



# Disability Action Plan 2024–28



The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital respectfully acknowledges the people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the Eye and Ear sites are located. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# Joint Message from the Chief Executive Officer and Board

Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

We are proud to introduce our Disability Action Plan 2024–2028. This plan is a testament to our commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all individuals, particularly those who live with disability. In alignment with our guiding principles of integrity, inclusive and accessible care, collaboration, and excellence, we have crafted a comprehensive roadmap aimed at addressing the diverse needs of our patients, staff, carers, volunteers and visitors.

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Eye and Ear), a recognised leader in specialist clinical service delivery, education, and research, has always prioritised improving the patient experience and outcomes for our community. Our dedicated staff, volunteers and consumer advisors work tirelessly to provide high-quality care to people from all over Victoria and beyond. This Disability Action Plan strengthens our mission to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, has access to the highest standard of care.

Importantly, in developing this plan, we engaged with our community, staff and stakeholders to gather valuable insights and feedback. This collaborative approach has ensured that our plan is not only comprehensive but also reflects the needs and aspirations of those we serve. The Eye and Ear’s Disability Action Plan 2024–2028 focuses on three priority areas: Accessibility, Inclusion and Participation, and Changing attitudes and behaviours. Each priority area outlines strategic actions and desired outcomes that will guide us in reducing barriers, promoting inclusion, and fostering a culture of respect and dignity.

We invite you to join us in this important endeavour, working together to create a hospital environment that truly reflects our values of inclusivity, respect and excellence. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of people living with disability, their families and our broader community.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Sincerely,

**Brendon Gardner**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Dr Sherene Devanesen AM**  
Chair, Board of Directors



Photo: Patient undergoing an eye examination at a slit lamp

# About Our Hospital

The Eye and Ear is a recognised leader in specialist clinical service delivery, education and training, and research. We are committed to improving the experience and outcomes for our patients and workforce and making significant contributions to our fields on a global scale.

We provide a 24-hour emergency eye and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) service and offer over 90 specialist outpatient clinics for the diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of vision and hearing issues. We are proud to deliver more than half of Victoria's public eye surgery and the majority of Victoria's public cochlear implants. Importantly, we respond to the needs of Victorians at every stage of life, from birth to the elderly years.

We are a world-renowned teaching and research centre and have strong partnerships with the Centre for Eye Research Australia, The University of Melbourne, the Bionics Institute, Bionic Vision Technologies, HEARnet and the Lions Eye Donation Service. We provide medical, nursing and allied health training. All Victorian Ophthalmologists are trained through the hospital.

Our 1082 staff and 73 volunteers and consumer advisors provide safe, high-quality care to people from around the state of Victoria and across our borders. In 2023–24, the Eye and Ear cared for:

- 154,609 outpatients
- 15,967 inpatients
- 43,185 patients who presented to our Emergency Department

## Vision

We will inspire and advance specialist eye and ear, nose and throat (ENT) care.

### Our guiding principles

- Integrity
- Inclusive and accessible care
- Collaboration
- Excellence

## Where our plan fits in

### Internationally

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### Nationally

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

### Victorian

- Disability Act 2006
- Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026
- Charter Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Photo: Carleen Miller (left) from our Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health Unit with patient Lee





# The Eye and Ear's Strategic Directions 2023–2027

Our Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 was developed following consultation with our staff, volunteers, consumer advisors, community and stakeholders. As a world leading eye and ENT specialist service, we progress and provide exceptional care delivered by an empowered and sustainable workforce. We do this through delivering on our three strategic pillars:



## Leading Through Excellence

Achieving the best possible patient outcomes through leadership in training, education, research and innovation



## Advancing Specialist Care

Our consumers benefit from access to progressive, impactful and responsive care, and outstanding experiences



## Supporting and Growing Our People

Embedding a thriving culture of learning, safety and wellbeing through effective leadership

To help implement these pillars, we will collaborate with and leverage off our six enablers:

- Our partners and consumers
- Our infrastructure and technology
- Financial and environmental sustainability



In addition, to help implement these strategic pillars, the following services are in place to support patients.

The Eye and Ear has an Aboriginal Health Service, Mirring Ba Wirring. Our two Aboriginal Engagement and Project Coordinators assist and support patients to receive care and treatment at the hospital and also support their carers through this process. The Mirring Ba Wirring Team also provide education and support to staff to help them to improve cultural safety for patients and to lead and support the hospital on our reconciliation journey.

The Eye and Ear has a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) who assists people living with disability, their families, and carers to access services at the Eye and Ear and our other health services. DLO services include:

- Supporting people living with disability to access COVID-19 assessment and treatment.
- Providing support, and reducing the barriers to healthcare, for all patients living with a disability.
- Supporting people living with disability to access the health and community services they require.
- Providing disability-specific advice and support to the hospital.
- Providing support to patients living with disability to access treatment within the Eye and Ear.
- Identifying and reducing barriers to health service accessibility for people living with disability.





# The Eye and Ear Disability Action Plan (DAP)

The Eye and Ear's Disability Action Plan 2024–2028 is our commitment to fostering accessibility and inclusivity for people living with disability, including patients, carers, families, staff, volunteers, consumer advisors and visitors. It empowers our workforce to actively address disability discrimination and advocate for the rights of people living with disability. We aim to increase employment opportunities for individuals living with disability and provide the necessary support and equipment for staff and volunteers. Aligned with the *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026*, whose vision is for “an inclusive, accessible and safe Victoria that upholds the rights of people living with disability, celebrates our diversity and pride, and expands our opportunities to belong and control our lives”. Our DAP shares the aim of creating an inclusive, accessible, and safe environment that respects diversity and promotes autonomy for people living with disability.

The *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026* has four pillars:



- Inclusive communities
  - Health, housing and wellbeing
  - Fairness and safety
  - Opportunity and pride
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- 



Photo: Volunteer Cathy assisting a patient to use our self check-in kiosk

The Victorian Disability Act 2006, Section 38, states that all public sector bodies must ensure that a Disability Action Plan is prepared for the purpose of:

- Reducing barriers to persons living with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- Reducing barriers to persons living with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons living with a disability
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons living with a disability

The Eye and Ear's DAP is guided by this legislation and addresses key priorities to deliver on these objectives.

# Priority Areas and Desired Outcomes


## Priority Area 1 **Accessibility (reducing barriers)**

1

The hospital is accessible to people living with disability.

### Desired Outcomes

- Consumers actively participate in the regular review of signage and wayfinding, resulting in improved navigation.
- Patients and carers can easily access and understand public-facing information such as screens, self-check-in kiosks, websites and patient forms.
- Patients, volunteers and staff living with disability experience full accessibility and usability in our facilities and environment.



## Priority Area 2 Inclusion and Participation (workforce and volunteers)



2

People living with disability are skilled and capable in contributing to the organisation.

### Desired Outcomes

- Volunteer numbers are increased to support patients living with disability to navigate the hospital environment and services.
- Disability awareness training is scheduled and delivered for staff and volunteers to improve their understanding of working with people living with disability.
- The Eye and Ear partners with external disability employment organisations to increase opportunities, and improve the process for employment, for people living with disability.
- The Eye and Ear has established processes in place for making adjustments required by staff and volunteers living with a disability.

# Priority Areas and Desired Outcomes

## Priority Area 3 Changing attitudes and behaviours

3

The hospital continues to become a more inclusive environment and workplace.

### Desired Outcomes

- Staff are supported to better understand and recognise the gap between traditional disablement and social disablement.
- Partnerships with community organisations are strengthened to leverage expertise, tools and resources to increase knowledge and change attitudes and practices.
- Positive change in staff and volunteer behaviours and attitudes that discriminate against people living with disability is measurable and noticed.
- Clinical staff knowledge and understanding is improved about specialist support services in the community to support enhanced referral practices for patients who require this.
- Code Grey responses are strengthened to include therapeutic intervention of behavioural emergencies for people living with disability experiencing emotional dysregulation.



Photo: Some of our Consumer Advisor Team members

- Training is delivered to clinical staff to support them to better identify people living with disability experiencing family violence to build a robust workforce equipped with the skills to manage the complexities of intersectional family violence and disability.
- Current procedures are reviewed, and where required, new procedures implemented to support staff to better recognise and respond to changes in a person's mental state in response to temporary disability whilst awaiting corrective treatment.

# How will we know if the plan is working?

The Eye and Ear's DAP will be implemented in stages over time throughout the lifetime of the plan. Where appropriate, actions will be integrated into annual business planning for better Board and Executive oversight and overall accountability. Progress updates will be provided every six months to the hospital's Community Advisory Committee and Partnering with Consumers Committee, with ongoing reviews forming part of the process.

A mid-Plan self-assessment will be undertaken, as part of the ongoing monitoring against progress of the actions, and the results will be presented to the Executive and Board. The Australian Disability Network's Access and Inclusion Index self-assessment tool will be considered for this purpose. Progress will also be reported in the Annual Report.

The next DAP will begin development prior to the completion of this DAP, in mid 2028.

Photo: Our Disability Liaison Officer Emma





## References

Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026)  
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LGBTIQ+ [LGBTIQ\\_\\_Health\\_Australia-Response\\_to\\_Issues\\_paper\\_the\\_Royal\\_Commission\\_into\\_violence\\_\\_abuse\\_and\\_neglect\\_of\\_people\\_with\\_disability.pdf](#) (d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net)Health Australia. LGBTIQ+ people with disability. 2022.

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Reconciliation Action Plan - [Innovate 2.0](#)

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Strategic Plan [2023 - 2027](#)

Australian Network on Disability Report [2021](#)

First Peoples Disability Network

Australian Disability Network Australian Disability Network's Access and Inclusion Index



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