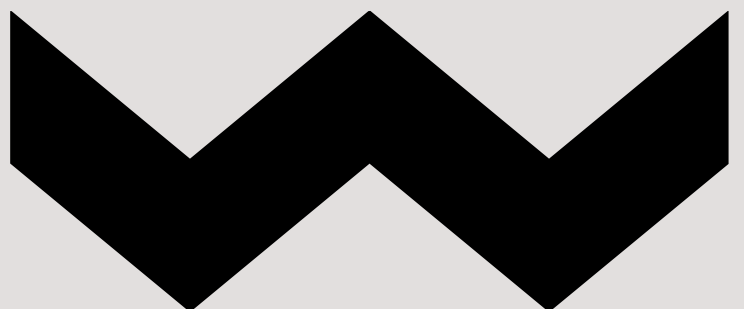


Never stop exploring.

We are fearlessly creative. We have always asked and answered the tough questions and if there is a better way, we will find it.

To demonstrate our commitment to living this value, we will:

- respectfully question and challenge current practice;
- reflect on our actions and on lessons learnt;
- be curious and seek to understand the problem and offer a solution;
- explore creative alternatives and opportunities for continuous improvement;
- adopt new ways of doing things.



Our impact.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is the leading provider of Guide Dogs and orientation and mobility services that enable people with low vision or blindness to get around their communities safely and independently.

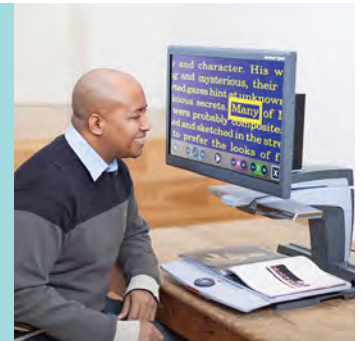
In 2023 we delivered:

2,331

Client programs delivered.

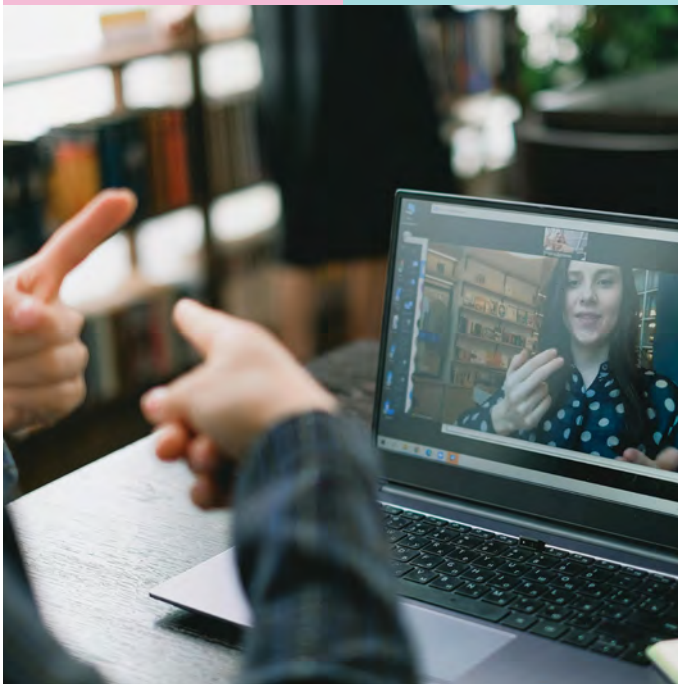
54,164

hours of Client services delivered, including 23,348 hours for regional Clients.



2,756

pieces of equipment distributed, such as white canes and accessories.



86

Therapy Dogs.



37

Guide Dogs placed with Handlers bringing the total of Guide Dogs working in our community currently to 280.

We support our Clients to pursue meaningful activities that are important to them and to build and maintain strong relationships and connections to help them feel more positive about the future.

In 2023 we surveyed our Clients as part of our Social Impact Measures Framework.

- 75% of Clients say they are more confident performing daily activities.
- 82% of Clients say they are more independent when getting out and about.
- 74% of Clients say they are more confident doing activities that are important to them.
- 79% of Clients say they recognise more of their strengths.



Recent achievements.

Continual improvement of disability inclusion across our business has always been a key priority of our leadership team and is at the heart of our culture.

Since 2021, improving our people's experience of Disability Inclusion has been formally governed through a Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) made up of staff, with executive sponsorship. The DISC has played a key role in determining our disability inclusion priorities and supporting delivery and tracking of our agreed objectives.

In 2022, recognising the value of external assessment of our current practices and policies, we engaged the Australian Network on Disability to conduct an independent audit. This resulted in several recommendations which have been incorporated into this DIAP.

In the past year, key disability inclusion highlights include:

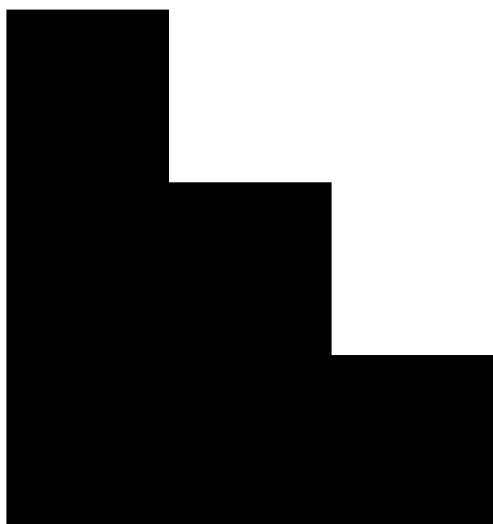
- Receiving two awards at the 2023 Australian Financial Review's 2023 Most Innovative Companies Awards. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT was awarded Most Innovative Company – Government, Education and Not-For-Profit category as well as being
- awarded Best Internal Innovation for the design of our flagship St Leonards office.
- Appointment of Disability Inclusion Advisor to support delivery and governance of disability inclusion activities across the organisation
- Launch of the GDN Disability Employee Network, which is open to all employees who identify with lived experience of disability and any other staff keen to be allies.
- Created and introduced a Social Change team who will help drive and increase disability inclusion in the broader community by sharing our expertise.
- Completion of mandatory organisation-wide Disability Awareness Training.
- Development of a comprehensive Workplace Adjustment Policy.
- Upgrade to our printing solutions to provide accessible machines.
- Upgrade to our employee and visitor registration process and technology to be accessible.

Why we must all do better.

As individuals, as organisations, as businesses, as government, as communities, as members of the collective human experience we need to do more to ensure all our places and practices are inclusive for us all.

Disability impacts many more of us than is captured with statistics. People can be born with disability, they can acquire permanent disability later in life, they may experience temporary or even situational disability in relation to an environment they are within at the time.

The individual experience of disability and the complexities around this shape us all and impact our identity and sense of belonging.



Priorities and key commitments - 2024 to 2027.

Through this DIAP, Guide Dogs is working to deliver key accessibility and inclusion commitments across key strategic priorities for 2024 to 2027.

Achieving these commitments will further enhance the capacity of our workforce, increase our collective knowledge and understanding of access and inclusion. This will enable us to demonstrate and practice true leadership across all levels of our workforce and with external stakeholders.



Priority 1: Our people.

Guide Dogs recognises that meaningful employment for people with disability is paramount in supporting and enabling an individual to feel fulfilled and connected. It is also critical in providing financial security which facilitates better housing and social options and increased choice and control.

Within our workforce, we know that diversity of experience within the workplace must reflect with diversity of our communities. Critically, there is substantial untapped potential from excluding people with disability from the workforce. We are committed to changing this.

Our commitment: We are committed to being recognised as an employer of choice for people with disability through our accessible and inclusive workplace and practices.

We will achieve this by removing remaining barriers to full participation within our organisation and create genuine pathways for career advancement.

By 2027, a minimum of 15 percent of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's staff will identify as having a disability.

Action 1.1

Complete a thorough assessment of our current employment representation

1.1 Deliverables:

- Our People and Culture Team will lead implementation of a New Human Resources Information System by 2024.
- From 2024 onwards, our People and Culture Team will report annually on candidate and employee disability status and workplace adjustment requests ensuring individual privacy is protected.

Action 1.2

Update and implement accessible and inclusive recruitment policy and process.

1.2 Deliverables:

- By 2024, we will have updated our Recruitment policy and processes to ensure accessibility and inclusion.
- From 2024, all application and supporting materials will be available in alternative formats on request with this communicated in advertising materials.

Action 1.3

Ensure staff with a disability have access to tools and skills to complete their roles.

1.3 Deliverable:

By 2024, we will ensure that when new systems and products are rolled out, training materials and learning content will be available and delivered accessibly.

Action 1.4

Implement a workplace adjustments process and passport.

1.4 Deliverables:

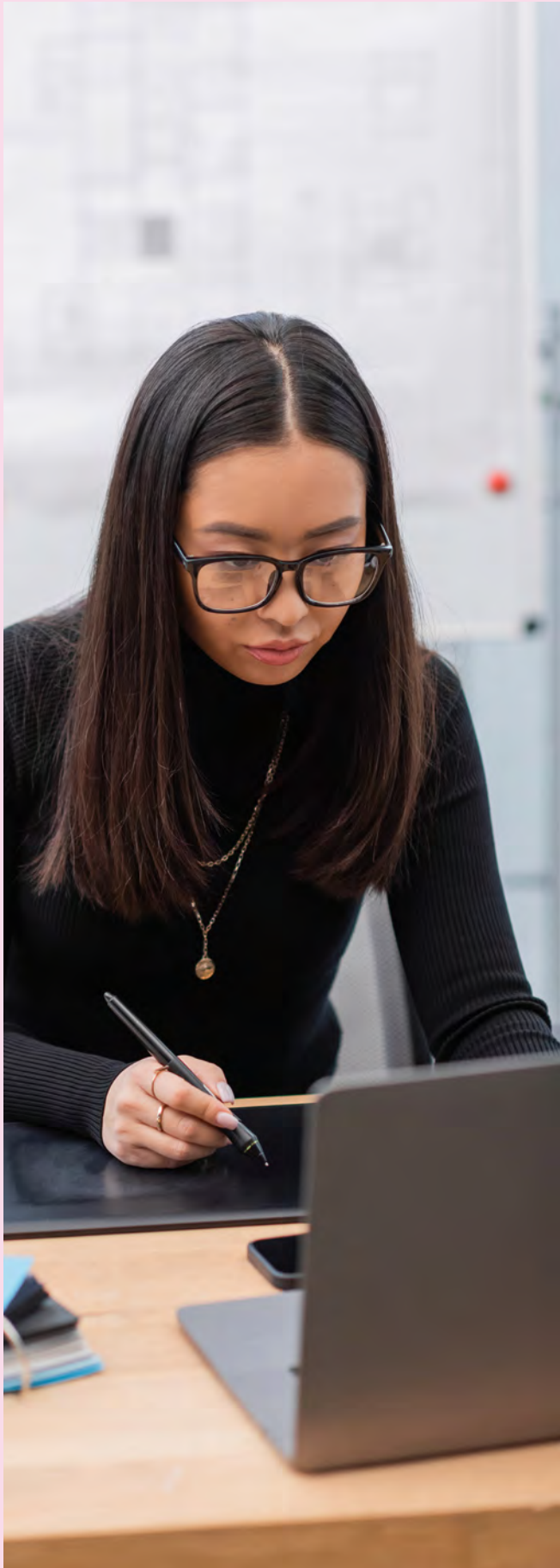
- By 2024, we will have a new workplace adjustment policy and procedure available and incorporated into recruitment and employment practices.
- During 2024, all Managers will receive training on promoting and actioning our workplace adjustment policy and procedure.

Action 1.5

Create innovative pathways and partnerships to increase employment and career progression opportunities.

1.5 Deliverables:

- By 2025, we will have developed a strategy to access talented candidates with disability through innovative programs or partnerships, including support for business units to actively recruit and create ongoing success in a wide range of positions.
- By 2026, we will have developed and implemented a graduate employment program for people with disability.
- By 2027, we will have developed and implemented a strategy to promote leadership and career advancement pathways for staff with disability.
- By 2027, our Board will have increased the number of Directors with lived experience through active recruitment and supporting development of future leaders.

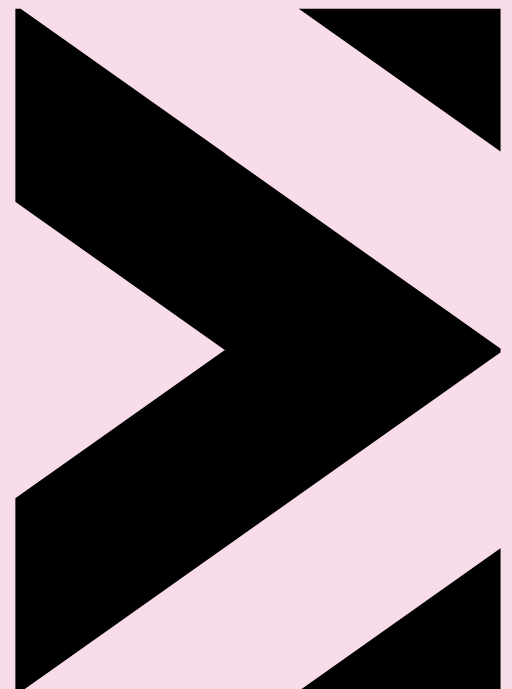


Action 1.6

Provide mandatory disability training for all staff.

1.6 Deliverables:

- From 2024, we will ensure all staff complete GDN developed accessibility modules during the induction process and every three years thereafter.
- From 2024, we will ensure that all staff complete GDN developed low vision and blindness modules during the induction process and every three years thereafter.
- We will ensure all staff complete externally delivered, comprehensive Disability Awareness Training every three years.



Priority 2 – Our practices.

People’s sense of belonging and connection is intrinsically linked to their ability to participate in the workforce and within their broader communities. Accessible and inclusive places and practices are essential in enabling a person with disability’s right to participation.

Our commitment

We are committed to being recognised as a leader of accessibility and inclusion in our places and practices.

We will achieve this by ensuring all our premises meet accessibility standards and demonstrate best practice and innovation in design.

We will ensure our systems and processes are accessible and staff have access to the technology and tools they need to work effectively.

We will ensure accessibility and inclusivity of internal and external events and communications through alignment with best practice accessibility standards.

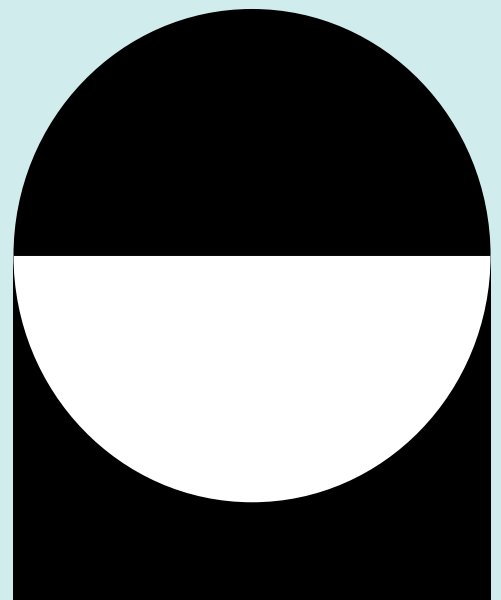
By 2027, external audit results will demonstrate the high-level accessibility of our premises, systems, processes and communications. As our commitment spans the needs of all people with disability we will engage external assessors as our current internal access consultant’s expertise focuses on low vision and blindness.

Action 2.1

Build accountability and transparency through DIAP reporting and feedback mechanisms.

2.1 Deliverables:

- From 2024, we will continue to monitor our progress against our DIAP commitments and report this regularly to the Executive Leadership Team and the Board.
- By 2025, we will have reviewed and revised our accessibility and inclusion stakeholder feedback process.



Action 2.2

Introduce and implement minimum accessibility standards for systems and processes.

2.2 Deliverables:

- From 2024, all new projects will require accessibility standards are met from initiation to receive approval.
- From 2024, an accessibility checklist will be applied to all internal and external events planning and delivery.
- By 2024, all employee staff claim forms and processes for claiming staff expenses will be accessible.
- By 2024, accessible printing solutions will be implemented across all offices.
- By 2024, our procurement policies, tenders and contract documentation will all include a requirement for minimum accessibility standards for all products we purchase.

Action 2.3

Update brand guidelines and materials to ensure alignment with the current WCAG AA accessibility standard.

2.3 Deliverables:

- By 2024, our Brand guidelines will be updated for greater accessibility of end materials.
- By 2024, we will ensure all our branded templates are checked for accessibility, updated for compliance where required and implemented for use by all employees.
- From 2024, we will ensure new collateral created will be accessible.
- From 2025, all current and continuing and future marketing collateral and materials will comply with updated branding and accessibility.

Action 2.4

Build internal capability to deliver to accessibility standards.

2.4 Deliverables:

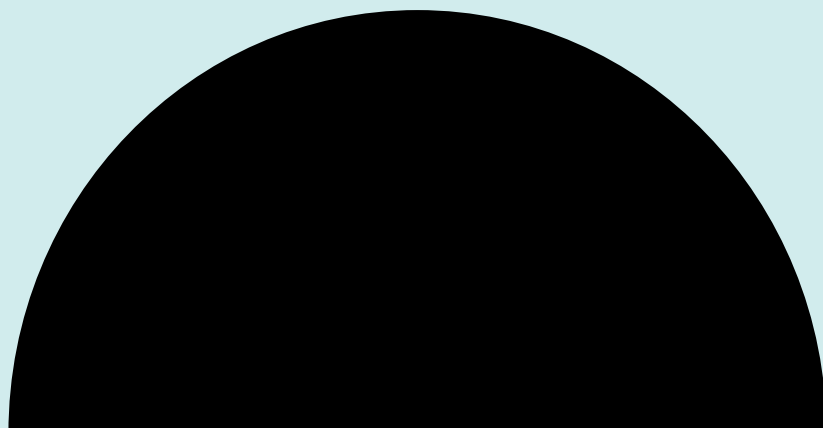
- By 2024, all briefing documents to partner marketing agencies will include a requirement that they produce and deliver accessible content. Guidelines will be developed and provided to support this.
- By 2025, Accessibility and Assistive Technology Training will be developed and delivered biennially for IT support partners.

Action 2.5

Ensure all premises and facilities meet and exceed Australian Accessibility Standards and demonstrate best practice and innovation in design by 2027 through improvement or replacement

2.5 Deliverables:

- By 2024, we will have completed a thorough audit of all premises
- My 2024, we will have policy and processes in place to ensure accessibility is essential in the choice of and planning for new premises
- By 2025, we will have developed a comprehensive premises improvement plan
- By 2025, we will have installed recommended hearing augmentation systems.



Priority 3 – Leadership and impact.

Communities grow and evolve. This is particularly apparent in areas of technology, development of public spaces, transport infrastructure and vehicles.

As such, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is committed to anticipating where possible and being responsive to this growth and change. We will be proactive in advocating for and influencing accessible and inclusive design and driving innovation to ensure people with disability are always able to participate fully in all aspects of their community.

Our commitment

We commit to being recognised by our community, government and industry as a leader in accessibility and inclusion.

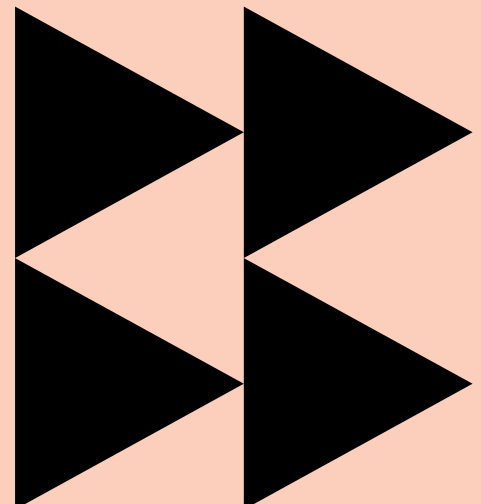
We will achieve this by demonstrating best practice and embracing inclusion and innovation for our staff, clients and stakeholders. We will build relationships and networks and use our experience, success and influence to raise awareness and champion systemic improvements to accessibility and disability inclusion.

By 2027, we will demonstrate active involvement with key external networks influencing industry and government policy and practice.

Action 3.1 Influence and educate our community and external stakeholders on best practice accessibility.

3.1 Deliverables

- By 2024, we will have developed a communication plan to promote our inclusion actions to staff, clients and stakeholders.
- By 2024, we will ensure accessibility principles are included in all supplier and partnership agreements.
- By 2024, we will have promoted Guide Dogs NSW/ACT online accessibility training and resources externally to drive broader community education
- By 2024, we will have developed a strategy to share best practice accessible and inclusive design externally.



Action 3.2

Actively participate in key sector bodies to affect systemic change.

3.2 Deliverable:

From 2024, we will ensure attendance and presentations provided to share expertise at key sector events.

Action 3.3

Contribute our expertise to public policy and political engagement.

3.3 Deliverables:

- In 2024, and into the future we will ensure policy statements relating to key accessibility and inclusion issues are developed and available publicly to educate and empower the broader community.
- In 2024, and into the future we will continue engagement with industry and government bodies on key policy issues.



Enabling and tracking outcomes.

Implementation

Our DIAP has been drafted through a consultative process and informed by the recommendations stemming from the 2022 independent audit conducted by the Australian Network on Disability.

Our draft document was subject to additional consultation and feedback opportunities by our employees, our Consumer Advisory Panel, our board cross section of clients to accept an invitation to provide feedback and our Board. Feedback received through this review process was incorporated into this final document.

Monitoring

Our Disability Inclusion Steering Committee includes representatives from each business with individuals responsible for reporting progress against DIAP deliverables.

Our Executive Sponsor for Disability inclusion, who is also Chair of the Disability Inclusion Steering Committee, will report monthly to the Executive Leadership Team tracking the organisation's progress against our commitments.

Our CEO will subsequently ensure the Board is across our successes, but also informed of any potential additional resources that may be required to achieve our objectives.

Evaluation

We will regularly engage and consult with our internal resources, including employees with lived experience of disability; our Disability Inclusion Steering Committee; our Disability Employee Network; and our Customer Advisory Panel to ensure we are meeting our objectives. We will further consult with our broader client community and other stakeholders to inform our progress and our priorities for future DIAPS.

We will also engage the Australian Network on Disability to undertake another comprehensive, independent audit of our practices and outcomes to measure our success of this DIAP.

Acknowledgements and thanks.

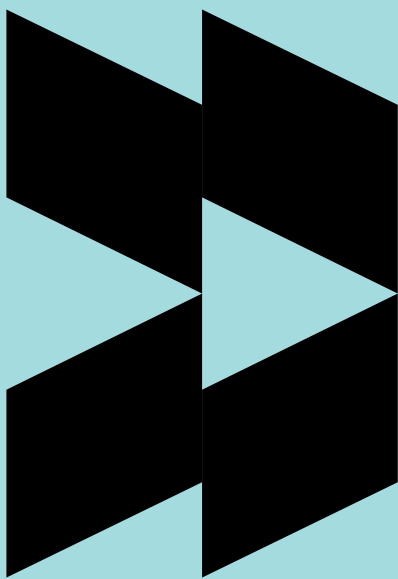
Thank you to our Board, our Executive Leadership Team, and our Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) for driving the development of this document.

Thanks to Glenn Mason, Chief Technology Officer and Gemma Farquhar, Chief People Office, Executive Leadership Team sponsors of the Disability Inclusion Steering Committee and Jodi Martin, General Manager Strategy and Innovation for championing the development of this DIAP.

Most importantly, however, are the thanks that must go to our Clients, our Customer Advisory Panel and our Disability Employee Network, who have all shared their expertise, which was integral to determining our access and inclusion priorities.







We're here whenever you need us.

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🌐 nsw.guidedogs.com.au

Guide Dogs.

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