



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2024–28



the royal victorian
eye and ear
hospital

On the Brink of Extinction
Artwork by Graham Gilbert,
Wiradjuri

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land. We acknowledge that the land we meet and work upon is the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people, and we pay our deep respects to Woi Wurrung Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Elders of the Kulin Nation.



Joint Message from the Chief Executive Officer and Board

Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

We are pleased to unveil our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan for 2024–2028, representing our unwavering commitment to fostering an environment where every individual is valued. This plan aims to create a culture that acknowledges and celebrates differences, ensures fairness and promotes an inclusive atmosphere where everyone is welcome and can thrive.

Aligned with our guiding principles of integrity, inclusive and accessible care, collaboration, and excellence, we have developed a strategic approach to support the unique needs of all our patients, staff, volunteers and visitors. Our dedicated staff and volunteers are committed to delivering exceptional care to our diverse community. The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospitals (Eye and Ear) Strategic Plan 2023–2027 reaffirms our mission to lead as a premier eye and ear nose and throat (ENT) specialist service, providing the highest standard of care through an empowered workforce.

In creating this plan, we worked closely with our staff, volunteers, consumer advisors and community stakeholders to gather their invaluable insights and feedback. This collaborative effort has shaped a comprehensive and forward-thinking plan that reflects the needs and aspirations of those we serve regardless of cultural preferences, gender identification, sexual orientation or age. At the heart of our Strategic Plan are three core pillars: Leading Through Excellence, Advancing Specialist Care and Supporting and Growing Our People. Each pillar embodies our dedication to delivering outstanding patient outcomes, pioneering innovative care and fostering a supportive and sustainable environment.

This plan is integral to our broader suite of strategic initiatives, including the Disability Action Plan and the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2.0. These plans are interconnected, all with the common goal of providing the best care in an environment that embraces and champions diversity. Together, these roadmaps enable the Eye and Ear to uphold our commitment to addressing discrimination proactively and advocating for marginalised and excluded people, whether they be patients, carers, staff or volunteers.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely

Brendon Gardner
Chief Executive Officer

Dr Sherene Devanesen AM
Chair, Board of Directors



Photo: Eye and Ear volunteers Rama, Sundas and John.
Photo by Anna Carlile



About the Eye and Ear

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 in eye and ENT health care.

We provide a 24-hour emergency eye and ENT service and offer more than 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 Centre for Eye Research Australia, The University of Melbourne, Bionics Institute, Bionic Vision Technologies, HEARnet and Lions Eye Donation Service. We provide medical, nursing and allied health training. All Victorian Ophthalmologists are trained through the hospital.

Our 1050 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:

- 140,514 outpatients
- 15,965 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

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 collaborate with and leverage off our six enablers:

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

Definitions

Diversity The visible and invisible differences that exist between people including, but not limited to, sexual identity, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, physical impairment, relationship status, ability. [Law_Council_Diversity_Policy.pdf](#), Accessed August 2024.

Equity The act of treating people as individuals who have different needs requiring different strategies to achieve equal outcomes. We achieve this through not treating people the same. [Let's talk about equality and equity](#), Accessed August 2024.

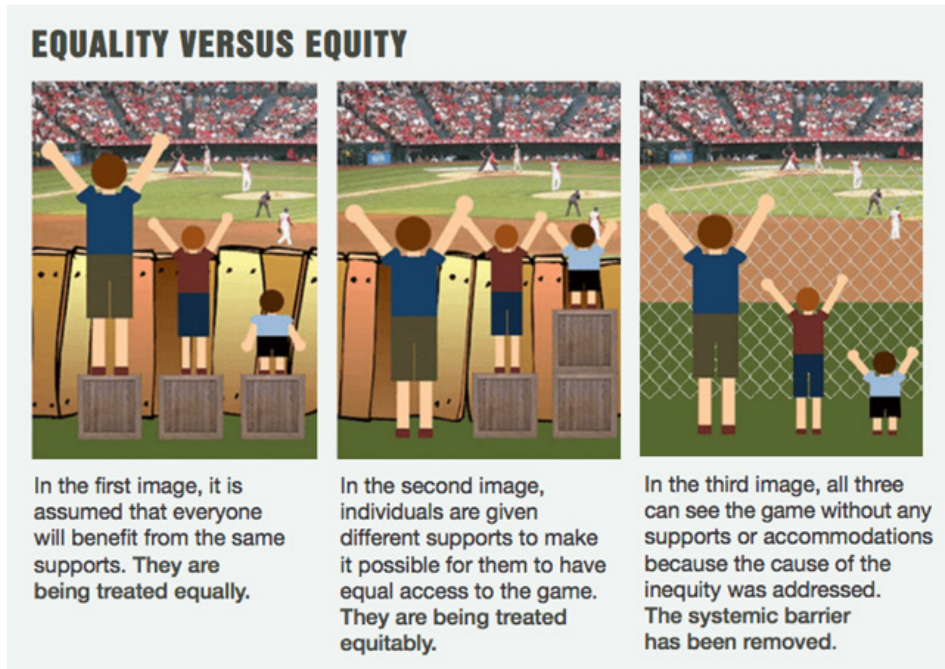


Image: *Equity versus Equality* When is Equality not Equality, business disability international (Accessed October 2024)

Inclusion The practice or policy of providing equitable access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised. Embracing all people, irrespective of difference.



Our Priority Areas

The definition of diversity is very broad. As a result, through consultation with our volunteers, consumer advisors, community, staff and stakeholders, our response is to focus this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan on the following key priorities:

Cultural Diversity Having the right approaches that support the organisation to have a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds – it can include differences in culture/ ethnic identity (how we identify ourselves and how others identify us), language, country of birth, religion, heritage/ ancestry, national origin, and-or race.

LGBTIQA+ Inclusivity Acknowledging and respecting that diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics is a normal part of life.

Gender Diversity Equitable representation of people of different genders.

In doing this, we are not excluding other aspects of diversity as we see our hospital as a place which is welcoming and inclusive of all people, irrespective of where they visit us from.

As referenced earlier, the Eye and Ear has a Disability Action Plan and a Reconciliation Action Plan which both highlight the key deliverables the organisation is focusing on to improve the experience of our patients, carers, staff, volunteers and consumer advisors living with disability or identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. These three plans align with our Strategic Plan and describe our commitment to providing positive experiences for all.

What we have achieved so far

The progress made against the goals and actions in the Diversity Plan 2020–23 are described below.

Outcome 1: Equitable and responsive services and programs

Goal	Action	Status
Inclusive and respectful care and treatment is provided to our patients	Provide opportunities for family members/carers of non-English speaking patients to work with staff to support their care	Complete
	Review the Language Lines and expand the information to include ENT conditions	Complete
	Improve visibility of LGBTI inclusivity at our organisation	Complete

Outcome 2: A culturally responsive workforce

Goal	Action	Status
Inclusivity is demonstrated throughout our organisation	Review food menus to ensure they meet multicultural and religious requirements	Complete
	Celebrate diversity amongst our staff, volunteers and consumers at key times throughout the year	Complete
	Review our policies and procedures to ensure they promote inclusivity and non-discriminatory practices towards our consumers, volunteers and staff	Complete
Our staff are trained to provide respectful and inclusive care and treatment	Implement staff and volunteer training to better support our diverse communities	Complete



Photo: Staff members during IDAHOBIT Day celebrations

Outcome 3: Partnerships with diverse communities

Goal	Action	Status
We understand the needs of our diverse community	Gather feedback from non-English speaking patients/carers through the support of interpreters when required	Complete
	Expand the diversity of our consumer representative cohort to better represent our diverse patient cohort	Complete
	Investigate scheduling some after-hours committee meetings/forums to enable wider diversity amongst our consumer representative group	Complete

Outcome 4: Effective and evidence-based approaches

Goal	Action	Status
We respect and support our patients religious and cultural needs	Provide a respectful space for patients and visitors to observe their cultural and religious practices	Complete
	Continue to improve the way interpreter services are utilised to ensure that patients who require an interpreter receive one at the right time and place	Complete

The Eye and Ear Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

The Eye and Ear's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2024–2028 is our commitment to fostering a respectful and inclusive environment for our diverse community, which includes patients, carers, volunteers, consumer advisors, staff and visitors. It empowers our workforce and volunteers to actively address discrimination and to advocate for the rights of others, particularly those who may otherwise be marginalised or excluded. Our Plan is aligned with the Department of Health's *Designing for Diversity Framework 2018* which describes four key principles:

- Access and equity
- Inclusiveness
- Responsiveness
- Empowerment and self-determination

This Framework also describes the risks of not addressing diversity which include the following:

- increasing barriers to services
- lack of appropriate, equitable and safe services
- increasing the risk of preventable adverse events
- decreasing positive health and wellbeing outcomes
- contributing to a decreased sense of belonging
- contributing to a lack of social cohesion in communities

The Eye and Ear's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan addresses key priorities to deliver on these principles and to reduce these risks.

Priority Area 1

Access and equity



The hospital and services are accessible to all people.

Desired Outcomes

- Staff and volunteers have a greater understanding of diverse cultures and consistently use respectful communication methods when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Effective workplace strategies are implemented to ensure equitable employment opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities.
- Improved accessibility of relevant information for older people and people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Priority Area 2 Inclusiveness

2

Our people feel included.

Desired Outcomes

- LGBTIQA+, sex and gender diversity awareness training is scheduled and delivered for staff and volunteers to improve their understanding of working with people from diverse backgrounds and communities.
- Patients from diverse backgrounds experience safe and inclusive care whilst at the Eye and Ear.
- Staff and volunteers use inclusive language that positively reflects the diversity of the community.
- Update our position description template to embed our commitment to diversity and inclusion so that all employees are accountable for upholding our diversity and inclusion commitments.
- Significant annual events are celebrated including, but not limited to, Pride Day, Cultural Diversity Week, IDAHOBIT Day.



Priority Area 3 Responsiveness

3

Our organisation is responsive to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds and communities.

Desired Outcomes

- An organisational culture that values, respects and is inclusive of staff and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and communities is embedded.
- Partnerships with community organisations are strengthened to leverage expertise, tools and resources to increase knowledge and change attitudes and practices.
- Volunteer capabilities are increased to support patients from diverse backgrounds and communities to navigate the hospital environment and services.
- Staff are educated to have respectful conversations with patients about their preferred pronouns and to then ensure they use these in discussions with the patient.

Priority Area 4 Empowerment and self determination

4

Our people from diverse communities are empowered to own, direct and make decisions about the design of services and programs that impact them.

Desired Outcomes

- Patients and carers from diverse backgrounds have the assistance and resources they need to support them to be partners in the patient's care.
- Interpreting services are provided to patients who require this support during discussions about their care and treatment options.
- Service review and improvements are informed and responsive to the feedback of consumers from diverse communities.

How we developed the plan

This Plan was developed in consultation with patients, carers, staff, volunteers and consumer advisors. They have provided feedback about the opportunities for the Eye and Ear to continue to grow and strengthen the ways in which patients, visitors and staff access and use the hospital.

How will we know if the plan is working

The Eye and Ear's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan will be implemented in stages 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. Progress will also be reported in the Annual Report.

The next Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan will begin development prior to the completion of this Plan, in mid 2028.

Photo: Our Inpatient Ward nurses caring for patient David



References

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The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Disability Action Plan 2024–2028

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2.0 2023–2025

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Strategic Plan 2023–2027



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