

Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disabilities 2019-22



Message from the Chief Executive



I am delighted to present Alfred Health's *Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disabilities 2019-22*, a continuation of our journey to improve the way we provide healthcare services to people with disabilities and their families.

This plan builds on our organisation's previous disability action plans and presents a vision for the future where we are truly able to provide an inclusive, safe and accessible health service and workplace for people with disabilities across the lifespan.

Through the development of this plan, we have identified actions to improve access and services for people with a range of disabilities. We recognise the impact of physical, social and cultural barriers on people with a disability and acknowledge that a variety of strategies are required to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to health services and employment.

Thanks must go to the many people involved in creating this plan, particularly those whose experience of living with a disability and accessing health services has provided great insight into areas of need and priorities for action. I sincerely hope that this plan will assist us as an organisation in our goal of providing outstanding care for patients with disabilities that meets their individual needs.

Prof Andrew Way AM
Chief Executive
Alfred Health

About this plan

This plan supports the principles of the *Disability Act 2006* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* in supporting access to health services and equal employment for people with disabilities.

Cover: Alfred Health patient, Kim, using sign language to communicate with cafe staff in the community

Caring for our community

At Alfred Health, we recognise that we provide services for the people of Melbourne and Victoria in a rapidly changing healthcare environment. We aim to provide these services with care, compassion and respect. Our local communities, vulnerable groups, patients with complex care needs and people suffering major trauma rely on us every day to help improve their lives. Many of our patients and visitors are people with disabilities and, as an organisation; we are continuing to learn about how we can provide them with outstanding care that meets their individual needs. We are responsive to the significant changes in the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and our role as a health service in supporting NDIS participants, particularly those transitioning to the NDIS.

Caring for children

Although Alfred Health is predominantly an adult health service, we also provide services to paediatric patients and to a range of children who access our service as visitors. In line with the principles underpinning the Victorian child safe standards we strive to respect diversity, particularly in promoting safety of children with a disability. As an organisation our Caring for Children at Alfred Health guideline supports our workforce in this area and this plan includes actions that support access for children with disabilities.



Alfred Health strives to provide a safe and accessible environment for all children, including with a disability

Developing our plan

Alfred Health’s Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disabilities 2019-22 has been informed by:

- Absolutely everyone: State Disability Plan 2017-20
- Alfred Health Strategic Plan 2016-20
- Alfred Health Patients Come First strategy and plan 2016-20

Significant consultation with patients, consumers and staff with disabilities, advocacy groups and carers was undertaken.

Advocacy groups Deaf Victoria, Blind Citizens Australia, Amaze and VALID provided input and three open staff focus groups were held (one at each of our primary sites).

“The overriding feeling I had, was that my daughter had the right to be treated ... everyone treated her as a 20 year-old girl having seizures, not the profoundly disabled girl with problems as a result of her disability”

Saabi Forrester, a mother of a young adult with significant disability



Saabi’s story

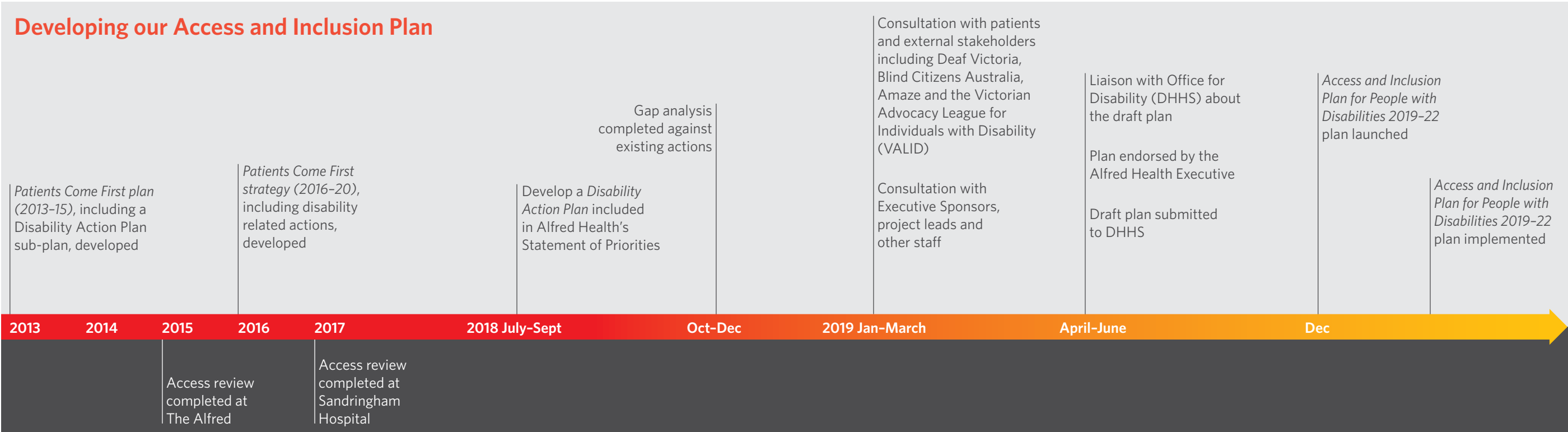
Saabi Forrester, a full-time carer for her profoundly disabled 20-year-old daughter Hannah, highlights the level of support required for families and patients transitioning from a children’s to adult hospital.

“It was quite intimidating coming to The Alfred, but all the staff we encountered were unfailingly supportive and very respectful,” Saabi said.

“My concern was whether I would be able to stay overnight with Hannah – I felt really anxious about that. The nurse said: ‘I can see it’s really important for Hannah that you’re with her and I’ll see what I can do’.

When I walked into the ward and saw they had organised an old treatment room with a bed set up in there for me, I felt enormously relieved.

And when we saw Professor O’Brien (Director, Neurology), he said: ‘I don’t want this diagnosis of epilepsy to change your life and it won’t.’ That was the most reassuring thing anyone had ever said to me in the medical setting.”



Progress to date

Alfred Health has undertaken work to improve how we support people with disabilities in our community. This includes:

- Representation by people with disabilities on our Consumer Advisory Committee (sub-committee of Alfred Health Board).
- Review of Patient Experience Survey questions to include demographic questions about longstanding conditions (inclusive of mobility impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, blindness or vision impairment, mental health condition, and learning disability).
- Development of processes and systems to support patients with disabilities who are registering with the NDIS, and those who are already NDIS participants.
- Developing the capacity of staff and the broader Alfred Health organisation to understand the NDIS and to work in partnership with patients on an NDIS pathway while they are patients in our healthcare service.
- Development of new electronic medical record (EMR) questions related to disability status, to support staff in identifying individualised care requirements, and in identifying the requirement for an AUSLAN interpreter.

- Completion of a staff survey in 2018 to gather information about staff confidence and perceptions of supporting patients with disabilities and their families.
- Completion of individual safety plans (emergency egress/evacuation plans) to support staff with disabilities in an emergency.
- Expansion of the headspace Discovery College, which delivers co-designed and co-facilitated programs about mental health and wellbeing in partnership with people living with psychosocial disability.

This plan outlines the next steps on our ongoing journey to support people with disabilities who utilise and work within our health services.

“People with disabilities should feel comforted by being in hospital, not concerned”

Peak body representative



The Caulfield Hospital Team supported Emma to navigate the NDIS and receive the support she needed



Alfred Health encourages patients to provide feedback about their healthcare experience

Priority areas



1

Continuous policy and systems development



2

Collaborative consumer consultation



3

Accessible built environment



4

Accessible communication



5

Inclusive organisational culture



6

Responsive feedback processes



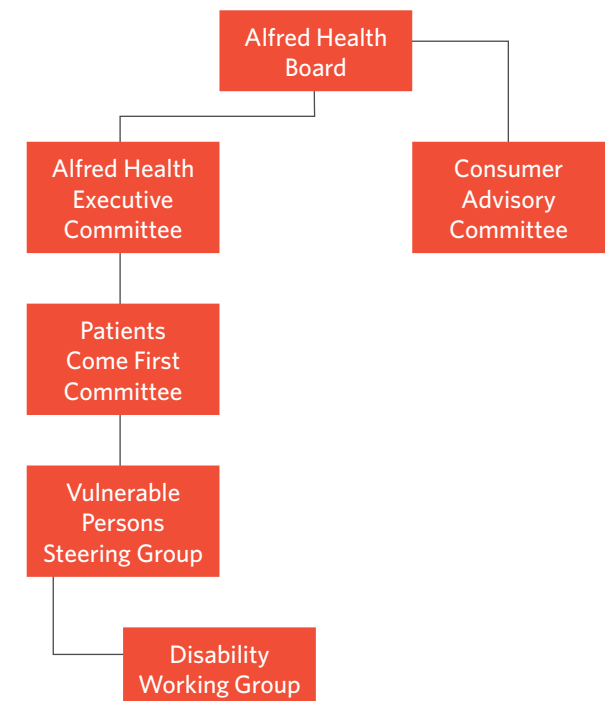
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Supportive employment practices

Governance structure

The Alfred Health Disability Working Group provides governance for this work by:

- annually reviewing the Alfred Health *Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disabilities 2019–22* for progress against set actions, and
- presenting annual progress reports to the Alfred Health Executive Committee.



Patients with disability are supported to be active participants in their healthcare journey

Goals and actions

Under each pillar of Alfred Health's *Access and Inclusion Plan*, we have highlighted some of our future aims.



1. Continuous policy and systems development

Our policies and systems support people with disabilities when accessing our health services and as employees of Alfred Health.

We are aiming to:

- Review relevant guidelines and policies regularly
- Increase understanding and improve processes to support people engaging with the NDIS
- Improve support of people with disabilities through electronic medical record systems
- Raise the profile for people with disabilities in the organisation through data systems and reporting
- Improve inclusion of people with disabilities as employees during commercial contract negotiations.



2. Consultation with people with lived experience of disability

We collaborate with and learn from the experience of people with disabilities. We co-design service improvements in collaboration with people with disabilities.

We are aiming to:

- Include people with disabilities as active participants
 - on key committees
 - when planning service improvements
 - during design of new buildings.



3. Accessible environment

Our buildings and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.

We are aiming to:

- Make sure that accessible carparking facilities are available at The Alfred and that people know how to find them
- Install Tactile Ground Surface Indicators and improve the ramp at Sandringham Hospital
- Improve public toilet facilities at all sites
- Build a 'Changing Places' facility at The Alfred
- Improve access to closed captioning on patient TV's
- Trial a quiet space for people with sensory disability.



4. Accessible communication

Our information is available in a range of accessible formats to support people with disabilities in their healthcare participation.

We are aiming to:

- Develop a guide to producing accessible communications at Alfred Health in collaboration with people with disabilities
- Improve the accessibility of our website
- Increase the captioned content broadcast on 'Alfred TV'
- Provide transcripts to accompany videos on our website
- Explore the development of more pictorial and video guides to explain our service.

"I don't consider myself to be a vulnerable person, but coming into hospital makes me vulnerable ..."

Patient with multiple disabilities

"Every deaf person's hearing loss is different, and therefore every individual's support needs and equipment are different"

Peak body representative



5. Inclusive organisational culture

We respect the diversity of our patients and employees and strive to provide an inclusive and accessible healthcare service and workplace.

We are aiming to:

- Increase staff knowledge of diversity and vulnerability by:
 - including key principles in our Code of Conduct and orientation program
 - sharing stories that highlight the experience of people with disabilities
 - increasing the availability of appropriate resources
 - ongoing education processes
 - exploring implementation of the Intellectual Disability Core Competency framework within Alfred Mental and Addiction Health services initially
 - providing relevant education to our volunteers
 - increase volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities.



6. Responsive feedback processes

We provide people with disabilities and their families with opportunities to give us feedback.

We are aiming to:

- Ensure that we provide people with disabilities with a range of suitable and accessible ways to give us feedback
- Actively seek feedback from people with disabilities through our usual feedback processes and strive to use their feedback to make improvements.

“It’s important that family and support workers are listened to and know how to escalate concerns”

Peak body representative



7. Supportive employment practices

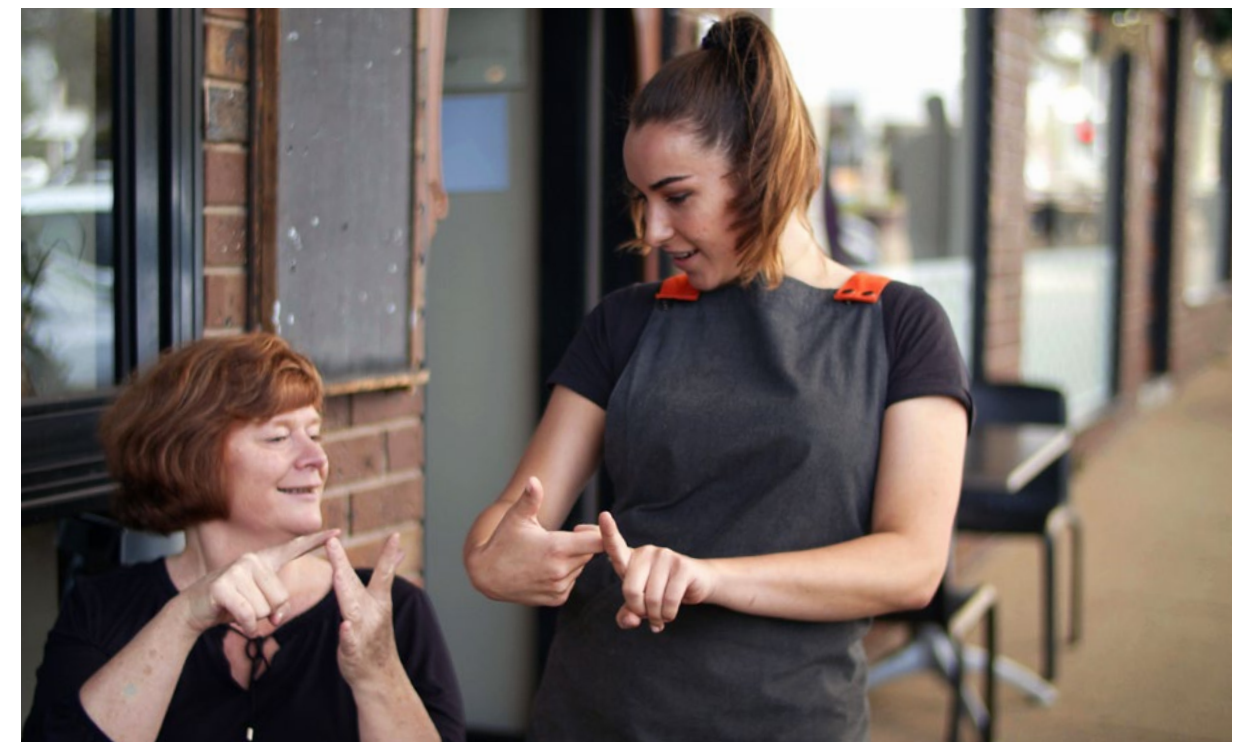
We support our staff with disabilities to do their jobs.

We are aiming to:

- Make sure that managers have the information they need to support staff with disabilities
- Increase the number of people with disabilities employed at Alfred Health
- Ensure a proactive approach is taken to build staff well being and prevent injury and disability.

“Healthcare workers need to know what is ordinary for each individual person. Don’t make assumptions – each patient is a new person, a unique person.”

Peak body representative



Alfred Health strives to provide accessible communication options to all patients and their families



Alex's story

Alex Coombs is a social worker at The Alfred, providing crisis support, counselling, advocacy, discharge assistance and community resources for patients in The Alfred's haemophilia clinic.

Three years in to his career at Alfred Health, an accident at home left Alex with a physical disability, that permanently changed how he could perform his role.

After 17 months' rehabilitation, Alex returned to The Alfred in 2012 to continue his career in the Infectious Diseases social work team working in the Ronald Sawes Haemophilia Treatment Centre.

"Returning to work was very important to me – when I was in rehab, it was something to keep me active. My vision of returning to work gave me a goal and something to look forward to."

Alex said the patience and flexibility from his team, and the organisation, played an important role in enabling him to return to work.

"There was a series of meetings to plan what I would need – equipment, access to computers, how much time I'd be able to physically work, and a slow integration back in to the workforce," he said.

"I now work 20 hours a week over three days, where as previously it was 40, but this helps me with coordinating things like my care and transport."

"I work with patients all over the hospital, and the physical environment is not without its challenges, but everyone has been very good at supporting me with a job access plan and generally making my job manageable from a wheelchair."

References

Disability Act (2006). (Vic).

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National Disability Insurance Scheme, (n.d.). What is psychosocial disability? <https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/how-ndis-works/mental-health-and-ndis>

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Patients with a disability can participate in activities like gardening, as part of their rehabilitation

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