

June 2022 - December 2025

ACCESS-ABILITY ACTION PLAN

A proud initiative of Cafs
Access-Ability Action Group



cafs  WE
CARE

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung, Djab Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and live. The Wadawurrung, Djab Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people are members of the Kulin nation, have looked after and cared for the land for generations, and are still caring for it today.

Cafs recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are the First Nations people of Australia. These nations represent many diverse languages and cultures. As a result of historical and ongoing violence, colonisation, assimilation, racism, discrimination, embedded structural disadvantage and the dominating Eurocentric culture in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have suffered many losses including family, land, culture and language. The impact of this dispossession has resulted in significant social, political, economic and health inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians today. In spite of this adversity the strength of First Nations Peoples is seen in their ongoing fight for justice, self-determination, recognition, land, language and culture.



INTRODUCTION

Cafs is proud to have developed this Access-Ability Action Plan as part of the organisations overall commitment to Inclusion and Diversity. We believe in providing quality service provision, a culturally safe workplace, and assisting people in overcoming barriers that might hinder them living a full and dignified life.

At present, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, just under one in five Australians (18.5% or 4.0 million persons) reported having a disability. One in five Australians aged 16-85 years, also experienced mental disorders in the past 12 months. Many of these people also had need of services not specifically related to their disability. This intersectionality shows that we should strive to be accessible and inclusive regardless of our primary service provision.

This Action Plan outlines our commitment to creating a fully inclusive and accessible community for all people. The plan presents clear strategies for supporting the needs and aspirations of people who identify as having a disability who work with us and use our programs and services, and is linked to other organisational strategies and plans.

The purpose of the Plan is to outline the strategies and actions that Cafs will undertake over the next 2.5 years to eliminate discrimination and improve access, equity, inclusion and participation for people living with disability within the organisation as service users, employees, volunteers and community members.



A message from the CEO

I am delighted to endorse Cafs Access-Ability Action Plan. It is an important step in the maturing of Cafs, and contributes to identifying areas where we can do better whilst contributing to a shared vision for an equal and inclusive future.

In supporting this plan, Cafs is building on the existing formal and informal practices, and committing to align our practices and processes with our vision of Wellbeing, Respect and Safety for everyone.

Disability does not define a person. We understand that while our primary service focus is children, young people and adults with a range of service needs, there are many within our service user group who identify as having a disability or special needs. I also recognise that we will have employees, volunteers and stakeholders we engage with who will also identify as having a disability or special needs. By ensuring that equity, diversity and inclusion are key in working and walking together we strive to support the whole person and work with each and every service user, employee, volunteer and community member to be safe, valued and to fully participate in the communities of their choice. The Cafs Access-Ability Action Plan 2022-2025 presents clear strategies for supporting the needs and aspirations of people with all abilities who work with us, and who use our programs and services.

We are excited about the role this plan will play in strengthening our commitment to an inclusive culture for all people.

I look forward to the implementation of Cafs Access-Ability Action Plan so that our intentions and commitment delivers real outcomes across our community.

WENDY STURGES she/her
Chief Executive Officer

A Message from Community

It is difficult for those of us that are fortunate enough to access a building, a service or even a webpage without conscious consideration to potential barriers to entry. We go about our lives without overt restriction, this includes accessing shopping centres, coffee shops or restaurants. But for many members of our community, this is not a common occurrence. We here in Ballarat, live in a city that is a rich, diverse and culturally significant, however we also live in a town that is surrounded by heritage and beautiful architecture. Unfortunately, the negative aspect to this is that many of our buildings, facilities and services are located in such buildings. It is for this reason that we must be creative, think innovatively and co-design our environments to ensure physical, emotional and culturally appropriate safe spaces are available.

I would also encourage all of us to extend our thinking beyond physical disability when consider our approach to inclusion and access, and broaden our compassion and conscious awareness of the emotional barriers to entry. In doing so, we create a fully inclusive space that is welcoming, functional and most importantly a space where the most vulnerable members of our community can access our services without fear or restriction. When we collectively achieve this, this will be a day to celebrate. I commend Cafs on striving for access that is available to all abilities.

SEAN DUFFY
Chief Executive Officer, Ballarat Community Health

OUR BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITIES WE WORK IN

Cafs is a community service organisation that provides a range of programs across the Central Highlands of Victoria to children, young people and families who are vulnerable or in need of support. Our areas of service currently fall within the traditional boundaries of the Kulin Nation, with the Wadawurrung, Djab Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people being the Traditional Owners. It is worth noting however, that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Ballarat and surrounds is largely comprised of persons whose traditional lands are outside Wadawurrung, Djab Wurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Our goal is to give every individual the optimal opportunity to live in, and be part of a safe and nurturing family. To maximise their potential and ability to participate within the communities of their choice.

At the time of writing this plan Cafs employs approximately 260 staff, engages with approximately 180 carers & volunteers, and provides help and support to more than 6,800 individuals and families each year. We have offices in Ballarat, Ararat, Daylesford and Bacchus Marsh. In addition, we run several youth residential houses and an Early Childhood Parenting Centre in Ballarat.

Based on a March 2022 Culture and Engagement Survey administered to all staff (146 respondents, or a 61% response rate), 8% of Cafs staff identified as having a disability. This statistic falls below the Australian workforce disability representation of 9.4%, and the Ballarat regional estimate of 20% of people living with some form of disability (6.6% with a profound disability).



8% of Cafs staff identified as having a disability

9.4% is the Australian workforce disability representation

CAFS VISION

Wellbeing, respect and safety for everyone.

CAFS MISSION

To deliver quality services with positive outcomes and experiences for the communities we serve.

CAFS VALUES

Respect

We treat all people, including ourselves, with dignity. We have genuine compassion for our colleagues and the individuals, families and communities we serve.

Integrity

We act ethically and do what is right – even if it's uncomfortable.

Collaboration

We embrace collaboration. We celebrate inclusiveness and work together with the individuals and families we serve to make a difference in their lives.

Kindness

We genuinely care about people and actively look for ways to offer a helping hand to those in need.

Innovation

We encourage and explore different ways of working and fresh ideas to improve our practice and outcomes for those we serve.

Measure / Indicator	Organisational results	Disability specific results
Engagement Index	76.9%	Physical disability 100%; Psychosocial disability 70%
Quality Manager Index	78%	Physical disability 90%; Psychosocial disability 70%
Overall satisfaction with Manager relationship	85%	Physical disability 100%; Psychosocial disability 78%

When comparing other key culture and engagement indicators from the overall organisational results to the disability specific survey results, it would appear that people with a physical disability reported stronger engagement than those with a psychosocial disability. Further work is required in strengthening the manager and employee relationships for those with psychosocial disabilities.

We also learned that our staff with disability wanted to see more:

- Strengthening of relationships with all workers
- Understanding of the bigger picture
- Listening and collaboration
- Recognition of staff performing well,
- Knowledge of the business; and
- Consolidation of Cafs' Culture across the organisation

We thank all people who participated in Cafs Culture and Engagement Survey. It is important to acknowledge that not all feedback was positive. We invite, respect and learn from this commentary. These voices have been heard and through this plan we hope to address these concerns. Staff have taken the time to share their valuable thoughts (both negative and positive) and all feedback will contribute to a positive Cafs culture.



OUR ACTION PLAN

The purpose of our Access-Ability Action Plan is to outline the strategies and actions that we will undertake over the next two and a half years to improve access, inclusion and participation for service users, employees, volunteers and community members who live with disability.

Many people's understanding of barriers facing those with a disability is often limited to the physical environment (i.e. steps rather than a ramp). Barriers can extend to issues of mental health, and are often subtle or invisible.

Cafs Action Plan endeavours to address both obvious and more subtle barriers and to embed sustainable change in the organisational culture.

In developing this Plan, we have addressed the following key outcome areas recommended by the Australian Human Rights Commission:

- Equitable access to premises
- Accessible information
- Equitable access to activities and services
- Equitable opportunities for participation
- Mental Health, and support mechanisms
- Staff training advice and support
- Equitable employment practices, and
- Promotion of positive community attitudes and advocacy for people with a disability.



This action plan should be considered in conjunction with the suite of Cafs other Inclusion and Diversity action plans, because we recognise the intersectional nature of marginalisation and discrimination.

These are:

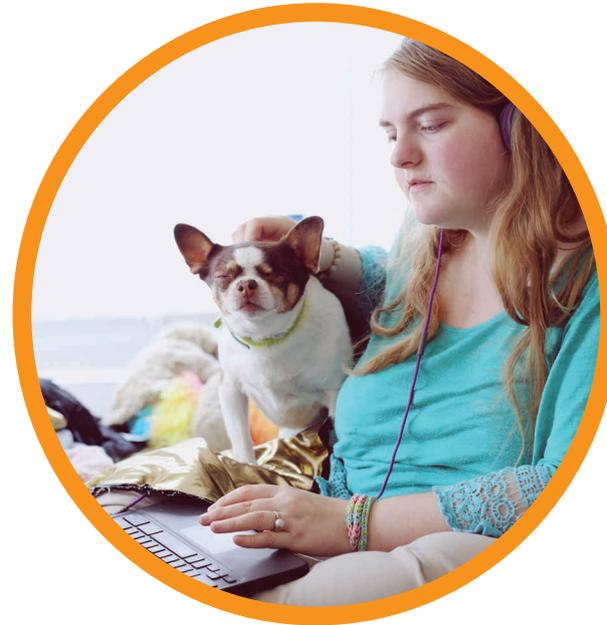


Legislative Context

There are a number of legislative requirements, regulations and policies that guide organisations in relation to matters of disability. Any review or updating of this Access-Ability Action Plan will ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and regulations, and demonstrate Cafs commitment to the protection of the rights of Cafs stakeholders.

Also important to note here, is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

Australia has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.



THE EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE CONVENTION ARE:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

ACTION PLAN

Action 1

Equitable and safe access to premises and information

Deliverables	Responsibility
Provide safe and dignified access to all Cafs locations. Ensure that, where possible, Cafs buildings and amenities are modified for people with a disability and a safe environment is guaranteed	Facilities Lead
Conduct an accessibility review to ensure access to buildings and amenities fall in line with policies. Engage professional advice for any structural modification, to at least AS 1428 standards. Discuss strategies to be undertaken to ensure the safety and lifestyle of all stakeholders in the delivery of services	Facilities Lead; Manager Brand Development
Encourage Cafs staff, volunteers and service users to report any areas of potential non-compliance and together make sure changes/issues are identified	Manager Quality & Child Safeguarding
Ensure that information about Cafs services is available to all stakeholders in a number of formats. Including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website• Intranet and staff systems• Printed• Social media Consideration given to: closed caption, translated resources, Auslan translation, Plain/Easy English	Manager Brand Development; Inclusion & Diversity Lead

ACTION PLAN

Action 2

Equitable access to services, opportunities and participation

Deliverables	Responsibility
Maintain a directory of local disability & mental health agencies, organisations and networks that Cafs could connect and/or collaborate with, for the purpose of being able to provide referrals, advocacy and choice of services	Inclusion & Diversity Lead
Develop and promote an Interpreting and Translation Procedure for Cafs staff	Quality & Child Safeguarding Team, Inclusion & Diversity Lead
Develop and promote a Cafs Accessibility Guide	Manager Brand Development
Ensure all Cafs staff are aware of the internal avenues and mechanisms of support for people living with disability ie. Cafs Accessibility guide, Access-Ability Action Group members, Translation & Interpreting Procedure, Working Flexibly @Cafs and Reasonable Adjustment	Manager Brand Development; Access-Ability Action Group
Explore opportunities for grants and funding to implement workplace improvements (that are identified through the Accessibility review)	Manager Brand Development
Increase capacity of all Cafs staff to be able to identify (and respond to) disability and the barriers it creates for inclusion and best practice service delivery through training, professional development and awareness-raising initiatives	All Staff

ACTION PLAN

Action 3

Mental Health support mechanisms

Deliverables	Responsibility
Actively promote Cafs Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – Converge International, Manager Assist, Career Assist, dedicated Help-Line for people with a disability, so that all Cafs people know where and how to access assistance	People & Engagement Team; Access-Ability Action Group
Maintain membership and annual involvement with the Ballarat Mental Health Collective	Inclusion & Diversity Lead
Provide and promote a designated safe/quiet space for Cafs staff and service users	Executive Team
Provide an opportunity to discuss Mental Health during regular staff supervision	Team Leaders & Supervisors

ACTION PLAN

Action 4

Equitable employment practices

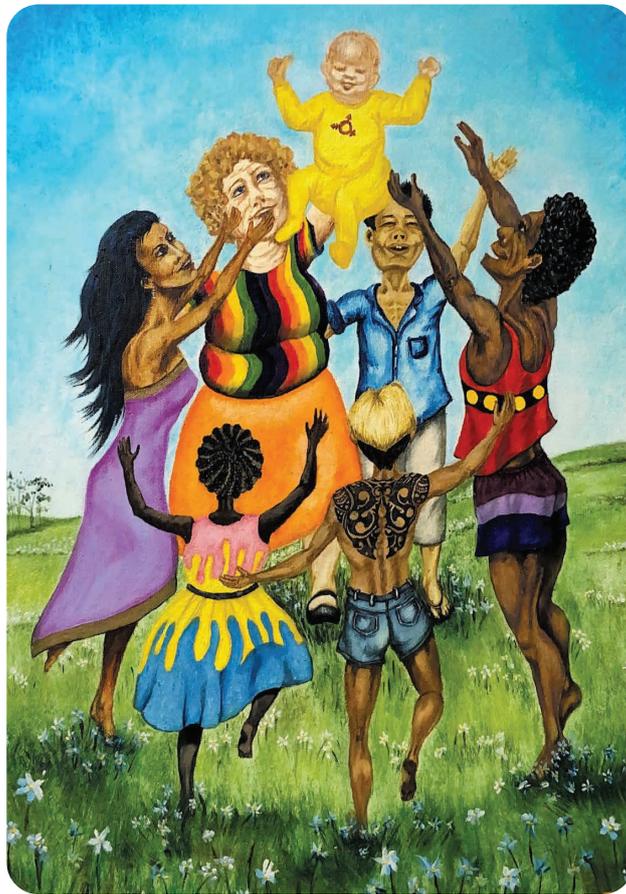
Deliverables	Responsibility
Provide job advertisements and relevant material in accessible formats, ensuring applicants understand inherent requirements of the job	Exec Manager People & Engagement
Develop a targeted employment strategy for people with disability at Cafs	Exec Manager People & Engagement
Source and deliver an Accessibility/Disability module as part of Cafs wide Learning and Development program. Ensure Cafs staff have access to mental health and 'Invisible Disability' awareness training (ie: the Hidden Disability Sunflower campaign)	Learning Development & Employee Compliance Lead
Strengthen leadership and management capability in facilitating more positive experiences for people at work who experience psychosocial and neuro-divergent disabilities. ie Mental Health First Aid training / accreditation	Learning & Diversity Lead
Deliver an Inclusion & Diversity component to all new employees as part of Cafs wide induction sessions	Inclusion & Diversity Lead
Provide awareness and educational support via the delivery of a mandatory Accessibility Training module to all Cafs staff	Learning & Development Lead; Access-Ability Action Group
Develop a new Access-Ability Action Plan based on learnings, challenges and achievements. Align the development and duration of the plans with the Cafs Strategic Plan cycle	Access-Ability Action Group; Inclusion & Diversity Lead

ACTION PLAN

Action 5

Promotion of positive community attitudes and advocacy for people with a disability

Deliverables	Responsibility
Actively promote inclusion and participation internally, and engage with the wider community through relevant events and days/weeks of significance such as (but not limited to) International Day of People with Disability and Mental Health Week	Access-Ability Action Group; Marketing & Comms Team; Inclusion & Diversity Lead
Engage our senior leaders in the delivery of Access-Ability Action Group outcomes through the provision of minutes and progress reporting to Executive, Leadership, and the Board	Inclusion & Diversity Lead; Executive Assistant – CEO
Maintain membership with the Diversity Council of Australia, and associations like the Hidden Disability Sunflower	Access-Ability Action Group
Promote the Access-Ability Action Plan on Cafs website	Manager Brand Development
Register Cafs Access-Ability Action Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission	Inclusion & Diversity Lead



Inclusion and diversity

I have used the Cafs company colours, green, blue and orange prominently.

You will notice that figures all stand on their left foot while lifting the right. This is to show that we follow our Policies and Procedures.

You will also notice that their heads are proportionally larger. This is to show that we remain continually mindful of our values, duty of care to our clients and of their rights.

The long grass depicts our company's continued commitment to growth and improvement. The daisies are a reminder to see the beauty that is always there when you choose to look for it.

The little girl's dress is in the colours of the pansexual flag.

The mother figure is of Indian descent and the young man of Asian descent.

The boy in the front has used a Maori tattoo to camouflage his spinal curvature and torso deformity.

The Nanna figure is gay.

The father figure is Aboriginal and bisexual.

The baby is transgender.

Lastly, we work together as a team, with diversity being our strength and inclusion being our culture.

Statement from the artist,
DENISE SWAN, **Cafs Residential Carer 2020**

Cafs is all about support.



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