



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NSW  
*good works*

# DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

## 2021–2025



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We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

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# OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION



## St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (‘the Society’) is proud to present its first Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

We recognise people with disability as part of the diversity that enriches us all and enriches our society as a whole. We have a deep commitment to a world that promotes inclusion and participation. We know that when people from different backgrounds, with different lived experiences and points of view come together, we create the most value for our people, the people we assist and for society.

People with disability continue to face barriers to full participation and inclusion in community life. They are often denied everyday choices that Australians without disability take for granted. For people with disability from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and others from communities that have been disadvantaged or marginalised, we know that the barriers are even higher and the choices more limited.

The Society has a long history of delivering services and programs to people living with disability, including a broad range of programs focused on social inclusion, capacity building, community engagement and participation.

Beyond these programs, our tradition challenges us to identify the unjust structures that cause disadvantage. In this Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we formalise our

commitment to identifying and reshaping the processes, structures and infrastructure of the Society in NSW which limit the full participation of people with disability. We commit to examining and challenging the attitudes that perpetuate stereotypes and myths. We commit to embedding more inclusive ways of working and to increasing access to our physical and virtual spaces. We commit to providing opportunities for meaningful employment and career progression for people with disability.

The voices and contributions of people with disability have shaped this plan and will be at the centre of its implementation and review. As a people-centred organisation, we will continue to pay attention to the experiences of people with disability and learn from these. We will ensure that people with disability have a central role as agents of change in the delivery of this plan.

Our vision is for a society transformed by compassion and built on justice. This Disability Inclusion Action Plan provides us with the practical actions we must take as part of our commitment to justice for people with disability.

Jack de Groot

# OUR VISION FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW's vision is for a society transformed by compassion and built on justice. Our vision is firmly based on our core mission to offer a hand up to people experiencing disadvantage and is guided by our key values: commitment, compassion, respect, integrity, empathy, advocacy and courage.

We recognise that differences such as those that come with experience of disability are natural. In Australia, disability is a common part of the human experience with one in five people living with disability. Although attitudes are changing, people with disability still report barriers that deny them access to typical experiences in their communities. The barriers can be physical, such as inaccessible facilities; social, such as lack of accessible information; and attitudinal, such as assumptions and myths about people with disability. When these barriers are removed, we increase the opportunity to engage in community life.

Our vision is built on a profound belief and the guiding principles expressed in Catholic Social Teaching of the inherent dignity and rights of all human beings.

Our mission and spirituality compel us to promote radical inclusivity, restoration and accompaniment. We recognise the dignity of each human being, independent of their ethnicity, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability. We oppose discrimination of all kinds and challenge any attitudes or systems which wound the dignity of others.

In the Society all our services are radically people-centred with empowerment at their heart. People are never treated as transactions or commodities nor as mere recipients of assistance. We affirm the rights of people with disability, consistent with the principles of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*. In particular, we acknowledge that people with disability:

- have the same right as other members of Australian society to realise their potential for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development
- should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability
- have the same right as other members of Australian society to respect for their worth and dignity and to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- have the same right as other members of Australian society to be able to determine their own best interests, including the right to exercise choice and control, and to engage as equal partners in decisions that will affect their lives, to the full extent of their capacity

As people we all want connection and to be included. We know that as a country, our diversity brings us strength and enriches who we are. By actively supporting inclusion, we reduce disadvantage, isolation, and discrimination. As an organisation that has a long history of supporting people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, we aim to be a leader in driving change for greater inclusion for people with disability.



## OUR PROFILE

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is a member and volunteer-based organisation that has been assisting marginalised and disadvantaged people across NSW for nearly 140 years.

The Society was founded in post-Revolution France in 1833 by 20-year-old Frederic Ozanam who wanted to make a difference to the poverty and disadvantage that he saw around him. In just 20 years his passion would become a worldwide movement. In 1881, a Scottish migrant named Charles Gordon O'Neill founded the first St Vincent de Paul Society conference in NSW at St Patrick's Church Hall in The Rocks, Sydney.

Today, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is divided into 10 Central Councils which are made up of 58 Regional Councils. We have 390 local member networks, known as conferences, across the State. The core of conference members' work is visiting and assisting people experiencing disadvantage, in their homes, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, detention centres and in our services. We

are one of the few remaining charities where members still visit people in their homes.

Today there are close to 13,000 members and volunteers providing vital support to people experiencing disadvantage including food parcels and vouchers, financial assistance, help with energy bills and other debt, budget counselling, school items for children and the provision of other material items such as furniture, clothing, bedding, and other household items.

In the 2019-2020 financial year the Society provided over \$15.9 million in financial and material assistance through our network of member-based Conferences, \$14.8 million in drought relief funds, and more than \$5.2 million in emergency payments to people impacted by the Black Summer bushfires in NSW<sup>1</sup>.

The Society is also a leading provider of community services with 115 services across NSW that provided assistance to 33,350 people in the 2019-2020 financial year. We provide accommodation, supported accommodation

<sup>1</sup> These figures capture bushfire relief provided by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW by the end of June 2020, and do not include parts of the far South Coast that fall under the territory of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn.

and drop-in services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We provide services to people with complex mental health diagnoses and/or complex behavioural support needs; people experiencing problematic alcohol or other drug use; and young people at risk of exclusion.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in NSW offers services and programs to people living with disability through the Disability and Inclusion division. This division delivers a broad range of programs focused on social inclusion, capacity building, community engagement and participation. Programs equip people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to bring about personal and social transformational change. The focus is to reconnect marginalised communities with the broader community through the provision of training and volunteer opportunities; to provide safe and inclusive spaces for people accessing the programs; and to increase opportunities for engagement in social and recreational activities. Through the Disability and Inclusion division, the Society also provides short term accommodation, respite and supported independent living services for people with disability who have

been relinquished or removed from their homes, or whose complex support needs require specialist housing.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW currently employs approximately 1350 people. This includes 89 people with disability employed through our Australian Disability Enterprises. Ozanam Industries and Castlereagh Industries provide support, training and upskilling opportunities to increase pathways to open employment for people with disabilities. The Society also provides employment, volunteer and membership opportunities to people with lived experience of disability across a broad range of program areas.

The Society conducts all of its work with a drive to see an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice. As a caring lay Catholic charity offering “a hand up” to people experiencing disadvantage, we advocate on pressing social justice issues such as homelessness, housing affordability, energy and cost of living, poverty and the rights of people seeking asylum. We live and work with the ideals of respecting human dignity, sharing hope, and encouraging people to take control of their own destiny.

## OUR CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan was developed and guided by internal and external stakeholders through consultation. Input from people with a lived experience of disability has been fundamental to the development of our strategies and actions for inclusion.

In the early stages of the project, we undertook extensive consultation to ensure that the Plan could be embedded in the organisation from policy and governance perspectives,

that managers would be committed to its successful delivery and that our employees could provide input. We particularly sought frank advice from employees with disability on the experience of working for the Society. We held informant interviews with key people across a range of functions in the organisation. Focus groups were held in regional NSW to ensure that the perspectives and needs of people across the state were included.

Prior to finalising the plan, we held further consultations with employees and service users with lived experience of disability.



## OUR FOCUS

The definition of disability used to guide the development of our DIAP is from the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW), which defines disability as

‘... a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

This definition reinforces the importance of viewing disability as the result of interaction between people living with a range of impairments and their physical and social environment. Disability is not just about the impairment. The onus to break down barriers rests with the whole community.

Living with disability can happen at any life stage and can be highly visible or hidden. In developing our plan, we consider not only an individual’s disability but the barriers that our society presents which restrict their life choices. *Disability inclusion* involves identifying and removing physical, social and attitudinal barriers to the full participation of people with disability in society.

We recognise that people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, from regional and remote locations, who are young, who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or identify as LGBTQIA+, can face multiple disadvantages or additional barriers to inclusion and participation. We seek to create an inclusive environment that is welcoming and supportive of people with disability in all their diversity.

In recognising the human rights of people with disability, our goal is to move beyond compliance with current anti-discrimination legislation to champion proactive outcomes for people with disability.

In preparing our plan, we have built on our existing systems, services and organisational culture that support inclusion as well as identifying additional opportunities to show leadership through better practice. We have ensured that this plan aligns with the strategic priorities in our *2020-2022 Strategic Plan*. The plan will be reviewed to ensure that it continues to align with the priorities articulated in the next Strategic Plan.



## DELIVERING ON INCLUSION

People with disability will be at the centre of the ongoing development and implementation of this Plan.

A *Disability Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG)* will provide strategic advice to guide the implementation of this plan. The group will include employees who identify as people with disability, parent/s or carers of people with disability using Vinnies services and representatives from external agencies.

The DIAG will review reports of the Disability Inclusion Working Group and provide advice to ensure that our work leads to meaningful outcomes for people with disability, that emerging issues and opportunities are factored into ongoing implementation, and that further

opportunities for people with disability to provide direct input are identified.

An *employee network* of people with lived experience of disability will be invited to review and advise on operational issues as initiatives are implemented. These could include planning of events to promote inclusion, review of inclusive language and other inclusion guides, critique of existing internal processes and assessment of the accessibility of facilities and technologies.

Resources will be provided to ensure that these and any other forums established are accessible to people with disability from diverse backgrounds.



# PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

The plan includes four priority areas for action to promote disability inclusion within the Society.

## 1 COMMITMENT TO AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

*Outcomes:*

- 1.1** The Plan is effectively implemented; and is guided by people with disability.
- 1.2** There is broad awareness internally and externally of Vinnies' commitment to inclusive practices and the rights of people with disability.
- 1.3** All members, volunteers and employees have access to knowledge about disability and ways to be inclusive.
- 1.4** We advocate for the rights of people with disability and contribute to public debate and policy on issues related to people with disability.
- 1.5** We support businesses that actively employ or are inclusive of people with disability.

## 3 MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

*Outcomes:*

- 3.1** We improve recruitment outcomes for people with disability.
- 3.2** People with disability have the resources and support required to do their job and progress in their careers.

## 2 ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

*Outcomes:*

- 2.1** The content and layout of the Society's written communications are accessible for people with disability.
- 2.2** Websites and online platforms managed in NSW are accessible places for people with disability to navigate and seek information.
- 2.3** Vinnies' spaces have the communications technology required for all people to access and participate on premises.

## 4 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO OUR BUILDINGS AND SERVICES

*Outcomes:*

- 4.1** People with disability can access information about the accessibility of our sites.
- 4.2** People with disability have greater access to our facilities because the accessibility of the Society's property assets is improved.
- 4.3** We increase external funding to deliver accessible disability services and accommodation.

# ACTIONS

## PRIORITY 1: COMMITMENT TO AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

We commit to being an inclusive organisation that aims to support all people, within the Society and in the community. We will use the Disability Inclusion Action Plan as a vehicle to encourage our community to fully support inclusion and celebrate the significant role that people with disability contribute in delivering our work. We will work to communicate a positive message of inclusion and facilitate the voice of people with disability to share their lived experience and knowledge. As an employer and consumer of goods and services, the Society can play a significant role in improving opportunities for people with disability to contribute to our society.

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1.1 The Plan is effectively implemented; and is guided by people with disability	1.1.1 Establish a Disability Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) to manage and monitor the plan	Working group of eight established with at least two of those identifying as people with disability  Working group manages and monitors the plan as per monitoring and reporting schedule	Corporate Services People Strategy and Change	Established second half 2021, meeting quarterly
1.2 There is broad awareness internally and externally of Vinnies' commitment to inclusive practices and the rights of people with disability	1.2.1 Launch and promote the Plan across internal and external channels	Online launch of the plan engaging employees, clients, and disability organisations Plan promoted on all internal channels and Vinnies NSW managed websites 100 employees access the Plan from the staff portal following launch Plan promoted in four external channels Plan submitted to Disability Council NSW	People Strategy and Change Communications and Marketing Disability and Inclusion  Corporate Services	Second half 2021
	1.2.2 Hold events to promote International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) and Social Inclusion Week	Managers circulate resources to employees to encourage participation and assist in education and planning for IDPWD events  At least one internal event is held each year, with support for further regional events where possible	People Strategy and Change Communications People Strategy and Change Communications MVRO	Annually
	1.2.3 Include representation of people with disability in Vinnies' traditional and social media	Imagery of people with visual disability is featured in strategic marketing material  Four stories of the experience and contribution of people with disability to Vinnies through working, volunteering or being a member of the Society are included in Vinnies' traditional media strategy each year  Six stories displaying inclusive practice of people with disability are included through Vinnies' Social Media channels each year	Communications and Marketing	From second half 2021 then ongoing





## PRIORITY 2: ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

We will use inclusive language and build relationships with people with disability to reduce barriers and support improved interactions across all facets of the Society’s work. We will invest in the technologies needed to improve accessibility for people with disability.

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
2.1 The content and layout of the Society’s written communications are accessible for people with disability	2.1.1 Develop guidance material to ensure language used in defining services and programs is respectful and inclusive of people with disability	Inclusive Language Guide added to staff portal Printed copies of Inclusive Language Guide developed and distributed in program areas where electronic access is limited Cross section of communications and program materials audited to track implementation	People Strategy and Change Communications	Second half 2021  Annually
	2.1.2 Audit and update accessibility of existing policies, procedures and strategic plans	Audit of existing policies completed Resources developed and distributed to assist people with disability to access and understand policies relevant to them	Governance Strategy and Outcomes	Second half 2021 Throughout 2022
	2.1.3 Review and update formal external communications tools (including Vision, Impact, Annual Report) to enhance accessibility	Review completed; improvement plan implemented	Communications	Review by end 2021  Program of improvements 2022

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
2.2 Websites and online platforms managed in NSW are accessible places for people with disability to navigate and seek information	2.2.1 Enhance the digital accessibility of our external and internal websites	Accessibility standards to be met on different platforms managed by Vinnies NSW identified in consultation with stakeholders Improvement plan for existing websites developed, costed and implemented Appropriate standards for all new web pages and mobile apps applied	Communications Technology Services Disability and Inclusion  Technology Services  Technology Services	Second half 2021  From 2022
	2.2.2 Include information regarding accessibility on our website, including contact details for users to request reasonable adjustments when wishing to access information	Information statement developed and included on all websites that Vinnies NSW manages	Communications Disability and Inclusion	Second half 2021
2.3 Vinnies' spaces have the communications technology required for all people to access and participate on premises	2.3.1 Audit existing accessible technologies to identify what tools and supports are being used and what else is needed	Requirements and standards for accessible technology determined in consultation with stakeholders Scope of audit defined including priority premises; audit undertaken Improvement plan developed, costed and implemented	Safety and Emergency Management Technology Services	Scope 2021  Audit and implementation from 2022
	2.3.2 Apply for funding to purchase accessible technologies required	Possible funding sources identified and applications submitted	Fundraising	From mid-2022



## PRIORITY 3: MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER GROWTH

We will support people with disability to access meaningful work and responsibility. Work provides a pathway to economic and individual independence and is also critical to supporting social engagement, physical well-being and mental health.

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
3.1 We improve recruitment outcomes for people with disability	3.1.1 Conduct a review of recruitment and induction processes against Australian Network on Disability's standards for a Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR)	Recruitment review completed by Australian Network on Disability (AND)	People and Culture Services	2022
	3.1.2 Deliver program of improvement towards DCR standards	Improvement plan towards DCR accreditation developed and costed Following endorsement, actions are incorporated into Recruitment Strategy	People and Culture Services	2022 2022-2023
	3.1.3 Establish a People with Disability network for Vinnies employees to provide opportunity for networking, peer support and providing advice to the Society about implementation of the DIAP	Network established with Executive sponsorship	People Strategy and Change	Second half 2021
3.2 People with disability have the resources and support required to do their job and progress in their careers	3.2.1 Develop a reasonable adjustments application process for new and existing employees	Processes at onboarding and for existing employees are aligned and formalised	People and Culture Services Safety and Emergency Management	First half 2022
	3.2.2 Provide information for managers about how to approve and access reasonable adjustments	Process is clear and accessible on staff portal	People and Culture Services Safety and Emergency Management	First half 2022
	3.2.3 Enhance accessibility of PPG and internal training	PPG Phase 2 is implemented so that supported employees are able to have meaningful feedback on performance and plan for improvement Consideration of accessibility is included when developing and implementing further systems for career development, progression and succession planning Skills and knowledge are developed in Learning and Development team to increase accessibility of classroom and virtual training	People Strategy and Change People and Culture Services People and Culture Systems Learning and Development	July 2021  From 2023

## PRIORITY 4: ACCESS TO OUR BUILDINGS AND SERVICES

We will provide places and spaces that are accessible to all. We recognise the importance of having facilities that respond to people's needs and right to be treated with respect and dignity and will work with people with disability to increase the accessibility of our property assets. Factoring in accessibility and inclusion as an important element of any new asset procurement or lease will provide significant future value to the organisation.

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
4.1 People with disability can access information about the accessibility of our sites	4.1.1 Use the Better Access Map (BAM) tool so that each of our sites can create and share their own accessibility assessment	All sites are assessed, with outcomes promoted through Better Access Map	Property and Facilities Disability and Inclusion	2021-June 2022
	4.1.2 Provide an opportunity, at a local program level, for members, volunteers, employees and clients to comment on key access and inclusion needs	Process developed and accessible in multiple formats	Communications	2022
4.2 People with disability have greater access to our facilities because the accessibility of the Society's property assets is improved	4.2.1 Use the data from BAM to identify access and inclusion gaps for assets in priority areas	Needs analysis completed Priorities established	Property and Facilities Disability and Inclusion Corporate Services	2022
	4.2.2 In conjunction BAM, develop an Access and Inclusion Checklist that provides guidance on standards of inclusion and accessibility for new, renovated or leased Society buildings	Existing checklist/s are refined to consider a diversity of accessibility needs and are included in pre-approval process for new, renovated or leased buildings going forward. Threshold questions for new properties are identified	Property and Facilities Disability and Inclusion	From 2022, ongoing
	4.2.3 Deliver program of upgrades and renewals to the Society's building assets to enhance accessibility and inclusion in priority areas	Three-year schedule for upgrades and renewals is developed and costed for endorsement. Following endorsement, actions are incorporated into Asset Strategy Plan and Property Strategy	Property and Facilities	2023-2025
4.3 We increase external funding to deliver accessible disability services and accommodation	4.3.1 Identify grant and funding opportunities available for delivering new and upgraded services and accommodation buildings for people with disability	Funding opportunities identified and pursued	Fundraising Disability and Inclusion Property and Facilities	2023-2025



# MONITORING AND REPORTING

## ROLES

Coordination will be the responsibility of the Corporate Services Directorate (People Strategy and Change team).

For each initiative, a Leading Directorate and Responsible Person should be identified.

### Disability Inclusion Working Group (DIWG):

- responsible for monitoring the plan and reporting to ELT and Disability Inclusion Advisory Group
- eight people; should include decision makers from key directorates and at least two people with lived experience of disability

### Disability Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG):

- provides strategic advice and input to the ongoing implementation of the Plan
- eight people; should include at least three people who identify as people with disability, and at least a further two having experience in working alongside people with disability in a support or other role

### Vinnies NSW Employee Network

- reviews and advises on operational issues as initiatives are implemented
- open to employees with lived experience of disability
- will meet as determined by the network

## SCHEDULE

### Quarterly:

- Those with responsibility under this plan report against the initiatives that are due using standard template
- DIWG reviews reports and progress against the *initiatives* in the Plan
- DIWG reports to ELT and DIAG

### Every six months:

- DIAG reviews reports of DIWG and provides feedback and advice

### Annually:

- DIWG reviews progress against the *outcomes* in the plan and produces annual report for ELT and DIAG; first annual review to include alignment with new organisational Strategic Plan
- DIAG reviews annual report and provides recommendations for refining initiatives and targets



# RISKS

Key risks to the successful implementation of this Plan will be considered and tracked through the Vinnies risk assessment form and risk register. These may vary over the life of the Plan.

Risks identified during the writing of the Plan are:

- Budget
- Time
- Misalignment with new strategy
- Relative priority
- Coordination/alignment across functions
- Staffing changes
- Messaging too many and varied stakeholders

