

# **NSW Department of Education Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020**

# Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The NSW Department of Education	5
3. Legislative and policy context	6
4. Key areas for action	7
5. Consultation	8
6. Key outcomes	9
Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability	9
Focus Area 2: Creating more liveable communities for people with disability	10
Focus Area 3: Achieving a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices	10
Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes	10
7. Governance, monitoring and reporting	11
8. Feedback	11
Table Focus Area 1	13
Table Focus Area 2	16
Table Focus Area 3	18
Table Focus Area 4	20

# 1. Introduction

The NSW Department of Education's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016 – 2020* demonstrates the department's continuing commitment to improving the lives of people with disability, their families and carers. As we increasingly move toward models of service and practices which seek to remove obstacles and enable people to achieve their full potential, the department must ensure its operations and the services it provides are accessible and designed to enable and maximise participation of people with disability.

This Plan identifies actions the department will undertake over the next four years to foster an inclusive environment for people with disability, through policies, practices and high quality services that reflect, recognise and respond to their diverse needs.

The actions identified in this Plan respond to State and Federal legislation and policy initiatives that support rights of people with disability. Primary among these is the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* which protects the rights of people with disability. The introduction in 2005 of the *Disability Standards for Education* (the Disability Standards) contributed to an increasing focus in our schools on improving the educational outcomes of students with disability. In particular, the Disability Standards require schools, among other education providers, to provide reasonable adjustments that enable students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers. The department is currently committed to working with the Commonwealth to implement the recommendations of a review of the operation of the Disability Standards completed in 2015.

In 2008, Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) signified a commitment by all levels of government to eradicate obstacles faced by people with

disability. This was followed in 2010 by the National Disability Strategy, which set out a 10 year national plan for implementing the obligations under the UNCRPD and improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers.

In 2013, the Federal Government, together with the states, agreed to the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS will provide lifetime support to people with significant disability and give them choice and control over their access to specialist support services. The NDIS does not change the obligations of schools and the early childhood education and care sector towards people with disability. Transition to the NDIS in NSW commenced in 2016, with the NDIS to be fully in place in NSW by July 2018. The department is working with State and national agencies, staff and stakeholders to support this transition.

In 2014, the NSW Parliament passed the *Disability Inclusion Act* (the Act), demonstrating the NSW Government's ongoing commitment to building an inclusive community. The Act provides the legislative framework for the development and implementation of a NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (the State Plan) to drive disability access and inclusion. The State Plan is based around four key focus areas, formulated in consultation with disability stakeholders and the Disability Council NSW:

1. developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability
2. creating more liveable communities for people with disability
3. achieving a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices
4. achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes

The State Plan underpins the direction, focus and content of this Plan.

## 2. The NSW Department of Education

The NSW Department of Education is one of the largest organisations in Australia and employs in excess of 84,000 staff. The department's vision is for a highly skilled, vibrant and inclusive NSW where all students are achieving their potential and contributing as informed citizens to our society, where all staff are valued for their skills and contributions and where Aboriginal people are determining their own futures.

The Department of Education funds and delivers education services for NSW students from preschool to secondary school. The department also regulates the early childhood education and care sector including preschools, long day care centres and family day care and supports their inclusion of children with disability. Through Aboriginal Affairs, the department works with Aboriginal communities to promote social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

The department manages one of the most extensive public education systems in the world. It delivers education to more than 780,000 school students each year through its network of over 2,200 public schools, representing around two-thirds of all school students in NSW. In addition, the department provides funding support to over 400,000 students attending non-government schools.

Overall, the Department of Education is committed to improving the lives of people with disability, their families and carers through ongoing engagement, consultation and advocacy. The department provides leadership for supporting positive community understanding, attitudes and behaviours and embraces the diverse experiences of persons with disability.

Ongoing engagement with people with disability and their families and carers is an essential component of this Plan.

This Plan builds on the significant initiatives implemented by the department under its previous *Disability Action Plan 2011-2015*. Some of these achievements included:

- implementing Every Student, Every School, an ongoing initiative that continues to strengthen support for students whose learning is impacted by disability through a range of activities including increased professional learning for teachers
- implementing the department's Access Review Tool to identify and prioritise projects in schools to meet the access needs of students and staff with disability
- continuing to be a major sponsor of the NSW Don't DIS my ABILITY campaign
- establishing the Disability Employee network, providing a forum for consultation and feedback on organisational strategies and policies that may affect employees with disability.

### 3. Legislative and policy context

The Department of Education operates within a context of a wide range of legal and policy obligations and these have informed the development of this Plan. The obligations include:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008 (UNCRPD)
- National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020
- NSW National Disability Strategy: NSW Implementation Plan 2012 – 2014
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW)
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and related Disability Standards for Education (2005) and Access to Premises – Buildings (2010)
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*
- *Education Act 1990* (NSW)
- *Education and Care Services National Law*

A range of existing Department of Education resources have also informed the development of this plan and support its implementation. These include:

- Workforce Diversity Policy
- Workforce Diversity Plan 2012 - 2017
- Aboriginal Human Resources Development Plan 2012-2017
- People with Disabilities – Statement of Commitment (Policy)
- Assisting Students with Learning Difficulties (Policy)
- Public Schools NSW – Strategic Directions – Creating Futures Together 2015-2017
- Wellbeing Framework for Schools 2016
- School Excellence Framework

## 4. Key areas for action

The department's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020* incorporates outcomes and actions that align with the State Plan and support the implementation of important national and state priorities and initiatives. This includes:

- Supporting the successful transition of people with disability to the National Disability Insurance Scheme in NSW by July 2018 and its intersection with services provided by the department.
- Improving service delivery to students with disability in public schools in response to the recommendations of the NSW Audit

Office in its Performance Audit entitled *Supporting Students with Disability in NSW Public Schools*.<sup>1</sup>

- Fostering an inclusive workplace in which employees with disability are supported to succeed
- Focusing on the development of accessible and clear communications to help inform the community and shape community attitudes
- A commitment to increasing the number of children with disability accessing a quality preschool education program in the year before full-time school, and supporting inclusive practices in the early childhood education and care sector.

## 5. Consultation

The department's Disability Employee Network has contributed to the development of this plan and plays an important role in advising, supporting and monitoring its implementation.

The department has also utilised feedback from a wide range of parent, community and education stakeholders about its services in the development of this Plan.

A consultation draft of this Plan was provided directly to a range of external peak and representative groups for feedback, including the following:

- Disability Council NSW
- Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW
- People with Disabilities Australia
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia

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<sup>1</sup> The Plan includes actions that are directly in response to recommendations from the Performance Audit.



- NSW Primary Principals Association
- NSW Secondary Principals Association
- National Disability Services
- Family Advocacy

Feedback on the consultation draft was also received from non-government disability organisations, the early childhood education and care sector and individuals with disability, their representatives and advocates.

Ongoing engagement and feedback with a wide range of groups and individuals with an interest in matters impacting people with disability, in addition to any emerging priorities and issues impacting people with disability who access department services, will continue to inform adjustments to the Plan as required.

## 6. Key outcomes

The Plan is structured in alignment with specific outcomes for each focus area identified in the State Plan. Outcomes are linked with detailed actions included in the following table.

### *Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability*

- 1.1 Key organisational strategies promote and support disability awareness and inclusion
- 1.2 Increased employee awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability, and improved inclusive practices
- 1.3 Identification of additional workforce related actions to support positive changes in community attitudes and behaviour

- 1.4 Staff and stakeholders are informed and understand the role and purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

*Focus Area 2: Creating more liveable communities for people with disability*

- 2.1 Improved attraction, retention and career development for people with disability
- 2.2 Department buildings are accessible
- 2.3 School communities are supported to address the wellbeing of students with disability and their carers.

*Focus Area 3: Achieving a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices*

- 3.1 Improved recruitment experience for people with disability
- 3.2 Increased opportunities for people with disability to enter the workforce
- 3.3 Improved engagement and support for people with disability in the workforce
- 3.4 Improved accessibility of services and systems supporting employees with disability
- 3.5 School students with complex needs are supported in planning for post school employment pathways

*Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes*

- 4.1 A new strategic policy that underpins the department's commitments to people with disability

- 4.2 Improved access to information of department programs and services supporting people with disability
- 4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning
- 4.4 Improved school planning for students with disability
- 4.5 Improved processes for accessing additional resources for students with disability
- 4.6 Increased number of children with disability in quality preschool programs (these children will primarily be in the year before school or disadvantaged three year olds).

## 7. Governance, monitoring and reporting

Implementation of this Plan is monitored by a Project Control Group comprised of senior officers from across the department and chaired by the Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance.

Each business area of the department is responsible for implementation of actions in the Plan and for internal progress reporting requirements.

Progress against the department's Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be publically reported each year as part of the Department of Education Annual Report.

## 8. Feedback

The Department of Education is committed to continuous improvement. Ongoing feedback and comments are welcome on this Plan and on progress towards achieving the key outcomes in each of the focus areas through implementation of the actions set out in this Plan.

Feedback can be provided in writing to: [Disability.Support@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Disability.Support@det.nsw.edu.au)

<b>Table Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1.1 Key organisational strategies promote and support disability awareness and inclusive practices	1.1.1 Establish an executive disability champion role for employees	Senior Executives	April 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance)
1.1 Key organisational strategies promote and support disability awareness and inclusive practices	1.1.2 Promote the Human Rights Commission learning and development resource 'Upholding the Rights of People with Disability in Policy and Project Work' to departmental employees who work in policy and project officer roles	Departmental employees who work in policy and project officer roles	On-going	Human Resources Directorate (Talent Management – Corporate Talent)
1.1 Key organisational strategies promote and support disability awareness and inclusive practices	1.1.3 Publish positive stories about Departmental initiatives and employees with disability through the Department's web content and publications	All employees	July 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance) Communications and Engagement
1.2 Increased employee awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability, and improved inclusive practices	1.2.1 Promote opportunities for staff to participate in activities and campaigns which foster and celebrate disability inclusion and culture and recognise achievements, through the Don't Dis my ABILITY campaign and	All employees	April 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance) Communications and Engagement

**Table Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability**

Outcome	Action	Targeted Area	Timeframe	Responsibility
	International Day of People with Disability			
1.2 Increased employee awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability, and improved inclusive practices	1.2.2 Encourage more staff to complete elearning modules on the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> and <i>Disability Standards for Education 2005</i> about their obligations to students with disability and their parents and carers	Schools	On-going	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
1.2 Increased employee awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability, and improved inclusive practices	1.2.3 Build disability awareness training into the employee induction program for corporate employees	All corporate employees	June 2019	Human Resources Directorate (Talent Management – Learning Design & Evaluation)
1.2 Increased employee awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability, and improved inclusive practices	1.2.4 Build disability awareness training into the manager induction program for corporate employees	All corporate managers	June 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Talent Management – Learning Design & Evaluation)
1.3 Identification of additional workforce related actions to support positive changes in	1.3.1 Consult with staff and external disability stakeholders to develop	Relevant business units and	June 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance)

**Table Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability**

Outcome	Action	Targeted Area	Timeframe	Responsibility
community attitudes and behaviour	further actions which foster positive community attitudes and behaviour	Disability Employee		Work Health & Safety Directorate
1.4 Increased student awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability	1.4.1 Encourage and support students with disability to participate in Student Representative Councils and in the annual Secretary for a Day program	Schools	August 2017	Learning and Wellbeing
1.5 Staff and stakeholders are informed and understand the role and purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	1.5.1 Establish and maintain a website presence that provides information about the NDIS for schools and early childhood education and care providers to support their understanding of the NDIS	Schools Early Childhood Education and Care	January 2017	Learning and Wellbeing Early Childhood Education and Care Communications and Engagement
1.5 Staff and stakeholders are informed and understand the role and purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	1.5.2 Deliver professional development sessions to staff across School Operations and Performance to support their engagement with NDIS participants.	School Staff	July 2018	School Operations and Performance
1.5 Staff and stakeholders are informed and understand the role and purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	1.5.3 Provide information to the early childhood sector about the NDIS and the delivery of NDIS supports in an early childhood setting.	Early Childhood education and care sector	July 2018	Early Childhood Education and Care Communications and Engagement

**Table Focus Area 2: Creating more liveable communities for people with disability**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
2.1 Improved attraction, retention and career development for people with disability	2.1.1 Develop collaborative partnerships across government agencies, non-government organisations and the private sector with a view to strengthening employment outcomes for people with disability	Workforce Management Directorate, Family and Community Services, Public Service Commission	June 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance)
2.1 Improved attraction, retention and career development for people with disability	2.1.2 Engage and support Australian Disability Enterprises through procurement activity	Workforce Management Directorate, Family and Community Services, Public Service Commission	December 2016	Procurement Solutions Directorate
2.2 Department buildings are accessible	2.2.1 Ensure new schools have high levels of accessibility for people with disability	Assets	Ongoing	Asset Management Directorate
2.2 Department buildings are accessible	2.2.2 Upgrade existing school buildings to improve access for people with disabilities	Assets	Ongoing	Asset Management Directorate

<b>Table Focus Area 2: Creating more liveable communities for people with disability</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
2.3 School communities are supported to address the wellbeing of students with disability and their carers	2.3.1 Implement the Wellbeing Framework for Schools which seeks to strengthen students' cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development	Schools	Ongoing	Learning and Wellbeing
2.3 School communities are supported to address the wellbeing of students with disability and their carers	2.3.2 Establish and consolidate the operation of 21 Networked Specialist Centres across NSW to assist public schools in supporting students with the most complex needs and their families through specialist services available within education and from external services as required	Schools	December 2016	Learning and Wellbeing



<b>Table Focus Area 3: Achieving a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
3.1 Improved recruitment experience for people with disability	3.1.1 Review existing recruitment processes to ensure information and application processes are accessible	Recruitment and Employment	June 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Recruitment & Employment)
3.2 Increased opportunities for people with disability to enter the workforce	3.2.1 Consider opportunities for targeted recruitment for people with disability	All corporate business units	June 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance)
3.3 Improved engagement and support for people with disability in the workforce	3.3.1 Use the Disability Employee Network as a mechanism for improved engagement with the workforce on issues related to disability in the workplace.	All employees	Ongoing	Human Resources Directorate (Talent Management)
3.3 Improved engagement and support for people with disability in the workforce	3.3.2 Promote leadership development for people with disabilities	All corporate business units	April 2018	Human Resources Directorate (Strategy & Governance)
3.3 Improved engagement and support for people with disability in the workforce	3.3.3 Support employees requiring reasonable adjustment due to disability, illness or related health conditions	All employees	September 2016	Work Health & Safety Directorate

<b>Table Focus Area 3: Achieving a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
3.4 Improved accessibility of services and systems supporting employees with disability	3.4.1 Increase opportunities for employee feedback and input in relation to accessibility of services and systems	All employees	December 2016	Information Technology Directorate, Communication & Engagement
3.5 School students with complex needs are supported in planning for post school employment pathways	3.5.1 Review processes for supporting transition of students with disability into post-school employment options in light of supports being provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Schools	June 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
4.1 A new strategic policy that underpins the Department's commitment to people with disability	4.1.1 Review and update the <i>People with Disability – Statement of Commitment</i> policy to reflect contemporary obligations, expectations and services of people with disability and inclusive practices, including their supporters and representatives	Schools, Educational Services and State Office	June 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.2 Improved access to information on Departmental programs and services supporting people with disability	4.2.1 Improve the Department's website information about support provided in NSW public schools for students whose learning is impacted by disability	Schools	December 2016	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.2 Improved access to information on Departmental programs and services supporting people with disability	4.2.2 Review guidance for school website content to see if information on supporting students with disability on these websites can be improved	Schools	December 2016	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.2 Improved access to information on Departmental programs and services	4.2.3 Ensure all new Department web content complies with WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards and develop a plan to make old content accessible	All employees	December 2020	Communication and Engagement Directorate

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
supporting people with disability				All staff who update web content
4.2 Improved access to information on Departmental programs and services supporting people with disability	4.2.4 Provide training for staff responsible for creating web content to ensure it meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards	All employees	December 2020	Communication and Engagement Directorate
4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning	4.3.1 Encourage learning and support teachers to take up professional learning opportunities to help them to improve their knowledge and skills in supporting students with disability.	Schools	December 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning	4.3.2 Further develop and promote professional learning options for teachers in personalising learning and support for students whose learning is impacted by disability	Schools	Ongoing	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning	4.3.3 Work with Australian Government to implement recommendations for school education from the Commonwealth Review of the Disability Standards for Education	Schools	Schools	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning	4.3.4 Develop materials that support schools to align personalised learning and support with supports being provided by the NDIS	Schools	December 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.3 Improved teacher knowledge and skills in recognising and responding to the individualised learning and support needs of students whose disability impacts their learning	4.3.5 Develop additional guidance for school staff in working with students with disability in areas such as use of assistive technology, effective use of learning and support teachers and working with external service providers	Schools	July 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, School Operations and Performance

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
4.4 Improved school planning for students for disability	4.4.1 Explore how the School Excellence Framework can be used to monitor and report on the overall performance of schools in learning outcomes for students with disability	Schools	December 2017	Leadership and High Performance Schools Operations and Performance
4.4 Improved school planning for students for disability	4.4.2 Develop additional support for school teams around national data collection processes, such as consultation and gathering of evidence, to achieve consistency and analysis of data to inform school planning	Schools	July 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance
4.5 Improved processes for accessing additional resources for students with disability	4.5.1 Work with stakeholder representatives to streamline processes related to planning for targeted specialist support provisions, including support classes funding support for students with disability in regular classes, and access for students to targeted specialist provisions	Schools	July 2017	Learning and Wellbeing, Schools Operations and Performance

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
4.6 Improved complaint handling processes that meet the needs of people with disability	4.6.1 Develop a revised complaint handling policy and procedure that address the needs of people with disability through enhanced accessibility, focusing on prompt local resolution and capturing data about complaint issues and complaint handling	Corporate Services Schools	February 2017	Employee Performance and Conduct
4.7 Increased number of children with disability in quality preschool programs (these children will primarily be in the year before school or disadvantaged three year olds)	4.7.1 Review the current disability programs funded by Early Childhood Education and Care	Early Childhood Education and Care	December 2016	Early Childhood Education and Care
4.7 Increased number of children with disability in quality preschool programs (these children will primarily be in the year before school)	4.6.2 Undertake consultation with key early childhood education and care sector including educators, parents and advocacy groups	Early Childhood Education and Care	July 2016	Early Childhood Education and Care

<b>Table Focus Area 4: Achieving more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Targeted Area</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
or disadvantaged three year olds)				