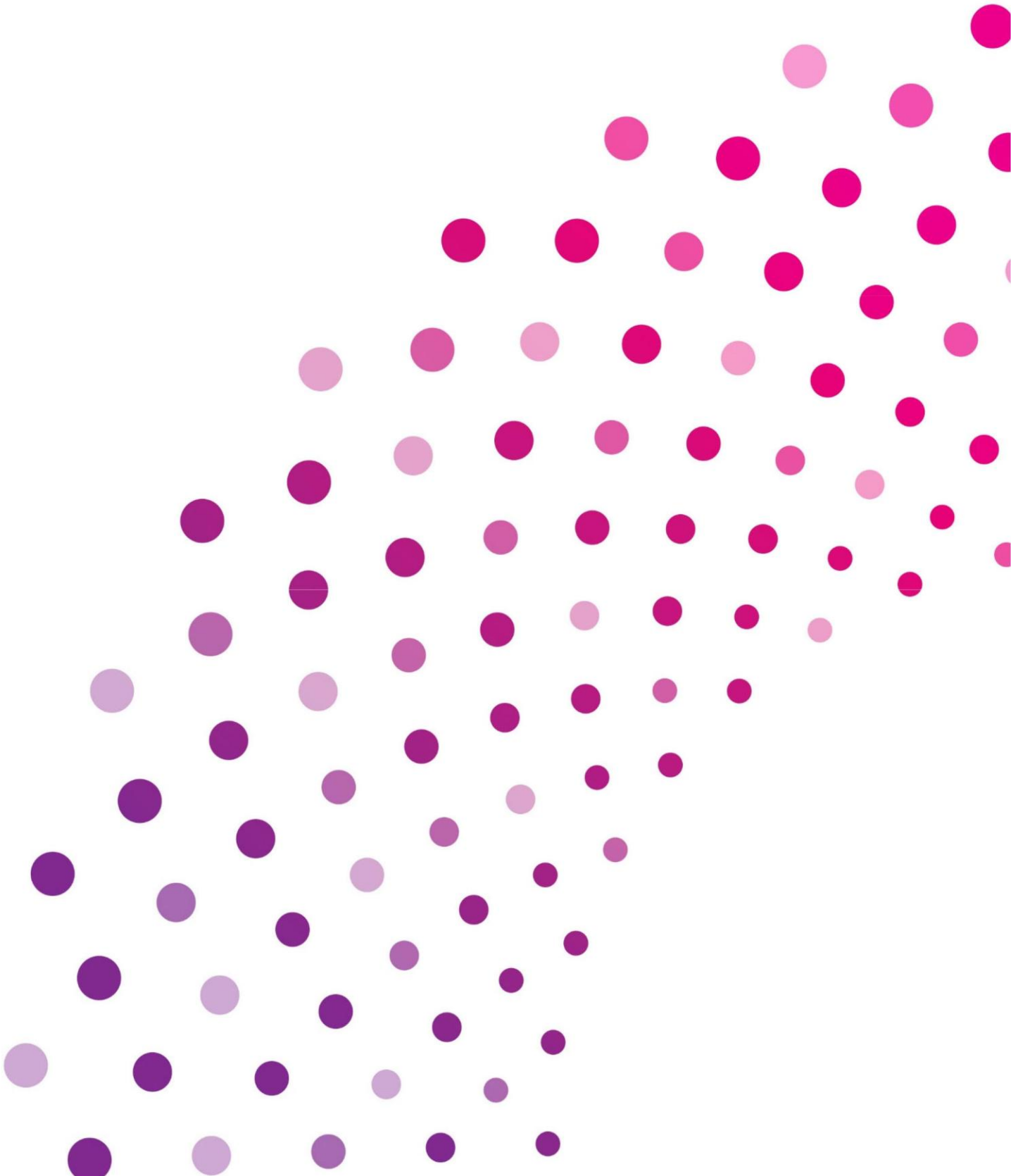




the women's  
the royal women's hospital

# The Women's 2026 Disability Action Plan



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Women's acknowledges the Wurundjeri Peoples of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Owners of the land where we are privileged to work and provide care. We extend that respect to the Traditional Owners of neighbouring lands where we operate programs and provide services.

We pay our deepest respect to Elders, Ancestors and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, and that colonisation continues to impact the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We are committed to walking alongside First Peoples in the spirit of truth, justice and self-determination. At the Women's, we strive towards health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children, and families. We honour the enduring cultural traditions, knowledge systems, spiritual practices, and deep connection to Country that are essential to health and wellbeing. We acknowledge the strength of kinship networks, community ties, and cultural identity as powerful protective factors that uphold health and resilience.

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## Our vision

The Women's is a disability-confident organisation providing inclusive, empowering and respectful health care and employment to people with disability.

## History and governance

The Women's Disability Action Plan (DAP) Advisory Committee is made up of consumers and staff with lived experience. In 2019, they endorsed the first three-year DAP.

In 2022, the DAP Advisory Committee co-designed the second three-year DAP (DAP2) which was accepted by our Strategic Executive Committee and Board. As was the case for the first three-year DAP, the implementation of DAP2 was overseen by the Executive Sponsor and supported by members of our DAP Advisory Committee and DAP working group.

With the successful implementation of two consecutive three-year Disability Action Plans, we are well on our way to achieving our vision. Progress has been made in several areas, which have since been established as business-as-usual practice. However, there is still more work to do. With DAP2 coming to an end in 2025, the approach of a one-year focused action plan will continue the great work that was started in 2019.

Actions in the 2026 DAP build on the foundation that has been established and bring forward the vision, focus areas and principles that the DAP Advisory Committee developed as part of DAP2 design. Progress will be monitored by the DAP Advisory Committee. It will also be reported to the Strategic Executive Committee, the Patient and Consumer Experience – Community Advisory Committee and the People, Culture and Engagement Committee (Board Committees) within the Equity, Inclusion and Belonging report.

## Focus areas

The 2026 DAP demonstrates how the Women's intends to continue to increase access and inclusion for people with disability. We will continue to focus on the following four areas:

**Service access:** We will partner with people with disability in the design of our services and facilities to ensure user-friendly, person-centred healthcare and workspaces. We will improve how we ask patients about their disability status and improve how we measure, monitor and respond to the experiences and feedback of patients and staff with disability.

**Changing attitudes and behaviours:** We will tackle the direct and indirect discrimination and stereotyping that women and staff with disability experience. We will ensure the voices of women and staff with disability are active and influential in governance and leadership.

**Employment and volunteer opportunities and experiences:** We will ensure our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive and barrier free, that we work to attract and retain talented and skilled people with disability, and we build the capacity of our people managers to advance inclusive workplace practices.

**Inclusion and participation:** We will ensure our marketing, consumer health information and digital information is accessible, inclusive and promotes positive and diverse representations of people with disability, to support informed decision-making by our patients and increased employment of staff with disability.

## Principles

<p><b>Overarching principle</b></p>	<p><b>Inclusive and equitable:</b></p> <p>We partner with people with disability to provide healthcare and employment that addresses and removes structural barriers and discriminatory practices that impact health and employment outcomes, to ensure the full participation and inclusion of people with disability.</p>
<p><b>WHY: A values-based principle</b></p>	<p><b>Respect, human rights and empowerment:</b></p> <p>We respect women’s dignity, abilities, diversity and achievements. We respect and promote the human rights of people with disabilities in accordance with international and legal frameworks. We promote a strength-based approach to empower women to have informed consent and control over decisions that affect their health care.</p>
<p><b>WHAT: A service-based principle</b></p>	<p><b>Accessible, integrated and holistic care:</b></p> <p>We provide inclusive and accessible health information, programs, services, facilities and digital information and solutions for people with disabilities. We provide integrated and coordinated care to women, consistent with our social model of health, that responds to their physical, emotional, social, economic, and spiritual health and well-being.</p>
<p><b>WHO: A partnership and relationship principle</b></p>	<p><b>Relationships, partnerships and representation:</b></p> <p>We promote strong, reciprocal relationships and partnerships with women with disabilities, carers, specialists, disability organisations and our health sector peers and partners, including those in the Parkville Precinct. We actively strive to increase representation of women with disability in governance, leadership and strategic work.</p>
<p><b>HOW: A principle that speaks to how things will get done</b></p>	<p><b>Responsive, innovative and evidence-based:</b></p> <p>We are responsive, listen and adapt to the diverse needs of women with disabilities and our staff with disabilities, and are always open to new and innovative ways of working and offering healthcare. We are informed by research and data, develop evidence-based models of care, and advocate and promote women’s choice in the provision of safe and best-practice healthcare.</p>

# Our 2026 DAP

## Service access

The Women’s is committed to providing accessible, high-quality, evidence-based healthcare. We will partner with people with disability in the design of our services and hospital facilities to ensure user-friendly, people-centred healthcare and workspaces. We will improve how we ask patients about their disability status and remove access barriers for our services, programs and facilities. We will amplify the voices of and be a strong advocate for people with disability.

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
Secure philanthropic funding to support disability initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a compelling \$100,000 philanthropic package focused on disability initiatives</li> <li>• Craft a strategic philanthropic proposal for the expansion of specialised clinical services to people living with disability and start approaching potential philanthropists</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philanthropic package and proposal are developed by December 2026</li> </ul>	Executive Director, Office of Philanthropy and Community Investment
Make structural improvements to the Women's physical facility to increase accessibility and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a risk assessment, obtain quotes and if feasible, implement improvements to patient lifting equipment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient lifting equipment risk assessment completed and necessary and feasible, replacements and/or modifications have been made.</li> </ul>	Chief Financial Officer
Embed accessible communications practices to staff across the Women's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Women’s Accessible Communications Guide and supporting tools internally.</li> <li>• Update the Women’s brand guidelines to meet WCAG Level AA.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least two internal campaigns to promote the Women's Accessible Communications Guide during 2026.</li> <li>• The Women’s brand guidelines will meet WCAG level AA by December 2026.</li> </ul>	Chief Communications Officer
Increase visibility and awareness of the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidelines that clearly outline the DLO role and staff to support patients and their interface with NDIS.</li> <li>• Promote the DLO role internally and externally.</li> <li>• Engage the DLO in staff training and patient experience initiatives to strengthen visibility and impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website content on the DLO is live and accessible by</li> </ul>	Director Allied Health and Clinical Support Services

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
	<p>January 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DLO posters and signage installed in 10+ key locations across the hospital by April 2026.</li> <li>20% increase in DLO referrals or contacts by December 2026.</li> <li>Guideline developed that supports decision making and patient experience</li> </ul>	
<p>Reduce access barriers for women with disability in the Women’s programs, services and facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with women with disability in the design and evaluation of any new/redesigned/improved facilities, services and/or models of care.</li> <li>Map the current state of <u>early</u> access to disability support to identify barriers and provide recommendations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perspectives and feedback from women with disability were included in the design and evaluation of the Women’s Outpatient Services Optimisation Program.</li> <li>Equity Impact Assessments (inclusive of disability) are conducted on all strategic projects.</li> <li>Mapped current state complete giving clarity on the problem related to early identification of support needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Director, Allied Health and Clinical Support Services</p>
<p>Improvements are made in partnership and with feedback from patients and/or staff with disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and promote accessible feedback mechanisms and utilise that feedback to make improvements.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from patients and/or staff has been utilised to improve a service/process and/or system by December 2026.</li> </ul>	<p>Director, People and Patient Experience</p>
<p>Improved collaboration across the Parkville Local Health Service Network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a network forum to collaborate, learn, optimise resources and minimise duplication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Network Disability Collaboration forum is established by January 2026</li> </ul>	<p>Director, People and Patient Experience</p>
<p>Improved access for people with disability to continuity of carer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the Women with Individual Needs (WIN) Clinic evaluation research findings (led by La Trobe University) and establish and scope the recommendations the Women’s can reasonably adopt.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The WIN evaluation report is delivered and the Women’s considers recommendations related to continuity of carer for people with disability.</li> </ul>	<p>Director, Maternity Services</p>

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations that can be reasonably adopted and delivered are scoped and plans are put in place to implement.</li> </ul>	

## Changing attitudes and behaviours

The Women's is committed to changing attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with disability. We will work to create positive social change by engaging and educating our staff and volunteers so that they are disability-aware and confident.

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
Staff and patient experiences reflect positive attitudes and behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and/or deliver educational content related to respectful behaviours with specific examples related to people living with disability – including shared decision making.</li> <li>Provide visual signage, posters and intranet content reinforcing inclusive behaviours.</li> <li>Integrate disability awareness messaging including the Disability Identifier into onboarding and training.</li> <li>Equity Impact Assessments consider the needs of patients with disability.</li> <li>Leaders and managers complete the Neuro-affirming care in practice and/or the Hidden Disability Sunflower training on WISE.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three education/events delivered by December 2026.</li> <li>A 2% increase of patients feel safe to identify as having a disability in EPIC by December 2026.</li> <li>The gap in performance between people who identify as living with disability and those who do not has continued to improve in relation to the following experience indicators by December 2026: being treated with respect and dignity being involved in decisions about their care and treatment.</li> <li>An improvement in the percentage of staff with disability who express that they have been discriminated against because of their disability (2024 vs 2026 People Matter Survey results).</li> <li>80% of leaders/managers have completed the Neuro-affirming care in practice and/or the Hidden Disability Sunflower Awareness training.</li> </ul>	<p>Director, People and Patient Experience</p> <p>Director, Allied Health and Clinical Support Services</p>

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
Celebrate and amplify voices of those with lived experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate the contributions of people with disability by recognising International Day of People with Disability (3 December).</li> <li>• Share stories from people with lived experience of disability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run an activation or campaign aligning with International Day of People with Disability in December 2026.</li> <li>• Profile at least one staff member and at least one patient/consumer with lived experience of disability on the Women’s communication channels throughout 2026.</li> </ul>	Chief Communications Officer

## Employment and volunteer opportunities and experiences

The Women’s is committed to increasing employment opportunities, career development and the retention of staff with disability. We will ensure our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive and barrier-free, and that we work to attract and retain talented and skilled people with disability.

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing the recruitment, retention and professional development of people with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor satisfaction with requested interview or workplace adjustments.</li> <li>• Evaluate the workplace adjustments procedure.</li> <li>• Continue to train and support managers on inclusive recruitment.</li> <li>• Develop a process that ensures that staff living with disability are not required to repeat their requirements as they move into different roles within the Women’s.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace adjustments requested and actioned to the requester’s satisfaction.</li> <li>• The gap between the number of staff/volunteers who identify as having a disability in SuccessFactors and those who identify in the anonymous People Matter Survey has improved.</li> <li>• A process has been developed to ensure staff living with disability are supported to have their requirements known, as appropriate.</li> </ul>	Director, Workforce Planning and Business Partnerships

## Inclusion and participation

The Women’s is committed to promoting the inclusion and participation of people with disability. This includes removing barriers and creating new opportunities for active participation and learning.

Goal	Actions/Success Measures	Responsibility
Increased opportunity for recognition, learning and development	<p>Create an annual Equity, Inclusion and Belonging scholarship opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that staff with disability can apply for and/or</li> <li>• staff looking to increase their understanding and capability in working with people with disability can apply for.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Equity, Inclusion and Belonging scholarship is established for the 2026 round of scholarships.</li> </ul>	Director, People and Patient Experience
Ensure digital systems and applications are disability accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add AA compliance (yes/no/partial/not applicable) to the Application Master List attributes and collect data for 12 months.</li> <li>• Increase awareness within the Digital Innovation streams/teams of the AA procurement requirements when procuring new systems.</li> <li>• Implement processes to consider AA requirements when upgrading existing systems.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AA attribute baseline established by December 2026.</li> <li>• Measurement and monitoring of vendor compliance with AA is established.</li> <li>• Process to consider AA requirements in upgrades is in place.</li> </ul>	Executive Director Information Management & Technology
Support individuals with cognitive disabilities to understand and navigate specific clinical environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design ‘social stories’ with people who have lived experience and clinical staff that describe what to expect in each setting.</li> <li>• Display QR codes in waiting areas for easy digital access.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least two tailored social stories are developed and evaluated by June 2026.</li> </ul>	Director, Allied Health and Clinical Support Services
Ensure the Women’s consumer health information is disability accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Health Information is created based on evidence based accessibility standards, including inclusive language, and is tested with consumers with living experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60% of new and updated Consumer Health Information materials have been built and tested for accessibility.</li> </ul>	Director, People and Patient Experience

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