



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Border Protection

Disability Action Plan

2016–20

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Acknowledgements

This Disability Action Plan was developed in consultation with our staff, community groups, and organisations dedicated to enhancing the inclusion of people with disability across our agency.

The Department would like to thank the following groups for their assistance in developing this plan:

- DIBP Disability Forum (DDF)
- DIBP Disability Support Network (DDSN)
- Australian Network on Disability (AND)
- National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (NDRC)
- Australian Public Service Commission (APSC).

The Department is a supporter of the Australian Network on Disability and has been a member since 2007.

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I am a carer for my son who has schizophrenia.

The good thing about having a good relationship with your supervisor, or with your team members, is that I've always been able to be open and honest with those who I'm working with.

I felt that I was supported, not only for me but for my son, and it changed dramatically how I felt in the workplace, that I wasn't in this by myself, and it drew a feeling of commitment and attachment to the workplace.

- Robyn Hull

Foreword and vision

We are pleased to present the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's *Disability Action Plan 2016–20*.

In 2008, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that 18.5 per cent of Australia's working population had some form of disability. This is a significant percentage of the potential workforce. However, as of 30 June 2016 only 1.98 per cent of the Department's workforce identifies as having a disability. The Department is committed to focus on disability to ensure that we can attract the broadest talent pool and the most capable workforce possible. In order to more accurately represent the Australian people, we must also improve our attitudes and policies for people with disability and establish trust between staff and managers.

Building an inclusive, accessible and disability confident workplace is of great importance to the Department's leadership team. The diversity of the Department's work, of its client base, and the broader community in which we operate, should be reflected in its people. A diverse workforce can give us critical insights across our service delivery areas, resulting in better outcomes for both staff and clients.

This plan supports the *Diversity Statement of Commitment* and our *People Strategy 2020* within the organisation. It also considers the broader framework of the Department of Social Services' *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*.

It has been developed in consultation with our staff and a range of external stakeholders.

Our vision for disability in the Department is:

'To be a workplace that actively welcomes, includes and develops people with disability.'

We commend the *Disability Action Plan 2016–20* and ask that all staff consider what they can do to contribute to a disability confident workplace.

Michael Outram, APM

Deputy Commissioner Operations
Disability Champion

Frances Finney

Assistant Secretary
Disability Co-Champion

Purpose

We aspire to be an organisation where all staff have equal access to development, promotion, services and opportunities.

The *Disability Action Plan 2016–20* will help us achieve this by setting out the initiatives and steps we will take to build up our workforce capability and make us a more professional organisation. We have focused on three key themes which inform our approach to disability in the workplace:

Leadership

Our leaders should be consultative, collaborative and committed to change. Leaders should help to facilitate an inclusive, trusting environment, whilst ensuring equal development opportunities. This enhances the motivation, morale, and job performance for all staff.

Awareness and inclusion

A high level of awareness of disability across the Department is essential for disability confidence. Informed, aware staff will lead to a more inclusive and welcoming workplace for people with disability. By promoting disability awareness both internally and externally, we position ourselves as an employer of choice for people with disability and have the opportunity to recruit from a wider talent pool.

Accessibility and opportunity

Ensuring that the Department's workplaces are accessible to people with disability means that everybody is able to perform to their full capacity and capability and provide dignity of access for all staff. Accessibility includes both the physical and virtual environment. Having an accessible working environment means that we are accessing a wider talent pool and can attract, recruit and retain the best staff.

It is not enough to talk about disability; we must work towards our vision of a workplace that actively welcomes, includes and develops people with disability. This plan is a practical sign of our commitment to this vision.

What is disability?

For data collection purposes, all APS agencies use the ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings 2003* definition:

“a person has a disability if they report that they have a limitation, restriction or impairment which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities”.

Disability can affect people in different ways, and some can be born with or acquire a disability either over time or after an incident or illness. A disability can be both visible or invisible and include a physical or mental health disorders (e.g. depression or anxiety).

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (the Act) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability, or because a person is a relative, carer, or friend of, or have a business, sporting or recreational relationship with, a person with disability. For further information relating to the definition of disability, see the Act.

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I have epilepsy and I'm very lucky in that it's not on a daily basis. If you are unaware of someone's disability, you cannot make an allowance.

When I say an allowance, sometimes a person is able to do 95 per cent of the job, but there may be 5 per cent that they are unable to do. It's not looking to shirk any type of responsibility or workplace requirement, but it sometimes means that workforce adjustment needs to occur.

I think listening is also about supporting that person to be in the workforce and to contribute to the best level they possibly can.

- Nicole O'Connor

Where we are

The Department's disability representation rate of 2.1 per cent is lower than the APS average of 3.7 per cent as at June 2016.

The *Disability Action Plan 2013-2016* contained several initiatives which the Department successfully met. These include:

- Appointing an engaged Disability Champion and Co-Champion
- Establishing and maintaining working relationships with peak disability organisations: the Australian Network on Disability, Diversity Council of Australia, National Disability Recruitment Coordinator
- National support for International Day of People with Disability
- Our web framework is approximately 60% conformant to WCAG 2.0 Level AA
- Annual participation in the AND Positive Action towards Career Engagement (PACE) mentoring programme.

Whilst these initiatives mark progress for the Department and staff with disability, we still have further to go.

Barriers to inclusion

There are a number of barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities, barriers are more than just physical obstacles, they are factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as:

- a physical environment that is not accessible,
- lack of relevant assistive technology (assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices),
- negative attitudes of people towards those with a disability,
- services, systems and policies that are nonexistent or that hinder involvement.

Often, more than one barrier occurs at a time and multiple barriers can make it extremely difficult for people with disabilities. Here are the most common barriers.

Attitudinal

Attitudinal barriers are the most basic and contribute to other barriers. Examples of attitudinal barriers include stereotyping, stigma, prejudice, and discrimination.

Today, society's understanding of disability is improving as we recognise "disability" as not considering it as a personal deficit or shortcoming, and instead thinking of it as a social responsibility where all people can fully participate. It is important to recognise and address challenges that all people—including those with disabilities experience.

Communication

Communication barriers are experienced by people who have disabilities that may affect hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and or understanding, and who use different ways to communicate than people who do not have these disabilities. Examples of communication barriers include:

- Use of small print or no large-print versions of material
- No Braille or versions for people who use screen readers
- Auditory messages may be inaccessible to people with hearing impairments, including videos that do not include captioning
- Oral communications without accompanying manual interpretation
- The use of technical language, long sentences, and words with many syllables.

Physical

Physical barriers are structural obstacles in natural or manmade environments that prevent or block mobility or access. An examples of physical barriers include:

- Steps and curbs that block a person with mobility impairment from entering a building
- No ramps available between levels
- Heavy doors or uneven surfaces that may be difficult to navigate.
- Inappropriate lighting and space.

Policy

Policy barriers are frequently related to a lack of awareness or enforcement of existing laws and regulations that require programmes and activities be accessible to people with disabilities.

Examples of policy barriers include, explicitly or unintentionally denying individuals with disabilities access to programs, services, benefits, or opportunities to participate within corporate policy.

Where we want to be

The Department's ideal future state is in our vision:

'To be a workplace that actively welcomes, includes and develops people with disability.'

We are committed to developing a workplace which welcomes and includes people with disability, and raising the profile of the Department as a disability friendly employer.

We want to see more staff with disability in senior roles, reduced separation rates, higher levels of community and Department engagement and increased development opportunities for staff with disability. We will do this by supporting and developing our managers, developing an environment of trust and openness, and improving the way in which we attract, retain and develop our staff and leaders.

This is highlighted in our Disability Action Plan. The Plan has been developed as a working document to improve our performance and remove barriers to participation for people with disability and those with a carer role. Specific, measurable actions have been developed to address the three identified goals, with milestones and key performance indicators for review to measure our progress.

The Plan

Leadership and engagement

Our leaders should be collaborative, engaging and committed to change, and help facilitate an inclusive, trusting and equal opportunity environment. This enhances the motivation, morale, and job performance of all staff.

Managers and leaders can drive change and increase confidence in our disability strategy by being welcoming and accommodating all staff with or without a disability. Staff at all levels across the Department have leadership responsibilities and should model the behaviour that is expected by the Department and its staff.

Strong leadership and engagement is essential to motivate, develop and retain our people. Leadership combined with an inclusive workplace culture will help attract people with disability, encourage staff to share their disability information with us, and allow the Department to work more effectively.

Goal	Action	Lead Work Areas Involved	Timeline
1. Provide active, mutually beneficial mentoring programmes for staff with disability	Continue and expand our Positive Action towards Career Engagement (PACE) mentoring through the Australian Network on Disability (AND).	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section Recruitment Section	Ongoing
2. Reinvigorate and maintain our existing disability employee networks (DDSN)	Actively promote the DDSN via internal communications twice a year.	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section Communications and Media Branch	Twice annually
3. Support from senior leaders, including the Disability Champion and Disability Co-Champion	Senior leaders raise the profile of access and inclusion by promoting the implementation of the <i>Disability Action Plan 2016-20</i> .	DIBP Senior Leadership Group	Ongoing from plan release date
	The Champions host two roundtables a year with DDSN representatives.	Disability Champion and Co-Champion Performance, Career and Inclusion Section	Twice annually
	The Department will be represented at all AND and APS Disability forums.	Disability Champion and Co-Champion Performance, Career and Inclusion Section	Ongoing

Awareness and inclusion

A high level of disability awareness across the Department is essential for disability confidence. Informed, aware staff will lead to a more inclusive and welcoming workplace for people with disability. By promoting disability awareness both internally and externally, we position ourselves as a disability employer of choice and have the opportunity to recruit from a wider talent pool which truly reflects the society we serve.

Our rates of disability disclosure are low compared to the APS average. This may be due to the perception that disclosing disability in the Department may negatively affect job prospects or others' perceptions. The more accurate our understanding of our disability cohort is, the better we can provide reasonable adjustments. This will lead to a more supportive, inclusive environment and help to maximise participation and contribution in the workplace.

Goal	Action	Lead Work Areas Involved	Timeline
1. Increase the disclosure rates of disability in the Department	Run a DIBP 10+10 session where 5 staff with disabilities share their experiences with 5 senior leaders within the Department.	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section	By end of 2017
2. Managers and staff have an awareness and understanding of disability in the workplace	Update disability information on Bordernet so that all staff are aware of our disability platform.	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section Web Operations	By end of 2016
	International Day of People with Disability is supported nationally by the Department through a range of activities and events.	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section Communications and Media Branch	Ongoing

Accessibility and opportunity

Ensuring that the Department's workplaces are accessible to people with disability means that everybody is able to perform to their full potential. Accessibility includes both the physical and virtual environment. Having an accessible working environment means that we have access to a wider talent pool and are able to attract, recruit and retain the best staff. It is also about valuing our staff and their differences.

Goal	Action	Lead Work Areas Involved	Timeline
1. Provide accessible web services for staff	Ensure all our intranet resources comply with WCAG 2.0 at an AAA level.	Performance, Career and Inclusion Section Web Operations	Review web services accessibility in 2017
2. Provide an accessible recruitment process for all potential applicants	Information regarding vacancies, recruitment processes and contact people is available in accessible formats.	Recruitment Section People and Support managers	Ongoing
	Undertake and implement a recruitment review of current attraction and retention strategies to ensure they are inclusive.	Recruitment Section People and Support managers	Review by December 2017
3. Establish entry-level employment opportunities for people with disability	Research and establish participation in the Dandelion Program, designed for people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the ICT Section.	ICT Division Recruitment Performance, Career and Inclusion Section	2016–20
4. Ensure all premises allow dignified access for people with disability	Review all premises to identify any accessibility issues.	Work Health and Safety Section	Review to take place in 2017
5. Provide appropriate care in the event of safety or evacuation procedures for all staff with disability	Emergency evacuation plans in every Department workplace make provision for people with disability.	Work Health and Safety Section Property Operations Section	Third Quarter 2017
	All staff with disability will have a Personal Employee Evacuation Plan (PEEP) if appropriate.	Work Health and Safety Section	All PEEPs in place by December 2017

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Nicole brings a lot of benefits to our team, being identified with a disability but in fact it is not perceived like that at all. Nic is one of our quite experienced team members.

The main focus is on her abilities, not her disability, and it's really important to acknowledge your staff on the contributions that they can make, and whether a staff member has a disability or not it is really important to make them feel valued and part of the team.

- Peta Bulloch