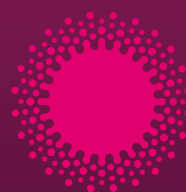




# THE WOMEN'S DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2022



the women's  
the royal women's hospital







# FOREWORD

We are proud to present the Royal Women's Hospital's first Disability Action Plan, which strengthens our commitment to enhance the health and wellbeing of women and newborns with disability.

Almost one in five Victorian women and girls live with disability. Ensuring the Women's provides accessible and inclusive healthcare is an important organisational priority and ensures that our patients are at the heart of everything we do.

We know that women with disability experience poorer health outcomes when compared to the general community due to inequities associated with gender and disability.

Women with disability experience barriers to health services, a lack of accessible health information, and discrimination and exclusion from decisions that affect their care and treatment.

The Women's Disability Action Plan provides a framework for how we will respond to this need and how we will increase access and inclusion for people with disability.

We are proud that our plan was co-created with our Disability Advisory Committee, women with disability and their carers, our staff, and Women with Disabilities Victoria - the Victorian peak body for women with disability. Their passion, expertise and knowledge has shaped this plan and its actions.

## Over the next three years, we will:

- Ensure our services, programs and hospital facilities are improved to increase accessibility for women with disability and their families
- Increase opportunities within the Women's for people with disability to obtain and maintain employment
- Promote community inclusion and participation of people with disability
- Work to change attitudes and behaviours, which discriminate against people with disability.

These actions support us to deliver on the plan's vision of enabling the Women's to be 'an inclusive, empowering and respectful hospital that provides fair and easy access to healthcare.' The Women's Disability Action Plan forms part of our long-term aspiration that all women and girls' right to dignity, inclusion and wellbeing is realised.



**Dr Sue Matthews**  
Chief Executive Officer

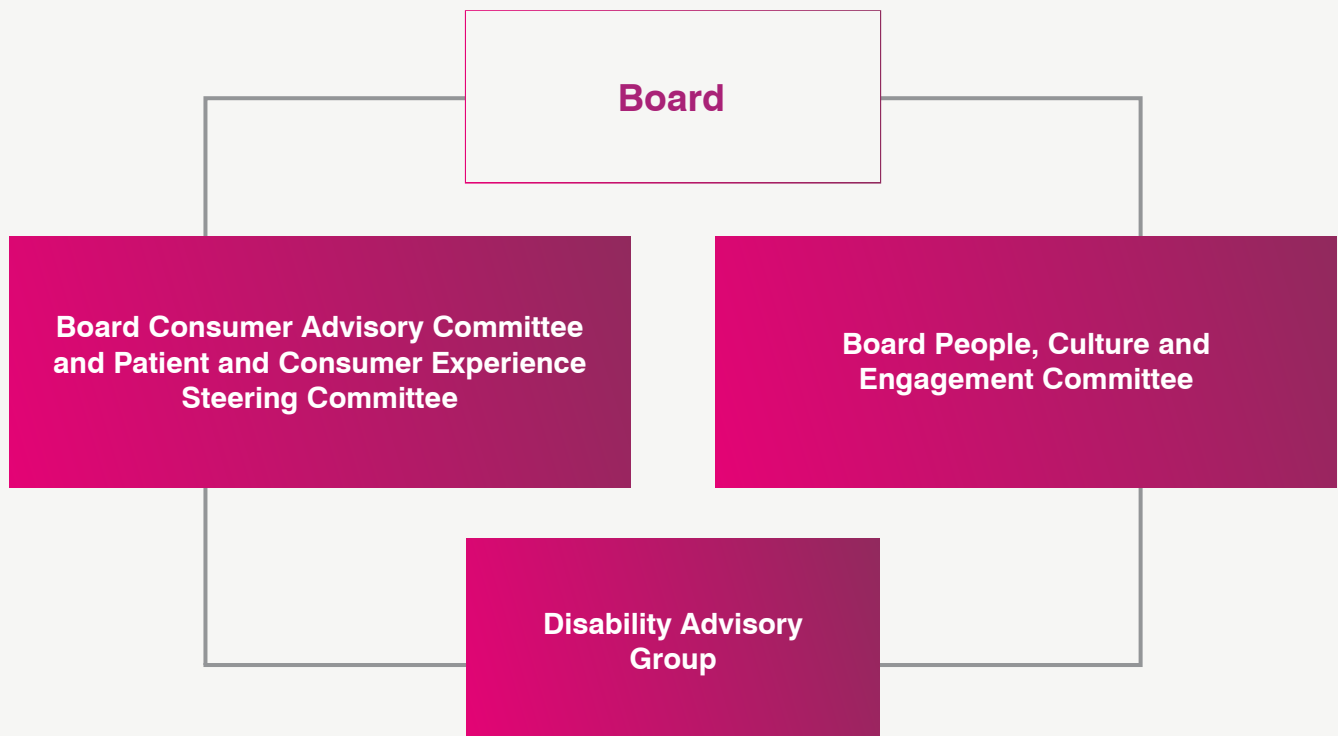


**Sherri Huckstep**  
Chief Experience Officer

## Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

The Royal Women's Hospital acknowledges and pays respect to the peoples of the Kulin Nations, the traditional owners of the country on which our sites at Parkville and Sandringham stand and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. The Women's is committed to improving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families and we recognise the fundamental significance of cultural traditions, beliefs and connection to country for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge the importance of kinship and family structures as a cohesive force that binds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we recognise their cultures, community connection, and self-determination as critical protective factors for wellbeing.

# THE WOMEN'S DISABILITY ACTION PLAN - GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND COMMITTEES



## Members of the Women's Disability Advisory Group include:

- **Amelia Digance**  
People, Culture and Wellbeing Consultant
- **Charlene Smithson**  
Research Nurse
- **Cherise Smith**  
Women with Individual Needs Clinic Coordinator/Midwife
- **Christina Coldebella**  
Social Worker
- **Deb Robieson**  
Organisational Communications Manager
- **Elizabeth Jeroboam**  
Consumer Representative
- **Elly Taylor**  
Director Prevention of Violence Against Women
- **Julie Canals**  
Consumer Health Information Coordinator
- **Maryan Raffaello**  
Consumer Representative
- **Mia Wallace**  
Consumer Representative
- **Michelle Schwensen**  
Director Strategic Engagement, Advocacy and Innovation
- **Mija Gwyn**  
Consumer Representative
- **Olivia Murray**  
Midwife
- **Peta Ferguson**  
Consumer Representative
- **Sherri Huckstep**  
Chief Experience Officer, Disability Action Plan  
Executive Sponsor
- **Vanessa Jo Di Natale**  
Consumer Representative

## OUR BUSINESS

The Women's is Australia's first and largest specialist hospital dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of women and newborns. We are a state-wide tertiary hospital for women and newborns with complex needs, as well as a local maternity hospital for women who live in Melbourne's inner suburbs and around Sandringham.

We provide maternity, neonatal, gynaecology and women's cancer care. The Women's is a major teaching hospital and our ten research centres conduct research to improve outcomes for women and newborns. For more than 160 years, the Women's has been a leading advocate for women's health.

The Women's strategic goal is that 'our patients and consumers are at the heart of everything we do'. The Women's has a commitment to Creating Exceptional Experiences with our patients, consumers, staff and volunteers. We lead one of Australia's only dedicated clinics for pregnant women with disability.

Our Women with Individual Needs Clinic works in partnership with women with disability to provide healthcare support during pregnancy and after the birth of their baby. Our staff provide women with information about service options, advocacy, practical assistance, emotional and social support, and referrals to community services. The Women's also has one of Australia's largest specialist neonatal services where we provide specialist care for babies with disability, as well as unwell and premature babies in our intensive care and special care nurseries.

## OUR DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

The Women's Disability Action Plan strengthens our commitment to increase the health and wellbeing of women and babies with disability and promotes access and inclusion of patients, consumers, staff and volunteers with disability in all areas of our organisation.

The Women's Disability Action Plan works to progress four outcome areas that include:

- Ensuring our services, programs and hospital facilities are accessible to women with disability and their families
- Increasing opportunities for people with disability to obtain and maintain employment
- Promoting community inclusion and participation of people with disability
- Working to change attitudes and behaviours, which discriminate against people with disability.

The Women's Disability Action Plan promotes the principles of the *Disability Act 2006* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* to support people with disability to access healthcare, employment, and equal opportunities to participate in our community.



## OUR STAFF

The Women's employs over 2,500 staff across two campuses, of which 88 per cent are women. We are proud to employ 54 people who identify as having a disability.



# DEVELOPING OUR STRATEGY

The Women's Disability Action Plan was co-created with our Disability Advisory Group. The group includes women and staff with disability.

Women with disability - including those who have accessed services at the Women's - were consulted in the design of the plan via a focus group and an online survey. This included women with a diverse range of disabilities, including acquired brain injuries, intellectual and learning disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities, and mental health disorders. Women ranged in age from 18 to 64 years and included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women of refugee and migrant background, rural and regional women, women who identify as lesbian and bisexual, and people of diverse genders.

We consulted with our staff about how to ensure the Women's is a safe and inclusive hospital and workplace for people with disability. We sought expert advice from Women with Disabilities Victoria, the peak body for women with disability in our state.

We also used the Australian Network on Disability Comprehensive Access and Inclusion Audit to benchmark our policies, procedures and practices against ten key areas that have the greatest benefits for access and inclusion of people with disability.



## OUR VISION

The Women's is an inclusive, empowering and respectful hospital that provides fair and easy access to healthcare.



# OUR DISABILITY ACTION PLAN PRINCIPLES

## Accessible

Provide inclusive and accessible programs, services and facilities for people with disability

## Respect

Respect women's dignity, abilities, diversity and achievements

## Integrated, holistic care

Provide integrated and coordinated care to women that responds to their physical, emotional, social, economic, and spiritual health and wellbeing

## Human rights

Respect and promote the human rights of people with disability in accordance with international and national legal frameworks

## Relationships and partnerships

Promote strong relationships and partnerships with women with disability, carers, specialist disability organisations, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

## Inclusive

Partner with people with disability to identify and remove barriers that affect their full participation and inclusion

## Responsive

Be responsive, listen and adapt to the diverse needs of patients, consumers, staff and volunteers

## Safety

Advocate and promote women's choice in the provision of safe, efficient, evidence-based healthcare

## Empowerment

Promote a strengths-based approach to empower women to have informed consent and control over decisions that affect their healthcare

## SERVICE ACCESS

The Women's is committed to providing accessible, high quality healthcare that is responsive to women and newborns with disability.

Through our consultation, we heard that maternity care, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health services, are among our services that have the biggest impact on the lives of Victorian women with disability. Creating a welcoming, inclusive and accessible hospital environment and providing health information in accessible formats is integral to the Women's providing care to women with disability.

We will listen to women with disability and partner with them in the design of our services and hospital facilities to ensure user-friendly, women-centred healthcare.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Provide specialist healthcare for women with disability.</b>	Promote the Women with Individual Needs Clinic and specialist maternity care for women with disability.	2019-2022	Chief Communications Officer
	Advocate for sustainable funding to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of women's mental health services.	2019-2022	Chief Operating Officer
<b>Promote the health and wellbeing of women with disability.</b>	Work in partnership with Women with Disabilities Victoria to deliver training that builds staff capability and knowledge about the sexual and reproductive health of women with disability.	2019-2020	Director Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy
	Develop and promote accessible health information for women with disability that supports informed consent and decision-making about their health and wellbeing.	2020-2021	Director of People and Patient Experience
<b>Reduce access barriers for women with disability in the Women's programs, services and facilities.</b>	Develop a written commitment with our partners and suppliers to make our premises, facilities and services accessible and track accessibility progress for people with disability.	2020-2021	Chief Operating Officer
	Consult with women with disability in the design of new or upgraded facilities.	2019-2022	Executive Director Clinical Excellence & Systems Improvement
	Consult with women with disability in the redesign of models of care.	2019-2022	Director of People and Patient Experience



# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES

The Women's is committed to increasing employment opportunities at the Women's, career development and the retention of staff with disability.

We will ensure our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive and barrier free, that we work to attract and retain talented and skilled people with disability, and we will build the capacity of our people managers to advance inclusive workplace practices.

The Women's is an inclusive workplace that values and celebrates the contribution of our diverse staff and we strive to be an employer of choice for people with disability.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Improve employment outcomes by increasing the recruitment, retention and professional development of people with disability.</b>	Develop a public commitment, through a statement on our website, about the Women's commitment to employ and retain people with disability.	2019-2020	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Provide job adverts and relevant materials in accessible formats.	2019-2020	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Appoint a People, Culture and Wellbeing staff lead to advance inclusive workplace practices for people with disability.	2019-2020	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Work with a disability employment specialist to assist the Women's to employ and support people with disability.	2019-2020	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Provide training and resources to managers at the Women's to support them to employ and assist the career development of staff with disability.	2020-2021	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Promote the Women's workplace adjustment policy to ensure staff with disability have the workplace support they require.	2019-2021	Director of People and Patient Experience
	Ensure the Women's organisational career development and retention strategies consider the specific requirements of staff with disability.	2020-2021	Director of People and Patient Experience

# INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

The Women's is committed to promoting the inclusion and participation of people with disability.

This includes celebrating important national and international days that support the dignity, rights and wellbeing of people with disability, and increasing awareness of the health and wellbeing of women and newborns with disability.

Central to this is ensuring our events, information communication technology, and our communication and marketing is accessible, inclusive and promotes positive and diverse representations of people with disability.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Promote and celebrate the contribution of people with disability.</b>	Celebrate and promote International Day of People with Disability.	3 December 2019, 2020, 2021	Chief Communications Officer
	Hold a Women's staff event to promote inclusion, access and the health and wellbeing of women with disability.	2020-2021	Chief Communications Officer
	Promote stories and experiences of women with disability in marketing materials, case studies and imagery.	2020-2021	Chief Communications Officer
<b>Ensure the Women's events are inclusive and accessible for people with disability.</b>	Ensure the accessibility requirements of people with disability are planned for at Women's events and functions.	2019 - 2021	Chief Communications Officer
<b>Ensure the Women's information communication technology is disability accessible.</b>	Redevelop the Women's website and staff intranet to meet AA standards.	2020-2021	Executive Director Information Management & Technology
	Develop a process to ensure future information communication technology products, planned purchases and upgrades are disability accessible.	2020-2021	Executive Director Information Management & Technology



## CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

The Women's is committed to changing attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with disability. This includes tackling the direct and indirect discrimination and stereotyping that women with disability experience.


We will work to create positive social change by engaging and training our leaders and staff so that they are disability aware and confident. We will ensure the voices of women with disability are active and influential on key committees and in shaping our strategic plan. We will be a strong advocate for women with disability through both internal and external advocacy.

We will demonstrate our commitment to access and inclusion through the resourcing of our Disability Action Plan and by monitoring and evaluating our impact.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Advance the voices of women with disability in strategic documents and committees.</b>	Consult with Women with Disabilities Victoria in the design of the Women's Strategic Plan.	2019-2021	Director Strategy, Planning and Performance
	Ensure at least one member of a Board Sub-committee has a disability.	2019-2021	Chief Experience Officer
<b>Deliver training that challenges attitudes and behaviours that stigmatise women with disability.</b>	Provide information, resources and training to staff and volunteers so they are disability aware and confident.	2020 - 2021	Director of People and Patient Experience
<b>Establish and maintain the Disability Advisory Group to drive governance of the Disability Action Plan.</b>	Convene the Disability Advisory Group with consumers and staff to increase access and inclusion of people with disability.	2019-2021	Director Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy
	Appoint a Senior Disability Champion to lead and advance access and inclusion for patients, consumers, staff and volunteers at the Women's.	2019	Strategic Executive Committee
<b>Provide appropriate support for the effective implementation of the Disability Action Plan.</b>	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of actions in the Disability Action Plan.	2019-2022	Senior Disability Champion
	Define resource requirements for the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.	2019-2021	Senior Disability Champion
	Develop appropriate systems with the capability to track, measure and report on the Disability Action Plan.	2019-2020	Director Strategy, Planning and Performance

**For public enquiries about the Women's  
Disability Action Plan, please contact:**

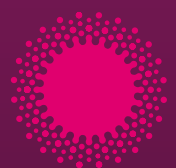
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