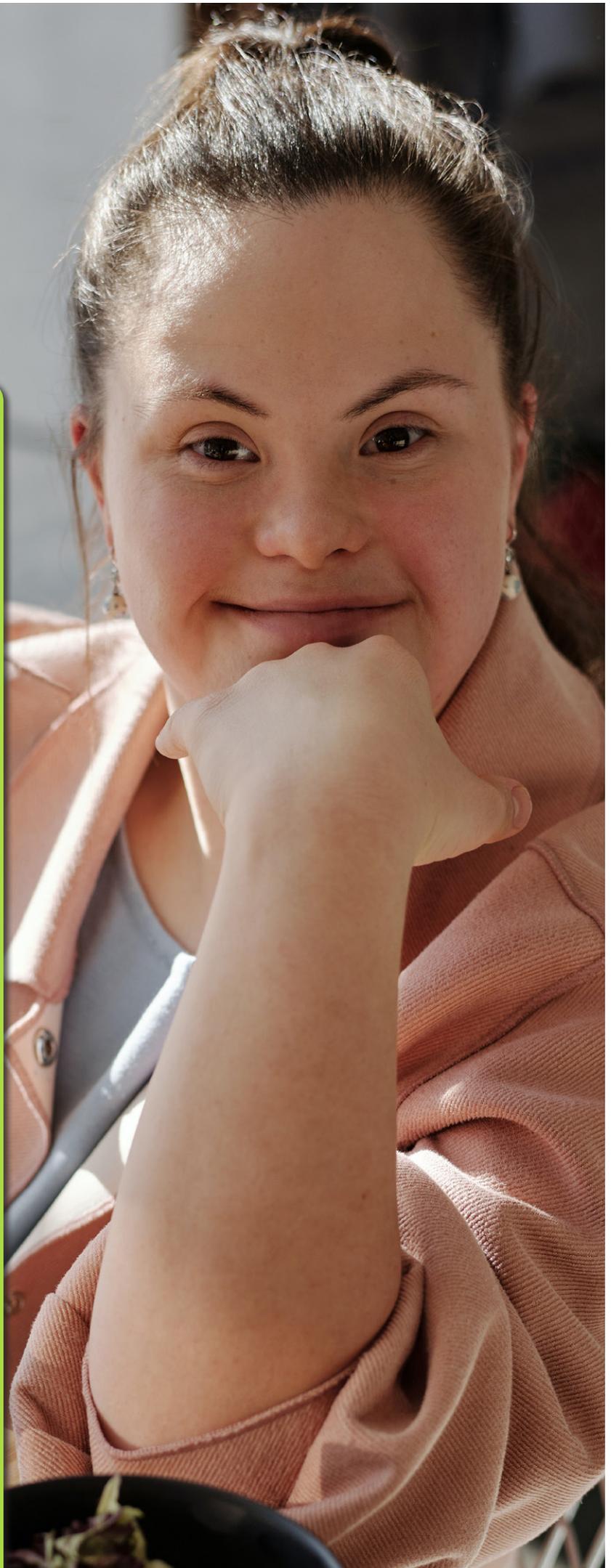


# All Abilities Access & Inclusion Plan

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2020-2024







# Message from the CEO

I am proud to present Ballarat Community Health's All Abilities Access and Inclusion Plan 2020-2024. This plan articulates our commitment to ensuring that all clients and participants, particularly those with disability and their carers, have equal access and are fully included in our programs and services. It explains how we will continue to improve the way we work and outlines the actions we will take over the next four years to ensure we create an inclusive, safe and accessible service and workplace for people with differing abilities. More specifically, it holds us to account by setting goals for access and inclusion issues related to: our services and programs; our buildings and facilities; staff and volunteer recruitment, employment, training and support; as well as our organisational culture.

Although this is our first All Abilities Access and Inclusion Plan, it is by no means a starting point. BCH has a long history of working with people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities. We have a strong organisational commitment to breaking down barriers to access, involvement, employment and participation.

This plan supports continuous improvement. It challenges us to move beyond minimum inclusion and access standards, and reminds us to listen and learn from the lived-experiences of people with disability and their carers. We will revisit all our programs and services with their needs and preferences in mind.

Thanks must go to the many people involved in creating this plan, particularly those whose experience of living with disability and accessing our services has provided great insight into areas of need and priorities for action. If you are a person with disability or a carer, this plan outlines what you can expect from Ballarat Community Health. We are committed to meeting your needs as we strive to improve the access and inclusion of people of all abilities.

Sean Duffy  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Ballarat Community Health

# Introduction

At Ballarat Community Health we work to promote health and wellbeing, and to provide quality and affordable healthcare to our community. From primary care to community wellbeing programs, we take a holistic approach to better health. We know everyone is different and we work with the community wherever possible, to create consumer-led and informed services, ensuring more effective care for individuals and their needs.

Ballarat Community Health operates from six locations across Ballarat and the western region, and provides outreach services and clinics throughout the Central Highlands, Wimmera and Grampians.

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People with disability participate in all our services and programs, volunteer and work for the organisation. We are a registered provider of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and deliver several programs specifically for people with disability. Many of our staff have specialist skills and knowledge relating to disability support.

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## **What do we mean by disability?**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines disability as 'any impairment of a physical, intellectual, psychiatric, neurological or sensory nature.' In simple terms, a disability is any continuing condition that restricts everyday activities. This includes enduring mental health conditions.

Disability can be either temporary or permanent and it may be acquired or present from birth. For some people, support needs can increase over time. Others can experience fluctuating or episodic disability. This can particularly be the case for some people with mental ill health. People with multiple disabilities are likely to have more complex support needs.

While people with disability are a diverse group, what they have in common is a shared experience of encountering negative attitudes and barriers to full



When an organisation considers access and inclusion, opportunities open up to me that would not otherwise have been possible.

- Advisory Group Member

participation in everyday activities. Many experience intersectional discrimination compounded by negative attitudes towards their gender, race, cultural background or sexuality. Experiences of trauma are also common.

Ballarat Community Health views disability as a 'social construct'. Instead of focussing on disability as a restriction or lack of ability, we believe it is the way society is organised, social attitudes and barriers that 'disable' individuals.

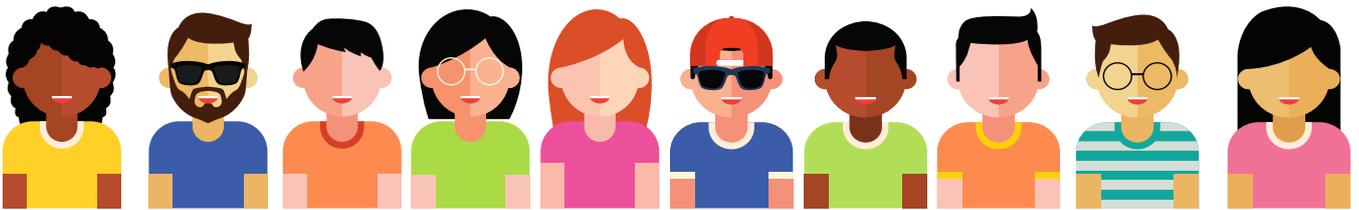
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With the assistance of appropriate aids and services, and the removal of barriers that limit life choices, the restrictions experienced by many people with a disability may be overcome.

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This thinking is fundamental to the effective implementation of an Access and Inclusion Plan.

### How common is disability?



**4 million+**

More than 4 million Australians have a disability – that's around 18% of the population

**78%**

Approx. 78% of people with disability have a physical disability and 22% have a mental or behavioural disorder (inc. mood affective disorders (4.2%), intellectual or developmental disorders (6.3%), and dementia or Alzheimer's (2.3%))

**30,000+**

By 2031, predictions say there could be more than 30,000 people in Ballarat living with a disability

**20,000+**

Estimates tell us that more than 20,000 people in Ballarat have some form of disability, and around 6,600 have a severe or profound disability

**33%**

Approx. 1/3 people with disability have a profound or severe disability.

**2.7 million**

There are over 2.7 million carers in Australia, or 12% of the population.

Rates of disability increase markedly with age – i.e. over half the population aged 65+ are living with a disability.

# Access & Inclusion

Access and inclusion mean different things to different people. Typically, access refers to the ability of any person to safely and independently approach, enter, operate, participate or work in any building, facility, program or service.

In simple terms, an accessible place is one that everyone can use easily.

- It's easy to get there
- It's easy to enter buildings
- It's easy to move around when inside
- The environment is safe and welcoming
- It's easy to communicate your needs
- Everyone can use the facilities
- Everybody can find information in a format that is useful to them.

Inclusion relates to enabling everyone's participation and involvement.

- An inclusive organisation:
- Makes people feel valued and included
- Supports everyone to take part in its events and activities
- Gives everyone an opportunity to work, volunteer or have their say

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Access and Inclusion Plans assist organisations to provide safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable services and spaces to people who may experience barriers to participation due to their disability.

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They support the removal or reduction of barriers to participation, work, access and inclusion, and extend to the needs of people's carers.



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Inclusion works to the advantage of everyone. We ALL have things to learn and we ALL have things to teach.

- Advisory Group Member

# Developing this plan

This All Abilities Access and Inclusion Plan 2020-2024 reflects Ballarat Community Health's commitment to the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Victorian Disability Act (2006). It commits us to providing equitable and easy access to all our services, facilities, programs, communications and employment processes.

Our obligations under this plan align with the principles set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- non-discrimination
- full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- equality of opportunity
- accessibility
- equality between men and women
- respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

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To ensure the plan is locally relevant and respectful of lived-experience, it has been informed by:

- the experiences and suggestions of clients and participants with disability and their carers
  - consultations with staff and disability organisations
  - audits of each Ballarat Community Health site
  - an Advisory Group made up of staff, disability sector representatives, people with disability and carers.
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As we developed this plan we identified seven priority areas and numerous opportunities to improve our services, programs and facilities and to eliminate barriers preventing the access and inclusion of people with disability and their carers.

The goals and actions described in this table will inform the annual workplans and activities of all Ballarat Community Health departments.

PRIORITY AREA	GOALS	ACTIONS
Policy and systems	Access and inclusion considerations for people with disabilities are standard practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review relevant guidelines and policies regularly and ensure they align with this plan.</li> <li>Collect consistent data on clients, staff and volunteers with disability.</li> <li>Adapt our programs and services to reflect changes in needs or circumstances.</li> </ul>
Collaborative participant engagement	People with disability have a meaningful voice in our operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include people with disability and/or their carers as active participants on committees, when planning service/program improvements and during the design of new buildings and spaces.</li> <li>Review and improve the accessibility of client feedback mechanisms and ensure they are inclusive of people of all abilities.</li> <li>Introduce new ways to receive feedback from clients.</li> </ul>
Accessible built environment	Our buildings and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the buildings we own comply with Disability Discrimination Act building principles.</li> <li>Ensure accessible carparking is available at all Ballarat Community Health sites</li> <li>improve access for clients with mobility challenges.</li> <li>Improve the experiences of clients, including those with sensory challenges and anxiety.</li> <li>Utilise aids to improve access and inclusion.</li> <li>Show flexibility in meeting clients' access needs.</li> </ul>
Accessible communication	Our information is available in a range of accessible formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure information is widely accessible in various formats.</li> <li>Utilise aids to improve communication.</li> <li>Increase signage in public areas.</li> </ul>

PRIORITY AREA	GOALS	ACTIONS
<p>Inclusive organisational culture</p>	<p>Our culture is inclusive and respectful of diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training and resources to increase staff members' knowledge, skills and confidence in working with people with disability.</li> <li>• Ensure training options are high-quality and meet identified needs.</li> <li>• Ensure imagery is routinely inclusive of people with disability - not just in certain contexts.</li> <li>• Regularly share the stories and experiences of people with disability – amongst staff and with the community.</li> </ul>
<p>Supportive employment practice</p>	<p>Our staff and volunteers with disability are supported to do their jobs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of people with disability employed at BCH.</li> <li>• Increase volunteering opportunities for people with disability.</li> <li>• Provide individualised support for staff and volunteers with disability where possible.</li> <li>• Build trust and confidence in our commitment to confidentiality and supportive practice.</li> </ul>
<p>Advocacy</p>	<p>People with disability have better access to services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased, flexible, long-term funding for disability support programs.</li> <li>• Improvements to the NDIS funding model to improve access to services.</li> <li>• Ongoing access to Telehealth.</li> <li>• Improved public transport access to our sites, particularly Lucas.</li> <li>• Support initiatives that provide opportunities for people with disability through our contracted services, supply chain and programs.</li> </ul>

# How will we know we're improving?

Responsibility for implementing this plan will be shared across Ballarat Community Health. Actions will be expanded upon in the annual workplans of each department which will include targets and indicators of success.

Ballarat Community Health's cross-organisational Diversity and Inclusion Committee will maintain oversight of the plan and promote accountability. Progress will be monitored and reported annually, with input from clients and participants with disability and their carers.



It is wonderful when I can attend a venue, meeting, entertainment etc. & not feel I am putting people out. To be able to seamlessly be part of the general community activity without fuss or additional attention gives me such a feeling of freedom.

- Advisory Group Member

## Contact us

If you wish to discuss an access or inclusion issue, or for more information, contact Ballarat Community Health:



(03) 5338 4500.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, contact Ballarat Community Health through the National Relay Service on:



Voice Relay number  
1300 555 727

TTY number  
133 677

SMS relay number  
0423 677 767



For more information visit  
[www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)





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