

VLSB+C Access and Inclusion plan

2020 - 2023

Message from the Commissioner

I am very pleased to announce the launch of our first Access and Inclusion Plan for 2020-2023.

This plan was developed through a number of consultation and stakeholder sessions. These were critical to helping us understand the scope of where we need to make changes in our operations, so that we can make sure our services are accessible to the Victorian public. As a modern regulator of the legal profession, this is particularly important for us.

Through our Access and Inclusion Plan we will focus on four areas:

- Engagement and Communication – improving the ways that people can connect with us;
- Facilities – ensuring we provide equitable access to our office as well as workplace facilities and amenities;
- Systems and Processes – embedding access and inclusion principals into our everyday thinking and planning;
- Employment – creating a welcoming and supportive work environment modelled on best practice for employing people with a disability.

Underpinning this plan is our commitment to improving the community's access to justice, and to supporting a fairer and more inclusive justice system for all.

To deliver on this plan, we must ensure that our staff are equipped with the skills and resources to provide these services in an accessible way. This capability building process has already commenced and will be further advanced as this 3 year plan is implemented. Our Access and Inclusion Committee will monitor and support this plan, and our progress will be reported to our Board regularly.

I'm proud to be the sponsor and champion of this initiative and look forward to its achievements over the next three years.

Fiona McLeay
Victorian Legal Services Board CEO and Commissioner



Introduction



People with disability in Australia make up one in five of our population or just over 4 million people in total (*ABS Data) making it essential that our services and locations are accessible to everyone.

The objectives of an Access and Inclusion Plan (AIP) are to ensure that all members of the community have equitable and dignified access to Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner services, programs, activities, information, communication and employment opportunities that we all access in our society.

The Access and Inclusion Plan provides the framework for us to address disability access issues across all areas of our workplace and supports us in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for people with disability, as well as meeting our legislative obligations. During the 3 year life of this framework, we are committed to providing a proactive approach to enable full and active participation for people with disability by embedding disability inclusive practices in everything we do.

The process of developing this Access and Inclusion Plan included:

- Review and analysis of current work processes and activities
- Incorporating best practice in access and inclusion
- Consultation with staff and external stakeholders

We would like to acknowledge our key stakeholders for providing their vital contributions to the development of this plan through consultations, surveys and workshops.

Our Access and Inclusion Plan has the potential to demonstrate leadership in access and inclusion for people with disability with the plan modelling all appropriate components including:

- Identifying access barriers to programs, services, communication, built environment, policies, processes and employment
- Outlining actions and timelines to remove barriers
- Promoting accountability by identifying who has responsibility for ensuring actions are completed
- Outlining the Governance process of how monitoring, reviewing and evaluating of the AIP will occur.

Our commitment to continuous improvement also includes how we will in future strengthen our links with people with disability and disability organisations to capture ensure lived experience of people with disability.



Policy and Legislation Context



Our Access and Inclusion Plan (also known as a Disability Action Plan) is guided by State, Commonwealth and International legislation and policies. As a Victorian public-sector body, we are required under Section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to develop, maintain, and review a Disability Action Plan for the purpose of:

- a. reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- b. reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- c. promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability
- d. achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

In addition to the Victorian Disability Act 2006, this Plan also commits to the principles of the following frameworks and legislation:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Access to Premises Standards 2010 (Cth)
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Cth)
- The Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, and
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Equitable and dignified access to services, facilities, communications and employment processes can be achieved by embedding access and inclusion in the organisations services, programs, activities, information, communication and employment opportunities, and this starts with building a long-term strategy and framework.

The Framework for Access and Inclusion



In understanding that the aforementioned key legislation is imperative to protect the rights of people with disability, we are mindful that access and inclusion begins with the consideration of the Social Model of Disability.

Historically, the 'medical model' for people with disability indicated that it was disability that was the problem, and that a person with disability needed to be 'fixed' or 'cured' by medical professionals. The medical model of disability was all about what a person cannot do and cannot be.

The Social Model of Disability, however, provides us with a new concept of looking at the constraints that society creates for people with disability. These constraints include barriers relating to the built environment, access to employment, and equitable services, programs and communication. We aim to remove these barriers to ensure people with disability are included to promote an environment where attitudinal barriers are removed, and access and inclusion is widely considered in all policies, processes and decisions.

The United Nations definition of disability promotes the Social Model of disability and is outlined below:

Disability includes long-term (lasting 6 months or more) physical, mental health, intellectual, neurological or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

At the Victorian Legal Services Board & Commissioner, our commitment to the Social Model of Disability is demonstrated by the title of our plan; Access and Inclusion Plan 2020 – 2023. Current legislation outlines the concept of Disability Action Plans, however focusing on removing barriers highlights the desired outcomes of access and inclusion in everything we do.

Access to Justice



"...it is vital that the rule of law and the working of the justice system is maintained and protected, and that people have trust and confidence in its legal profession". – Fiona McLeay, Victorian Legal Services Board CEO and Commissioner (Oct 2018 – VLSB+C Strategy: A clear direction).

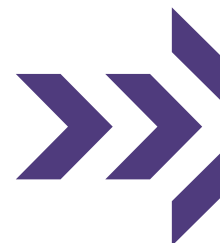
As this is our first Access and Inclusion Plan, we aim to improve our services, programs and employment opportunities for people with disability, as well take the opportunity to influence and educate the legal profession to improve Access to Justice for people with disability.

Access to a fair and impartial justice system is a fundamental principle of the rule of law. For people with disability to participate in an equitable system, greater awareness is required by legal professionals and court staff to ensure barriers are removed in all legal proceedings.

We need to be responsive and understanding to the needs of people with disability in an equitable, efficient and non-discriminatory manner and provide strategies to eliminate barriers and provide adjustments to processes and judicial proceedings where applicable.

We are committed to being an effective and trusted regulator of the Victorian legal profession, and we have an opportunity to lead by example in access to justice for people with disability. Our underlying commitment is supported by the following strategies and frameworks:

- + United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
Article 13: Access to justice - States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages.
- + The National Disability Strategy
The National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 was developed in response to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Australia ratified in 2007.
Policy Direction 2: Rights protection, justice and legislation — statutory protections such as anti-discrimination measures, complaints mechanisms, advocacy, the electoral and justice systems.



'Our Progress toward Access and Inclusion'



"Building on our current strengths and capabilities, we look forward to advancing our agenda on access and inclusion with the delivery of this plan." - Fiona McLeay, Victorian Legal Services Board CEO and Commissioner

The purpose of our Access and Inclusion Plan is to deliver accessible services, programs, communications and employment opportunities for people with disability. Although this is our first Access & Inclusion Plan, our commitment to access and inclusion has already delivered successful initiatives into ongoing business-as-usual activity. As we continue to build momentum in this area, the following initiatives are now underway:

Our Website

Our website provides a range of relevant information for both lawyers and consumers. We have been working on updating our website, and ensuring we add access features such as web-enabled support on mobile devices, updated color schemes with compliant contrast and scalable text to increase usability. We are working toward AA accessibility standards as per Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and have commenced User Acceptance Testing (UAT). In addition, a review of our online PDF documents is currently underway where they will be converted to HTML content to improve accessibility, as well as content searchability.

The next stage of our website update will include options for web-based forms as well as printable alternatives and our Annual Reports will also be made available in HTML content on our site.

Recruitment and Retention

As part of our recruitment policies and processes, our job advertisements have been updated to include workplace adjustments and providing a contact point for applicants who require assistance or adjustments to fully participate in the interview process. This is a great starting point for a much more comprehensive update as set out in our Access and Inclusion Plan.

Our on-boarding process includes a workplace assessment to determine modifications and adjustments to the working environment, including new and appropriate equipment or furniture as well as flexible working arrangements, such as working from home and changes to start and finish times.

Access and Inclusion towards 2023

Access and Inclusion Plan – Key Priority Areas

Priority 1 – Inclusive Engagement and Communication

People with disability use many alternative formats for communication and information. Our commitment to improve access and inclusion to our services, activities, programs and engagement with people with disability will be equitable, dignified and responsive.

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
1 (a)	Access and inclusion principles in our Outreach Program and initiatives increases positive engagement for people with disability.	Ensure our Outreach Program policies and processes include access requirements. Develop an awareness campaign to promote the Outreach Program to disability organisations and our Legal Practitioner network.	Year 2	Improved engagement outcomes for people with disability. Increased opportunities to participate in Outreach Programs for people with disability.	The Outreach Program is updated and implemented and has clear and defined outcomes to include people with disability.	Policy & Outreach Division – Comms & Engagement
1 (b)	Our Grants Program is fair and equitable and includes opportunities for people with disability and disability organisations.	Review and update the Grants Program procedures to include access and inclusion requirements.	Year 1	Improved engagement outcomes for people with disability. Increased opportunities for Disability Organisations to participate in the Grants Program.	The Grants Program is updated and implemented with access and inclusion requirements.	Corporate Services Division - Grants
1 (c)	People with disability have a positive experience in all aspects of our services.	Review the Client Services Charter to include accessibility requirements for people with disability. Ensure Disability Confidence training is provided in the on-boarding process to all client-facing employees at VLSB+C.	Year 1 Year 1	Improved customer service experience for people with disability.	The Client Services Charter is reviewed and updated to include accessibility requirements.	Enquiries & Complaints Division People & Culture

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
1 (d)	People with disability can participate in all events and programs.	<p>Develop an Event Guideline to ensure all events are accessible.</p> <p>Promote the Event Guidelines internally and externally as a useful resource.</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>	<p>Increased participation by people with disability at events.</p> <p>Increased awareness of internal staff and external stakeholders to include people with disability at events.</p>	<p>Event Guidelines are developed and communicated to include access requirements for people with disability.</p>	<p>Corporate Services Division – Facilities & Administrative Services</p> <p>Policy & Outreach Division - Comms & Engagement</p>
1 (e)	Accessible communication styles and methods are available to people with disability.	<p>Complete an external Audit of our internal and external websites to ensure they are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA.</p> <p>Review our website information for alternative formats of documents.</p> <p>Provide a dedicated section on both the internal and external websites to provide relevant information for people with disability.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to train staff on the use of Communication Access Boards, TTY and Hearing Loops.</p> <p>Review and update internal Brand Guidelines to ensure access requirements are included, such as captions on all videos, Plain English and Easy English, as well as accessible fonts, logos and language.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>People with disability feel included and have access to the information they need in the format they require.</p>	<p>Our website meets Level AA compliance to WCAG.</p> <p>Alternative formats are available for people with disability</p> <p>Information on services, programs and events are available on our website for people with disability.</p> <p>Staff training for accessible communication has been developed and implemented.</p> <p>Our Brand Guidelines are reviewed and updated.</p>	<p>Corporate Services Division – IT</p> <p>People & Culture</p> <p>Policy & Outreach Division - Comms & Engagement</p>
1 (f)	Our services promote the importance of Access to Justice.	<p>Provide tools and resources on our website to create awareness of Access to Justice to Legal Practitioner networks and Disability organisations.</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and awareness of Access to Justice for people with disability.</p>	<p>Tools and resources are provided on our website</p>	<p>Access & Inclusion Committee</p>

Access and Inclusion towards 2023

Access and Inclusion Plan – Key Priority Areas

Priority 2 – Inclusive Facilities

People with disability can face multiple barriers in society with limited access to the physical and built environment as well as workplace facilities and amenities. Our commitment to removing barriers for people with disability will consider inclusive universal design principles that consider the varied abilities of our community.

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
2 (a)	Accessible and inclusive design practices are embedded in all infrastructure policies and processes.	<p>Review the workplace environment to remove barriers in areas such as the kitchen, meeting rooms and general office space.</p> <p>Re-evaluate the Access Audit Report to ensure a beyond compliance approach is considered and adopted.</p> <p>Develop and implement a Universal Design framework to ensure all new infrastructure builds, retrofits and maintenance of office facilities and amenities are accessible to everyone.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>	<p>A fully accessible environment is created for clients and employees with disability.</p> <p>Our workplace is welcoming and inclusive for people with disability.</p>	<p>A checklist is created to assess and remove barriers in the workplace on a regular basis.</p> <p>The Access Audit Report is reviewed with actions and timelines for implementation.</p> <p>A Universal Design Framework has been developed and implemented.</p>	Corporate Services Division – Facilities & Administrative Services

Access and Inclusion towards 2023

Access and Inclusion Plan – Key Priority Areas

Priority 3 – Inclusive Systems and Processes

People with disability often experience systemic exclusion by inaccessible processes, policies and systems. Our commitment to include people with disability in all that we do begins by embedding access and inclusion in our processes, policies and systems.

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
3 (a)	VLSB+C supports our Suppliers in equitable practices for people with disability.	Embed social procurement into our relevant policies and processes, including access and inclusion criteria as an integral component of procurement.	Year 1	Increased economic participation for people with disability in our community.	Our internal procurement processes are reviewed and updated to include access and inclusion criteria.	Corporate Services Division – Finance & Investments / Governance
3 (b)	People with disability have a voice and their concerns are understood and respected.	Review complaint and feedback systems to include a disability related category for the purpose of continuous improvement.	Year 2	Systemic issues are identified and resolved in a timely manner. Increased satisfaction in customer service experience.	Our complaints system has the capability to capture systemic issues relating to people with disability.	Enquiries & Complaints Division
3 (c)	People with disability in rural and hard-to-reach communities can access services and programs.	Develop and implement processes to ensure access requirements are considered for visits to rural and remote clients.	Year 2	Increased satisfaction and inclusion of people with disability in our community.	Access requests are embedded as a standard process for visits to rural and remote clients.	Enquiries & Complaints Division

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
3 (d)	Our visitors and employees with disability are safe and secure in our office environment.	<p>Develop and implement Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for people with disability.</p> <p>Review overall EGRESS policies and procedures to ensure people with disability are included.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>People with disability feel respected and are safe and secure.</p>	<p>Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan process and procedure are developed and implemented.</p> <p>EGRESS policies and procedures are reviewed to include people with disability.</p>	<p>Corporate Services Division – Facilities & Administrative Services / Governance</p> <p>People & Culture</p>
3 (e)	Our commitment to employ people with disability is enhanced by promoting equal opportunities.	Develop and implement an Affirmative Action policy to employ people with disability.	Year 2	<p>Increased employment of people with disability.</p> <p>Increased awareness of internal staff on recruiting people with disability.</p>	An Affirmative Action Policy is developed and implemented.	People & Culture
3 (f)	Our commitment to continuous improvement is measured by tangible data and meaningful information.	<p>Investigate an annual reporting framework for baseline data relevant to the Access & Inclusion Plan.</p> <p>Consult with relevant divisions to identify relevant baseline data information.</p> <p>Review progress made on baseline data annually.</p>	Year 3	Increased data outputs create meaningful outcomes for people with disability.	<p>An Annual Reporting Framework is developed.</p> <p>Baseline data is captured and reported on with annual reviews.</p>	Access & Inclusion Committee

Access and Inclusion towards 2023

Access and Inclusion Plan – Key Priority Areas

Priority 4 – Inclusive Employment

People with disability are underrepresented in our workforce due to unconscious bias and low expectations. Our commitment is to model best practice employment of people with disability and create a welcoming and supportive work environment that enables positive career experiences for all employees.

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
4 (a)	VLSB+C is an employer of choice for people with disability.	Review and communicate our Workplace Adjustment Policy and Process, including information about JobAccess.	Year 1	Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.	Our Workplace Adjustment Policy is reviewed and updated.	People & Culture
		Review internal employment recruitment processes to ensure they are accessible.	Year 1	Increased employment of people with disability.	Our Recruitment processes and policies are reviewed and updated.	
		Develop and implement an employee satisfaction survey, including employees with disability, to capture information for continuous improvement.	Year 2	Increased satisfaction of employees with disability.	An annual employment satisfaction survey is developed and implemented to include people with disability.	
		Improve access to employment information on our website to improve diversity and showcase employment of people with disability.	Year 1		Our website is reviewed and updated to promote inclusion of people with disability in our workforce.	
		Scope and implement disability employment pathways, such as internships, graduates and work experience for people with disability.	Year 2		Dedicated employment pathways are developed and implemented.	
		Establish a Disability Employee Network to promote inclusion in the workplace	Year 2		A Disability Employee Network is established and implemented.	

	Objective	Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Responsibility
4 (b)	Our employees are disability confident and are aware of the Social Model of Disability.	<p>Review and update Learning and Development programs to include disability confidence training.</p> <p>Provide Recruitment Panel members with disability confidence training specific to interviewing people with disability.</p> <p>Promote a culture of inclusion and accessibility, including providing staff with disability confidence training.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.</p>	<p>Our Learning and Development programs include disability confidence training.</p> <p>Training on interviewing people with disability is developed and implemented for Recruitment Panel members.</p> <p>Disability confidence training is developed and implemented for all staff.</p>	<p>People & Culture</p>
4 (c)	The broader community recognises the contribution of people with disability to businesses and workplaces.	<p>VLSB+C will model best practice employment outcomes to influence and educate Legal Practitioners on the benefits of employing people with disability.</p> <p>Ensure annual awareness events such as International Day of People with Disability are promoted and celebrated.</p>	<p>Year 3</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>Increased employment and economic participation of people with disability.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.</p>	<p>Our communications and events include employees with disability to promote our inclusive workplace.</p>	<p>People & Culture</p> <p>Policy & Outreach Division – Comms & Engagement</p> <p>Access & Inclusion Committee</p>

Governance

We are committed to the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Plan 2020 – 2023 and will continue to monitor progress and respond effectively to changes within the disability sector at a National and State level. It is also necessary to ensure the implementation enables successful outcomes for people with disability in our community and within our workforce to increase access and inclusion. We will endeavor to strengthen its links with external stakeholders as part of its ongoing review process.

Governance and accountability arrangements have been established to support sustainable change and embed access and inclusion in everything we do. The following provisions are in place:

- All actions have timeframes
- All actions have a named division for accountability
- All actions have an identified success measure to monitor progress and achievement against outcomes
- An Access & Inclusion Committee is in place to meet quarterly to monitor and review progress
- We will seek employee and external feedback on our progress annually
- Progress and achievements will be reported annually in our annual report
- Our Board will be updated on a regular basis

The Access and Inclusion Plan and Committee are sponsored and championed by the Commissioner to position inclusion planning and actions as a high priority

Reporting and Accountability

People with disability expect sustainable change to improve outcomes in access and inclusion. Our commitment to reporting and accountability will provide transparency and regular communication of outcomes and achievements for people with disability.

Objective	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
We will be transparent in the progress of our plan.	<p>A Communications Plan is developed to increase awareness of the Access and Inclusion Plan with both internal employees and external Stakeholders.</p> <p>Quarterly Access & Inclusion Committee meetings.</p> <p>Publicly report against this plan in our annual report and on our website.</p> <p>Provide a copy of the Access & Inclusion Plan to publish on the Australian Human Rights Commission Disability Action Plan Register.</p> <p>Half-yearly progress report to the Board and Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>Annual communication to VLSB+C employees on the progress against our plan.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Access & Inclusion Committee
We are committed to be accountable for our progress.	<p>All Senior Leadership Team members are accountable for their commitments in this plan in annual performance development processes.</p> <p>Business planning processes include references to actions to embed access and inclusion for people with disability.</p>	Ongoing	Access & Inclusion Committee
We are committed to engage people with disability throughout the implementation of the plan.	<p>Consultation mechanisms are developed to ensure people with disability are involved in the implementation process and feedback.</p> <p>An annual employee survey is developed for feedback on the progress of the plan.</p>	Year 1	Access & Inclusion Committee

Feedback Welcome

To help us improve access and inclusion for people with disability, we value your feedback on this document via:

Email: admin@lsbc.vic.gov.au

Postal: GPO Box 492 Melbourne 3001

Phone: 03 9679 8001

Accessibility

This document is available upon request in alternative formats including:

- Hard copy in standard and large print
- Electronically by email in Word or PDF
- On our website at lsbc.vic.gov.au/accessibility