



Justice
and Community
Safety

Accessibility in Action: Disability Action Plan 2022-2026





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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Justice and Community Safety acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waterways upon which our lives depend.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to ancestors of this country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders – past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are steeped in culture and lore having existed within Australia continuously for some 65,000 years.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of Aboriginal communities across Victoria and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in striving to build on these strengths to address inequalities and improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are disproportionately affected by discrimination and that Aboriginal self-determination requires a systemic shift of power and control from government and non-Aboriginal services to Aboriginal communities and their organisations.



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Note on language and imagery

Language and imagery are powerful ways to include or exclude individuals and groups of people from the workplace and community. We recognise this and have been deliberate in the language used in **Accessibility In Action: Disability Action Plan 2022-2026 (the Plan)** to ensure it is respectful and empowering. We have equally been conscious in our approach to imagery, ensuring that we respect human rights and enable people to shape their involvement and representation in this Plan.

The Plan aligns with the **strengths-based approach** to language in the Victorian Government's Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022–2026 (Inclusive Victoria). We are using **person-first language** which puts the person before their disability – for example, 'person with disability'. Person-first language was first used to emphasise a person's right to an identity beyond their disability and as a way of addressing **ableism**. We know person-first language is important when it comes to people's identity, particularly for many people with cognitive disability and self-advocates.

We believe that it's important to acknowledge and include references to both 'lived' and 'living' experience. We understand that the experiences people have are not binary or linear. That whilst a particular event may have happened in the past a person may continue to experience the impacts into the present. Therefore, we need to be mindful that people with whom we're engaging may be 'living' with their experience – it has not ended, and we need to recognise this for people's safety and wellbeing.

We have also chosen to place the term '**justice clients**'¹ before '**staff**'² to signal that we are here to serve the community. This does not relegate staff as less valued, as both are equally important, but foregrounds justice clients' experience. We also note that Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We appreciate that language is always changing and can be dependent on the context or setting. We support the rights of people to use language that is meaningful to them. We commit to continuing to listen to people with **lived and living experience** to shape language. This is a critical part of our efforts to drive **inclusion** and improve access for justice clients and staff with disability.



Furthermore, we have been intentional about the imagery used in this Plan. Imagery and visual depictions are important in relating issues to people's experiences and impact whether something is seen as positive or negative. It is not unusual for people who identify with the most commonly championed diversity characteristics to have limited or no power to control the capture and use of their images, particularly people with visible diversity. Even when these images are being used in an advocacy or positive manner, this process often fails to consider an individual's power and safety in being 'showcased' in such a prominent way. Historically, images have also been misused, leading to the reinforcement of negative views and stereotypes.

We have partnered with the Department of Justice and Community Safety's (the department's) Enablers Network and sought volunteers across the department who are happy for their images to be used in the Plan. This approach was designed to empower people who want to be part of our story and agents for change.

The images in this Plan reveal that disability may or may not be visible, it may be permanent or temporary, or have a substantial or minimal impact on a person's abilities. They highlight that people with disability often come from a range of backgrounds, stages of life, and with a range of diverse experiences. They also represent the importance of allies in driving action and reform. We thank everyone who participated, acknowledging that visible leadership is critical for building our positive culture.

We also recognise that specialist language is used in this context, so a glossary can be found at **Appendix A**.

¹ Justice clients' refer to Victorians who come into contact with the justice system and community safety sector, including emergency management and response. This also includes Victorians who have traditionally and continue to experience barriers to accessing justice and seeking support from services due to discrimination and exclusionary practices.

² 'Staff' refers to the Department of Justice and Community Safety current and future workforce. It does not include staff with statutory agencies as they are required to develop and implement independent disability action plans.

Our commitment to Accessibility in Action

Acting Secretary's foreword



All Victorians should have an opportunity to take part fully and equally in all areas of our community and be treated with respect.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety is committed to ensuring people with disability – and their carers – can equally and fairly access the justice system and navigate our services. We will also continue our work to ensure the department provides the necessary adjustments to support staff with disability.

I am pleased to introduce **Accessibility in Action: Disability Action Plan 2022–2026** (the Plan). The Plan continues our work to reduce barriers Victorians with disability experience when accessing justice services, participating in the life of the state and working across the department.

This Plan is ambitious and will guide a significant shift in our approach to inclusion of people with disability. It will evolve with the changing needs of justice clients, staff with disability and their carers.

Over the past several years, we have made progress on improving inclusion for people with disability. Some of these achievements include:

- offering more flexible services to victims of crime to minimise physical barriers to accessing support, such as providing some justice clients with IT equipment to remove barriers caused by technology, travel limitations and geography
- delivering targeted programs and projects to embed the voices of justice clients in service delivery – this includes the Just Voices project, which is a piloted initiative influenced by the voices of lived and living experience of our workforce and people with disability to increase capability of frontline workforces on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

- building staff awareness of disability through a Victorian Public Sector Disability Awareness eLearn
- establishing flexible work arrangements and work-life balance, supporting staff with disability and carers
- developing an internal Workplace Adjustments Policy
- committing to Aboriginal self-determination, ensuring that Aboriginal staff and communities are involved in our decision-making, program design and delivery.

I am pleased to report that the proportion of departmental staff with disability has increased from three per cent in 2019 to seven per cent in 2021. This is a step in the right direction.

Within the department, we recognise that there is more work to do to ensure people with disability are represented at all levels, including in leadership roles. The Board of Management is committed to guiding organisational culture to challenge ableism (discriminatory practices and attitudes toward people with disability).

Taking an intersectional approach, we recognise the need to work towards greater representation of people who experience discrimination and disadvantage along with disability.

The Plan was developed in consultation with staff across a range of work areas and roles and with the Community and Public Sector Union (Victoria). During consultation we provided accessible, safe and inclusive spaces for staff to contribute.

The feedback we received has shaped the vision and focus areas of the Plan. Hearing the voices of those with lived and living experience of disability will help us improve outcomes for our clients and staff within our workforce.

This Plan is also part of our broader equality work through our contributions to **Safe and Strong – A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, Free from Violence: Second Action Plan 2022–2025**, **Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–2032**, and the **Building Equality Policy**.

I encourage you to join me in being part of this important reform by considering how you can make a difference to improving outcomes for people with disability in the work that you do. I look forward to keeping you informed of our progress.

Peta McCommon
Acting Secretary

Department of Justice and Community Safety Enablers Network Co-Chairs message

The lived and living experiences of people with disability is central to implementation of this Plan.

The department's Enablers Network is a peer-led network of people with disability and their allies who represent the needs, interests and concerns of departmental staff with disability. The department's Enablers Network functions as a subgroup of the wider Victorian Public Sector Enablers Network.

In our role as Co-Chairs of the Enablers Network, we supported our members to share their stories and experiences to help shape the department's Plan and ensure the needs of departmental staff with disability are central to meaningful change.

We acknowledge the work involved in implementing the previous Disability Action Plan 2019-2022. The development and release of the Workplace Adjustments Policy has had a significant impact on our members and allows us to bring our whole selves to work.

This Plan builds on the foundations and successes of previous work including working collaboratively with the department's Executive Disability Champion, Peta McCammon and the Board of Management to promote inclusion and embed the rights of employees with disability across the justice and community safety sectors.

We want to continue to see this Plan work to ensure the experiences of people with disability are not only heard, but valued and respected. We hope that this Plan takes us further so all people with disability are afforded equity, inclusion and access across the justice system and within our workforce.

We look forward to working together to get there.

- Department's Enabler Network Co-Chairs
Ann Scriven, Jason Morris,
and Melissa Smeet

"I believe the Disability Action Plan and actions such as the Workplace Adjustment Policy have had a significant impact in allowing us to bring our whole selves to work. I am proud of the progress made despite COVID, and proud of everyone involved."

- Jason Morris
Department's Enabler Network
Co-Chair



About Accessibility in Action

The Plan sets out a vision for a justice and community safety system and workplace culture that is inclusive, accessible and values people with disability and carers. We recognise that building a more knowledgeable and capable workforce has tangible benefits, including greater participation of staff with disability in the department and an enhanced workplace culture. These improvements have positive flow on effects for the policies, programs and services designed and delivered to the community. Therefore, the Plan includes internally focused and external facing strategies which are mutually reinforcing to collectively achieve our vision.

We recognise that the current Plan is weighted towards workforce actions, this is to ensure that our foundations are strengthened, and lessons learned through the COVID-19 pandemic are embedded for sustainable change. It is also to enable meaningful engagement to be conducted with justice clients in phase two development via a client consultation program commencing in 2023.

The Plan builds on the significant work already undertaken by the department through the previous Disability Action Plan 2019-2022 (a summary of key achievements can be found in **Appendix B**). This suite of work delivered innovative approaches to service delivery and programs to ensure **accessibility** for justice clients. It also delivered new policies, resources and guidance to support staff and people managers to address challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability in our workforce.

Building on this important work, key guiding principles are embedded in the Plan which will inform implementation and monitoring of strategies to drive systemic and long-term change. We recognise that **Aboriginal self-determination** is a human right for First Peoples as declared under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The department's commitment to protecting the right to self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians is clearly articulated in the **Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023**. Self-determination is critical to creating meaningful change for Aboriginal people with disability through systemic and structural transformation. Aboriginal people, and particularly Aboriginal people with disability, must be empowered and prioritised when making decisions about policies, programs and services that directly impact their lives. Aboriginal people's perspectives must be actively sought, valued and reflected in reform and action.

An **intersectional approach** is embedded in the Plan in order to understand how social meanings about different people and groups of people underpin experiences of discrimination, disadvantage and inequality. These experiences can overlap (or 'intersect') when an individual experiences more than one form of inequality, associated with a range of different identities or attributes. For example, it can be used to better understand barriers to accessing services experienced by a young Aboriginal woman with disability living in rural Victoria. The barriers she may encounter are the result of historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal Victorians since colonisation, across all areas of social, political and economic life. Understanding her experience will enable a more inclusive and accessible service to be tailored to her multiple needs.

This intersectional approach enables connections to be made with other **equality** work in the department, thereby creating a holistic view of improvements to ensure better outcomes for justice clients and staff. This includes the department's **Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025**, and our forthcoming plans being delivered in 2023 including the Multicultural and Multifaith Action Plan and LGBTIQ+ Action Plan. Importantly, these plans will be brought together under a new Intersectionality Strategy, also to be published in 2023. Together, sustainable change will be delivered via a comprehensive and coordinated approach to embedding inclusion, access and **equity** for justice clients and staff.

People with disability are acknowledged from a strengths-based approach within this Plan in recognition of and respect for lived and living experience of individuals. It recognises the diverse strengths that individuals and communities bring to a situation and the need for collaboration to harness these strengths. In this way, lived and living experience is valued and an active contributor to change.

There is an emphasis on a **universal design** approach to ensure all policies, programs, services and infrastructure (including online environments) are conceptualised and designed to guarantee equitable access and use for all individuals and communities.

Above all, the Plan seeks to drive sustainable outcomes as underpinned by genuine commitment and investment to achieve change over time. Every strategy has specific allocated funding and resourcing to ensure success.

The Plan fulfils the department's obligations under the **Disability Act 2006 (Vic)** for public sector bodies to have a disability action plan to reduce barriers, promote inclusion and strengthen participation in all aspects of life for people with disability. It also captures broader reform such as those stemming from the Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Robust governance structures have been designed to track progress and update the Plan to reflect evolving needs and a changing legislative and policy climate. This will build upon the existing governance mechanism, the Disability Action Plan Working Group, established for the implementation and monitoring of the department's previous Disability Action Plan 2019-2022.

The Plan is a living document to respond to shifts in broader reform and emerging issues. This includes new legislative obligations scheduled to commence in 2023 (**Disability Inclusion Act**) and relevant recommendations from the **Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System³** and **Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability**.⁴

The Plan includes key strategies and measures that seek to:

- improve our collection and analysis of justice client and staff experiences to ensure evidence-based reform of systems, structures and practices, and improve outcomes for people with disability
- enhance departmental capability and capacity to create a more inclusive and equitable culture and environment for justice clients and staff
- support career pathways and opportunities for progression and development for staff with disability
- build an organisational culture and justice and community safety system where people with disability feel safe, respected, included and valued.

The strategies and measures outlined in this document are informed by key insights gathered from extensive consultation with senior executives, staff, business areas, diversity and inclusion networks, and the Community and Public Sector Union, as well as desktop research to identify client experience and reforms.

³ The Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System will examine the culture, experiences, systems and processes within Victoria's prisons and correctional centres, both private and public, to ensure the wellbeing and safety of staff and people in custody. The report is due to the Minister for Corrections in December 2022.

⁴ The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability seeks to understand the experiences of people with disability and recommend important safeguards. The Royal Commission is due to conclude in September 2023.



Understanding disability

Disability is dynamic and can occur at any time in life. It can be present from birth or acquired through illness, accident or the ageing process.

Disability can be enduring, episodic or short-lived. Disability may or may not be visible.

There are various formal definitions and understandings of disability. For example, those contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which is an international human rights treaty to which Australia is a signatory, and Victoria's **Disability Act 2006** (see glossary in **Appendix A**).

As an employer, the department has legislative obligations under the Disability Act to reduce barriers for people with disability accessing services and obtaining and maintaining employment, as well as promote inclusion, participation and drive tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with disability. However, we want to acknowledge that formalised definitions while aimed as protective measures can be limiting and prescriptive, typically relying only on medical or health conditions to define disability.

Broadening our understandings

This Plan encourages people to think more broadly about disability and how it is shaped and impacted by the society and environment in which it exists. Social conditions and environments can be disabling and fail to empower people with disability to participate fully in all areas of life.

We recognise there are physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers which result in people with disability receiving unequal access or being excluded from society. These barriers were often created by people without disability who have traditionally controlled the power to build and shape the world around us. These are often referred to as **systemic barriers** or **systems of discrimination** because they consistently disadvantage people from a diverse range of backgrounds relating to disability, sex, age and race. These can overlap to shape and create unique experiences of discrimination, commonly referred to as intersectionality.

Similarly, understandings of disability within Aboriginal communities have been from a holistic perspective. A holistic perspective considers the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural factors that shape wellbeing of individuals and the community as a whole. In doing so, this approach recognises nuances in individual experiences as well as broader societal factors that play a role in the experiences of people with disability.

Some justice service systems still reflect discriminatory ways of thinking, whereby disability is viewed from a deficit perspective with negative implications for the individual. A deficit perspective can act as a barrier to Aboriginal people with disability accessing equitable outcomes. This is the result of seeing the intersection of Aboriginality and disability as a disadvantage or a weakness, which can prevent Aboriginal people with disability from achieving equitable social, economic and cultural outcomes. This can extend to Aboriginal people with disability in the justice system being treated prejudicially. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4 recognises that Aboriginal people with cognitive disability are more likely to come into contact with police earlier and more frequently than non-Aboriginal people.

We acknowledge the need to dismantle legacy service systems that reflect people with lived and living experience and their needs as a deficit. Committing to advancing Aboriginal self-determination and meaningfully engaging with community and people with lived and living experience is critical to addressing systemic barriers and systems of discrimination. Policy must continue to challenge such entrenched attitudes and barriers to inclusion by supporting and empowering people to participate fully and equally. To do this, we will draw on the lived and living experience of justice clients and staff to rebuild the world from a universal design perspective.

An example of work that seeks to support and empower people to participate is the Intermediary Program (see [page 17](#)).

Intermediary Program

Intermediaries are skilled communication specialists who hold a tertiary qualification in either Speech Pathology, Social Work, Psychology or Occupational Therapy. They are engaged as independent and impartial officers of the court to address communication needs of eligible witnesses.

The experience of giving evidence in criminal justice processes is highly traumatising for most victims of crime. For child witnesses and adults with cognitive disability, it is particularly distressing, with a high chance of the system contributing to people feeling re-victimised.

Many routinely face systemic barriers to justice because police and the courts are ill-equipped to meet their communication needs. The methods used to question these witnesses are particularly difficult for people with communication support needs and can compromise the quality of their evidence. It is all too often assumed that their evidence is unattainable or unreliable, so prosecutions do not proceed, and the justice system does not hear these victims' voices.

The role of an intermediary is to assess and facilitate communication between eligible witnesses and the police or courts. This helps police, legal practitioners and the judiciary to plan their questioning so that the witness can understand, participate, feel more confident, and provide better quality evidence. This improves access to justice and makes for fairer and more efficient legal processes. In some cases, an intermediary will be the difference between a witness with specific communication needs being able to participate in the criminal justice system at all.

In Victoria, intermediaries are available for children, young people and for adults with cognitive disability who are giving evidence in sexual offence and homicide court matters in particular geographic areas. Intermediaries also assist victim and witnesses to participate in the taking of visual and audio recorded evidence interviews conducted by select Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams.



Language as a key driver for change

The Plan encourages people to think about the language they use to describe disability and people with lived and living experience. Language is constantly evolving and is often based on the collective views of people within a society or social group, which at times is intended to exclude people from participating in society. Throughout history and still today, language has been used to stereotype and discriminate against people with disability. It has been used to describe people with disability as less valued in our society, with disability described as a 'problem' or 'deficit'. This type of negative language is harmful and fails to recognise the positive impact and contributions that people with disability have and continue to make to our community.

It is important to recognise people's different preferences about how language is used, which reflects the different ways people consider their identity, their experience of disability and the attitudes of their community. To align with Inclusive Victoria's goal to shift community attitudes and promote inclusion, we have used strengths-based, person-first language in this Plan. This positions people first and foremost, and values their experience, skills and abilities.

There are people with disability who prefer to use what is known as identity-first language. Identity-first language puts a person's disability identity before the person – for example, 'disabled person'. We recognise that many people with disability prefer to use identity-first language because they see their disability as a key part of their identity. They use identity-first language to show their connection to the disability community, demonstrate disability pride and emphasise that it is society that is disabling. We respect that identity-first language is important to the many people with disability who have and continue to advocate for the use of this language.

'I prefer person first language. As a person with an intellectual disability, I have spent my entire life fighting to be included in both the community and the workforce. I have felt the pain of isolation as I was segregated in my schooling, TAFE, and have had to fight to find my rightful place alongside those without a disability in the workplace. Disability does not define me; it has only served to segregate me. I wish to be seen as a person first. I am more than just my disability. I'm proud of my achievements.'

- Caitlin Syer (she/her)
Victorian Disability Advisory
Council memberⁱ

'I personally prefer identity first language. For me, saying "I am a disabled person" is saying that I belong to a community of people who are excluded and marginalised because our bodies and minds are different from the socially prescribed "norm". Disabled is also a term of pride for me; it proclaims that I accept and value my disability and don't feel ashamed or wish to minimise it anymore. The term "disabled person" comes from the social model of disability which says I'm disabled by an inaccessible environment and by attitudes or assumptions about disability, not by my body and mind being different. The term "disabled" asks us to think about disability as a social issue of identity, rights and access. It puts disability front and centre proudly, boldly and unapologetically.'

- Jax Jacki Brown (they/them)
Victorian Disability Advisory
Council memberⁱⁱ

Experiences of disability

Current landscape

Figure 1. Experiences of disability



We recognise that the current climate in which we live has significant and long-lasting impacts on Victorians with disability. However, it is important to acknowledge that not all experiences of disability are the same.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented changes for our community, particularly for people with disability. These include shifts in the way we live, work and participate in our community. Some changes have been positive, such as an increase in accessible and online services, embracing hybrid models of working and reduced stigma related to working from home and flexible working arrangements. Unfortunately, people with disability have been disproportionately impacted negatively. This has included increased risk of poor health outcomes from limited access to health care such as routine treatment and rehabilitation, and adverse social impacts due to COVID-19 restrictions in accessing social and support networks.



Cost of living pressures, associated with the pandemic and other broader economic and political factors, have also had significant impacts on people with disability and their quality of life. We know that people with disability require additional income to achieve a similar living standard to those without disability; this can be exacerbated by the nature of a person's disability.⁵

The current cost of living pressures have intensified this even further, along with the fact that people with disability are more likely to experience pay inequity, job insecurity and underemployment.

As mentioned earlier, an intersectional approach can help us understand how other historic forms of discrimination (such as racism) may come together with ableism to shape a person's experience. For example, a migrant woman with disability who is on a disability support payment may experience barriers to securing part time paid employment due to experiences of racism and ableism, which exacerbates the cost of living pressures and her quality of life.

The Plan has been developed with the current landscape in mind, and will adapt according to shifts in our society and environment.

⁵ Vu, B., Khanam, R., Rahman, M. et al. The costs of disability in Australia: a hybrid panel-data examination <<https://healtheconomicsreview.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13561-020-00264-1>>. Health Economics Review 10, article 6, 2020.

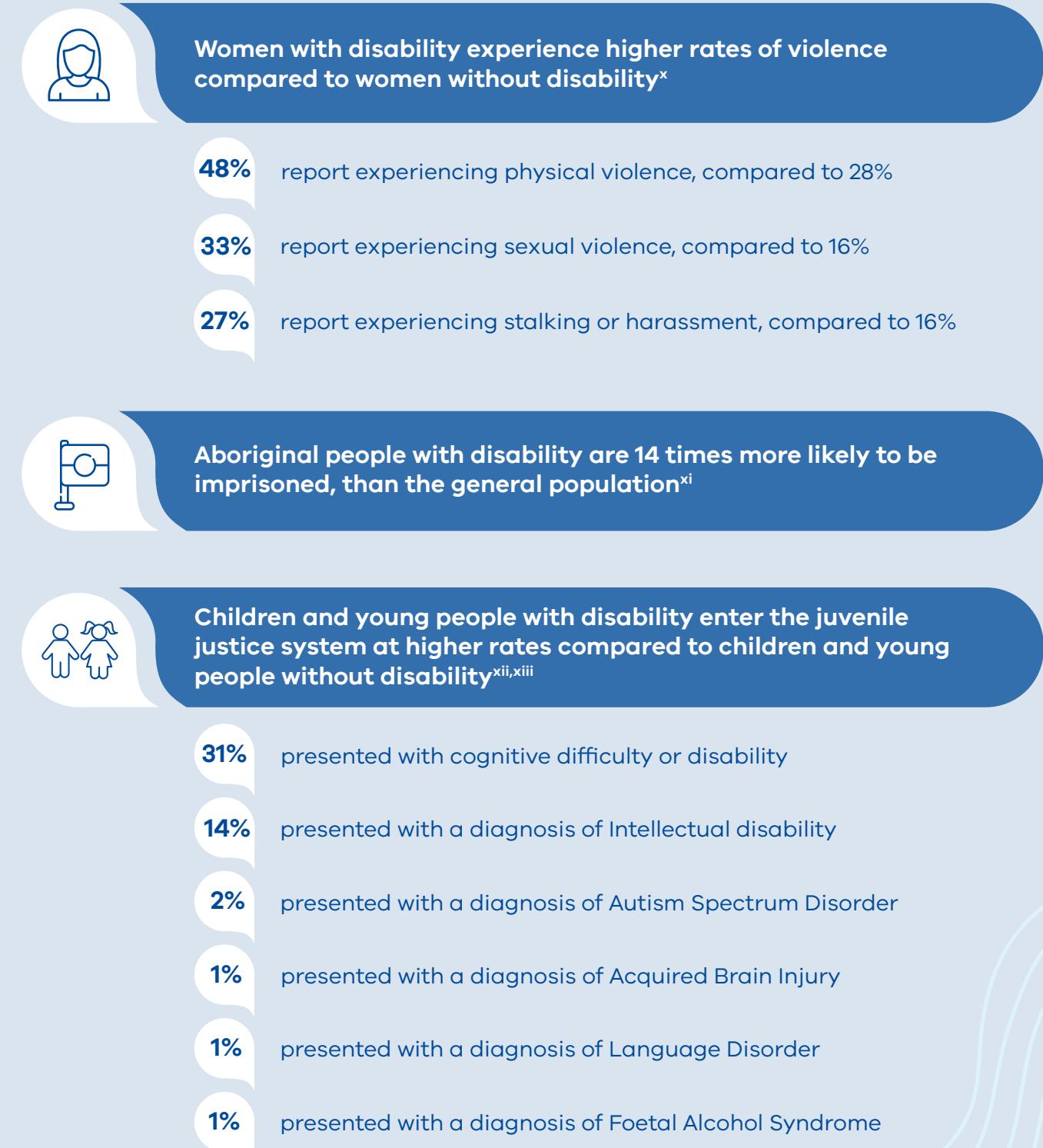
People with disability in the Victorian justice and community safety system

Recent reviews such as the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability report that people with disability may come into contact with the criminal justice system as a victim of crime, a person accused or suspected of a crime, or as a witness to a crime. It also acknowledged that people with disability face discrimination and are not treated the same as people without disability. The review also recognised the importance of integrated models of care and diversion programs. The compounding effect of intersecting inequality increases the risk of people with disability experiencing discrimination and victimisation and the likelihood they will come into contact with the criminal justice system.



Disability is likely to be underreported for a range of reasons, including challenges in screening and identification, and stigma associated with identifying as a person with disability.

Figure 2. People with disability in the Victorian justice and community safety system



People with disability as victims of crime and survivors of family violence

People with disability are more likely to be victims of crime than other groups in the general population.

Aboriginal people with disability

Aboriginal people with disability experience multi-faceted social inequality and discrimination that stem from the impacts of colonisation and exclusionary policies and practices, across all aspects of their lives, and interactions with social support systems.⁶ Historic and contemporary exclusion, discrimination and prejudicial attitudes can make it more difficult for Aboriginal people with disability to access justice and receive fair treatment in their engagement with the criminal justice system. This has resulted in Aboriginal people with disability being almost twice as likely to experience discrimination as non-Aboriginal people with disability.⁷ In addition, Aboriginal women with disability experience disproportionate rates of family violence compared to non-Aboriginal women.⁸

Children and young people with disability

Children and young people with disability enter the juvenile justice system at disproportionately high rates and are more likely as adults to come into contact with the system as **victims and/or offenders**.⁹

This Plan recognises the importance of valuing the experiences and expertise of people with disability who come into contact with the justice system as a key driver for change. The strategies identified in this Plan build on existing programs and initiatives such as the Just Voices Project (see [page 25](#)).

Just Voices Project: Building mainstream justice workforce capability

The Just Voices Project: Building mainstream justice workforce capability leveraged the experience and expertise of people with lived experience of the criminal justice system to improve outcomes for people with disability in the justice system. Through genuine co-design with the Project Advisory Committee comprised of people with lived experience expertise, RMIT University's Centre of Innovative Justice in partnership with KPMG designed and piloted workforce development initiatives and interventions that sought to strengthen the capacity of the Corrections and Youth Justice frontline workforce to better recognise and respond to clients' disability needs.

In particular, the initiatives piloted through the project aimed to build the capability of the justice workforce to:

- understand the lived experience of people with disability
- be aware of disability and be able to identify associated behaviours
- communicate and interact effectively with people with disability.

The learnings from the project provide a strong evidence base to continue our work in partnering with people with lived and living experience of the criminal justice system to improve outcomes for people with disability.

⁶ Avery, S. Research Report 'Something Stronger: Truth telling on hurt and loss, strength and healing, from First Nations people with disability <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/something-stronger-truth-telling-hurt-and-loss-strength-and-healing-first-nations-people-disability-research-report>>, 2020, p. 22.

⁷ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Interim Report Summary <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/interim-report>>, 2020, p. 14.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Criminal justice system Issues paper <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/criminal-justice-system>>, 2020, p. 6.

People with disability in emergency planning, response and recovery

People with disability can be significantly impacted by emergencies and may be at **higher risk of violence and abuse during these times.¹⁰** People with disability also experience barriers to accessing the following during and after emergencies:

- Information due to communication formats that are often inaccessible
- Essential support for daily living
- Food and nutrition if essential supplies run low or if support workers or family are unable to help access food
- Health care, including access to medication, assistive devices and therapeutic services.

The Plan recognises the importance of engaging people with disability in emergency management planning and ensuring their voices are heard. An example of this includes work undertaken by the Victorian Emergency Management Sector: Creating an accessible sector for all (see [page 27](#)).

Victorian Emergency Management Sector: Creating an accessible sector for all

On 1 December 2021, a multi-organisational working group hosted a virtual International Day of People with Disability panel on behalf of the Victorian Emergency Management Sector: Creating an accessible sector for all. Based on their lived experience, the four panellists and facilitator shared with the audience some of the challenges that people living with disability may experience when trying to access communications and community information in an emergency. In addition, they provided practical communication and engagement advice to better enable people with disability to prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency to improve outcomes for people with disability. 125 emergency management sector personnel, including volunteers, joined the virtual event on the day, and more than 200 people viewed the recording after the event.

An accessible communication and engagement guide for the emergency management sector was produced and distributed to registered attendees to support their implementation of accessible communication and engagement good practices.

In early 2022, the four panellists and the facilitator were invited by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to be members of the newly formed Accessible Emergency Warnings and Communications Community Advisory Group, increasing the participation of people with disability in the emergency planning process.

¹⁰ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Issues paper: Emergency planning and response <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/emergency-planning-and-response>>, 2020.

Staff with disability in the department's workforce

The department is committed to improving community safety, victim services, regulatory services and crime prevention. Our scope of responsibilities includes service delivery and improvement, along with the development and implementation of laws, regulations and policy. Our work focuses on ensuring that the justice and community safety system works efficiently and effectively.

The department partners with a broad network of statutory authorities, portfolio agencies, judicial and quasi-judicial bodies to support delivery of its work. We are coordinating and collaborating with our partners to manage interdependencies and foster mutual success.

The department collects data from its staff on disability and other demographics such as age, gender and Aboriginality. The department continues to strengthen its data collection methods to allow for analysis from an intersectional approach. This will support a nuanced understanding of the experiences and needs of staff within the department.

The department is making good progress to lift employment of staff with disability. The proportion of departmental staff with disability has increased in the last few years (from three per cent in 2019 to seven per cent in 2021). This progress is reflective of work undertaken by the department to improve employment programs and support career pathways for people with disability.

While this is promising, we know there is still work to do to support recruitment, employment and retention of staff with disability. In the 2021 Victorian Public Service People Matter Survey, departmental staff with disability reported that they experienced discrimination, as well as significant issues negotiating workplace adjustments and flexible working arrangements. The Plan will build on existing work to support a more inclusive workplace for staff with disability, including the rollout and implementation of the new Workplace Adjustments Policy and Inclusive Employment Guide.

A key driver of positive change has been employee networks represented by people with lived and living experience of disability, carers and allies, including the department's Enablers Network.



The department's Enablers Network

The Enablers Network is a peer-led network of people with disability, carers and allies who represent the needs, interests and concerns of departmental staff with disability. It operates as a subgroup to the wider Victorian Public Sector Enablers Network.

The Enablers work collaboratively with Peta McCammon who represents the department on the Victorian Public Sector Disability Champions Roundtable and the Board of Management to promote inclusion and embed the rights of employees with disability across the justice and community safety sectors.

The department's Executive Disability Champions

The Executive Disability Champions are a group of executive staff from operational and frontline areas, including corrections, youth justice, emergency management and victim support. The group provides leadership in their respective areas to support staff with disability regarding workplace adjustments, inclusive language and creating a safe and inclusive culture.

The department's Disability Action Plan Working Group

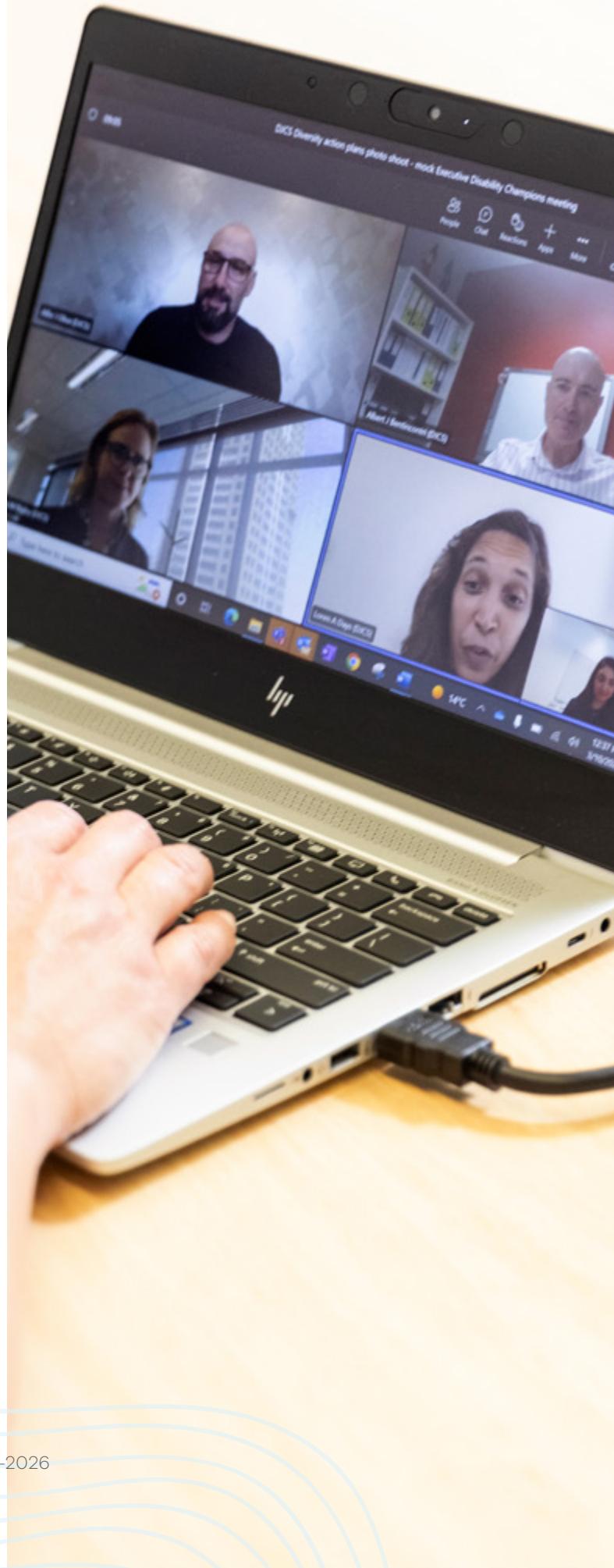
The Disability Action Plan Working Group provides a forum for ensuring people with disability are afforded equity, inclusion and access across the justice system and within our workforce, through the implementation and monitoring of the department's Disability Action Plan. The Working Group was the oversight mechanism for the Disability Action Plan 2019–2022.

Drawing upon lived and living experience to shape our Plan

The Plan has been informed and shaped by lived and living experience of people with disability and carers, along with insights from allies and people whose work has a specific disability focus.

We were deliberate in our approach to consultation with staff to ensure lived and living experience was at the heart of our engagement. From the outset, we sought to create safe spaces for people to share their experience and for their voices to be heard. We also completed a comprehensive environmental scan and desktop review to identify the lived and living experiences of justice clients, using this to inform the focus areas and strategies of this Plan.

A detailed overview of the engagement approach can be found at **Appendix D**.



What we heard

The following themes were drawn from consultations with staff during the development of this Plan:

Inclusion and access need to be essential foundations

Staff emphasised the importance of getting things right from the beginning. This includes embedding inclusion and access as principles in service design and delivery, and policies from the start, rather than 'add ons' after development or implementation. These principles were considered critical to affording all people with opportunities to fully and equally participate, whether it be in our justice system or our workforce.

Other principles including intersectionality, Aboriginal self-determination, sustainable outcomes and lived and living experience were described as underpinnings to driving cultural change in this space.

Staff quote:
"My vision is a workplace where access and inclusion are effortlessly woven into every element of the workplace. I'm thinking along the lines of universal design."

Staff quote:
"Engaging those with lived experience in a meaningful way around the design and implementation and surrounding activities and reimbursing them for their time."

Staff quote:
“The most important thing is cultural change and leadership from the top.”

Leadership is critical to driving cultural change

Through the consultation for this Plan, executive leaders showed commitment to driving an organisational culture that is inclusive and accessible for our workforce. In doing so, leaders recognised that they need to deepen their understanding of disability and the experience of justice clients and staff with disability, as well as building their capability around messaging for cultural change.

Staff across all levels expressed that executive leaders can play an important role in modelling inclusive practice and addressing structures, practices and attitudes in the department that are discriminatory and create barriers for justice clients and staff with disability.

It was also emphasised that staff with disability should be represented in leadership roles across the department, and the importance of visibility at that level.

Staff quote:
“Change at the structural level, culture change is the heart of disability inclusion”

Uplifting workforce capability and capacity will support cultural change

Training and capacity building were identified as important priorities. This was seen to be particularly critical for people managers, to build their knowledge about how to support staff with disability and carers with, for example, workplace adjustments and flexible working arrangements. Staff expressed the importance of building capability in inclusive language and accessible communications to foster a safe and welcoming culture and environment for justice clients and staff. Accessible communications were described as vital to supporting and empowering justice clients to navigate and interact with the justice system and services.

Furthermore, strengthening understanding of disability in the justice system, particularly within correctional and youth justice settings, was an area identified for workforce uplift. Specifically, developing a common understanding of disability and how to support people with disability in the justice system was identified throughout consultations.

Staff quote:
“...lifting capability of everyone who works in the system”.

Staff quote:
“Many people do not know that they have a disability. Complexity of self-identification and complexity of terminology – many people in the justice system do not have access to this.”

Staff quote:
“In order to make reasonable adjustments, we need to know how to identify a person with disability’s needs and wants to live a life with full participation.”

Flexibility and workplace adjustments are key aspects of access and inclusion for staff

Staff emphasised that staff with disability and carers must be supported through flexible working arrangements and workplace adjustments in order to contribute to the department and the community, drawing upon their strengths, skills and experience. They also highlighted the need for leadership to drive change required to ensure the onus is not of staff with disability to advocate for accessible and inclusive practices and workplaces. Executive leaders committed to drive cultural change to make workplace adjustments ‘business as usual’ and provide an enabling and authorising environment to change current workplace practice from ‘no’ to ‘yes’ by ensuring funding is not a barrier.

Staff quote:
“Support for staff in obtaining workplace adjustments and flexible working conditions, particularly, if staff are directed to return to the office.”

Data is a critical piece of the puzzle

The need for better data collection to gather a more accurate picture of justice clients and staff with disability and carers and their experiences is the missing link for many.

Sharing information across the justice sector and broader service system to achieve better outcomes for justice clients was also identified by staff.

The importance of collecting and using data to know we are on track and making gains in improving outcomes for people with disability is critical. But more importantly are the stories behind the data and sharing what is happening to influence change.

We have listened closely to those who have participated in our consultations for this Plan. We have considered insights shared from staff working to improve outcomes for justice clients with disability and the lived and living experiences of staff with disability. In doing so, we have developed four key focus areas that are mutually reinforcing and seek to address existing challenges, while leveraging previous work and current opportunities.

Staff quote:
“I think it’s important to acknowledge the challenges in identification/ reporting meaning the data generally underestimates actual trends”

Staff quote:
“Aboriginal people are further stigmatised and negatively stereotyped if they disclose a disability. If DJCS [Department of Justice and Community Safety] does not often know who their identified Aboriginal clients are, how can they address disability?”

Staff quote:
“Data is key - we don’t have a good understanding of disability in our system (i.e., corrections, victims)”



Focus areas and strategies

The strategies and measures are structured into the four following focus areas:



Focus area 1:

Improving data on disability and intersectionality



Focus area 3:

Equitable pathways to career development and leadership



Focus area 2:

Building capability and capacity



Focus area 4:

Creating a safer, empowering and inclusive culture

Strategies are designed to be phased and mutually reinforcing, recognising that multiple strategies and a long-term approach is required to achieve inclusion for people with disability.

Measures are designed to assist the department in monitoring strategies to know we are on the right track to achieve our vision for a disability inclusive workplace.

The focus areas will also support the department to fulfil its commitment under Inclusive Victoria (see **Appendix E**).



Focus area 1: Improving data on disability and intersectionality

Our goal: Improve data collection and analysis to better inform policies, programs, services and workforce strategies. Short-term goals will focus on achieving improved workforce data and developing a data improvement plan to support longer-term system reform. This will also include self-determination work related to embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles.



Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
<p>Contribute to reviewing and assessing existing Victorian legislation and policy in the justice portfolio (excluding statutory entities and the Emergency Services portfolio) against nationally agreed principles.</p> <p>Consider amending existing Victorian legislation and policy in the justice portfolio (excluding entities and the Emergency Services portfolio), as required, to better align with nationally agreed principles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A set of national principles is agreed to. Legislation, regulation and policy facilitates actions and information sharing align with national principles, where required, to strengthen supports and protect people with disability at risk of harm. 	2025-2026	<p>Conduct regular pulse surveys and employee experience surveys and analyse workforce data using a disability and intersectional approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in identifying staff with disability. Increased willingness of staff with disability to share personal and diversity data. 	2022-2026
<p>Convene the Disability Justice Operational Forum four times a year. A collaborative environment for Victorian and National Disability Insurance Scheme stakeholders working at the operational level to regularly meet with people with disability who have experience of the justice system to learn together, share resources and identify ways to consider the voice of lived experience in policy and service design.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and services developed within the Victorian Justice system better meet the access needs of people with disability. The diverse voices of people with disability and lived and living experience of the criminal justice system are heard and included. 	2022-2026	<p>Develop more robust methods of collecting information on the needs and experiences of customers of Births, Deaths and Marriages, including people with disability. Review and update our current customer surveys/feedback mechanisms and ensure they are available in accessible formats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity data is safely and confidentially captured and analysed. Mechanisms put in place to collect appropriate data. Surveys and feedback mechanisms available in accessible formats. 	2022-2023
<p>Develop and implement a data improvement plan which includes guidance on measurement, collection, monitoring and analysis of diversity data across the employee lifecycle to ensure consistent and robust data collection and analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data improvement plan delivered and implemented. Collection of intersectional data through HR/Payroll systems upgraded. Guidance materials on HR data collection and analysis delivered. Workforce diversity data is safely and confidentially captured and analysed. Staff voluntarily provide diversity data and have confidence in its confidentiality and use. 	2022-2024	<p>Develop information sharing guidelines to enhance agencies and services in the justice system to identify, support and connect people with disability who come into contact with the Justice system.</p> <p>Focus on methodologies that reduce the burden on people with disability to disclose and is informed by trauma-informed practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in identifying people with disability in the justice system. Increased willingness of people with disability in Corrections and Justice Services to share personal and diversity data. 	2022-2026



Focus area 2: Building capability and capacity

Our goal: Empowering justice clients and staff to understand how inclusion can improve people's lives in the workplace, at home and in society.



Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
Develop a departmental intersectionality strategy to build capability in considering intersectionality in policy and program development, service delivery and internal workforce strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy developed and implemented. The department has embedded intersectionality into core functions such as business planning, data analysis, and workforce management. 	2022-2024	Develop clear processes and guidance for people managers to request and procure workplace adjustments to reduce barriers experienced by employees with disability using inaccessible systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People managers are aware of the process to request accessible ICT systems as a workplace adjustment. Requests for accessible ICT solutions (workplace adjustment) are approved by managers in a timely manner. 	2022-2023
Map and update relevant inclusion and intersectionality policies across the department to ensure consideration of disability through an intersectional lens is embedded in approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review completed and recommendations implemented as required. 	2022-2024	Develop a Workplace Adjustment Policy Change Management and Communications Plan to implement the policy and provide better support to employees with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace Adjustment Policy communicated across the department. Reduction in the percentage of staff reporting being denied workplace adjustment/s (People Matter Survey and/or pulse check survey data). 	2022-2023
Work with Aboriginal community partners to enhance responses to Aboriginal people with disability under the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, through development of its next phase.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be developed as part of phase 5 of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA5). 	2022-2024	Implement the Inclusive Employment Guide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of management forums on the Inclusive Employment Guide delivered. Increased capability across the department to support staff with disability. Increased disability awareness across the department. 	2022-2023
Develop diversity and inclusion action plans (Gender Equality Action Plan, Multicultural and Multifaith Action Plan, LGBTIQ+ Action Plan) that consider disability inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plans are developed with measures that consider disability inclusion. 	2022-2023	Develop a process to regularly review and update the Inclusive Employment Guide to uplift managers to support staff with disability, and increase disability awareness across the department.		
Improve accessibility and representation of people with disability in public communications provided through Emergency Management Victoria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Senior Advisor, Accessible Communications is successfully recruited to create a strategy for the improvement of access to information for people with disability, before, during and after emergencies. 	2022-2024	Coordinate and grow the membership of the Diverse Communications Community of Practice to increase awareness and understanding of accessible communication practices and uplift departmental staff capability to use inclusive and accessible language and imagery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased membership of the Community of Practice. Increased awareness and accessibility of online resources among members of the Community of Practice. Community of Practice members' confidence improved to develop accessible and inclusive communications across a range of channels. 	2022-2024
Share accessible communication best practice with emergency management sector partners through forums including the Emergency Management Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A document/presentation on best practice accessible communications is created and shared with the Emergency Management sector. 	2024-2026			

Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
Undertake a review of existing internal and external communications and supporting materials to update and incorporate guidance on inclusive and accessible language and imagery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review completed and guidance material is updated as required. 	2023-2024	Senior/Specialist Disability Advisors to deliver Youth Justice face-to-face training, including induction programs for new staff, which contains training related to the impact of disability and use of effective strategies to support children and young people with disability in the justice system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in Youth Justice staff's ability to identify disability presentation. Increase in Youth Justice staff use of effective and tailored strategies to improve responsiveness of children and young people on youth justice interventions and supervision. 	2022-2024
Support the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Enablers Network to pilot a reverse mentoring program. It would involve department employees with disability mentoring Executives on inclusive work practices, supporting staff with disability and how to be an effective ally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reverse mentoring program is implemented over 12 months. Evaluation of the pilot program is completed. 	2023-2024	Develop a suite of resources that will build the skills and knowledge of the corrections and victim services workforces to better understand, recognise and respond to the needs of justice clients with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources developed and released. Increase in Corrections and Justice Services and Victim Services staff understanding of the needs of justice clients with disability. 	2022-2024
Deliver the Disability Awareness eLearn training. Undertake a review of staff completion rates and consider making this training mandatory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of staff who complete the Disability Awareness training. Increase in disability awareness and responsiveness across the department's workforce. 	2022-2026	Undertake a review of training and professional development opportunities for people managers to determine if standalone training is required to uplift people managers in supporting staff with disability and increase disability awareness across the department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review completed and recommendations implemented as required. 	2023-2024
Develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures that outline minimum standards for accessibility for the development and delivery of procuring new learning and development training for departmental staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard operating procedures are developed and implemented. Guidelines for contracts for external course facilitators and trainers are implemented. All training venues are accessible. All course materials and written in Easy English and are accessible. 	2022-2026	Develop and implement a leadership capability and engagement plan for Board of Management Executive Leaders and people managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan developed and implemented. Increase in leadership capability and understanding of disability and how to support staff with disability. 	2023-2025
			Explore options to provide dedicated resources to recognise the contributions of departmental staff, and run sustainable and successful Employee Resource Groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review undertaken and recommended options are implemented as required. Increase in staff participation in the Employee Resource Groups. 	2023-2024



Focus area 3: Equitable pathways to career development and leadership

Our goal: Increasing the representation of people with disability in leadership and improving equity for career development, remuneration, leave and flexibility.



Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability in the department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in staff identifying as a person with disability to at least 12 per cent by 2025. Identify (establish a baseline) how many positions across the department are established as special measure roles. Increase the number of special measure roles available to staff at all levels by 2025. Participate in the following disability employment programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Network on Disability Stepping Into Internships program Victorian Government graduate program: disability pathway stream Youth Employment Scheme Program: disability stream. Develop and deliver dedicated work-experience programs for students with disability. Pathway programs lead to an increase in mainstream employment outcomes for people with disability by 2025. Increased and enhanced pathway opportunities and mainstream employment opportunities for people with disability by 2025. 	2022-2025	Explore professional development opportunities to broaden our knowledge and work with the Emergency Management Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Group to ensure better representation of people with disability across emergency management sector organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share a list of professional development opportunities with the sector to increase knowledge of disability. Investigate initiatives that provide more opportunities for people with disability to work within the sector. 	2024-2026
Identifying pathways to increase the representation of people with disability, their families, and experts in municipal, regional, and state-level emergency management planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share a list of meetings at various levels for people with disability to attend to support emergency management planning. Create opportunities for the Emergency Management Sector to listen to people with disability. 	2022-2024	Develop a People Strategy across the employee lifecycle that is intersectional in its approach to build and maintain an engaged, flexible, productive and positive employee experience and workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Strategy developed and released. Progress reports submitted to the Board of Management. 	2022-2023
			Develop a Flexible Working Strategy that accounts for different lived and living experience and work environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Work Strategy developed and implemented. Increase in the number of staff (from 55 per cent to 70 per cent by 2025) who feel confident that if they asked for a flexible work arrangement it would be given due consideration (People Matter Survey data). Increase in the number of staff (from 46 per cent to 59 per cent by 2025) who feel there is a positive culture within the department in relation to employees who use flexible work arrangements (People Matter Survey data). 	2022-2025

Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
Undertake a review (intersectionality-based assessment) of department's induction and onboarding/offboarding processes for all staff, including staff with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review completed and recommendations implemented as required. Workforce diversity data is safely and confidentially captured and analysed. All new employees are asked if they require any workplace adjustments before they start working in their role. All new employees with disability are connected to the Diversity and Inclusion Advisor, People, Safety and Culture. Increase in the number of new employees who are connected to the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Enablers Network. Increased awareness of the Workplace Adjustment Policy. Increased departmental staff knowledge and understanding of how to raise employment-related issues through the Employee and Workplace Relations team and are made aware of the department's complaints framework. 	2022-2025	Pilot the RISE recruitment program that provides work for people on the autism spectrum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased percentage of autistic people employed in the department. Pathway programs lead to mainstream employment outcomes for people with disability. 	2022-2023
Undertake an assessment of existing career development pathways from an intersectional perspective. Focus on improving pathways for staff with disability, women with disability, Aboriginal staff with disability and staff with disability from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report that assesses current state and recommendations for improvement delivered. 	2022-2024	<p>Develop and implement a holistic professional development program that includes coaching and mentoring support for employees with disability, at all levels and across all roles within the department, to support their career progression and increase their leadership skills.</p> <p>Analysis of options for further targeted career development, including scoping programs in other departments and organisations. For example, the 'Victorian Public Sector Pilot Mentoring Program for employees with disability' being led by Victoria Police.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental disability professional development program developed and implemented. Improved career development and progression outcomes for staff with disability. Increase in the percentage of staff with disability in leadership and executive roles across the department (People Matter Survey and/or pulse check survey data). 	2023-2024
			Undertake a review of role types and associated physical and health requirements in correctional settings (including Justice Services), to better support people with disability to occupy a range of different roles in these settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review undertaken. Opportunities identified to support people with disability into roles (including identification of updates necessary to existing requirements for specific role types). 	2022-2024

Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
<p>Ensure equitable career pathways are promoted and available including pathways to leadership development. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment of existing training, career development and leadership pathways so staff with disability have the same opportunities and access as their peers accessible formats in the delivery of training and programs analysis of options for further targeted career development, including scoping programs in other departments and organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing training, career development, and leadership pathways for staff with disability undertaken, and recommendations implemented as required. Increase in the percentage of staff with disability in leadership and executive roles across the department (People Matter Survey and/or pulse check survey data). 	2023-2025	<p>Research opportunities to craft and implement special measures roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> special measures positions as outlined in the Victorian Public Sector Commission Guide to hiring with special measures in the public sector. wherever practicable prioritising special measures that are designated positions over those that are prioritised positions, as described in the guidelines. utilising special measures to develop career pathways, including pathways into leadership roles for people with disability. applying special measures to a diverse range of roles including those that do not necessarily benefit directly from a lived experience of disability, to create equitable and diverse pathways and opportunities for people with disability. interviewing all applicants with disability who meet the key selection criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research undertaken, options paper developed, and recommendations implemented as required. Improved career development and progression outcomes for staff with disability. 	2023-2025



Focus area 4: Creating a safer, empowering and inclusive culture

Our goal: To provide environments where justice clients and staff feel safe, respected, supported and valued.



Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
<p>Establish the Disability Advice and Response Team in the Children's Court of Victoria to provide on-the-spot disability advice prior to and during hearings, as well as assist with screening for disability and identify pathways to service responses to address the young person's disability needs. One of the Disability Advice and Response Team worker positions will be an Aboriginal identified position, and will operate in the Children's Koori Court, including attending weekly Koori Family Hearing Days.</p> <p>Develop an operational protocol between Youth Justice and the Koori worker in the Disability Advice and Response Team at the Children's Court of Victoria to enable a joint approach to responding to the disability related needs of Aboriginal children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people with disability are diverted away from the justice system and into community-based services. Increased access by Aboriginal young people with disability to disability supports that acknowledge and respond to their cultural needs, as well as their criminogenic needs. 	2022-2025	<p>Continue the Intermediary Program. Intermediaries are skilled communication specialists from a range of allied health backgrounds that are engaged as independent and impartial officers of the court to address communication needs of eligible witnesses.</p> <p>Intermediaries provide recommendations to police, lawyers, and the judiciary to plan their questioning so that victims can understand, participate, feel more confident, and provide better quality evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible witnesses' communication style and specific communication supports are provided for. Enhanced knowledge and confidence for staff and stakeholders to respond to and support victims and witnesses with disability. 	2022-2025
<p>Deliver Phase One of the Just Voices Project which aims to strengthen the capability of frontline justice workforces, including within the adult and youth justice system, to support people with disability by engaging people with lived and living experience of the justice system to co-design workforce development initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase One Just Voices Project delivered in agreed timeframes and a reflective review is undertaken to capture lessons learnt, challenges and recommendations for future projects. 	2022	<p>Work across the Victorian Government to ensure consistent rights and protections for people living in disability supported accommodation, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and working to address gaps in legislative residential rights and protections for residents of, and people requiring, disability supported accommodation. Working with the Commonwealth, states and territories governments towards nationally consistent residential rights and protections for people living in Specialist Disability Accommodation across all jurisdictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally consistent residential rights and protections for people living in Specialist Disability Accommodation across all jurisdictions. 	2022-2023
<p>Include people with disability in corrections policy and program design.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The voices and lived experience of people with disability in contact with the justice system are included and used to inform the development of corrections policy and program design. 	2022-2024			

Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
<p>Support renters with disability by promoting compliance with new laws under the recently reviewed Residential Tenancies Act which state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental providers must not unreasonably refuse disability-related modifications under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 without good reason. Renters no longer have to provide private information protected in the Act when applying for a rental property. This includes information about their disability, ethnicity or gender identity. Rental agreement forms must include an information statement that educates applicants, rental providers and agents about unlawful discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of legislative reforms to increase the rights of renters with disability. Delivery of targeted capacity building initiatives to increase rental providers and agents' understanding about unlawful discrimination. 	2022-2026	<p>Continuation of the Prison Disability Support Initiative across all prisons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence in responding to people in prison with disability, particularly cognitive disability. Improved identification of prisoners with disability and complex needs. Enhanced decision-making about the placement, management, rehabilitation, and transition planning for prisoners with disability and complex needs. Behaviour support plans for prisoners with disability who demonstrate behaviours of concern are developed and implemented. Enhanced capability of prison staff (particularly custodial staff) to work with prisoners with disability and complex needs. Increased support for prisoners with disability to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme. 	2022-2023
<p>Continue the work of Senior and Specialist Disability Advisors to provide secondary consultation and advice to youth justice staff and care teams. This work is designed to improve youth justice supervision and ensure young people with disability have timely access to appropriate services and supports, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This includes a position dedicated to supporting Aboriginal young people and children with disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth justice staff are supported to employ effective strategies to support young people with disability. Young people in youth justice are supported to undertake relevant disability assessments. Young people are supported to navigate National Disability Insurance Scheme processes and to access timely and appropriate National Disability Insurance Scheme supports. Young people with disability experience effective and tailored supervision and improved access to and use of service systems. 	2022-2024	<p>Embed the Disability and Complex Needs Service at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (women's prison).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced capability of prison staff (particularly custodial staff) to work with prisoners with disability and complex needs. Increased support for women prisoners with disability and complex needs to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme. 	2022-2024

Strategies	Measures	Timeframe	Strategies	Measures	Timeframe
Provide accessible remote service delivery for victims with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased accessibility for victims with disability, for example, removing impediments caused by travel and geography. Increased remote service delivery. 	2022-2026	Continue to embed Victoria's Social Procurement Framework and the department's Social Procurement Strategy when procuring the delivery of public services and infrastructure required for the department, the justice system and community safety services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased leadership in promoting the use of social procurement across the department. Increased purchasing from Victorian social enterprises and Australian Disability Enterprises. Increased purchasing of services and products that are accessible for justice clients and staff. Increased employment of people with disability by suppliers to the Victorian Government by embedding social procurement targets into high-value government projects. 	2022-2026
Senior and Specialist Disability Advisors to maintain strong partnerships with the National Disability Insurance Agency, including Justice Liaison Officers to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting National Disability Insurance Scheme participants in youth justice, including to ensure continuity of services and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved uptake, coordination, and integration of National Disability Insurance Scheme processes and funded supports with the justice system. 	2022-2024			
Ensure the application process, access to counselling and therapeutic services and/or participation in the Restorative Engagement and Redress Scheme is inclusive of and accessible for people with disability. Restorative Engagement and Redress Scheme disability-inclusive strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing information in accessible formats where needed. Making reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers to participation, such as accepting applications in alternative formats or assisting applicants to obtain statutory declarations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in information provided about restorative engagement program in accessible formats. Increase in the number of reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers to participation, such as accepting applications in alternative formats or assisting applicants to obtain statutory declarations. 	2022-2023			

Monitoring progress

Monitoring progress will enable the department to know if we are on the right track to achieve our vision and provide the flexibility to respond to rapidly changing environments, emerging research and best practice.

This includes development of a monitoring and evaluation framework co-designed with people with lived and living experience. This will include Aboriginal people with disability, who will be involved in all stages of the process. The monitoring and evaluation framework will align with the outcomes framework identified in Inclusive Victoria and draw upon the principles of self-determination. Through consultation with Aboriginal people and organisations, the framework will also adopt Aboriginal measures of success concerning Aboriginal people with disability.

Governance structures have been established to ensure regular monitoring of implementation against milestones, outcomes and targets (see **Appendix F**). A Working Group will be the key mechanism that provides close monitoring and oversight of the Plan. The group will be co-chaired by Inclusion and Intersectionality and Aboriginal Justice to ensure the voices of Aboriginal staff are heard and the principle of self-determination is enacted in implementation.

Disability Action Plan Working Group

In April 2021, the Inclusion and Intersectionality Branch established a Disability Action Plan Working Group comprised of senior representatives from relevant departmental business units whose work relates significantly to people with disability, and the Co-Chairs of the DJCS Enablers Network. The purpose of the Working Group was to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the previous Plan. The group will continue to govern the implementation and monitoring of the Plan, with a refresh to its membership to reflect lead business units.

All relevant business units across the department will be involved in detailed annual reporting against the Plan, coordinated by the Inclusion and Intersectionality branch. Progress will be published in the department's annual report.

Strong governance will allow us to track progress and update the Plan as necessary. A formal external evaluation of the Plan will be conducted to identify the successes and challenges, as well as provide recommendations for the development of the next Plan.



Appendix A: Glossary

We acknowledge that people may have different definitions and that language can evolve.

Term	What it means in the Plan	Term	What it means in the Plan
Ableism	Describes discrimination based on a person's disability.	Equity	This principle builds on equality and is about ensuring just and fair inclusion for all people with disability. An equitable society is one where everyone can take part and prosper. The goals of equity are to create conditions that allow all people to reach their full potential. These conditions must recognise that experiences, inequalities and outcomes are not the same across communities. ¹²
Aboriginal self-determination	The right and ability for Aboriginal people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development.	Identity-first language	Language that prioritises a person's disability identity before the person – for example, 'disabled person'. We recognise that many people with disability prefer to use identity-first language because they see their disability as a key part of their identity. ¹³
	Self-determination is a human right for First Peoples enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The department's commitment to upholding the principle of self-determination is clearly articulated in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023. The Aboriginal Justice Caucus has been clear in stating that Aboriginal self-determination is a matter for Aboriginal people. Therefore, the process of furthering self-determination in justice must be led by Aboriginal people in Victoria.	Inclusion	Empowering access to opportunities, dealing with structural inequalities, tackling unconscious bias to have equal access to all parts of society. ¹⁴
Accessibility	The extent to which people with disability can access something like an office, worksite, public area, program, service, including digital services through adaptive technology. It is closely linked to universal design.	Intersectionality / intersectional approach	An approach that helps us understand how systems and structures interact to create multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage. It also considers people's unique experiences and how social meanings relating to people's identities underpin discrimination. These can overlap (or 'intersect') to compound experiences of discrimination, disadvantage or inequality or privilege individuals and groups.
Co-design	The process of involving people with disability in designing, delivering and evaluating a policy, program or service.	Lived and living experience	The experiences people have are not binary or linear. Whilst a particular event may have happened in the past a person may continue to experience and be 'living' with the impacts into the present.
Equality	A principle that ensures every person with disability has an equal chance to make the most of their lives and talents. It means that no-one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or how they identify. ¹¹	Person-first language	Language that puts the person before their disability – for example, 'person with disability'. Person-first language is used to emphasise a person's right to an identity beyond their disability.

¹² Adapted from Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan>>, Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022.

¹³ Adapted from Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-2032 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/pride-our-future-victorias-lgbtqi-strategy-2022-32>>, Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022.

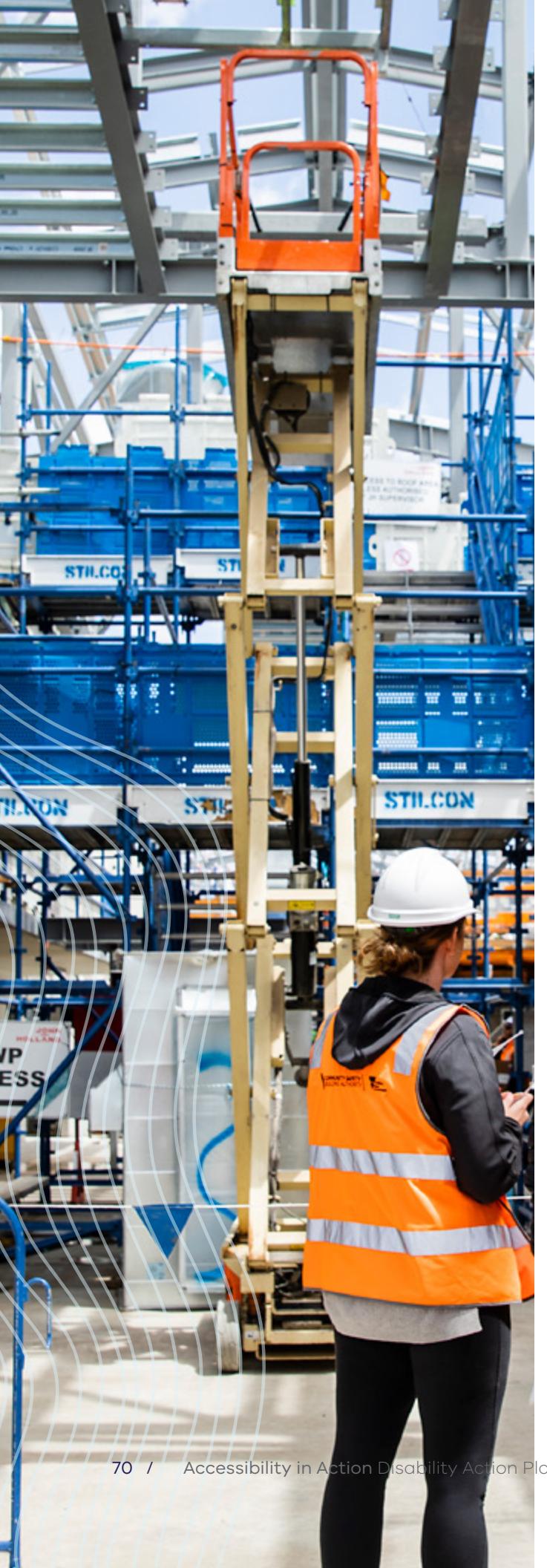
¹⁴ Adapted from Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan>>, Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022.

¹¹ Adapted from Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-2032 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/pride-our-future-victorias-lgbtqi-strategy-2022-32>>, Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022.

Term	What it means in the Plan
Social model of disability	A model that views disability as stemming from communities, services and spaces that are not accessible or inclusive. In the social model of disability, it is society that places limits on a person, not their disability. ¹⁵
Strengths-based approach	Recognises the diverse strengths that individuals and communities bring to a situation and the need for collaboration to harness these strengths.
Systemic barriers and systems of discrimination	Attitudes, environments, policies and institutions within our community that discriminate and exclude people across multiple areas of life.
Universal design	An approach to design that makes spaces, policies and programs that are inclusive, accessible and can be used independently by all people.

¹⁵ Adapted from Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022–2026 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan>>, Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022.





Appendix B: Overview of achievements

The department's Disability Action Plan Framework 2019–2022 set out an overarching policy, outcomes and priority areas for supporting access and inclusion for people with disability, including justice clients and staff.

It delivered positive change around six priority areas for action to address systemic and current barriers for people with disability in the justice system and the department's workforce:

1. Responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
2. Building workforce capacity and capability
3. Accessible communications
4. Inclusive and accessible justice systems and services
5. Improving data on disability
6. Disability employment.

Key achievements delivered across these areas include:

- Increased access and inclusion for service users and clients during COVID-19 with flexible and remote service delivery to ensure services continued during COVID-19 restrictions. Victims of crime, including victims with disability, were able to access services remotely through a range of different methods and technologies.
- Establishment of a Disability Advice and Response Team.
- The Just Voices Project piloted workforce development initiatives or interventions to support capability uplift around the National Disability Insurance Scheme for the mainstream Corrections and Youth Justice frontline workforce.
- Fines Victoria updated its website to improve accessibility and functionality.
- Production of an accessible communication and engagement guide for the emergency management sector to provide practical communication and engagement advice to improve outcomes for people with disability.
- Youth Justice employed four Senior and Specialist Disability Advisors to support young people, including young people with disability, as they transition from custody into the community and vice versa.
- Delivery of the Disability and Complex Needs pilot program at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for women with prisoners with cognitive disability.
- Release of the first Workplace Adjustment Policy and Inclusive Employment Guide.
- Delivering Disability Justice Operational Forums which provide a community of practice environment for discussion and engagement across the interface of the Victorian Justice System and the National Disability Insurance Scheme at an operational and policy level, including engagement with people with disability.
- Delivering a Victorian Public Sector Disability Awareness eLearn training package.

Appendix C: Overview of national, state and departmental policies

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 provides an overarching framework at a national level to support the rights of people with disability. Within a Victorian context, the Disability Act 2006 provides the legislative framework. It requires public bodies to develop and implement disability action plans to improve inclusion for people with disability. Work is currently underway to review the Act, which aims to strengthen the Victoria's disability inclusion legislative architecture.

Reform across Australia is currently underway to drive change and improve outcomes for people with disability. At a state level, the release of Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022–2026 in early 2022 offers a reform agenda that builds on previous work to make all parts of the community inclusive and accessible. This is supported at a national level by Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 which provides a strategic and collective approach to addressing systemic issues and barriers for people with disability.

In the justice space, the Inquiry into Victoria's Criminal Justice System and Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System (currently underway) will have implications for people with disability in contact with our justice system. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (also underway) will identify further work to enhance safety for people with disability.

These reforms and inquiries provide critical strategic frameworks and points of alignment for our work as a department. More broadly, they will impact on the lives of Victorians with disability in profound ways by addressing longstanding structural issues and barriers. These reforms and inquiries also open up a broader discussion within the community about disability – with opportunities to engage a range of settings in these conversations.

In recognition of the diversity of people with disability, our Plan will align with other government reforms including Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–32 and Safe and Strong – A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy. The intersectional approach adopted in this Plan will also support the delivery of these other reforms.

Aligned with legislation and frameworks, the department has various strategies and action plans in place and underway to support people with disability, include our staff and the community we serve.



Key national, state and departmental policies and strategies used to shape the Plan are summarised in **Table A** below.

Table A: Summary of key national, state and departmental policies and strategies

National	State	Departmental
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Disability Act 2006	Corporate Plan 2022-2026
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	Equal Opportunity Act 2010	Statement of Direction 2019-2023
National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006	Wirkara Kulpa: Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy 2022-2032
Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023	Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability	Victorian self-determination reform framework	Cultural Diversity Plan Framework 2019-2022
Fair Work Act 2009	Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement	
	Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026	
	Getting to Work: Victorian public sector disability employment action plan 2018-2025	
	Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32	
	Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy	
	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023	

Figure 3. Accessibility in Action: Shaping our Plan roadmap

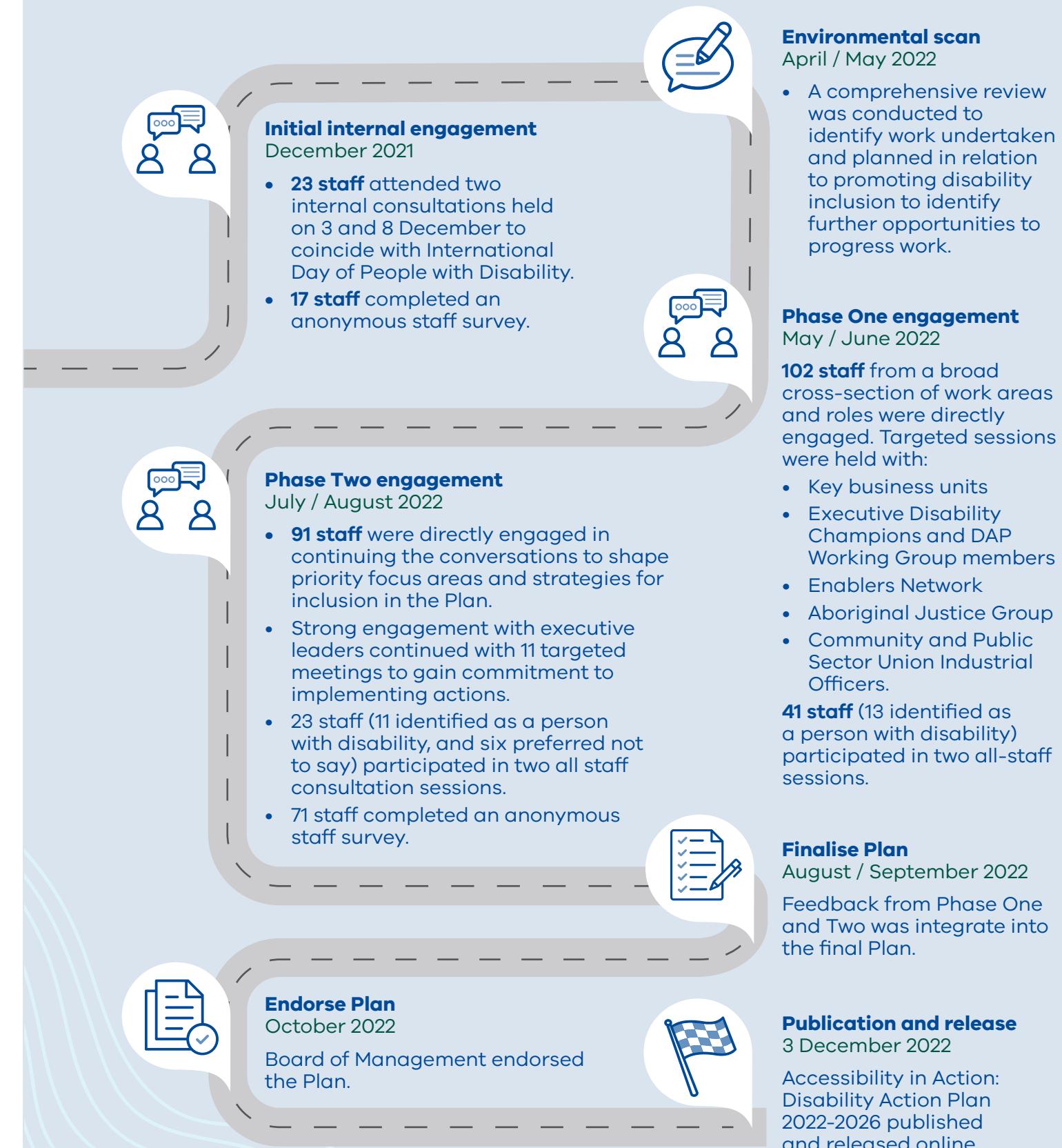
Appendix D: Detailed overview of engagement approach

To inform the development of the Plan, consultation started early with two internal consultations held in December 2021 to coincide with International Day of People with Disability. An online survey was also released to identify opportunities to improve disability inclusion across the department and justice service systems.

In April 2022, the department embarked on a more extensive consultation process to gain a better understanding of work undertaken and planned about promoting inclusion in the workplace and broader justice sector, and further opportunities to progress work in this space. The comprehensive consultation process is outlined by the roadmap (see **Figure 3** on page 75). It was through this ongoing consultation process that our priority focus areas and strategies emerged and allowed for lived and living experience to be heard.

With hybrid working conditions in place, all engagement was conducted online. Engagement mechanisms included a comprehensive environmental scan of current and planned work, online workshops open to all staff, targeted online meetings with key business units, anonymous surveys, anonymous online polling and digital whiteboards (Jamboard) were utilised to encourage participation and capture participants ideas and insights.

There was a deliberate approach to provide accessible and inclusive participation to allow more staff to engage in the consultation process. This included the provision of access and technological options that catered for a 24/7 workforce.

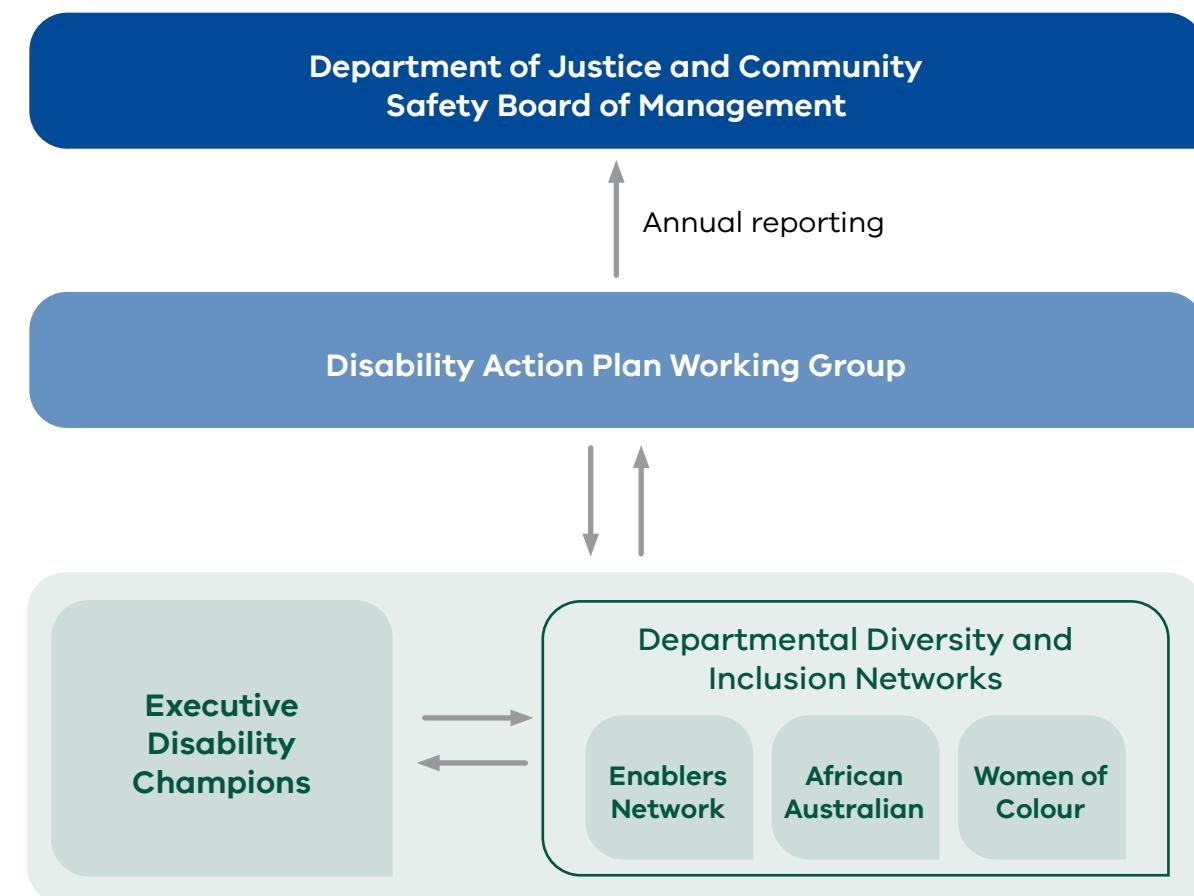


Appendix E: Links with Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026

Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026 systemic reform areas					
Co-design with people with disability	Aboriginal self-determination	Intersectional approaches	Accessible communications and universal design	Disability confident and inclusive workforces	Effective data and outcomes reporting
Vision: A justice and community safety system and workplace culture that is inclusive, accessible and values people with disability and carers.					
DJCS Statement of Direction 2019–2023 Outcomes	Safer and more resilient communities	A trusted justice and community safety system	A fair and accessible justice system for Aboriginal people	Easy access to justice and safety systems and services	
Accessibility in Action: Disability Action Plan 2022–2026 Focus Areas	Improving data on disability and intersectionality	Building capability and capacity	Equitable pathways to career development and leadership	Creating a safer, empowering and inclusive culture	

Appendix F: Governance and oversight

Figure 4. Governance structure



Endnotes

- i Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026 <<http://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan>> Melbourne, Victorian Government, 2022, p.10.
- ii Ibid
- iii Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>>, Australian Government, Canberra, 2018.
- iv Australian Bureau of Statistics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, Australia: summary of findings <<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-disability>>, Australian Government, Canberra, 2018.
- v LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People <<https://www.lgbtqhealth.org.au/statistics>>, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Sydney, 2021.
- vi Australian Bureau of Statistics, Children with disability, Australia: summary of findings <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#children-with-disability>>, Australian Government, Canberra, 2018.
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- viii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with disability in Australia: income and finance <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/income-and-finance/income>>, Australian Government, 2022.
- ix Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with disability in Australia: employment <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/employment/employment-rate-and-type>>, Australian Government, 2022.
- x Women with Disabilities Victoria, Facts on Violence against Women with Disabilities <<https://www.wdv.org.au/publications-resources/wdv-fact-sheets/>>, Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2021.
- xi Law Council of Australia, 2020 - Aboriginal People with Disability in Contact with the Criminal Justice System slide deck, 2021.
- xii Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Criminal justice system Issues paper <<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/criminal-justice-system>>, 2020, p. 6.
- xiii 2019 Youth Justice Annual Survey.



Justice
and Community
Safety