

Treasure Stories Inspire Possibilities Strengthen Communities

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN 2024-2028
STATE LIBRARY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



STATE LIBRARY

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

State Library of Western Australia kadij Wadjak Noongar boodjar-ak wer kendjil Marawar boodjar kalyakool moondang-ak kaaradjiny.

Ngalak kadij ngala bibool kadadjiny-dandjoo kangowiny Indigenous yoongar dirdong Australian boodjar, ngannilak.

Ngalak boola moort noondak-marar yoongi keny baam-ak kadadjiny nyidiyang-ak kaaratjiny.

Ngalak kadij Birdiya, koora wer yeyi, ngiyan Noongar kadadjiny moort yanginy.

The State Library of Western Australia acknowledges the Whadjuk Noongar people on whose land we are located.

We acknowledge the traditional lands of all the Western Australian Aboriginal communities and their cultural practices and knowledge and kinship systems.

We recognise that our collections hold traditional cultural knowledge belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the country.

We support communities to protect the integrity of this information, gathered from their ancestors in the colonial period.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, who have handed down these systems of practice to each new generation for millennia.

Image: Mowanjum Dancers, Western Australia, ca. 1975

Contact us

Please contact us if you would like to give feedback about our plan, provide advice on how we can improve access or raise an issue you have experienced.

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Dates

This plan is active from 1 January 2024
to 30 December 2028.

Acknowledgement

The State Library wishes to acknowledge everyone, particularly those with lived experience of disability, who shared their feedback and provided ideas and advice that helped shape this DAIP.

Images

Several images used in this document are from The Lives We Lead, which was a social media project to help the community to better understand the contributions that people with disability are making economically, socially, culturally and politically. This project was created by WA's Individualised Services and funded by Department of Communities and Department of Social Services. Visit the State Library website to view The Lives We Lead videos and photo stories.



Right: Behind the scenes - Chris in Halls Creek
The Lives We Lead

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Forward



At the State Library of Western Australia, we want everyone to have equitable access to enjoy our collections, services and events with as few barriers as possible.

I am pleased to present the State Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2028 (DAIP). Developed by staff and informed by community feedback, the plan identifies key access and inclusion outcomes the Library will work towards over the next five years.

In 2020, Creative Australia's *Creating our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey* told us that people with disability are more likely to read for pleasure than other Australians and are more likely to attend literary events. There are over 400,000 Western Australians who live

with disability and many regularly visit the Library in person and online for research, study and recreation. Through monitoring client feedback, we know that people with disability love visiting the State Library building and generally have a very positive experience. This tells us that our enhancements to access and inclusion over the years have been valuable.

But there are always areas we can build on. We need continuous improvement to remove physical, digital and attitudinal barriers to improve the experiences of Library visitors and our staff and volunteers, both in person and online.

A major role of the Library is to capture, preserve and tell the stories of Western Australia's diverse communities. The development of a new DAIP has been an opportunity to reflect on how well the voices of people with disability are represented in our collections.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Library staff in the development of the plan. Many staff have knowledge about access and inclusion within their professional capacity, and some have developed this knowledge through lived experience.

I'm proud that the Library has representation of people with disability as 5% of our workforce, which meets the target set by the *Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020-2025* and compares favourably to the Western Australian public sector average of 1.5%.

However, rather than viewing this from a compliance perspective, we focus on it being best practice for a library's workforce to reflect the diversity of the community that it serves. Because at heart, our goal is that when staff and visitors engage with our physical and online spaces, they feel valued, respected and connected.

Catherine Clark
CEO and State Librarian



ACCESSIBILITY

This report is available in alternative formats and languages other than English on request



Several photos featured in this document are from the State Library collections. For more information visit the [State Library website](#)

The State Library's commitment to access and inclusion 2024-2028

01

State Library collections, services and events are accessible to all community members

Collaborate with people with disability to collect materials that reflect diverse perspectives and stories

Work with Western Australian local public libraries to provide resources in a range of formats for different needs

Promote the DAIP to ensure staff understand the State Library's obligations and commitment to providing accessible and inclusive collections, services and events

Review, update and promote resources that support staff to deliver accessible and inclusive collections, services and events

Continually improve the assistive technology available at the State Library Building and ensure staff are able to assist people to use the technology

Promote on-request access to interpreter services

02

State Library buildings and facilities are accessible to all community members

Develop a business case for the staged development of all-gender accessible toilets on all levels of the building

Follow guidelines for accessible directional and information signage and wayfinding improvements

Incorporate universal design principles in building refurbishment activities

Regularly review and update accessibility information on the State Library website

Provide a guide on the website to assist people to plan a visit to the State Library building

03

State Library information is accessible to all community members

Provide support for people to build their digital literacy skills and find information and services online

Assist staff to provide accessible information, including alternative formats

Ensure the State Library website is compliant with W3C AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Follow inclusive design principles for social media content

04

All community members receive the same level and quality of service from State Library staff

Ensure policies and procedures are inclusive and consider the needs of people with disability

Provide training to staff which focuses on disability awareness, attitudes and beliefs, understanding and managing unconscious bias, communication and assistive technology for the library environment

Ensure emergency response procedures for people with disability are in place and staff are trained in their use

05

All community members have the same opportunities to make complaints to the State Library

Ensure the complaint process responds to the needs of people with disability

Review feedback about access or inclusion matters and respond to opportunities for improvement

06

All community members can participate in public consultation conducted by the State Library

Review, update and promote resources that support staff to deliver accessible and inclusive public consultation

07

All community members are supported to obtain and maintain employment with the State Library

In collaboration with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Australian Network of Disability, review and update current recruitment processes and upskill staff to become a 'Disability Confident Recruiter'

Provide employment opportunities for people with disability by procuring services from registered Australian Disability Enterprises

About the State Library of Western Australia

The State Library is a valued cultural institution, recognised for the outstanding services it provides to the people of Western Australia.

The Library's mission is to treasure stories, inspire possibilities and strengthen communities. The Library collects, preserves, treasures and shares knowledge and stories from the past, the present and those yet to unfold as a vibrant record of Western Australia's shared history.

Collections represent the richness and diversity of the Western Australian community and can facilitate a better understanding of the past, discovery of new ideas and shaping a stronger future.

Visitors to the State Library building and online services will find vibrant and welcoming spaces for learning, recreation and enterprise. Using innovative services and technologies, we connect with all Western Australians to offer exciting and fulfilling experiences.



Libraries act as gateways to knowledge and culture. They house centuries of learning, information, history and truth. Everyone must have access to this information, so it is vital that libraries are safe spaces where all members of the community feel welcomed.

- Hon. John Day, Chairman of the Library Board of Western Australia, 2023

The following organisational values guide how actions from the Library's DAIP are developed and implemented.

The infographic consists of five vertically stacked items. Each item features a circular icon on the left and a text box on the right. The icons are: 1. Three stylized human figures in purple. 2. A gear with a clock face inside in blue. 3. Two hands holding a stylized human figure in green. 4. Two hands shaking in pink. 5. A lightbulb with a checkmark inside in orange.

- Community-focused**
We will provide high quality services based on community need
- Responsive**
We will make informed, timely decisions and communicate them clearly
- Respectful**
We will value others and respect their differences
- Accountable**
We will hold ourselves to account for the work we do
- Innovative**
We will strive for excellence by being open to new ideas and embracing opportunities for improvement

Right: Kaitlin at work at the Geraldton Regional Library
The Lives We Lead, 2021

Disability in Western Australia

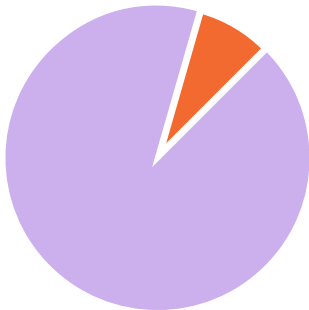
Disability is part of everyday life. In fact, almost all of us will experience temporary or permanent disability at some point in our lives.

In Western Australia, one in five people (or 411,500 people) have a permanent disability. Currently 68,000 Western Australians are the primary carer for a friend or family member with a disability.

Library visitors and staff

We welcome a diverse community of visitors to the Library. In 2023, there were 350,000 in-person visits to the State Library building, 750,000 website visits and 2.5 million social media engagements.

State Library visitors
with disability 8%



State Library staff
with disability 5%



Library visitors tell us that 8% of them experience disability. Our workforce is similarly diverse with 5% of staff identifying as having a disability.



Australians with disability embrace the arts. Regular ebook usage is more widely adopted by people with disability (26%, compared to 17% without disability) and regular audiobook usage is also used to a greater extent than people without disability (22%, compared to 12%).

- Creating Our Future, Results of the National Arts Participation Survey, 2020

Disability Access and Inclusion Committee

The Library's Disability Access and Inclusion Committee is comprised of representatives across the organisation. The committee is chaired by the Director Library Services and meets four times per year. It is responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of the DAIP.

Below: Assistive technology on a public computer, 2023



The committee follows the social model of disability. This model proposes that what makes someone disabled is not their impairment, but the attitudes and structures of society. If society is set up in a way that is accessible for people with disability, then they have independence, autonomy and inclusion like any other citizen.

Some barriers are physical, while other barriers are caused by negative attitudes to people with disability. The Library's DAIP guides the identification and removal of barriers, creating a fairer and more equitable environment for everyone.



People with disability report the greatest barriers they face are not communication or physical, rather they are created through stigma, unconscious bias and lack of understanding of disability... Improving attitudes is as important as removing physical barriers to the built and natural environment.

- Australia's Disability Strategy, 2021-2031

Consultation

In 2023, the Library partnered with the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Western Australian Museum to engage with people with disability, families and carers, disability service providers, peak bodies and staff.

The consultation process included public community engagement sessions (metropolitan, regional and online), online surveys, internal staff survey and interviews and in-person stakeholder interviews. The opportunity to provide feedback was advertised via posters, social media, website, newsletter, staff intranet and notices with Public Libraries Online, West Australian Information Network and the West Australian newspaper.

Seventy-eight responses were received, with comments covering a broad range of topics. The following are example statements from library visitors, stakeholders and staff.

Outcome 1: Services and events

“It’s wonderful to see more diverse voices and stories featured in collections and literary events.”

“The library has a large catalogue of accessible digital content, including audiobooks.”

“The library incorporates access features at major events, like Auslan signing at the Premier’s Book Awards and live-streaming, which is great for people who can’t attend in person.”

“There could be more partnerships between the Library and specialist services to explore disability focused programming and improvements to access and inclusion.”

“There are multiple websites used to register for events. Some don’t provide enough options for registering access needs.”

“Let us know about events in advance. People with disability often need extra time to organise disability supports and transport.”

“Online workshops during the pandemic were valuable.”

“Quiet zones at busy events would be great.”

“As a staff member, I’d like training and resources to build my skills in planning inclusive services and events.”

Outcome 2: Building and facilities

“I can’t access the toilets above the ground floor due to narrow, heavy doors and small air locks.”

“The lack of all-gender toilets on Levels 1-4 is an issue if I need assistance from someone of the opposite gender.”

“All floors should be accessible via the public lifts.”

“I find it difficult to hear staff at the Welcome Desk. The desk is raised and the Perspex screens block the sound.”

“There should be more public computers with assistive technology on each floor, including screen readers.”

Outcome 3: Information

“I’d like to see clearer signs that help me navigate the Library and find assistance when I need it.”

“Digital signage could be used to present information in voice, Auslan and captions. It could tell people what services and activities are available in different parts of the library.”

“It would be helpful to have a visual guide of how to get around the building available on the website.”

“More people with disabilities should know about the benefits of online library membership and access to digital resources.”

“With more collections being digitised, we need to ensure that accessibility of online content is a priority.”

“The Library’s catalogues and online platforms should be audited for accessibility.”

Outcome 4: Quality of service

“Front-of-house staff are enthusiastic, empathetic and caring.”

“Staff were amazingly helpful and showed me what I needed to do and how to get online with the public library computers.”

“Disability isn’t always visible. There should be more focus on staff awareness of psychosocial disability and neurodiversity.”

“Training should be organised at the organisational level, with access to disability awareness, mental health training and information from people with lived experience of disability.”

Outcome 5: Complaints

“Training or awareness raising is needed on how people with disability can register a complaint.”

Outcome 6: Consultation

“The Library would benefit from hearing directly from people with disability more often.”

“There is potential to create a disability advisory group to guide and advise the Library.”

Outcome 7: Employment

“The Library has flexibility to support existing and future employees with disability.”

“Managers would benefit from training on how to make the workplace supportive for people with disability, like identifying required supports and capacity within teams to vary duties to accommodate different needs and abilities.”

“Staff workrooms and internal doors aren’t always easy to access. The Welcome Desk is not wheelchair accessible.”

Audit

As part of the review of the previous DAIP 2019–2023, the Library undertook a physical disability access audit and a neuroaccessibility audit.

The physical access audit revealed that although there are many elements that enable people with disability to have a positive experience when visiting the Library building, there are also significant barriers to access, including areas where the building is non-compliant with contemporary access standards and community expectations. The audit considered inherent limitations given the State Library building’s age and structural design.

The neuroaccessibility audit identified that overall the Library performs well in terms of neuroaccessibility. Open spaces, natural light, friendly staff and generally low noise levels contribute to this assessment. The audit identified some areas that would benefit from improvement to enhance the experience of neurodiverse people from both a sensory and wayfinding perspective.

Findings from the audits, along with information gathered through the consultation process, were used to develop the new DAIP 2024–2028.



All library staff have an advocacy role in promoting Australian library services. This includes advocating for access and equity in library services for people with disabilities.

– Australian Library and Information Association, 2023

Communication

The DAIP 2024–2028 will be promoted to the community by:

- ▣ placing a notice in The West Australian newspaper
- ▣ making the DAIP available on the State Library website
- ▣ promoting the DAIP on social media channels and the staff intranet
- ▣ providing the DAIP to community members and other stake holders who participated in the consultation process.

Accountability

Each year, the Library will develop an annual implementation plan which outlines actions, timeframes and responsibility areas to guide to guide achievement of the outcomes.

Every six months, staff members responsible for actions will be asked to provide a progress update. This information will be reviewed by the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee and will contribute to the annual progress report submitted to the Minister for Disability Services. Additionally, the State Library will report the key achievements to improve access and inclusion in the Annual Report of the Library Board of Western Australia.

Next page: Hayden in Esperance, The Lives We Lead, 2021



Achievements of the DAIP 2019–2023

The following initiatives highlight the work of the State Library under the DAIP 2019–2023.

Accessible public library physical materials

The Library provided the framework for local public libraries across the State to select resources in alternative formats to assist people with disability. Accessible physical materials freely available in the State’s 232 public libraries at 30 June 2023 include:

- 154,041 large print books
- 169,452 DVDs
- 120,471 audiobooks in a variety of formats.

Each year, State Government funds are used to refresh and renew collections so that they remain relevant and accessible to local communities.

Accessible online materials

All Western Australian public library and State Library members were able to freely access online resources such as ebooks, eaudiobooks, enewspapers, ecomics, emagazines and streaming motion pictures and music using a variety of platforms such as Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy and PressReader. These platforms are continually enhancing their accessibility features for different needs. Accessible online materials available at 30 June 2023 include:

- 747,830 ebooks
- 155,485 eaudiobooks
- 29,433 emagazine and enewspaper titles
- 31,509 streaming motion pictures
- 392,178 streaming music titles.

Content digitisation

The Library continued to digitise its unique Western Australian historical collections to improve accessibility for people who engage with content online. At 30 June 2023, more than 320,000 Western Australian State Library collection images and publications were available online.

Better Beginnings packs for vision impairment

The Library’s Better Beginnings Family Literacy Program supported the development of literacy in children. Better Beginnings provided resources specifically for families with parents and/or children with disabilities including Braille and audio versions. Packs were also provided to VisAbility and Perth Children’s Hospital for use by occupational therapists working directly with families. Lending kits that model using resources from around the home to create sensory aspects to picture books were also available for families to borrow for free from their public library.

VisAbility Talking Book Library

The Library provided an annual grant to VisAbility for the provision of Statewide library services to people who are blind, vision impaired or who have a print disability. In 2023, VisAbility celebrated the milestone of producing their 20,000th audiobook title for their clients.

Improved website accessibility

In 2021, the Library launched a new website with improved accessibility features to ensure its content is available to the widest possible audience, including readers using assistive technology or accessibility features. The website also offered free online Ask a Librarian and Chat with Us services for people who cannot visit the State Library building in person or who have trouble with verbal communication or hearing.



Above: Super Power Kids, 2019

Super Power Kids exhibition

The Library partnered with Kalparrin and the AWESOME Festival in 2019, to present an exhibition titled Super Power Kids, showcasing the stories of 33 Western Australian children living with disability.

Disability awareness training

The Library developed an online disability awareness training program for all staff. Training sessions by people with lived experience of disabilities were held to raise awareness of disability access and inclusion.

Accessible events

Library events were accessible and inclusive. The annual Premier's Book Awards were livestreamed and made available for later viewing. The Disrupted Festival of Ideas was also livestreamed and made available for later viewing. Auslan interpreters were used and closed captions were available on some videos.

Enhancing accessibility of eConnect

Enhancements were made to the physical accessibility of the Library's eConnect service where people are supported to build their digital literacy skills and find information and services online. Adjustable desks and chairs were made available along with a suite of assistive technology including a Braille keyboard overlay, large print keyboards with different contrast options, trackball mice and large monitors.

Partnering with disability service providers

The Library had contracts with two Australian Disability Enterprises for the disposal of collection items and the preparation of Better Beginnings packs.

Enhancing physical accessibility for public enquiries

State Library and State Records Office public enquiry services were bought together in a single accessible space within the State Library building. The refurbished public space opened in July 2020.

Alignment

The State Library's DAIP is aligned with other frameworks, legislation and strategies.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Internationally, the Library recognises Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to promote equal opportunities and outcomes for people with disability.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* seeks to provide uniform cover for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability.

Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)

At the State level, the *Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)* requires all local government and selected State Government organisations to develop a plan to assist in the promotion of access and inclusion of people with disability. Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)*.

A Western Australia for Everyone: State Disability Strategy 2020-2030

The Library supports the State Government's 10-year whole-of-community vision which sets the foundation for building a more inclusive Western Australia, empowering people with disability to participate meaningfully in all parts of society and to have the resources to do so.

This strategy aligns with the Library's Strategic Plan 2023-2027, recognising that communities that welcome and support contributions from a diverse range of people are more creative, innovative and resilient than those that don't.

The National Arts and Disability Strategy

The National Arts and Disability Strategy's vision is for the artistic aspirations and achievements of people with a disability to be a valued and visible part of Australian culture.



Australians are increasingly seeking out diverse writers and voices in literature. It's our responsibility to ensure that State Library collections reflect diverse perspectives and stories.

- Catherine Clark, CEO and State Librarian



Definitions

Disability

Under the *Disability Services Act 1993*, the Library recognises disability as being attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments. It may result in substantially reduced capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for support.

The Library recognises that there are many Australians with hidden disability – 19.1% of Australians have a disability and only 20% of those disabilities are 'seen' or visible disabilities.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other functions.

Access

Accessibility is when the needs of people with disability are considered and products, services and facilities are built or modified so they can be used by everyone. It is well known that improved access brings benefit to people of all ages and abilities.

Inclusion

Inclusion moves beyond access measures and is a deeper shift towards accepting and valuing people exactly as they are. Inclusion allows everyone to feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate and contribute to society.



Libraries are one of the most critical but undervalued forms of social infrastructure in our society. With isolation and loneliness being known health hazards, libraries offer a place where everyone is welcome and social bonds can be formed.

– Susan McEwan, Director Library Services

*Previous page: Disability surfing event at Leighton Beach
Kerry Faulkner 2023*

Discover More

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