



Australian Government
IP Australia

Access and Inclusion Plan 2023–2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

IP Australia respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders, past present and emerging. We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society. We particularly acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and their carers.

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MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR GENERAL

I am pleased to present our Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026 (the Plan). This plan reflects our ongoing commitment to providing an inclusive workplace and customer experience.

Our employees are critical to our ability to deliver on our vision for IP Australia. Our workforce is made up of people living with disabilities, people who may acquire a disability during their working life and those who have caring responsibilities. To attract, recruit and retain our people we need to support their needs, be flexible and value their contributions throughout their employment at IP Australia.

Our [Customer Service Charter](#) outlines our commitment to a customer-centric service,

with access and inclusion as a key driver of how we design and deliver our products and services to support individuals. This Plan, along with the Charter, reinforces the message that we value our colleagues and customers with disability, and we want them to be able to participate fully in the workplace and intellectual property rights system. To do this well we must make accessibility part of the fabric of what we do and provide a seamless interaction for our employees and customers.

I encourage you to engage with this Plan and commit to the role you can play as an individual, manager or leader in implementing and embedding accessibility in our workplace and in all that we do. I look forward to working with each of you as we continue to build a more diverse, inclusive and accessible workplace.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMPION

This Plan was developed in consultation with all employees, led by our IP Learning, Equity and Accessibility Partnership (LEAP) Network across the business.

The LEAP Network is a new network, established in December 2021, for our people with disability, people with caring responsibilities, and their allies. Accessibility is a key priority for IP Australia, and we have all worked together to develop this Plan, guided by our people with disability under the 'nothing about us without us' principle.

As Disability Executive Champion, I am the agency's chief advocate for the IP LEAP network and our key goal of increasing employment for people with disability. If we provide an accessible and inclusive workplace, we will not only retain our existing employees with disability in a workplace where they are supported and celebrated for their capabilities, insights and contributions, we will also improve our attractiveness for new talent. Having a team that

better reflects the Australian community, with one in five people having some form of disability, will help us deliver on our purpose of helping all Australians to benefit from great ideas.

The Plan is part of IP Australia's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026. It is a call to action that aims to ensure that our workplace, processes and policies support a culture which celebrates and welcomes people from all backgrounds, and where people with disability are supported throughout all stages of their career. The actions outline a range of practical and strategic things we can do to improve recruitment, provide flexible work practices, raise awareness and provide disability confidence training, ensure career opportunities, mentoring and support services are consistently available to all employees, and that all of our services and systems are accessible for colleagues and our customers. IP Australia is a member of the Australian Network on Disability, and I'd like to acknowledge their advisory support to us in developing this plan.



WHERE ARE WE NOW

IP Australia is an Australian Public Sector (APS) Agency of around 1150 employees. Our workforce until recently has been largely based in offices in Canberra and Melbourne. We now have a large contingent of workers who work from their home in a variety of locations across Australia.

In 2016 we launched our previous [AccessAbility Action Plan 2016-2019](#). In April 2016, 2.4 per cent of employees shared that they had a disability. That number has now increased to 9 per cent in the June 2022 APS Census. The APS Census also showed as many as 43 per cent of employees identified as having caring responsibilities. The 2016-2019 Action Plan included nine action areas. Progress has been made against all areas but there remain gaps and new challenges to be addressed in the new Plan.

In developing this Plan we have also given consideration to the commitments and values in the [Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25](#) (The Strategy) which provides a foundation for building an inclusive and diverse APS. The Strategy represents the Australian Government's continued commitment to increase the employment of people with disability across the APS to 7 per cent by 2025.

Australia's [Disability Strategy 2021–2031](#) is the national disability policy framework. It provides a plan for how all levels of government will work together to improve outcomes for people with disabilities. The vision of the Strategy is for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disabilities can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community. The Strategy provides the framework for how Australia will ensure the rights of people with disability under the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by identifying practical changes which remove barriers to inclusion.

APS strategy image:





DEFINITIONS

Definition of Disability

The definitions of disability vary. The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (the Act) defines disability as:

- a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour¹.

The Act includes disability that:

- presently exists
- previously existed but no longer exists
- may exist in the future
- is imputed to a person (meaning it is thought or implied that the person has disability but does not).

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) offers the following statement: 'Persons with disabilities include 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.'

This is considered the social model of disability. The social model focuses on the way the individual interacts with their environment. Individuals encounter physical barriers, digital barriers and barriers of attitudes and communication. These barriers impact on an individual's ability to equitably participate in society. The social model of disability places a greater emphasis on creating inclusive environments where everyone can fully participate.

Definition of a Carer

The term 'carer' refers to anyone who spends time providing unpaid care, help or assistance for family members or others. This could be providing care to a child or adult, with or without disability.



INTRODUCTION

Our vision is to have a world leading IP system that builds prosperity for Australia. To do this we administer IP rights and legislation relating to patents, trademarks, designs and plant breeder's rights. We contribute to the innovation system more broadly by using our skills and experience to advise government and Australian businesses to make the most of their IP. As a leader in the innovation sector, we strive to set an example of best practice in all that we do.

Our Strategic objectives: Impact, Customer, Capability and Innovation are all enhanced by providing an accessible and inclusive workplace for people living with disability whether they are customers, stakeholders or employees.

IP Australia is committed to providing a workplace where everyone feels safe, can participate fully, reach their full potential and be their true selves.

It is important to recognise that disability is diverse and that not all disabilities are visible. Ensuring that workplaces can support employees with diverse experiences and at all stages of their careers is critical. Accessibility is about recognising and reducing barriers to allow everyone to fully participate and to achieve their best.

Actions that improve accessibility for people with disability also improves access for everyone and provides options and different ways of working that can benefit our productivity, our health and wellbeing and our ability to connect with others.

Our Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026 supports the delivery of the APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020-2025 and aligns to the Strategy's two focus areas. The Plan outlines the actions we will take over the next three years under these two focus areas and based on three pillars:

1. **Attract, recruit and retain** more people with disability
 - a) Opportunities and support
2. **Accessible and inclusive workplace** cultures
 - b) Building awareness, respect and confidence
3. **Accessible and inclusive workplace** environments
 - c) Physical and digital environment

1 IN 5
AUSTRALIANS
LIVE WITH **DISABILITY**

THE PLAN

FOCUS AREA ONE: Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability

Opportunities and support

APS Strategy Outcome

We will increase the number of people with disability in the APS through attraction, recruitment, and retention initiatives. We will ensure that the APS is an employer of choice that is well regarded in the broader disability community.

APS Strategy Action 1

Develop a whole-of-government approach to large-scale recruitment of people with disability designed to meet the government's recruitment target. Expand the range of employment pathways into the APS, including through the use of Affirmative measure – disability for entry level, middle management and senior roles.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|--|------------------------|--|
| a. Promote the use of Disability Employment Services (DES) and specialist recruiters, Affirmative Measures Disability (AM-D) and RecruitAbility with hiring managers, where appropriate, to ensure recruitment of people with disability at all classification levels. | Sept 2023 and ongoing | Recruitment | IP Australia has broadly achieved 9% representation, but not at every level. Success would be maintaining or improving the representation and ensuring the minimum representation at every classification level of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4% by 31 Dec 2023• 5% by 31 Dec 2024• 6% by 31 Dec 2025• 7% by 31 Dec 2026. |
| b. Review Career Pathways and entry level programs (including Patents and Trade Marks training programs) to ensure they are inclusive and providing opportunities to candidates with disability, removing barriers, and providing appropriate support. | Review conducted by Dec 2024 Changes implemented by June 2026 | Recruitment | Entry level programs are targeting, attracting and retaining new trainees with disability. Career pathways are identified and developed for employees with disability at all levels. |

APS Strategy Action 2

As part of the broader APS reform work, develop APS-wide branding and employee value proposition that enables the promotion of the APS as an employer of choice for people with disability. Actively seek out skilled and talented people with disability.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|-----------|----------------------------------|--|
| a. Review and communicate IPA's employee value proposition (EVP) as an employer of choice for employees with disability. | June 2025 | Recruitment | EVP reflects inclusive culture and is visible to external candidates. Feedback from candidates says recruitment process matches promised experience. |
| b. Review internal recruitment practices and onboarding to ensure they match the EVP. Ensure consistent message of inclusive culture (for internal and external candidates) through the internet, advertisements, social media posts and candidate packs. | June 2025 | Recruitment | Candidate material is consistent and inclusive and reflects EVP. |
| c. Participate in recruitment programs such as Stepping Into internships, Koomarri work experience placements and others as identified. | Ongoing | People Development and Inclusion | Participate in at least one program each year. |
| d. Build relationships with organisations (such as universities, Disability Employment Services and specialist recruiters) to draw in talent from a wider candidate pool. | Dec 2024 | Recruitment | IP Australia has an ongoing relationship with at least one university, one DES and one recruitment company with regular engagement. |

APS Strategy Action 3

Agencies to work with the Australian Public Service Commission to conduct a review of recruitment practices (including application of Affirmative measures) to ensure alignment with contemporary and inclusive practices.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|-----------|------------------------|---|
| a. Review recruitment policy and guidance material to emphasize inclusive recruitment practices and encourage hiring managers to use AM-D, RecruitAbility and broader advertising options to actively seek out talented people with disability. Promote use of new AM-D guide developed by APSC. (aligns with actions 1 and 3). | June 2024 | Recruitment | Policy and guidance up to date and aligns to best practice. |
| b. Incorporate inclusive recruitment training as part of general recruitment panel training. | June 2023 | Recruitment | Standard selection panel training includes training on inclusive recruitment, AM-D and making reasonable adjustments. |
| c. Develop a guide for making reasonable adjustments in selection processes . As part of the guide include a resource with alternative assessment tools for selection processes to ensure panels can choose from fully accessible and inclusive assessment tools and remove barriers for candidates with disability. (aligns with actions 1 and 3). | Dec 2024 | Recruitment | A guide is developed and made available to hiring managers and Recruitment team. More information is provided to candidates on their options. |
| d. Review and develop best practice recruitment and onboarding resources that are inclusive and accessible. Include review of candidate packs, job description templates and website. | Dec 2024 | Recruitment | Feedback from candidates is positive. |



FOCUS AREA TWO:

Accessible and inclusive workplace cultures

Building awareness, confidence and an inclusive culture

APS Strategy Outcome

We will develop workplace cultures and environments that remove barriers to performance and support career development for all employees, including people with disability

APS Strategy Action 4

Agencies to provide disability awareness and capability uplift for managers and senior leaders

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| a. Review IPA manager training programs. Develop modules about supporting employees with disability, early intervention, leave, flexibility and other adjustments for employees with disability. (aligns with Actions 4, 6 and 7). | Review by Dec 2023 Implement new training modules Dec 2024 | People Development and Inclusion. | Review completed and additional content added to increase manager confidence. |
| b. Provide case management and recruitment teams with targeted training on working with people with disability, Disability Employment Services and JobAccess, to support increased recruitment and support. | Dec 2023 | People Development and Inclusion. | Training provided and Case management and recruitment teams report increase in confidence and capability. |

APS Strategy Action 5

Agencies to implement the disability liaison officer model to support employees with disability

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Develop and resource a Disability Contact Officer role (DCO) aligned to the APSC model to provide support to employees with disability and managers in the workplace. | Business case by June 2023. | People Development and Inclusion. | DCO position identified and filled in ongoing capacity. |

APS Strategy Action 6

Improve disability awareness and confidence to create an inclusive culture.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|---------------|---|---|
| a. Deliver internal events (such as presentations and training) and publish articles across the agency to increase general awareness about specific disabilities and the use of reasonable workplace adjustments. Include personal stories to reduce stigma and normalise disability and build manager confidence and understanding. | Ongoing | People Development and Inclusion with support from IP LEAP network. | Events held a minimum of twice per calendar year for all employees. At least quarterly articles, resulting in greater awareness and increased profile of disability and accessibility in IPA. Training programs delivered as required on general awareness and specific disabilities. |
| b. Provide the Communications team with specialised training to help ensure understanding and confidence in use of appropriate inclusive language. | Dec 2023 | People Development and Inclusion. | Training provided and Communication team report increase in confidence and awareness. |
| c. Develop a guide for inclusive language and make it available for employees on the intranet to ensure internal communication is inclusive and uses appropriate language. | Dec 2023 | Communications. | Guidance produced and made available to all employees and regularly accessed. |
| d. Participate in PACE and other similar mentoring programs to build confidence and normalise interactions with people with disability and reduce stigma and build awareness. | Ongoing | People Development and Inclusion. | At least once a year IPA participates in a mentoring program (or similar) to raise awareness and confidence through personal impact. |

90% OF DISABILITY
IS **INVISIBLE**

APS Strategy Action 7

Agencies to review business practices to include workplace adjustments and to embed conversations about workplace adjustments into all stages of the employee lifecycle.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|---------------|--|--|
| a. Review and update the Reasonable Workplace Adjustments guidance material to ensure it supports people with a disability. Managers to embed conversations about reasonable workplace adjustments into all stages of the employee lifecycle for all employees. | Dec 2023 | People Support | Guidance material updated and improved. Access to adjustments is more consistently applied and understood. |
| b. Review Flexible Work Policy and Travel Policy and procedures to ensure it meets the needs of employees with disability and those with caring responsibilities and aligns with Reasonable Workplace Adjustments guidance. | Dec 2023 | Employee Relations & Travel Policy and Operations teams. | Guidance material updated and improved and consistent with Reasonable Workplace Adjustments Guidance. |
| c. Provide awareness sessions for managers and employees on applying reasonable workplace adjustments and flexible work provisions to ensure respectful conversations and consistency, fairness and reasonableness in application. (aligns with Action 6). | Dec 2023 | People Support | Increased awareness and employees report more consistent and fair applications of the provisions in the annual D&I survey. |
| d. Develop a system/ tool or implement a Passport (including an APS wide Passport when available) to record and track reasonable workplace adjustments. | June 2024 | People Support | New tool in place with increasing increased usage and application. |

2.1 MILLION PEOPLE
OF **WORKING AGE**
HAVE DISABILITY

APS Strategy Action 8

Ensure employees with disability are supported and encouraged to take up mobility and career development opportunities

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| a. Regularly promote support mechanisms available in IPA: EAP, Mental Health First Aid Officers, Peer 2 Peer officers and People Support. | Quarterly (ongoing) from June 2023 | People Support | Increased understanding of support services and more regular outreach through Town halls and Information sessions and other opportunities. |
| b. Maintain and support an appropriately qualified Mental Health First Aid network . | Ongoing quarterly promotion | People Support | An ongoing Mental Health First Aid network. |
| c. Develop guidance material to assist managers to review role descriptions to identify inherent requirements and, where practicable, ensure any barriers for people with disability doing the role are removed. | Dec 2024 | Workforce Insights | Role reviews undertaken regularly and with more confidence. Feedback on role descriptions improves and is positive. |
| d. Provide formal coaching opportunities for employees with disability. | Dec 2024 | People Development and Inclusion | Coaching accessed by employees and reports of career progression improves for employees with disability. |
| e. Develop a formal mentoring program for people with disability to assist them in developing and exploring opportunities. | Dec 2024 | People Development and Inclusion | Mentoring program accessed by more employees and reportable improvements of career progression for employees with disability. |
| f. Conduct a review of the Studybank Assistance Guide to ensure that Studybank is accessible to employees with disability and the procedures are flexible and provide additional support if required. | June 2024 | People Development and Inclusion | Increased use of Studybank by employees with disability. |

MORE THAN 2.4 MILLION
HAVE A MENTAL OR
PHYSICAL CONDITION



Accessible and inclusive workplace environments

APS Strategy Action 9

Agencies to ensure all internal and external products and services are accessible.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| a. Test and monitor external facing ICT tools and website to ensure they are best practice, WCAG compliant. | Review by June 2024 and ongoing | DTG | ICT accessibility audit identifies no issues. Any issues raised are resolved. Feedback from customers is positive. |
| b. Include questions on accessibility in customer surveys to ensure customers are given the opportunity to provide feedback. | From June 2023 | Customer Insights and Improvement | Feedback is received from customers with disability. |
| c. Review parking policy to provide clarity around use of parking spaces. Increase flexibility in application of policy and ensure sufficient access to designated, suitable parking spaces. | Sept 2023 | Security team | Employees report increased clarity on policy. |
| d. Prioritise and raise general awareness of accessibility across the business through the development of an Accessibility Working Group (and Accessibility Stewards). The Working Group would include representatives from across DTG, Property and Services, Communications and other relevant business areas. | Dec 2023 | DTG | Establishment of Accessibility Working Group. Increased awareness of accessibility across all business areas. |
| e. Accessibility Working Group to review and inform accessibility practices in DTG and other business areas involved in digital service delivery, to develop an Accessibility Policy and coordinate accessibility measures across DTG business areas. | June 2024 | DTG | Coordinated approach to embedding accessibility across DTG resulting in improved accessibility and transparency of requirements. |
| f. Engage an accessibility SME to support the establishment of the Accessibility Working Group and develop an accessibility roadmap to embed best practice accessibility in IPA. | June 2024 | DTG | Delivery of a roadmap to improve accessibility processes. |
| g. Provide DTG and other digital teams with training in accessibility requirements and tools. | June 2024 | DTG | Increased knowledge of accessibility across all DTG areas. |
| h. Develop capacity for accessibility testing of ICT products and services through a registered pool of internal employees and/or procure external testing capability such as with Vision Australia. | June 2025 | DTG | ICT products and services regularly tested and internal capacity for testing is increased. |
| i. Develop written requirements for internal ICT systems – specify WCAG compliance, testing requirements. | June 2025 | DTG | Broad understanding of accessibility requirements resulting in compliant internal systems. |

APS Strategy Action 10

Audit of existing Australian Government owned and rented premises for their current levels of accessibility.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|-----------|----------------------------------|--|
| a. Consider and implement recommendations identified in Dignified Access Review , where practicable. | Dec 2025 | Action owners | Accessible workplace for all visitors and employees. |
| b. Develop and promote a tool for people to report on property and accessibility issues or make suggestions. | June 2023 | Property and Services | A tool for reporting issues resulting in timely remediation and reduction in issues. |
| c. Provide information on the IP Australia website about accessibility at Discovery House and MIPO - such as directions for accessible parking, entrance options, hearing loops etc. | Dec 2023 | Property and Services | Visitors easily able to navigate access to IPA premises and report positive experiences. |
| d. Develop guidance material for meeting organisers to assist them in holding accessible and inclusive meetings/events (whether virtual or in-person). | June 2024 | People Development and Inclusion | No issues reported in relation to accessibility for meetings. |

9% OF EMPLOYEES
HAVE **SHARED THEY**
HAVE DISABILITY

APS Strategy Action 11

Collaborate to share assistive technology and equipment across APS agencies and digital environments.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|---------|------------------------|---|
| a. Participate in APS whole of Government initiatives to improve accessibility and share technology and equipment. | Ongoing | DTG | Able to capitalise on improvements and knowledge across the APS to more quickly implement improvements. |

APS Strategy Action 12

Agencies must consider accessibility when procuring goods and services

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|----------|------------------------|---|
| a. Make accessibility a focus at the commencement of any new projects , including the procurement of products that meet accessibility standards. | Dec 2024 | Office of CIO | New projects deliver accessible outcomes. |

31% OF POPULATION
HAVE **ACCESSIBILITY**
REQUIREMENTS



Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The Workplace Strategy Committee (WSC) is responsible for the implementation of items within the Plan and ensuring that items are progressed by the appropriate area or persons within IP Australia. The WSC creates and monitors the workforce strategies, programs and measures, and is accountable to the Executive Board.

The People Development and Inclusion team will report to the WSC biannually and the Disability Champion and LEAP Network quarterly on progress against the Plan.

The Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-26 will be lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission). Under section 64 of the *Disability Discrimination Act*, organisations may provide a copy of their Action Plan and any amendments to the Commission. When the Commission receives a copy of an action plan, it will be published on their Disability Action Plan Register.

Key reporting timeframes

- **Quarterly:** The People Development and Inclusion team will provide an implementation progress report to the LEAP Network.
- **Bi-annually:** People Development and Inclusion team will provide an implementation progress report to the WSC. This report will be published on the intranet.

APS Strategy Outcome

We will monitor the implementation of the Strategy, evaluate progress and adjust actions as required to ensure success.

| APS Strategy Action 13 | | |
|--|-------------|--|
| Align to APS Strategy action 13 : 'Monitor and report progress' | | |
| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability |
| a. People Development and Inclusion team will report on the progress of the Plan to WSC and the Disability Champion. | Bi-annually | People Development and Inclusion team. |
| b. People Development and Inclusion team will report on the progress of the Plan to the LEAP network. | Quarterly | People Development and Inclusion team. |

Collaboration and networking

APS Strategy Outcome

Departments and agencies will collaborate to leverage good practice across the APS.

APS Strategy Action 14

Build a partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission to identify, support and enhance good practice.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|--|-----------|--|---|
| a. Lodge the Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission under section 64 of the Disability Discrimination Act. Any future amendments to be lodged to the Commission. | June 2023 | People Development and Inclusion team. | Able to capitalise on improvements and knowledge across the APS to more quickly implement improvements. |

APS Strategy Action 15

Agencies to collaborate to develop and share exemplary initiatives and innovative practices.

| IP Actions | Timing | Primary Accountability | Success Measures |
|---|----------|----------------------------------|--|
| a. Develop and maintain a network of contacts across the APS through APS Commission's Diversity network and APS Disability Champion network. | Ongoing | Disability Champion | Able to capitalise on improvements and knowledge across the APS to more quickly implement improvements. Able to share IPA knowledge and help other APS agencies improve. |
| b. Maintain membership of the Australian Network on Disability . | Annually | People Development and Inclusion | Maintain best practice employee experience and service to customers and support increased capability for IPA employees. |



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