



Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan 2020 – 2023

Introduction from the Ombudsman

Welcome to the first Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan (the Action Plan) for the Public Transport Ombudsman Scheme (PTO).

The Action Plan reflects principles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. The Convention aims to improve equity and maximise participation in the community for people with disabilities. It is underpinned by the social model of disability. This model recognises that disability results from an interaction between an individual and their environment rather than from their medical condition alone. The social model aims to address the communication modes, attitudes and physical environments that reduce people with disability's participation in the community. Rather than focusing on the person's diagnosis or physical or mental functionality, it focuses on how society is organised to include or exclude people with disability.

A significant part of the work we do is highlighting where public transport fails to be accessible or inclusive. We work with the community, government and public transport operators to continuously aim to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of public transport in Victoria, particularly in relation to physical barriers to access, communication and attitudes towards accessibility. This Action Plan has been developed to ensure that our services and our workplace align with the work we do.

We aim to provide a service that welcomes difference and values and empower people to achieve their goals. We are also committed to building an accessible and inclusive workplace to increase participation of people with disabilities in employment and a supportive environment where everyone can thrive.

Purpose

Our purpose is to provide a service that supports diversity and is accessible to everyone in the community and to build an accessible and inclusive workplace that promotes increased participation of people with disabilities in employment.

Objectives

Our objectives under this Action Plan are to:

1. Ensure our communication channels are clear and accessible to promote engagement;
2. Ensure PTO staff are disability confident and competent in their dealings with people who access our services;
3. Engage in a recruitment process that is accessible and inclusive; and

Provide a positive and inclusive workplace that accommodates and celebrates the strengths and abilities of everyone.

Some of the things we have already done, or are doing:

- In 2019 we redeveloped our website to simplify the functionality, prioritise user experience and meet the accessibility compliance standard of WCAG 2.1. The content of the website was rewritten into plain and simple language, and clear information in additional languages other than English was added.
- Staff undertook disability awareness training which will continue to be delivered on an annual basis.
- We expanded our public communication channels to include additional social media channels so that we have a variety of ways to engage with people, and they have alternative ways to contact us and make a complaint.
- We have updated the Auslan information video on our website and offer accessible contact channels such as the National Relay Service.
- The PTO was independently reviewed in 2019 and recommendations included measures which simplify the complaints process and provide targeted communications to groups in the community who need additional assistance. These recommendations are currently being implemented.
- We offer an annual internship through Monash University that gives priority to students who identify with a disability.
- We have developed a comprehensive Awareness Strategic Plan which includes measures for raising awareness of the PTO and engaging with people with disabilities and their advocates. These measures include attendance at metropolitan and regional disability expos, partnering with the Disability Resource Centre to attend regional public transport workshops and upgrading our website to make our systemic investigations process more accessible.

- We engaged a third-party firm to undertake an independent and confidential culture survey of the PTO in 2019 and we have recently appointed a mental health first aid officer.

Responsibilities

The Action Plan has been developed with involvement by staff and the Board of the PTO. Everyone in the PTO has a responsibility for fostering an environment in which practices and attitudes are designed to make the PTO fully accessible and inclusive.

Individual staff members and teams may have responsibility for deliverables under the Action Plan. The Policy and Communications Manager has oversight of these projects and reports to the Ombudsman on progress against the Action Plan every six months.

How we will deliver on our objectives

Clear and accessible communications channels

Review the accessibility of written communications

We believe our communications should be designed in way that everyone in the community can access them. We will undertake a comprehensive review of written communications including letters, information sheets and public procedural documents to identify opportunities to improve accessibility.

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| Deliverable: | Written communications are straightforward, in plain language and available in different accessible formats. |
| Time frame: | Process to commence in June 2020 and be completed by June 2021. |
| Measuring success: | Obtain feedback on accessibility of communication through customer surveys and through feedback from disability sector stakeholders. |
| Outcome: | Through a process of review, consultation and action, the PTO develops communications that are accessible to everyone in the community and enhance the overall accessibility of the PTO. |

Encourage feedback on our accessibility

We will look at the best way to encourage feedback from the community about the accessibility of our services. This will include consulting with disability sector

advocates, government and other stakeholders. A procedure will be developed to ensure the feedback is valued and acted on where appropriate.

- Deliverable:** Development of a customer feedback policy and procedure.
- Timeframe:** To be completed by December 2020.
- Measuring success:** Feedback is received from people who are made to feel that it is welcome and valued by the PTO. The PTO has a process in place to receive, evaluate and where appropriate, act on feedback.
- Outcome:** The PTO receives feedback from a wide range of sources to support continuous improvement of our services.

We are disability confident and competent

We will ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and support to provide an accessible service. PTO staff, through the work they do, are attuned to the issue of accessibility and actively identify opportunities to tailor services to support the needs of everyone who contacts us. Additional training will support them to develop their skills further.

- Deliverable:** Delivery of annual disability awareness training.
- Timeframe:** Annual basis, ongoing.
- Measuring success:** Staff feel confident in supporting the different range of needs and abilities of people engaging with the PTO. Feedback obtained from users of the PTO and their advocates indicate they were treated in a confident, competent and courteous manner.
- Outcome:** People of all abilities and needs are confident that the PTO can and will help them with their public transport issues.

An accessible and inclusive recruitment process

We will review the accessibility of the PTO recruitment process to ensure that we, and any third parties we engage, have strategies and processes in place to recognise the importance of diversity and promote the recruitment of people with a range of strengths and attributes.

Deliverable: Completion of a review of PTO job ad templates and recruitment information with implementation of any recommended changes to promote accessibility and inclusiveness.

Timeframe: To be completed by December 2020.

Measuring success: PTO recruitment activities result in a diverse range of applicants.

Outcome: A strong workplace that reflects the diversity of our community.

An accessible and inclusive workplace

We will proactively engage with new employees to identify any aspects of the workplace that may present barriers to their ability to work effectively and reach their full potential and commit to removing those barriers. We will support all staff with training and assistance to embrace diversity in the workplace.

Deliverables: Engagement with new staff on making the workplace fully accessible – as and when required.

Diversity training to be provided to staff on an annual basis. Active promotion of the employee assistance program.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Measuring success: Staff are engaged in the workplace and engage positively with each other. Staff feel empowered to raise issues and barriers with management and each other. Feedback from staff on engagement, challenges and satisfaction is obtained through regular culture surveys.

Outcome: A workplace where staff are confident, empathetic and committed to an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.