



VICTORIA POLICE

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Accessibility Action Plan 2021–2023





Thankyou

Victoria Police would like to thank the Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group and Enablers Network in supporting the development of the plan.

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Message from the Chief Commissioner

I am delighted to launch the *Victoria Police Accessibility Action Plan 2021-2023*. This Action Plan builds on the achievements of the previous Accessibility Action Plans and recognises that although we have improved in the way we deliver services, we know that we need to do better.



Victoria Police acknowledges that people with disability face significant barriers in their access to justice and often experience discrimination and harm. As a key entry point in to the justice system, Victoria Police is dedicated to ensuring that it is an organisation that is inclusive and accessible to the Victorian community.

We commit to creating inclusive and safe workplaces free from harm and discrimination, and ensuring there is equality of access to policing services for people with disability in the community – whether as victims of crime, witnesses, suspects, offenders or people in need of assistance.

We understand that Victoria Police should reflect the community we serve and we aim to be an employer of choice for people with disability. We are dedicated to making Victoria Police an organisation that provides meaningful employment opportunities for people with disability and values their skills and contribution.

I am proud to launch an Action Plan that has been developed in consultation with the Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group and Victoria Police employees, including the Victoria Police Enablers Network. Their input and advice has been invaluable to ensuring this Action Plan focuses on tangible, equitable outcomes for the community we serve and the staff we employ.

We are dedicated to improving the capability of our workforce and understand we must always strive for better. This Action Plan aligns with the values and direction of the *Victoria Police Capability Plan 2016-2025* and commits to improving the skills and ability of our staff to better serve the Victorian community.

In this Action Plan, we have set ourselves four goals as an organisation, to ensure that:

- Victoria Police services are accessible
- Victoria Police services are equitable
- Victoria Police employees have the right attitude and right capability, and
- Victoria Police has improved capacity to employ, develop and retain people with disability.

To achieve these requires each of us to ensure that we are delivering policing services in a respectful and inclusive manner and we place the person first in all we do. I encourage everyone to familiarise themselves with this Action Plan and commit to work together with our employees and community partners to support victims, reduce harm and offending, while improving community safety for all Victorians.

Our commitment

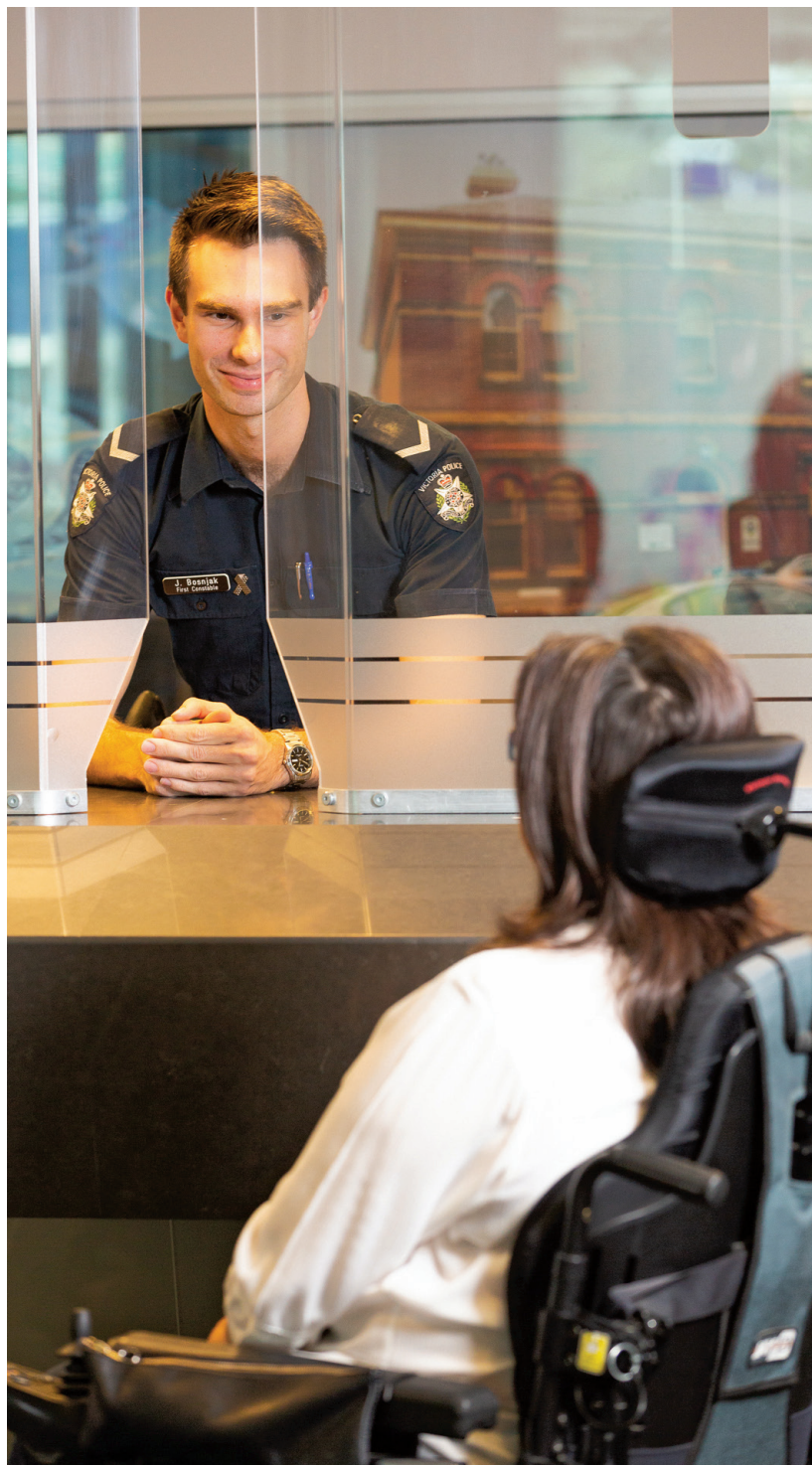
Victoria Police is committed to becoming a more inclusive and accessible organisation for people with disability, their families and carers, both in service delivery and as an employer.

Victoria Police acknowledges the significant barriers that people with disability experience when accessing the justice system. We recognise that it is our responsibility to make sure we are an accessible organisation that responds appropriately and meets the needs of individuals so everyone feels confident in the service they will receive across the organisation.

Our engagement must respect the needs of people with disability from diverse communities; especially women with disability and people with disability from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who face additional barriers when accessing the justice system. All Victorians should feel safe in their community and supported when accessing the justice system.

Working with our key partners, Victoria Police is supported to maintain a strong connection to the community and ensure our initiatives are informed by the experiences of people living with disability and their support networks. We acknowledge that the voices of people with disability, their families and carers have been silenced in the past, and it is our responsibility to create opportunities for these voices to be heard.

We look forward to working with our employees and community partners to ensure the *Victoria Police Accessibility Action Plan 2021-2023* is successful in delivering a better service to community members and our employees.



Our guiding principles

Our commitment and principles of the action plan are informed by state and commonwealth legislation¹, national and state disability strategies², International Human Rights standards³, Victoria Police Human Rights Equity and Diversity Standards, and the *Victoria Police Capability Plan 2016-2025*. Our Guiding Principles are:

- Accessibility
- Access to Justice
- Autonomy
- Co-design
- Communication, respect and dignity
- Diversity
- Engagement
- Human rights
- Non-discrimination
- Professionalism
- Reasonable adjustment
- Transparency and accountability.

Our goals

In developing our action plan, we have considered the goals and commitments set out in *Every Opportunity – economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020*, the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, and *Absolutely Everyone: state disability plan 2017-2020*, and the recommendations from the evaluation of our first action plan.

The *Victoria Police Accessibility Action Plan 2021-2023* is influenced by and consistent with the requirements of the *Disability Act 2006*, that identifies four outcomes to be addressed:

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

The goals for this Accessibility Action Plan are:

- **Goal One:** Victoria Police services are accessible.
- **Goal Two:** Victoria Police services are equitable.
- **Goal Three:** Victoria Police employees have the right attitude and right capability.
- **Goal Four:** Victoria Police has improved capacity to employ, develop and retain people with disability.

Victoria Police Accessibility Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2021

Goal Four of the action plan has been drawn from the *Victoria Police Accessibility Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2021*. The strategy is Victoria Police's commitment and vision for the inclusion of people with disability as valued employees of our workforce.

This strategy sits under the *Victoria Police Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2017-2020*, and provides the organisation with the foundations to create positive change in our workplace, where we welcome people with disability and continue to build a culture of respect and zero tolerance towards discrimination.

We are working to remove negative stereotypes, eliminate discrimination and improve our attraction, retention and career development strategies to enable people with disability to bring their whole self to work.

Our commitment of the strategy will be measured by achieving an employment target set by the Victorian Government to six per cent of people with disability employed across VPS staff of Victoria Police by 2020, increasing to 12 per cent by 2025.

With the strategy finishing by December 2021, a new accessibility inclusion action plan will be developed to meet our organisational commitments within Goal Four.

¹ Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Victorian Disability Act 2006; Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010; Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

² *Every Opportunity – economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020*, the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, and *Absolutely Everyone: state disability plan 2017-2020*

³ *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*





Disability Discrimination

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, it is against the law to treat someone unfairly based on their disability. Disability discrimination occurs when people with disability are treated less fairly than people without disability and the person discriminating fails to make reasonable adjustment. It also occurs when people are treated less fairly because they are family members, friends, carers, support persons, and/or co-workers of a person with disability.

Defining disability

Disability is complex, dynamic, multidimensional, and contested.⁴ Clinical or medical models define disability as health conditions or impairments, whereas social models view disability as the interaction between the person living with impairment and the barriers created by society, which exclude people with disability from full participation in the community. The social model of disability focuses on the way society is organised, thereby empowering individuals, organisations and communities to identify and remove these barriers.

In promoting and enabling access and inclusion, Victoria Police is committed to promoting the social model of disability, and applies the following definition as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵:

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

Victoria Police recognises the role that some families, carers and support persons have in supporting people with disability to access policing services. We also recognise that many people with disability in Victoria, often women, are carers themselves⁶. A carer is a legislated term under the *Victorian Carer Recognition Act 2012*⁷ that is applied to a person who is in a care relationship with another person with disability, care needs from advanced age, a mental illness, or an ongoing medical condition.

⁴ World Health Organisation (2011) *World Report on Disability*.

⁵ *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

⁶ *Victorian carer strategy 2018-2022*

⁷ *Victorian Carer Recognition Act 2012*

Barriers to justice

Victoria Police recognises its role as the first point of contact and entry to the justice system, and acknowledges the overrepresentation of people with disability as victims and offenders.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's *Beyond Doubt: Experiences of People with Disabilities Reporting Crime Report*⁸ highlights the difficulties people with disability experience when trying to access the justice system. The Report identifies a number of barriers to reporting crime including a lack of access to information or communication supports, lack of communication access, lack of physical access, and discriminatory attitudes and culture.

The Human Rights Commission's report *Equal Before the Law: Towards Disability Justice Strategies*⁹, focuses on people with disability who need communication supports or who have complex and multiple support needs. It found that the justice system has difficulty supporting people with disability in accessing justice including identifying disability and responding to it appropriately, and the under-utilisation of diversionary measures.

As first responders and the initial contact point with the justice system, police¹⁰ should identify the needs of people with disability as early as possible, including the steps required to have these needs met. The quality of the very first interaction between people with disability and police, and consistent follow-up by police, is fundamental to improved service delivery. We know this service is determined by a number of factors within Victoria Police including the capability and attitude of individual police members, and the culture of the organisation and resources provided for addressing the needs of people with disability.



8 *Beyond Doubt: Experiences of People with Disabilities Reporting Crime*

9 *Equal Before the Law: Towards Disability Justice Strategies*

10 Please note the reference to 'police' throughout this Report is inclusive of both Victoria Police Officers and Protective Services Officers.

People with disability living in Victoria

Approximately one in five Australians (18.3 percent or 4.3 million people) identify as having disability, and in Victoria, it is more than one million people. The number of people with disability is expected to continue to increase due to population growth, ageing and increased life expectancy. With the growth in population comes an increasing demand for accessible policing services.

People with disability, particularly people with cognitive impairment, such as intellectual disability and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), are over-represented in the criminal justice system both as victims of crime and offenders.¹¹



Population in Victoria

Approximately
1.1 million Victorians
have a disability



Using aids/equipment

About **half** of the people
with disability use aids
or equipment



In need of Assistance

About **three in five**
people with disability
need assistance with
at least one activity of
daily life



Sexual assault

One in four (**1 in 4**)
people who report
sexual assault are
people with disability



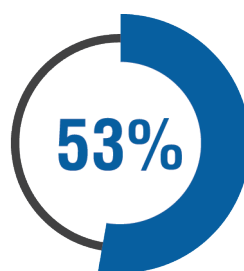
Victims of crime

Nine in 10 women with
an intellectual disability
have been sexually
abused



Acquired Brain Injury

About **42 percent** of
men and **33 percent**
of women, in Victorian
prisons, have been
diagnosed with an
Acquired Brain Injury
(ABI); compared with
just **2 percent** across
the general population



Workforce participation

53 percent of people
with disability and **40.8 percent** of people with
autism participate in the
workforce, compared
to **83 percent** of people
without disability



Experience of discrimination

Almost **one in 12** people
with disability experience
discrimination

¹¹ This information is drawn from the ABS 2015 survey and is available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features202015?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4430.0&issue=2015&num=&view=>

Building on our achievements

We have continued to progress and build upon the actions from our first action plan. We also completed an evaluation of the action plan to establish the extent to which we had met our commitments.

The evaluation found Victoria Police had made significant progress towards meeting the overall goals of the action plan including the establishment of important policy frameworks to better support employees with disability and improve the accessibility of Victoria Police's services.

The key achievements of the first action plan include:

- Development of practice guidelines with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for responding to allegations of abuse involving people with disability for service providers and Victoria Police employees.
- Development of a disability portal in the Cultural Community and Diversity (CCD) Resource Hub which provides information, case studies and resources.
- Development of Communication Access Accreditation at Box Hill and Geelong police stations.
- Development of a range of Easy English documents and videos that provide information about police services to people with disability in accessible formats.
- Development of Victoria Police's first Reasonable Adjustment Policy accompanied by practical guidelines for managers and employees.
- Establishment of the Victoria Police Enablers Network, which gives a voice for employees with disability.
- Delivery of disability awareness and confidence training to recruitment teams, hiring managers and customer service employees.

The evaluation also identified several recommendations for Victoria Police including to further develop sustainable recruitment pathways to support access to employment opportunities, and improve data collection in relation to victims and offenders, and employment data. The recommendations have been used to inform the development of this Accessibility Action Plan.



Working together

Victoria Police collaborates with both internal and external stakeholders and community partners to work towards access and inclusion.

Whole of Government

This action plan aligns with a number of state and national strategies including *Every Opportunity – economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020*, the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, and *Absolutely Everyone: state disability plan 2017-2020*. These strategies are critical in providing equal access and inclusion for people with disability across government services.

We work with the Victorian Public Sector (VPS) Enablers Network, a whole-of-Victorian Government employee-led association for people with lived experience of disability and their allies. The Network raises awareness of the rights of people with disability to embed inclusion and acceptance in the Victorian Public Sector and ensure fair and equitable treatment.



Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group

The Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group (DPRG) brings a stakeholder and community perspective to the review and development of Victoria Police's policies, processes and initiatives. The DPRG aims to improve interactions and engagement between Victoria Police and people with disability, their families and carers. It supports Victoria Police to maintain a strong connection to the community and is informed by the experiences of people living with disability and their support networks.

Victoria Police recognises the important principle of co-design. In 2018, the DPRG elected its first Co-Chair, Trevor Carroll, CEO of Disability Justice Australia. Victoria Police acknowledges the support and contribution of the organisations represented on the Victoria Police DPRG.

The current membership of the Group includes representatives from:

- Amaze
- Blind Citizens Australia

- Brain Injury Australia
- Carers Victoria
- Deaf Victoria
- Dementia Australia
- Disability Justice Australia
- First People's Disability Network
- Office of the Public Advocate
- Spectrum Intersections
- Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability
- Women with Disabilities Victoria
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service.

Victoria Police Enablers Network

The Victoria Police Enablers Network was formed in 2016. The purpose of the Network is to provide employees with disability a voice within the organisation and to give an opportunity to advise the organisation on ways it can be an inclusive and responsive employer to people with disability.

The Network has the following aims:

- Provide a safe, supportive, accessible and inclusive workplace for employees and prospective employees of all abilities.
- Foster diversity and inclusion within Victoria Police by supporting employees to network, share common experiences and information and contribute to policy development, which promotes greater inclusion of employees with disability.
- Improve organisational awareness of disability-specific issues by serving in an advisory capacity to executive command and organisational leadership on issues impacting employees with disability.
- Educate and raise organisational awareness of the barriers and challenges experienced by employees with disability.
- Overcome barriers for employees with disability by making reasonable adjustment in accordance with Victoria Police guidelines.

Australian Network on Disability (AND)



AUSTRALIAN
NETWORK
ON DISABILITY

Australian Network on Disability (AND) is a national, membership based, for purpose organisation that supports organisations to advance the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business. AND helps build disability confidence, engagement and action to promote positive outcomes for people with disability.

In 2014, Victoria Police introduced AND's Manager's Guide to creating a disability inclusive workplace to help managers and supervisors effectively support employees with disability throughout the entire employment cycle.

Victoria Police is committed to improving our workplace inclusion for people with disability and it is participating in the Disability Confident Recruiter Program to remove the unintended barriers from the recruitment and selection process for prospective Victorian Public Service employees. This program also focuses on educating recruiters to increase capability and promote greater understanding of the abilities of people with disability.

Law Enforcement Torch Run Victoria



Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) Victoria seeks to raise awareness and funds for Special Olympics Victoria. Worldwide, police officers are the Guardians of the Special Olympics 'Flame of Hope' and the Chief Commissioner is the official Patron of the program in Victoria. LETR supports police to engage with people in their local community who have an intellectual disability through Special Olympics activities and Torch Run events.

LETR Fundraising and sponsorship provides opportunity to underpin specific Special Olympics programs and initiatives within Victoria with a keen focus on education and development, equality, physical and mental health, sports participation and social inclusion.

Torch Run events include and celebrate:

- Delivery of the torch flame to state and regional games events
- Awareness of national and international events
- Equity and diversity within our community through events such as International Day of People with Disability.

The LETR also seeks opportunities to provide support to Victoria Police employees who have family members with intellectual disability through involvement in Special Olympics or other sporting endeavours.

Celebration of International Day of People with Disability



For the past six years, Victoria Police has celebrated International Day of People with Disability with the presentation of the Public Advocate's Award for Outstanding Police Service for People with Disability. The awards recognise police employees, police stations and work units that have provided outstanding service to people with disability.

The celebration involves the commencement of the Law Enforcement Torch Run with Special Olympics athletes and Victoria Police employees led by the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

Action Plan 2021 – 2023

Goal One: Victoria Police services are accessible

Priority	Action	Responsible	Key external stakeholders
Improve access to information	Develop key police information in accessible formats with community through a co-design approach	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Disability Portfolio Reference Group
	Ensure publicly available information is available in accessible formats	Media and Corporate Communications Department	Disability Portfolio Reference Group
Provide state-wide accessible police facilities	Buildings and facilities are designed and constructed to meet DDA compliance, through the use of the Victoria Police Accessibility Checklist with consideration of universal design and design for dignity principles	Properties Division	Australian Network on Disability
	Publicise levels of police facility accessibility to community	Media and Corporate Communications Department Properties Division Priority and Safer Communities Division	
	Identify and develop Accessibility Hubs (including physical and communication accessibility) in every police service area	Properties Division Priority and Safer Communities Division Regions Transit and Public Safety Division (Transit and Public Safety Command)	Scope Australia Australian Network on Disability



Goal Two: Victoria Police services are equitable

Priority	Action	Responsible	Key external stakeholders
Strengthen collection of disability data	Include disability as a demographic within crime reports	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Crime Statistics Agency
	Build capability to identify trends in complaints about police services to people with disability	Professional Standards Command	Office of the Public Advocate Disability Services Commission NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
	Identify trends in disability referrals by police via Victoria Police electronic Referrals (VPeR)	Victims Advisory Unit	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Department of Justice and Community Safety National Disability Insurance Agency
	Scope and progress data capture related to use of supports, including use of Independent Third Persons in justice processes	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Office of Public Advocate
Strengthen support for people with disability, their families and carers when in contact with police as victims, offenders and witnesses	Update and promote the Voluntary Disclosure Process	Priority and Safer Communities Division	
	Implement Disability Liaison Officer portfolios state-wide	Priority and Safer Communities Division Regions Transit and Safety Division (Transit and Safety Command)	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Disability Services Commission Disability Portfolio Reference Group
Strengthen local partnerships and networks with and for people with disability, their families and carers	Review local community engagement and/or regional plans and strategies to identify opportunities to proactively engage the disability community and their networks	Regions Transit and Safety Division (Transit and Safety Command)	
	Develop and promote a Victoria Police Accessible Events Guidelines and Checklist	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Australian Network on Disability

Goal Three: Victoria Police employees have the right attitude and right capability

Priority	Action	Responsible	Key external stakeholders
Increase police understanding of how to identify disability and provide appropriate supports	Develop resources for police about disability referral pathways	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing National Disability Insurance Agency
	Develop and promote a disability good practice guide	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Disability Portfolio Reference Group
	Implement a Disability Liaison Officer Community of Practice	Priority and Safer Communities Division	
Protect against discrimination to ensure people with disability, their families and carers have equal access to justice	Identify gaps and develop education and training resources for police, including a focus on bystander response, human rights and Prejudice Motivated Crime	Priority and Safer Communities Division People Development Command Regions Transit and Safety Division (Transit and Public Safety Command)	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
	Develop resources with community to meet gaps in police knowledge using a co-design approach	Priority and Safer Communities Division	Disability Portfolio Reference Group



Goal Four: Improved capacity to employ, develop and retain people with disability

Priority	Action	Responsible	Key external stakeholders
Enhance attraction and recruitment practices	Address barriers in Information Technology and implement reasonable adjustment passport	Information Technology and Infrastructure Services Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Unit	Victorian Public Sector Commission Australian Network on Disability
	Employ more people with disability, as per our mandated targets, through employment pathways such as traineeships, internships, work experience and prioritised positions	All Regions, Departments and Commands VPS Recruitment Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Unit	JobAccess Disability Employment service providers Specialisterne Australian Network on Disability Jobs Victoria
Create inclusive and supportive workplaces free from workplace harm and discrimination	Increase confidence of people with disability to report workplace harm and disability discrimination complaints, which can be recorded, monitored and analysed appropriately	Onelink	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Australian Human Rights Commission
	Ensure our Employee Assistance Programs are disability confident	Wellbeing Services	Victorian Public Sector Commission
	Continue to celebrate days of significance	Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Unit Priority and Safer Communities Division Enablers Network	VPS Enablers Network
	Employ a dedicated resource in Victoria Police for disability inclusion	Chief Commissioner of Police	
Support employees by enhancing development opportunities	Provide employees with disability opportunities to participate in fully accessible leadership and development opportunities, including mentoring	People Development Command Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Unit Enablers Network	Institute of Public Administration Association VPS Enablers Network Victorian Public Sector Commission



Victoria Police Enablers Network

The Victoria Police Enablers Network is comprised of employees with lived experience of disability, supporters and carers.



Monitoring and reporting

Victoria Police will use an outcomes framework to ensure we make real progress in achieving our commitment and can effectively measure outcomes. The framework will be developed in collaboration with the Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group.

We will report on the implementation of the action plan annually and contribute to progress reports on the implementation of *Absolutely Everyone: state disability plan 2017-2020*.



Acknowledgement of traditional owners

Victoria Police pay our respect to the traditional owners of lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who continue to care for their country, culture and people.

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