



DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2026

Reducing barriers and promoting inclusion

Northern Health



Northern Health (NH) acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri people, and pays its respects to elders past, present and future.

CONTENTS

4	Background
5	Message from Chief Executive Officer
6	Introduction
6.	What is a Disability?
7.	What is a Disability Action Plan?
7.	What is a Disability Liaison Officer?
8	Northern Health Values
9	Our Commitment
10	Our Community
11	Our Consumers
12	Our People
12	Consultation
13	Implementing, Monitoring And Reporting
14	Pillars, Priority Areas and Commitments
15.	Pillar 1: Accessibility
16.	Pillar 2: Inclusion and Participation
17.	Pillar 3: Responsiveness

BACKGROUND

Northern Health (NH) is the key provider of public health care in Melbourne's Northern region, one of the fastest growing communities in Australia. Forecast projections show the population in the Northern Health catchment will reach 806,000 people by 2036.

The NH catchment includes three of the state's six growth areas: Hume, Whittlesea, and Mitchell.

We take care of our community by providing a wide range of health services at Northern Hospital, Broadmeadows Hospital, Craigieburn Centre and Bundoora Centre.

Our Emergency Department (ED) treats over 110,000 patients each year (over 35,000 arriving by ambulance) and supported over 35,000 patients in the Virtual ED in 2021-22. NH cares for over 97,000 admitted patients each year and assists with the delivery of over 3,300 babies.

NH cares for a diverse community, born in more than 185 countries, who speak over 107 different languages and follow over 90 different religions or beliefs.



MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



I am pleased to present the NH Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2023-2026.

The plan was produced in collaboration with our consumers, employees, and stakeholders. It encompasses a variety of perspectives and plans to meet the needs of our diverse community and improve the accessibility and services we provide to achieve meaningful outcomes for all people, including those with a disability. It will also contribute to NH's goal to be an employer of choice for all people in the North and a Disability Aware health provider.

The NH DAP 2023-2026 is a health service-wide plan with an aim to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. This DAP has been developed and led by our Disability Liaison Officers and the Disability Working Group. It has been influenced by the Disability Act 2006 and 'Inclusive Victoria; the State Disability Plan' and aligns with NH Strategic Plan 2019-2024. The DAP contains goals and strategies

which will deliver meaningful improvements in the health outcomes and experiences of our patients and their carers. It also focuses on improving the experiences of our staff who have or care for someone with a disability.

Northern Health's aim for this plan is to be realistic, achievable, and measurable. We will assess our progress against the plan annually to ensure that we are on track to meet our goals. There will also be a dynamic implementation plan over four years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Sivarajah'.

Siva Sivarajah
Chief Executive Officer
Northern Health

INTRODUCTION

What is a Disability?

More than one in six Australians have a disability. That is more than one in six of the people who share our homes and workplaces, our streets and cities, our lives, and hearts.

“They are our brothers and sisters, parents and children, colleagues and co-workers, partners and friends.” (Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031, Foreword)

The Victorian Public Sector Commission, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recognises the definition of disability as including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth) is broad. It includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, and learning disabilities. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible. Some conditions and impairments are present from birth. Other people acquire or develop a disability during their lifetime from an accident, condition, illness, or injury.





What is a Disability Action Plan?

Disability Action Plans (DAP) describe how an agency will address access and inclusion barriers for people with disability, as both service users and employees. It is also a roadmap for the organisation's future direction.

The Victorian Disability Act 2006 requires public authorities, state government departments and local governments to prepare and implement a DAP. The foundation of an organisational DAP is built on the Australian Disability Strategy (2021-2031) and 'Inclusive Victoria; the State Disability Plan' (for Victorian organisations). As a healthcare provider, the NH DAP primarily focuses on the Health and Wellbeing Outcomes in the Australian Disability Strategy, and supports the State by working towards meeting these outcomes.

The new NH DAP is enhanced by the learnings from the previous NH DAP and the ongoing Disability Royal Commission Enquiry into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability 2019. These learnings will contribute to our actions for our four-year implementation plan.

The new NH DAP will form the foundation for Northern Health to improve service provision and interactions with people with disability.



What is a Disability Liaison Officer?

Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) are roles that have been established in every hospital and health service across Victoria. The aim is to support better access to health care and services for people living with disabilities. DLOs are identifying areas, initiatives, and ways to improve delivery of services for people with disability and aim to create change by including lived experience contributions.

At Northern Health, we commenced the Disability Liaison Program with 1 DLO at the end of 2020, and, since then, we have increased the team to 2 DLOs in 2022, primarily based at our Epping site.



NORTHERN HEALTH VALUES

At NH, we have a responsibility to provide safer care, treat everyone with kindness and work together.

The NH DAP has been built with our values in mind as we have embraced a whole of organisation approach.

Our values are Safe, Kind, and Together.



safe

We provide safe, trusted care for our patients.

We are inclusive and culturally safe, celebrating the diversity of our staff and community.



kind

We treat everyone with kindness, respect and empathy.

We provide patient-centred and compassionate care.



together

We work together with our staff, patients, consumers and health system partners.

OUR COMMITMENT

In preparing this DAP, our DLOs and those who have provided contributions have considered the following:

- Royal Commission Enquiry into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2019-2023)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006
- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Victorian Disability Act 2006
- National Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Inclusive Victoria – State Disability Plan 2022-2026
- The Victorian Autism Plan
- Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-2022

NH has a procedure, *Disability in Healthcare*, that outlines the ways in which NH addresses the needs of patients and/or staff members with a disability or those people caring for someone with a disability.

We abide by a *Code of Conduct*, which asks that we adhere to the delivery of high-quality patient-centred care and support a working environment where the rights and responsibilities of staff, volunteers and other persons associated with NH are acknowledged and understood.

We also have an internal National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) procedure which outlines the NH staff roles and responsibilities in regards to access to the NDIS and to understand the process required to support NDIS participants.

Our NH DAP considers the framework defined by our NH Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which comprises the following four core pillars: Relationships, Respect, Opportunities and Governance.

NH strongly commits to ensuring that people with a disability have equal access to our services and resources within our community. By developing this DAP, we aim to reduce barriers faced by patients living with disabilities.



OUR COMMUNITY

NH provides a wide range of health care services to the Northern Growth Corridor, a catchment of over 546,000 people living in Melbourne's middle to outer northern suburbs and the semi-rural regions beyond the urban fringe. NH comprises of Broadmeadows Hospital, Bundoora Centre, Craigieburn Centre, and Northern Hospital (NH annual report 2020-2021).

Fifteen per cent of the total number of residents within the City of Whittlesea (229,396 in 2021) identify as having a disability. One in eight residents of this catchment are carers for those with a disability, and 4,000 of these residents are participants of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. In the city of Hume, over 9,900 people identify as having a disability, of a population of 243,900 (2021).

The contributions that people with disability make to our community are significant and valuable. People with disability have the right to expect the same opportunities as people without disability and live lives of their own choosing.

NH's DAP and DLO program demonstrates our commitment to improving the health outcomes and hospital experiences of people with disability, as well as keeping us accountable and constantly striving to provide tailored services to our community and their unique needs. It also demonstrates our commitment to equitable access in the workplace and supporting our staff with a disability or caring for someone with a disability.

Across our State, 24% of First Nations people have a disability, which is twice the rate of the general population¹.

39% of LGBTIQ+ people aged 14 to 21 identify as having a disability or long-term health condition².

7.7% of children under 15 have a disability³.



¹ LGBTIQ+ Health Australia 2021, Snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTIQ+ people, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Pyrmont.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings.

³ Inclusive Victoria state disability plan 2022-2026.

OUR CONSUMERS

At NH, we value the lived experience of consumers and look to embed the learnings they share with us into our healthcare service. There are many ways that we already partner with consumers across all of the services and functions of NH. Together we have made significant inroads into helping improve the experience our patients have when they visit any of our NH services (partnering with consumer plan).

Our Consumer Network is made up of patients, carers and community members who are interested in the quality of health care and shaping the services NH provides.

Our consumers have assisted in developing this DAP by providing contributions via a survey and a focus group. In addition, we welcome the involvement of our consumers in service and capital building planning and hospital design. This ensures we aim towards meeting the needs of our consumers and ensuring safe and equitable access for people of all abilities in all areas of hospital operations.





OUR PEOPLE

NH recognises that our service users and our staff are diverse in many ways. As the largest employer in the northern community, NH has over 5,700 highly skilled clinical and administrative staff across our four sites *(NH annual report 2020-2021)*



CONSULTATION

This DAP is heavily informed by stakeholder consultation, which took place in various ways. The goal of the consultation was to obtain valuable information to help us to understand the needs of our patients with a disability and their families and carers.

We sought feedback from people with disability, family, carers, friends and support workers, disability services and networks, advocacy groups, NH workforce and contractors, and consumer partners. We conducted consultations through a survey (online and face-to-face), email and telephone, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings.

Our report also received contributions from our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, representing the diverse sections of our community, including First Nations, LGBTIQ+, and those culturally and linguistically diverse.

IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND REPORTING

NH aims to, first and foremost, improve baseline activities that affect our patients, people, and community. Thereafter, the goal is to maintain these baseline activities consistently, with consideration to diverse communities. To ensure the above is seen through, an implementation plan has been developed alongside the DAP, which sets out the individual actions under each pillar, responsible person(s) and timelines.

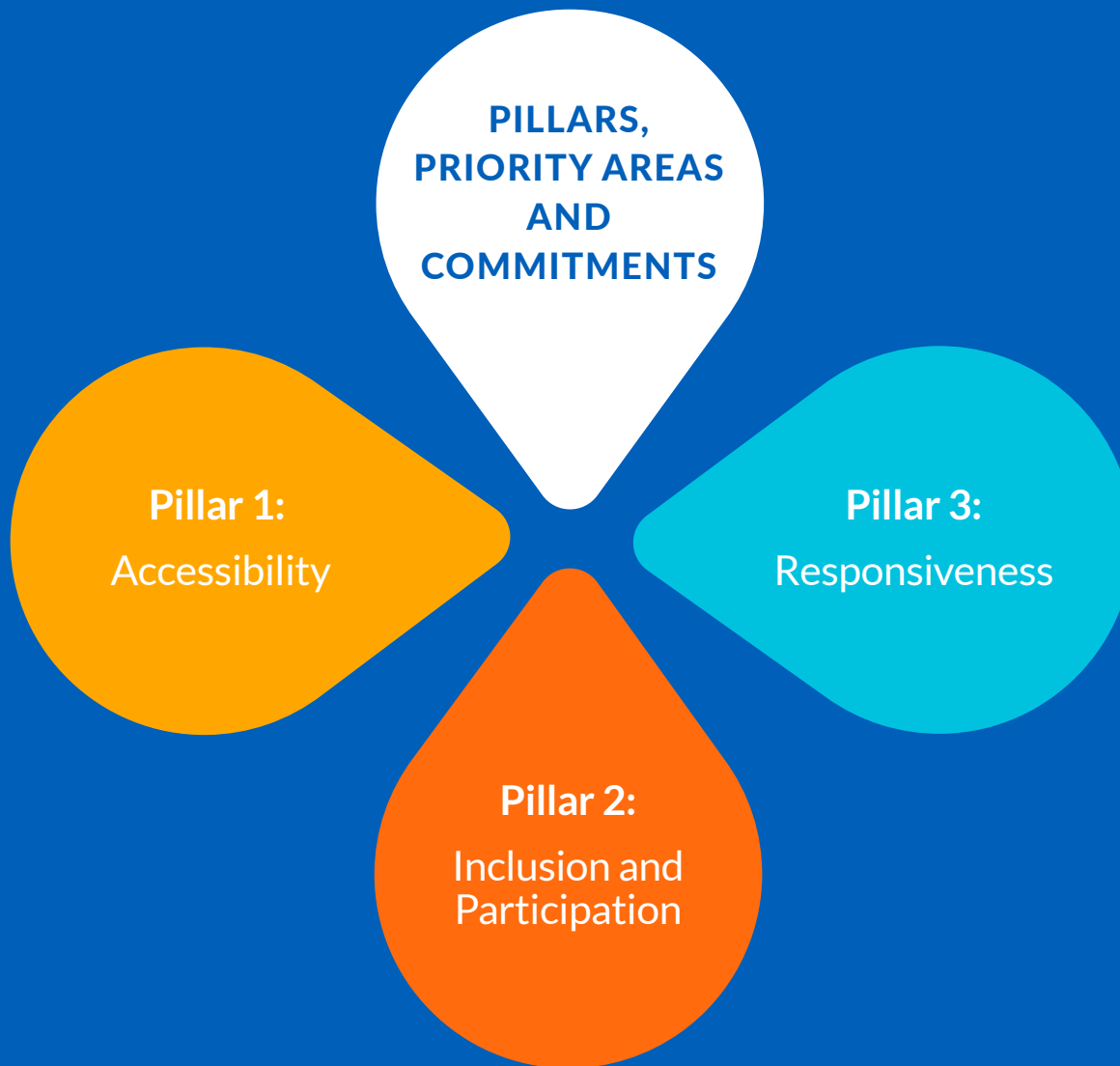
The Disability Sub-Committee will be responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reporting progress against the actions in the plan. The Executive Director sponsor is responsible for overseeing the entire process along the way. Each action has identified outcome measures developed for the implementation plan. Moving forward, the goal will be to add these to the operational plans for relevant services/departments where appropriate.

Performance against the plan will be monitored each quarter of each year, with a progress report provided to the Disability Sub-Committee and the NH Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. A progress report will also be provided to the NH Executive Committee bi-annually. The content and ongoing appropriateness of the DAP will be reviewed at least annually over the life of the plan through the Disability Sub-Committee.

The Disability Sub-Committee will report on the content and ongoing appropriateness of the DAP to the NH Executive annually through the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee. NH will also report progress against the plan through the annual Quality of Care report and NH Annual Report.

The plan has a four-year horizon, and the commencement of development of the next NH DAP should commence in the final year of the current plan (2026).





The individual Pillars, Priority Areas and Commitments and associated actions are documented in the next section.

PILLAR 1:



Accessibility

PRIORITY AREA 1

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION-SHARING

- 1 Reviewing our literature and communication methods with patients to ensure they suit their needs.

PRIORITY AREA 2

ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING PHYSICAL ACCESS, CAR PARKING, WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE)

- 2 Improve physical accessibility across all NH sites to ensure all people with a disability have equal and safe access to services and resources.

PRIORITY AREA 3

PARTICIPATION OF CONSUMERS, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AND THOSE WITH DISABILITY LIVED-EXPERIENCE IN HOW WE DESIGN OUR SERVICES, FACILITIES AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 3 Consistently include our consumers in our service and capital planning and design activities, wayfinding reviews, and other future initiatives.

PILLAR 2:

Inclusion and Participation

PRIORITY AREA 1

TO IMPROVE STAFF KNOWLEDGE OF DISABILITY AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION, TRAINING AND POSITIVE PROMOTIONS

- 1 Identifying staff education needs and providing delivery of this training through a range of forums. Aligning our training needs with recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission and the Victorian Autism Plan as well as the evolving NDIS.

PRIORITY AREA 2

TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITH A FOCUS ON OUR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES¹

- 2 Utilise the NH Disability Sub-Committee to strengthen partnerships with internal committees and external advocacy organisations.

PRIORITY AREA 3

TO BECOME A DISABILITY-CONFIDENT EMPLOYER

- 3 Strengthen NH as an employer of choice with a focus on improving the representation of people with disabilities and improving the provision of disability-aware health care, linking in with the NH People and Culture Plan 2020-2024.

¹ Diverse communities capture culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people and people with a disability.

PILLAR 3:



PRIORITY AREA 1

TO IMPROVE OUR KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE INTER-SECTIONALITY OF DISABILITY ACROSS OUR WORKFORCE

- 1 Strengthen and work with other partners across our hospital to address systemic issues.

PRIORITY AREA 2

TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY WORKING AT OR ACCESSING OUR HEALTH SERVICE

- 2 To listen to feedback from our consumers and staff with disability or lived experience of disability and target change and improvements across our entire hospital in alignment with their feedback.

PRIORITY AREA 3

TO REVIEW OUR PRACTICES TO ENSURE OUR SERVICES ARE TAILORED AND RESPONSIVE TO CHANGING NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

- 3 To focus on improving our understanding of current demands and needs including NDIS, specific disabilities and initiatives either via policy reviews, training or promotional work.



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