riac

Rights Information
and Advocacy Centre

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2027-2030



Contents

A message from our Board Chair, Bich Jennings 4
A message from our CEO, Dr Sandy Ross 5
Inclusion and Access for all is at the heart of what we do 6
Access and Inclusion Framework 7
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 7
Australia's Disability Strategy 9
Intersectionality 10
Language 11
What Disability Looks Like in Australia 11
Consultation and Plan Development 12
Focus Areas and Actions 14
Awareness Raising 15
Employment 21
Physical and Digital Environments 26
Inclusive meeting and Events 29
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation 31

Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC) acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are present, and to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

We acknowledge that this land has never been ceded and was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We also acknowledge, recognise, and thank the RIAC team members with disabilities who have shared their expertise, time and lived experiences in supporting the development of this inaugural plan.

A message from our Board Chair, Bich Jennings

Inclusion is not something RIAC does alongside its work; it is the work. For an organisation whose mission is to amplify the voice of people in our communities and to advocate for an inclusive and accessible society for all, it is only right that we hold ourselves to the same standard we expect of others. This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is RIAC's commitment to doing exactly that.

As a Board, we recognise that inclusion begins with governance. The decisions we make, the way we run our meetings, and the pathways we create for people with disability all shape the culture of the whole organisation. We are committed to a governance approach where lived experience is not consulted as an afterthought but is embedded in how we work, guided by the principle of "nothing about us without us."

Thank you to our Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) for their guidance and input. I also want to thank the staff, volunteers and Board members who shared their expertise and lived experience so openly in developing this inaugural Plan. Their honesty has made it a richer and more credible document. The Plan sets out ambitious actions over the next three years, and the Board will hold itself accountable for meaningful progress, not as a checklist, but as lasting change in how RIAC prioritises the lived expertise of people with disability, and champions and empowers people with disabilities at every level of the organisation.

A message from our CEO, Dr Sandy Ross

RIAC's values and mission are focused on improving the inclusion of people with disability at every level of the community – in employment, education, access to services, and participation in community life. It is integral to our work that RIAC itself, as an employer and organisation, is genuinely inclusive of all people. This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan provides RIAC with the means to come closer to achieving this vision of inclusion. The Plan does not give us a checklist to tick off – it challenges us to work on our systems and culture across all areas. Anyone – whatever their capabilities – should be able to engage with and participate in RIAC meaningfully. This might be in our governance as a Board member, a member of our Lived Experience Advisory Committee, a staff member, a volunteer, a client, or a community stakeholder.

There is a lot to do to implement the Plan, and we anticipate working our way through the actions over the next 3 years. In implementing the Plan, we aim to build inclusion into our organisation as fundamental to our functioning, not as an add-on. I encourage all RIAC, staff, Board, and volunteers to engage with the implementation of the Plan.

Inclusion and Access for all is at the heart of what we do

RIAC is a not-for-profit organisation that builds the capacity and wellbeing of individuals, families, carers and communities through advocacy and support services with a focus on disability.

Our Mission is to amplify the voice of people in our communities to drive individual and systemic change. Our inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is deeply aligned with our mission and demonstrates our commitment through tangible, measurable actions.

Access and Inclusion Framework

In developing our plan, we have used the following frameworks and definitions.

RIAC adopts a broad and inclusive definition of disability, consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This definition includes, but is not limited to, physical, sensory, intellectual, cognitive, neurological, psychosocial conditions, and chronic health conditions. Disability may be permanent, temporary, or fluctuating. RIAC recognises that some people may or may not identify with the term 'disability' to describe themselves; however, this does not affect whether their legal rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) apply.

This approach is guided by and consistent with the following legislative frameworks and definitions.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) entered into force in 2008, with Australia among the first countries to ratify it shortly thereafter. It provides a rights framework developed on both the social model and the human rights model of disability. It has presented an opportunity for Persons with Disabilities to have their rights promoted and protected.

The UNCRPD defines Disability as follows:

> "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

We also recognise that disability may be temporary or permanent, total, or partial, lifelong, or acquired, visible, or non-visible.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Under the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), an Access & Inclusion Plan provides a practical framework to meet legislative requirements. It provides a structured mechanism for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to participation, ensuring equitable access to premises, services, programs, information, communication, and employment processes and systems.

The DDA aims to:

- eliminate discrimination against people with disability
- ensure the legal equality of people with disability
- promote recognition and acceptance within the community that people with disability have the same rights as the rest of the community.

Under the DDA, disability is defined as:

- total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- presently exists; or
- previously existed but no longer exists; or
- may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or

- is imputed to a person.

The DDA makes it unlawful for any person or organisation to discriminate against a person with disability directly or indirectly.

The DDA is currently under review by the Australian Government.

The review considers the 15 recommendations the Disability Royal Commission put forward to amend the Disability Discrimination Act. This includes consideration of the Disability Royal Commission recommendations to:

- updating the definitions of direct and indirect discrimination
- introducing a positive duty for duty holders to eliminate disability discrimination
- clarifying the duty to adjust for people with disability with the elimination of the word reasonable

The introduction of a positive duty will place the onus on RIAC to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people with disability.

At the time of writing, these changes are only under review, and the timing of legislative change is unknown.

It is expected that these legislative requirements will come into effect during the lifetime of this plan, and should that occur, this plan would need to be revised to accommodate any changes.

Australia's Disability Strategy

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 is a national framework that outlines a plan to enhance the lives of people with disabilities over the next 10 years. This strategy was developed to create a more inclusive society and replaces the previous National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. It emphasises the importance of community involvement and aims to address barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating in society.

Key Goals and Areas of Focus

The strategy is built around several key outcome areas identified by people with disabilities, which include:

- Community Attitudes: Promoting positive perceptions and reducing stigma associated with disabilities.
- Access to Services: Ensuring that people with disabilities can access essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment.
- Safety and Rights: Enhancing the safety and rights of individuals with disabilities, particularly in relation to violence and abuse.
- Housing and Support: Improving access to suitable housing and support services that cater to the needs of people with disabilities.
- Economic Participation: Encouraging greater participation in the workforce and economic activities.
- Health and Wellbeing: Focusing on the overall health and well-being of individuals with disabilities.
- Inclusive Communities: Building communities that are accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Recent Updates and Developments

In 2024, the strategy was reviewed and updated to reflect the ongoing needs of the disability community. This update introduced new policy priorities, including a focus on addressing homelessness and enhancing community engagement. The strategy also emphasises the importance of involving people with disabilities in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Intersectionality

Inclusion and diversity mean stopping discrimination and ensuring everyone feels safe in every environment. A crucial aspect of inclusion and diversity is recognising intersectionality, which involves understanding how various aspects of a person's identity, such as age, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, can overlap and lead to multiple forms of disadvantage.

We believe that these characteristics, when combined with disability, make up a person's whole identity.

Language

People with disabilities often have a personal preference for language, which may be person-first or identity-first.

Person-first language puts the person before their disability, such as being a person with disability.

Identity-first language connects with the concept of the social model of disability, where people are 'disabled' by society and prefer the term disabled person.

For this plan, RIAC will use person-first language. However, we acknowledge and understand this is a personal preference. OBJ

What Disability Looks Like in Australia

At the time of writing (July 2026), Australia's most recent Census of Population and Housing occurred in 2022. Key data insights from the Census relevant to this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan are listed below:

- 5.5 million Australians (21.4%) have a disability
- Disability prevalence was similar for males and females
- One in 10 have experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months because of their disability
- About one in seven (15.0%) people aged 0-64 years had disability
- The labour force participation rate for people aged 15-64 years with disability (living in households) was 60.5%
- 2.7 million people with disability living in households were of working age.
- Of these,
    - over half (56.1%) were employed, compared with 82.3% of people without disability

- People with disability aged 15 years and over (living in households), over one-third (34.7%) avoided situations because of their disability in the previous 12 months
- There were 3.0 million carers, representing 11.9% of all Australians living in households (up from 10.8% in 2018).

Consultation and Plan Development

We listened to and engaged with staff, volunteers, clients, and community representatives (via LEAC) who have lived experience of disability and are allies of people with disability. We did this to understand the barriers experienced by people with disability accessing our services, working, and volunteering for us.

An external disability advisory business (Twenty Percent Disability Inclusion Advisory), a 100% disability owned and led business was engaged to co-create the plan. All external staff engaged and involved in the project identified as living with disability.

This included:

- A review of results from the Diversity and Inclusion Survey conducted in January and February 2026.
- Client Feedback received as part of the most recent audit report on performance against National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS), conducted in September/October 2025.
- 19 One-on-one consultations with staff, volunteers, LEAC and Board members conducted over April and May 2026.
- Review of the following policies and internal documents
    - Bullying, Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy March 2026
    - Diversity and Cultural Inclusion Policy March 2026.
- Vision, Mission, and Values 2026.

The consultation involved various staff, volunteers and allies across age, gender, RIAC role, culture, and lived experience of disability. The facilitated discussions focused on barriers and opportunities related to disability inclusion across RIAC's

activities, places, and spaces. It was noted that RIAC is also undertaking a Board Governance Review, commencing in June 2026.

Four themes surfaced in the consultation:

1. **Building on the foundations to deepen inclusion**

There is a solid foundation of disability representation among staff and at the Board level, supported by a deep leadership commitment to inclusion. The value of lived experience is further deepened in the organisation by the LEAC. There are opportunities to strengthen this representation and awareness further, and to translate them into genuinely inclusive decision-making and experiences that support participation by people with diverse disabilities.

2. **Making access more consistent**

The consultation highlighted a clear desire for more reliable access across physical, digital, and hybrid settings. Physical environmental and digital access experiences remain uneven, creating barriers to participation. Opportunities exist to reduce dependence on individual advocacy and to create environments, meetings, and events that are consistently accessible from the outset.

3. **Strengthening clarity and consistency**

There is an opportunity to make policies, processes, and supports easier to navigate and more predictable. Clearer guidance on workplace adjustments, flexible work, and hybrid participation would help create a more seamless experience and reduce the need for people to negotiate access continually.

4. **Universal Design needs to lead**

There is an opportunity to continue to reflect the strong commitment to access and inclusion by embedding it as a core design principle across systems and ways of working. Embedding universal design would create more inclusive and effective experiences from the outset.

Focus Areas and Actions

Our goals for access and inclusion for people with disability are focused on five streams to address the gaps uncovered in the consultation.

- **Awareness Raising** - We will continue to raise awareness of disability inclusion and rights across our staff, clients, stakeholders, and communities.
- **Inclusive Governance and Leadership** - We will embed inclusive governance practices that remove barriers to participation, continue to build disability leadership capability, and ensure the voices and lived experience of people with disability are central to governance and organisational decision-making.
- **Employment** - We will become an employer of choice for people with disability by providing a supportive and inclusive work environment that is reflected in policies, processes, and consistent experiences.
- **Physical and Digital Environments** - We will work to ensure that our physical and virtual spaces, including our communications, are accessible and inclusive of people with disability.
- **Inclusive Meetings and Events** - We will work to ensure our in-person, virtual and hybrid events and meetings are run in an inclusive and accessible way to maximise participation for clients, community members, volunteers, and staff with disability.

These goals for access and inclusion span the themes of our mission, vision, and values of:

- Amplifying the voice of people in our communities to drive individual and systemic change and achieve social justice.
- An inclusive and accessible society for all and our values of respect, independence, action with purpose and collaboration for impact.

Awareness Raising

We will continue to raise awareness of Disability Inclusion and Rights across our staff, clients, stakeholders, and communities.

Objective

We celebrate Disability.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Celebrate International Day of People with Disability, Global Accessibility Awareness Day	Year One	Increased awareness, understanding and celebration of disability inclusion across the organisation and community, fostering a culture of respect, accessibility and belonging.	International Day of People with Disability, Global Accessibility Awareness Day and other relevant events are recognised annually. - Staff and community engagement activities are delivered to promote disability awareness and inclusion. - Communications and promotional materials are accessible and inclusive. - Participation and feedback demonstrate increased awareness and engagement with disability inclusion initiatives.	CEO/EA

Objective

We will continue to work with our stakeholders and in our communities to increase disability confidence.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Work with external and community partners and stakeholders to uplift disability confidence	Year One	Strengthened partnerships that promote disability inclusion, increase disability confidence, and improve accessible and inclusive services for people with disability.	Participate in at least 2 collaborative disability inclusion initiatives, events, or forums each year. Partnership activities are undertaken annually; disability stakeholders report positive engagement; evidence that partner feedback has informed policies, programs, or services; increased participation in collaborative disability inclusion initiatives.	Director Advocacy (DA) and Access and Support Manager (A&SM)

Objective

We are disability aware.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Develop and execute an accessible communication plan for all regarding the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and the resources available to support staff and volunteers with disabilities	Year One	Staff, volunteers, and clients are aware of the DAIP and the available resources to support people with a disability.	A communication plan is developed and executed.	BSM
Join the Hidden Sunflower Program	Year One	Staff, volunteers, and clients are aware of and understand the Sunflower program.	The Sunflower Program is widely recognised and understood across all RIAC spaces.	A&SM

Inclusive Governance and Leadership

We will embed inclusive governance practices that remove barriers to participation, continue to build disability leadership capability, and ensure the voices and lived experience of people with disability are central to governance and organisational decision-making.

Objective

We evolve and enable an inclusive governance approach.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Evolve and execute an inclusive governance approach for RIAC	Year Two	RIAC has an inclusive governance framework that enables diverse perspectives, meaningful participation, and informed decision-making.	Governance arrangements are reviewed and updated to reflect inclusive practices. - RIAC membership and participation are representative and inclusive of people with disability and other diverse perspectives. - Governance processes and meetings are accessible and inclusive. - Members report positive experiences of participation and influence in decision-making.	Board/ CEO

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Create a Disability Leadership Governance Program to increase disability representation on the Board and support leadership capability	Year 3	People with disability are supported to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to participate in governance and leadership roles, increasing representation on boards, committees and the executive.	Disability Leadership Governance Program is developed and implemented. Participants complete the program and report increased confidence and governance capability. Participants are supported to pursue leadership, board or advisory committee opportunities including LEAC. An increase in the number of people with disability participating in governance and leadership roles is demonstrated over time.	Board
Establish a peer Board member mentoring program	Year One	Governance capacity-building for aspiring and new Board Members with a disability.	People with disability actively seek and hold Board positions.	Board

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Review and update Board Materials to reflect that they are presented in an inclusive and accessible way	Year Two	Board Members with disability can access relevant information in an accessible and inclusive way via all digital formats.	Communication is accessible and inclusive to all who have a disability.	Board
Assess and continually improve the effectiveness of LEAC in bringing lived experience considerations into decision-making for both Board and Management	Year One	People with disabilities are actively consulted with and engaged on an ongoing and proactive basis.	Decisions are made with the perspective of Lived Experience.	Board/ CEO

Employment

We will become an employer of choice for people with disability by providing a supportive and inclusive work environment that is reflected in policies, processes, practices, and consistent experiences for all.

Objective

We support staff and volunteers with disability with appropriate workplace adjustments.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Develop and implement a formalised Workplace Adjustment Policy and Process, including training for managers and people leads, and communication with the broader workforce for the complete employment and volunteer lifecycle	Year One	Increased satisfaction of employees and volunteers with disability.	A Workplace Adjustment Policy is developed and implemented.	BSM

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Provide education for all staff, including people leaders, on workplace adjustments to build confidence, increase understanding and support inclusive workplaces	Year One	Unconscious biases related to applying for and supporting adjustments decrease.	Resources developed and communicated. Increase in satisfaction of those requiring adjustments (measured as part of the annual Employee Survey).	BSM

Objective

We will provide an accessible and inclusive recruitment process for staff, volunteers, and board members.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Review and update recruitment processes to ensure they are accessible for staff and volunteers	Year One	Increased employment opportunities for people with disability.	Our Recruitment processes and policies are accessible and inclusive for people with disability.	EA

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Review and update the employee and volunteer onboarding process with a disability lens	Year One	Increased employment satisfaction of new employees with disability.	Onboarding requirements for people with disability are embedded into the onboarding process.	BSM/ Finance and Admin Manager (F&AM)

Objective

We will provide an accessible and inclusive environment for our staff, volunteers, and clients.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Review and update all policies, procedures, and work practices to embed universal design principles and practices	Year Two	Increased satisfaction of employees and volunteers with disability.	Policies and procedures are in plain English and incorporate relevant elements of universal design.	BSM

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Establish an Employee Disability Network (EDN) for employees with disabilities and their Allies to connect, share stories, and be consulted on all employee-related matters	Year Two	Increased satisfaction of employees with disability.	A network is established, and positive feedback was received about support for our people with a disability.	DA + nominated staff member with disability.
Increase Disability Confidence across all employees and volunteers (including Board members)	Year Two	Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.	Disability confidence training is developed and delivered to all employees.	CEO/EDN
Scope and implement disability employment pathways, such as internships, graduate programs, and work experience for people with disabilities	Year Two	Increased employment opportunities for people with disability.	Dedicated employment pathways are developed and implemented.	CEO

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Sponsor participation in a Disability Leadership Program	Year Two	Increased retention of employees with a disability by building the capacity of leadership skills.	Dedicated leadership pathways are developed and implemented.	CEO

Physical and Digital Environments

We will work to ensure that our physical and virtual spaces, including our communications, are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.

Objective

Our Physical Spaces are accessible and inclusive.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Audit offices and meeting rooms for accessibility and prioritise actions arising	Year One	Clients, volunteers, and employees with a disability have fair and equitable access to all spaces.	Work and meeting spaces are accessible. and inclusive.	F&AM

Objective

Our Digital Spaces are accessible and inclusive.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Develop and train staff and use digital accessibility guides in all communications (email and social media)	Year Two	People with disability can access information about and from RIAC in an accessible and inclusive way via all digital formats.	Communication is accessible and inclusive to all who have a disability.	BSM
Perform an accessibility audit on the RIAC Website to ensure it complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Double A (AA)	Year One	People with disability can access information in an accessible and inclusive way.	Our website meets current compliance standards with WCAG.	BSM
Create and communicate a disability inclusive communication language guide	Year Two	RIAC is consistent, inclusive, and respectful of how disability is acknowledged in all communications.	An Inclusive Language guide has been developed and implemented.	BSM

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
All published documents are in accessible formats, including easy-read and accessible PDFs	Year One	People with disability can access information in an accessible and inclusive way.	All published documents are accessible.	BSM

Inclusive meeting and Events

We will work to ensure our in-person, virtual and hybrid events and meetings are run in an inclusive and accessible way to maximise participation for clients, community members, volunteers, and staff with disability.

Objective

We create external events and host meetings that are accessible and inclusive.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Create an accessible meeting and event guide and checklist to cover before, during and after each meeting and event **Include in-person, virtual, hybrid meetings, social events, board meetings, internal and external**	Year One	An accessible meeting and event guide and checklist.	Clients, employees, and volunteers with disability can participate in all our events and meetings in a meaningful way.	EA

Action	Timeline	Outcomes	Success Measures	Owner
Train all chairs and meeting organisers in executing the Accessible Meeting and Event Guide	Year One	All chairs, hosts and organisers of meetings and events are trained in the accessible meeting and event guide and checklist.	Clients, employees, and volunteers with disability can participate in all our events and meetings in a meaningful way.	BSM/ EA

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes for this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan have been established to ensure transparency in progress and accountability arrangements.

The governance and accountability arrangements for strategy are as follows.

The Plan is the responsibility of the Board.

- A Steering Committee will be developed to meet every six months to monitor the plan's progress.
- The Steering Committee will comprise at least 50% of members with lived experience of Disability.
- The Steering Committee will include a Board Director Sponsor of the plan.
- Annual reporting of action outcomes and progress will be presented to the Board and LEAC.
- Annual reporting of action outcomes and progress will be made public via the website or in the Annual report.
- Ongoing communications of the outcomes and progress of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan will be shared quarterly.
- A midpoint review of the plan will be conducted.