

# Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2030





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# **Acknowledgement of Country**

National Archives of Australia (National Archives) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the people, their cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.

#### **About National Archives of Australia**

National Archives serves as the custodian of the nation's memory, preserving Australia's history for future generations. Established in 1913, the organisation's approach to safeguarding Commonwealth records has evolved significantly over time. The need to protect records from the Second World War marked a pivotal moment, initiating the systematic archiving of all Commonwealth records. Originally part of the National Library of Australia, National Archives became an independent agency in 1961, with its role formally defined by the *Archives Act 1983*. A key milestone in accessibility was achieved with the launch of its website in 1994, followed by a searchable online database in 1995.

National Archives' collection comprises over 52 million items, documenting pivotal events and decisions that have shaped Australian history. This extensive collection includes Australian Government records dating from Federation in 1901 to the present day, along with materials related to military service, immigration and First Australians. The national archival collection houses a diverse range of formats including paper and digital documents, audiovisual recordings, sound recordings, photographs and maps. These records are available through offices in every state and territory as well as an online database.

As a leader in the management of official Commonwealth records, National Archives ensures the enduring preservation and accessibility of Australian Government information. It supports government agencies, researchers and the wider community through expert guidance and a rich repository of historical resources.

Through educational programs, exhibitions and public engagement initiatives, National Archives fosters a deeper understanding of Australia's history. Its work strengthens government transparency and accountability and enhances trust in democracy by connecting Australians with the decisions and actions that have shaped the nation.

#### **Director-General's introduction**

I am pleased to present the National Archives of Australia Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2025–2030. National Archives enables best practice information management by Australian Government entities, secures and preserves nationally significant Australian Government information and connects Australians to the national archival collection. Our work strengthens trust in democracy and improves government transparency and accountability by connecting Australians to government decisions and activities. National Archives is committed to ensuring people with disability can fully participate in all we have to offer. To support this, we partnered with Accessible Arts to:

- understand the barriers that may stop people with disability from accessing our exhibitions, events and programs
- offer accessible services, experiences and content
- create a more accessible and inclusive workplace culture.

The 5-year plan provides practical and achievable actions that will improve access and inclusion for people with disability. The actions strengthen our focus and commitment to ensure the work we do and the services we provide include and represent audiences with disability. Moving forward, key themes for the agency are:

- working better together to build awareness and support for access and inclusion
- continuing to securely manage our evolving collection to enhance discoverability
- fostering access and engagement through improved physical and digital resources, systems, and services.

This action plan enables accessible and inclusive practices across inter-agency collaboration, strategic decision-making, program development and design. It will also enhance user experiences with our collection, exhibitions, and programs, whether they are onsite, online or on tour. A sincere thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of the plan. The feedback and insights provided during the consultation phase have been invaluable in developing the plan.

Simon Froude

**Director-General** 

National Archives of Australia

# **Disability in Australia**

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines people with disability as those 'who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

National Archives adopts the social model of disability, distinguishing between an individual's condition or impairment and the societal and environmental barriers they face. This model shifts the focus away from individual diagnoses to the barriers that create disadvantage by restricting opportunities, participation, autonomy and self-expression.

Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible or invisible. National Archives' inclusive definition of disability encompasses mental health conditions, members of the d/Deaf community (who may identify as part of a cultural and linguistic minority with Auslan as their first language) and members of the autistic/Autistic community (who may identify as part of a cultural identity rather than as people with disability).

National Archives acknowledges that not everyone who experiences barriers identifies as a person with disability and that identity and disclosure are deeply personal. It also recognises the complexities of universal design, intersectionality within disability and the principle that one size does not fit all.

Disability impacts individuals across all geographic, demographic and socio-economic levels. It affects not only those with lived experience but also their families, friends and support networks.

The following statistics illustrate the prevalence of disability in Australia:

- 21.4% of Australians (5.5 million) are people with disability.<sup>2</sup>
- 37% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over (almost 4 in 10) reported they had disability.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2006), <u>Convention on the Rights of Persons with</u> Disabilities (CRPD), UN Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), <u>Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings</u>, ABS Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022-23), <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>, ABS Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

- More than 453,00 Australians are blind or partially sighted.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.6 million Australians experience hearing loss.
- 16% of people with disability (more than 1 in 7) use mobility aids.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.1% of Australians (estimated 290,900) are Autistic.<sup>7</sup>
- 61% of Australians (15.4 million) live with a chronic condition.8
- 42.9% of people aged 16–85 years have experienced a mental disorder at some time in their lives.<sup>9</sup>
- People with disability are twice as likely to be in the bottom 20% of gross household incomes.
- 48% of working age (15–64) people with disability are employed compared to 80% of people without disability.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Vision 20/20 Australia, Eye Health Snapshot, Vision 2020 Australia Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care (2024), <u>About Hearing Health</u>, Health.gov.au Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024), <u>People with disability in Australia</u>, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), <u>Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings</u>, ABS Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024), <u>Chronic conditions</u>, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), <u>National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing</u>, ABS Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), <u>Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings</u>, ABS Website, accessed 15 October 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022), <u>People with Disability in Australia 2022: In Brief</u>, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 15 October 2024.

#### **Commitment to access and inclusion**

National Archives is steadfast in its commitment to fostering access and inclusion. As the custodian of the nation's memory, we preserve Australia's past while shaping a future rooted in equity, diversity and inclusion. Our mission is to ensure that all Australians can connect with, contribute to and benefit from the national archival collection.

We are dedicated to sharing the rich and diverse histories and stories of Australia, recognising and valuing the unique experiences of every individual. Acknowledging the complexity and multidimensionality of the disability community, we adopt an intersectional approach to accessibility, prioritising the needs of those most disadvantaged and actively dismantling barriers to equitable participation.

Our vision embraces equality for people with disability from all backgrounds and lived experiences, including First Nations people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse individuals, women and non-binary people, members of the LGBTQ+ community, residents from regional and remote areas, older people, children and young people and individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds. National Archives is committed to:

- maintaining accessible facilities across all locations and adhering to global accessibility standards for digital platforms
- ensuring our physical and digital collections are accessible through alternative formats, assistive technologies and user-friendly platforms
- delivering exhibitions and public programs that actively welcome and engage people with disability and tailoring programs to meet diverse access needs
- fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce by ensuring equitable hiring and professional development, providing accessible workspaces and reasonable adjustments and offering ongoing inclusion training and support for employee-led diversity initiatives
- partnering with individuals and organisations to refine our practices and deepen our understanding of inclusion
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the DIAP, ensuring accountability and sustained progress toward a more inclusive future.

The DIAP aligns with other key strategies and frameworks including:

- Strategy 2025-2030: Evolving National Archives
- National Archives of Australia Corporate Plan 2024–25 to 2027–28
- Multicultural Access and Equity Plan.

# Case study: Multi-sensory workshops for people with low vision

In 2022, National Archives held a series of unique, multi-sensory workshops on science and art for people who are blind or have low vision. Supported by Inspiring the ACT and produced in collaboration with the ACT Directorate of Education, the workshops were linked to our Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize exhibition and to National Science Week 2022. Drawing on the themes of both initiatives, we wanted to help young people with low vision explore how science is expressed through art.

To develop the workshops, we worked with students who are blind or have low vision. They helped co-design 3D interpretations of some of the artworks in our Waterhouse exhibition, using images, descriptions and other information provided by the artists. This work produced dioramas, small models and more. Soundscapes and braille and audio descriptions of the artworks were also created.

At the 2 workshops, which were held at our National Office in Parkes, primary and secondary school students used the 3D interpretations and audio experiences to participate in tactile, descriptive tours of the Waterhouse art exhibition. The students also took part in drama games like vocal warm-ups and body percussion, designed to build focus and create connection. They also enjoyed mind-modelling, storytelling and creating their own artworks with items including fabric and clay.

The popularity of the workshops allowed us to extend the experience to the wider community. Working with the Canberra Blind Society, we offered 3 further workshops and tours to visitors with low vision of all ages.

These workshops were a great way to introduce our collection to a different audience, fostering greater access and inclusion for people who are blind or have low vision. They also provided a valuable exchange of knowledge, deepening our understanding of this audience and allowing us to refine our approach to accessibility and engagement.

# **Methodology and consultation**

In developing this DIAP, National Archives collaborated with Accessible Arts, the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales. Additionally, a diverse range of stakeholders was engaged to gather insights and feedback on access and inclusion.

The consultation process included the following activities:

- 2 focus group discussions with staff and management from across the organisation
- a series of interviews with staff and management to gather detailed perspectives
- an internal survey distributed to all staff and management
- an external survey distributed to stakeholders outside the organisation
- Walk and Talk Access Audit Report featuring feedback from people with disability on physical accessibility at Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Compliance Audit to assess the accessibility of digital platforms
- Website Content Audit to evaluate the usability and accessibility of online materials
- a document review report to evaluate the usability and accessibility of current documents.

National Archives extends its gratitude to everyone who contributed their time, expertise and feedback to the development of this plan.

# **DIAP** goals

National Archives has identified 4 strategic goals for the DIAP. These goals are supported by a comprehensive set of objectives and actions to be implemented over the next 5 years.

The goals are designed to eliminate or mitigate barriers to full participation in all facets of National Archives' activities, including programs, events, access to the collection, employment and other initiatives.

In developing the plan, National Archives has adopted the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning framework, which emphasises 4 key outcome areas. These areas underpin a commitment to accessibility and inclusion and goals are aligned as follows:

#### **Attitudes and behaviours**

The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion. Attitudes and behaviour permeate all aspects of life. Low expectations and negative attitudes about people with disability serve as barriers to professional practice. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions over time.

**Goal** - Identify and address attitudinal barriers among employees, stakeholders, researchers and the public to encourage inclusive behaviours enabling people with disability to fully engage in all National Archives has to offer.

#### Accessible and liveable communities

Creating liveable communities for people with disability is more than modifying the physical environment. It covers areas such as access to transport, community recreation and culture, social engagement and universal design.

**Goal**: National Archives will identify and improve access and inclusion within our physical and digital resources, systems and services.

#### **Employment**

Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than for people without disability. People with disability experience multiple barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of reasonable adjustments to the work environment, rigid

role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain employment. Research indicates that organisational commitment to workforce equality and inclusion is closely linked to strong business performance.

**Goal**: National Archives will increase the diversity, inclusivity and accessibility of our workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for people with disability to gain and retain employment while removing barriers to their full participation.

#### **Systems and processes**

A common barrier for people with disability is the difficulty navigating systems and processes to access the services, venues and support they need in the community. This could include accessing information, communication or lack of options to access services.

**Goal:** National Archives will actively identify barriers and improve the accessibility of its systems and processes, to meet the needs of people with disability

#### **National Archives' actions**

#### Attitudes and behaviours

The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion. Attitudes and behaviour permeate all aspects of life. Low expectations and negative attitudes about people with disability serve as barriers to professional practice. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions over time.

**Goal 1:** Identify and address attitudinal barriers among employees, stakeholders, researchers and the public to encourage inclusive behaviours enabling people with disability to fully engage in all National Archives has to offer.

Objective	#	Action	Owner
1.1 Disability Inclusion Action Plan Launch, implement, promote and report on the DIAP.	1.1.1	Publish the DIAP on the National Archives website and share it with staff, managers and stakeholders.	Director, People and Culture
1.2 Staff confidence and competence Equip all personnel with the knowledge and skills to uphold access and inclusion principles.	1.2.1	Promote an annual disability confidence training plan, including refresher courses for staff, managers and volunteers.  Provide regular updates on accessibility initiatives and diversity recognition.	Director, People and Culture Director, People and Culture
1.3 Leverage internal expertise Utilise lived experiences of disability and internal insights to	1.3.1	Support National Archives' Diversity and Inclusion Network to advocate for access and inclusion initiatives.  Appoint a diversity ambassador to stay informed on best practices and emerging technology.	Director, People and Culture  Director, People and Culture

enhance organisational			
accessibility.			
1.4 Engage external expertise	1.4.1	Where appropriate, engage external expertise to ensure	Director, People and
Leverage external perspectives		accessible and inclusive needs are considered to support the user	Culture
to refine access and inclusion		experience.	
strategies.			
1.5 Representation and	1.5.1	Increase representation of people with disability across marketing	Director, Communications,
visibility		platforms and collateral.	Marketing, Partnerships
Reflect and represent the diverse			and Events
society which National Archives			
serves.			
1.6 Awareness of accessible	1.6.1	Work towards ensuring the website provides accessible and user-	Director, Digital Publishing
services and programs		friendly information about programs and services.	
Enhance visibility of accessibility	1.6.2	Strengthen partnerships with disability service providers and	Director, Communications,
commitments and services.		organisations to increase external awareness of National Archives	Marketing, Partnerships
		programs and initiatives.	and Events

#### Accessible and liveable communities

Creating liveable communities for people with disability is more than modifying the physical environment. It covers areas such as access to transport, community recreation and culture, social engagement and universal design.

Goal 2: National Archives will identify and improve access and inclusion within our physical and digital resources, systems and services.

Objective	#	Action	Owner
2.1 Building accessibility	2.1.1	Implement recommendations from Accessible Arts' Walk and Talk	Director, Property and
Improve the accessibility of		Access Audit Reports.	Security
National Archives' buildings.	2.1.2	Provide accessible spaces such as parents, sensory, quiet and	Director, Property and
		culturally sensitive rooms.	Security
2.2 Bathroom facilities	2.2.1	Where possible, update accessible bathrooms to ensure they	Director, Property and
Provide equitable and accessible		align with current standards.	Security
bathroom facilities.			
2.3 Wayfinding and signage	2.3.1	Update accessible wayfinding and directional signage to locate	Director, Property and
Provide clear and accessible		key spaces including reference areas, bathroom, kitchens, cafes	Security
signs to support independent		and emergency exits.	
navigation of National Archives			
facilities.			
2.4 Accessible exhibits and	2.4.1	Identify and implement best practices in the design and delivery of	Director, Public Programs
programming		interactive and inclusive exhibits, events and programs.	
Ensure exhibitions, events and			
programs are designed and			
delivered to meet a broad range			

of access and inclusion			
requirements.			
2.5 Online and digital offerings	2.5.1	Explore options for hybrid and online events that are compatible	Director, Public Programs
Deliver inclusive and accessible		with and complement onsite experiences.	
online and digital experiences.	2.5.2	Increase the availability of online and digital content that includes	Director, Public Programs
		comprehensive access services such as Auslan interpretation,	
		captions and audio descriptions.	

#### **Employment**

Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than for people with disability. People with disability experience barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of reasonable adjustment to the work environment, rigid role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain employment. Research indicates that organisational commitment to workforce equality and inclusion is closely linked to strong business performance.

**Goal 3:** National Archives will increase the diversity, inclusivity and accessibility of our workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for people with disability to gain and retain employment while removing barriers to their full participation.

Objective	#	Action	Owner
3.1 Increase employment of	3.1.1	Conduct an audit of roles and positions to identify access and	Director, People and
people with disability		inclusion requirements and integrate these into job descriptions.	Culture
Boost the participation of people	3.1.2	Continue to monitor and track workforce representation of people	Director, People and
with disability across the		with disability to meet Australian Public Service targets.	Culture
workforce.			

3.2 Inclusive recruitment, onboarding and retention Promote inclusive recruitment and retention strategies and promote accessible onboarding practices to support a diverse workforce.	3.2.2	Review recruitment processes and identify best practices.  Provide training and guidance on inclusive recruitment practices including interviews and onboarding.	Director, People and Culture  Director, People and Culture
3.3 Accessible work environment Ensure that National Archives' workplace is fully accessible and inclusive for all employees.	3.3.1 3.3.2 3.3.3	Provide education and support about psychosocial risks to address workplace safety, inclusivity and wellbeing.  Provide a mechanism for input and feedback from staff relating to workplace barriers and solutions.  Introduce emergency text alerts.	Director, People and Culture  Director, People and Culture  Director, Property and Security
3.4 Access requirements Support the needs of staff with access requirements.	3.4.2	Streamline processes for identifying and fulfilling access requirements for employees.  Continue to promote partnerships with disability networks and organisations to support employees in the workplace.	Director, People and Culture  Director, People and Culture

#### **Systems and processes**

A common barrier for people with disability is the difficulty navigating systems and processes to access the services, venues and support they need in the community. This could include accessing information, communication or lack of options to access services.

**Goal 4:** National Archives will actively identify barriers and improve the accessibility of its systems and processes, to meet the needs of people with disability.

Objective	#	Action	Owner
4.1 Embed access and	4.1.1	Ensure agency publications and organisational style and brand	Director, Communication,
inclusion		guides are reviewed and updated with consideration to inclusive	Marketing, Partnerships
Integrate access and inclusion		language, terminology, symbols and accessibility.	and Events
principles into every aspect of			
National Archives' operations.			
4.2 Accessible marketing and	4.2.1	Develop a marketing policy to ensure all social media platforms are	Director, Communication,
communication		fully accessible.	Marketing, Partnerships
Ensure National Archives'			and Events
communications are accessible			
to all Australians.			
4.3 Accessible technology	4.3.1	Improve accessible technologies to optimise the collection search	Director, Applications
Leverage technology to		experience for users.	Integration
enhance accessibility across the			
organisation.			

4.4 Website accessibility and information  Enhance the user experience for internal and external websites.	4.4.1	Review the accessibility, discoverability and navigation of National Archives website, including updating main access pages with detailed information on National Archives services, locations, and amenities.	Director, Digital Publishing
4.5 Ongoing evaluation and improvement	4.5.1	Review consultation and feedback mechanism to ensure evaluation and improvement of access and inclusion is considered	Director, Office of the Director-General
Establish methods of ongoing evaluations and improvement around access and inclusion.		across National Archives.	

# Reporting

Regular updates on DIAP implementation will be shared with relevant stakeholders. A 6-monthly progress report will be presented to National Archives' Executive Board, and achievements published in National Archives' Annual Report, ensuring transparency and accountability. Progress against targets will be tracked using a variety of measures and measurement tools.

# **Legislation and policy**

This DIAP aligns with key international and national social policy and legislative frameworks including:

- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (Commonwealth)
- Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan (Commonwealth)
- Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-2025 (Commonwealth)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD)
- <u>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</u> (Commonwealth)
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- <u>Disability Action Plan Guide (2021) | Australian Human Rights Commission</u>
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines | Communities and Justice

The Plan is <u>registered with the Australian Human Rights Commission</u> (AHRC). Section 64 of the disability discrimination act.

#### **Terms and definitions**

**Language** is both a personal and political choice and there are diverse perspectives regarding the terminology used to discuss disability, both in Australia and internationally. We respect and honour the various preferences people have in relation to language.

**People with disability** are those with sensory or physical conditions, hidden conditions, learning disability or mental health conditions. This person-first language recognises that disability is one aspect of a person's life and does not define who they are. This aligns with the social model of disability, which asserts that individuals are disabled by societal barriers and discrimination, not by their condition. Additionally, 'disability' as an uncountable noun represents a state or quality rather than a countable set of conditions.

The social model of disability distinguishes between conditions such as illness or functional loss and disability, which is the result of societal barriers and discrimination. Under this model the term 'disability' refers to barriers created by society and not to medical conditions. The emphasis is on removing societal and environmental barriers and not on an individual's medical condition.

**Access** is about creating the necessary conditions for everyone to utilise services, facilities, programs and employment opportunities. This includes making space for the unique attributes each person brings and addressing physical, communication, economic, social and attitudinal barriers.

**Inclusion** is the process of cultivating an environment that celebrates diversity and is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. This environment recognises, values and utilises the knowledge, skills and ideas of all individuals, irrespective of race, ethnicity or religion, gender or sexual orientation, education level, socio-economic background, age, disability or family responsibility.

**Universal access** refers to the design of environments (both physical and service-related) to be accessible, understandable and usable by all individuals. It is a fundamental condition of good design. When environments are accessible, usable, convenient and enjoyable, they benefit everyone, making it a shared responsibility within the community.

**Intersectionality** acknowledges that aspects of a person's identity can overlap in ways that expose them to multiple forms of marginalisation. Being part of more than one under-represented

group may compound the barriers an individual faces, necessitating tailored approaches to

address these unique challenges.

Contact

**Feedback** 

National Archives values community feedback on the progress of achieving the goals and actions

outlined in the DIAP and encourages individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and

experiences. We welcome requests for updates on the status of feedback and how it has been

addressed.

**Alternative formats** 

The DIAP is available in a range of alternative formats. PDF and HTML versions can be accessed

via our website. Hard copies are available upon request.

**Contact us** 

Contact form.

Phone: <u>02 6212 3600</u>.

If you do not speak English, contact us through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on

131 450.

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay

Service:

Speak and Listen users' phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 02 6212 3900.

Internet Relay users connect to the National Relay Service then enter 02 6212 3900.

We have offices in every state and territory. Visit our locations for contact details.