



Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Accessibility
Action Plan



Acknowledgements

In the spirit of reconciliation, Yarra Plenty Regional Library hopes you will join us in acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Thank you to Aurora Support Services for participating in our photography session at Thomastown Library.

Consultative committee members:

Stephen Bell – Team Leader Access,
City of Whittlesea, Committee Member

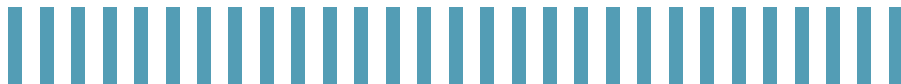
Angela Clare – Disability Inclusion Officer,
Community Services, Nillumbik Shire, Committee
Member

Vicki Martinez – Community and Social Planner,
Banyule City Council, Committee Member

Chantel Blitenthall – Branch Manager,
Yarra Plenty Regional Library, Project Lead

Robyn Ellard – Executive Manager
Public Participation, Yarra Plenty Regional Library,
Project Sponsor






Message from the CEO



Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is a place where everyone is welcome, and communities come together to meet, learn, create, and work. We offer opportunities for our diverse communities to connect and live well. We are committed to providing equitable access to collections, technology, programs, and welcoming, safe spaces.

We are transitioning from a social model of removing barriers to disability to that of a human rights model* where 'the emphasis is that people with disabilities have the right to enjoy the same rights as other members of the community' and be able to participate as other citizens (Review of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, released 2004). Application of this model will seek to remove barriers preventing inclusion and allow for meaningful participation. Our intention is to align YPRL with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Our strategic focus includes co-designing with community. We know our communities want to contribute to and be involved in our services. This is at the heart of who we are as an organisation. This Action Plan complements the Library Plan 2021–2025, providing an important framework to address barriers to access for people with disability, and promoting inclusion within the library team and in the broader community. This approach is underpinned by our principles:

- **We welcome and are here for everyone in our communities.**
- **We always work together.**
- **We are not afraid to try, test and learn.**
- **We always seek continuous improvement in what and how we deliver.**
- **We innovate to help our service grow and create positive outcomes.**
- **We undertake radical collaboration to make the most of everything we have.**



Jane Cowell,
Chief Executive Officer

* DARU (2021) states:

“The human rights model, as the name suggests, is based on basic human rights principles. It recognizes that:

- Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms.
- People with disability have the same rights as everyone else in society.
- Impairment must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people’s rights.”

Introduction

People living with a disability frequently experience barriers that impact their access to opportunities in education, employment, health and wellbeing. At Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) we welcome and are here for everyone in our communities and are committed to upholding this principle that shapes our service. Through the provision of equitable access to collections, technology, programs and welcoming, safe spaces and places, we are offering opportunities for everyone in our diverse communities to connect, read, learn and live well.



Our Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) draws insights from:

- **Agreed recommendations from the consultative committee.**
- **Recommendations arising from an internal audit.**
- **Consultation with community, disability advisory groups and networks.**
- **Collaboration with libraries about best practice to facilitate the building of a robust framework for our future Accessibility Action Plan 2023–2027, of which the final year will be focused on consultation for the next plan.**



Our AAP is in part informed by our Library Plan

- *Connection:* **Connecting and building strong links with local communities**
- *Organisational strength:* **Creating Opportunities for growth and learning to empower our staff**
- *Knowledge and learning:* **Supporting pathways to employment**
- *Connect to local experts:* **Work alongside experts to bring the best to our local communities by partnering with member councils to deliver better outcomes**




Definition

Disability — according to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the term “disability” refers to physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, learning, physical disfigurement and medical conditions.

What is our approach?

The Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) will take a co-design approach from its inception where we will work in collaboration with persons living with disability and the services who advocate for people with disability. This is to gain an understanding of their experiences of our services with the intended outcome of improving both the user experience and the services themselves. This approach to our AAP will provide a robust framework for YPRL to address disability access issues across all areas of library responsibility and operations, help us work towards removing access barriers, and provide equity of access to services and facilities.





Under section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, the Victorian Government has identified four outcomes that an AAP should address, and hope to achieve:

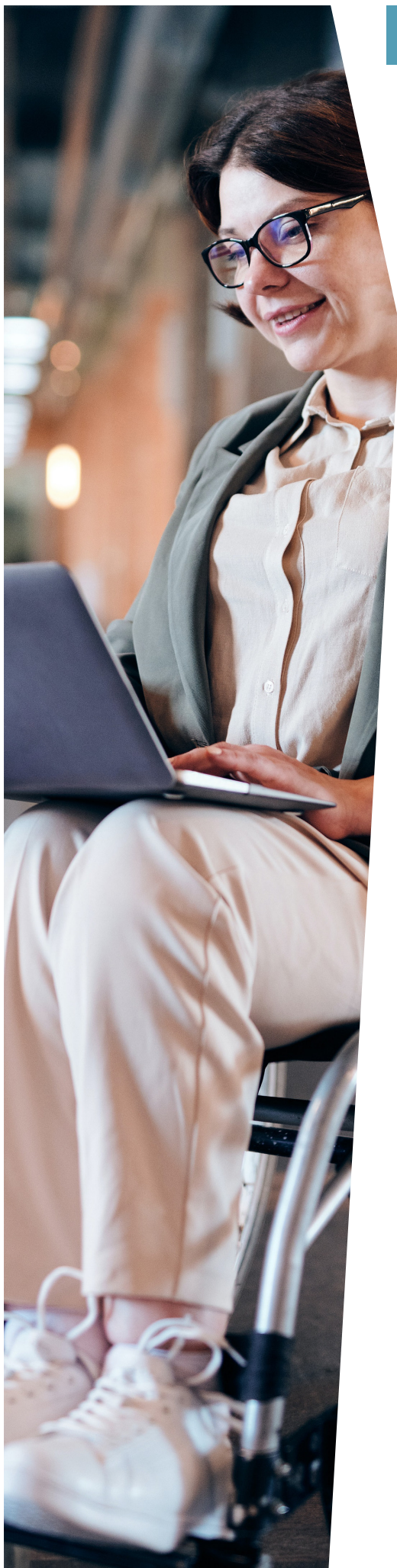
- **Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities.**
- **Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment.**
- **Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability.**
- **Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate against persons with a disability.**

Our approach through co-design and collaboration is to create an Accessibility Action Plan where practices are proactive in relation to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, their carers, friends and families, and that our services and facilities will be accessible to all.

Definition

Co-design – an approach where we seek to involve as many stakeholders as possible (e.g., advisory groups, peak industry bodies, networks) in the process design of the AAP. The approach allows for collaboration, consultation, and community input in a meaningful way so that user needs are met.

(Victorian State Government viewed 1/11/2021
<https://www.vic.gov.au/co-design>)




Accessibility Action Plan 2022

Background



To ensure that our AAP has been informed from a variety of experiences, meetings were held with representatives from YPRL's member Councils' access and inclusion teams. The CEO of Yarra Plenty Regional Library attended to discuss the vision for YPRL, what is currently offered to library visitors and to people with disability, what currently works and what could be improved. YPRL has also reviewed our member councils' Disability Action Plans.

We have consulted with our member Councils' access and inclusion teams, and it has been recommended that we action a plan of consultation and review over the next two years. This work will reflect our path to inclusive practices which will build into future Accessibility Action Plans. The timeframe will afford us the opportunity for meaningful engagement and consultation with community to identify barriers for people with disability.



Our Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) 2022–2024 includes five phases that are reflective of our Library Plan and inclusive of the communities that we serve. Each phase will be used to inform our 2024 AAP.

Phase 1

Inform the AAP through self-assessment, community consultation and journey mapping

Phase 2

Review of YPRL policy and procedures

Phase 3

Production of the co-designed AAP

Phase 4

Presentation of the AAP to community for final consultation

Phase 5

Communicate the AAP

Key Activities

(For details of each phase see Appendix A)

Phase 1

Self-assessment; Community Consultation;
Journey Mapping

Date

Key Activities

Jan – Feb 2022

Key Activity Initiate Access and Inclusion Index audit.
Key Activity Develop and deliver staff survey.

Feb 2022

Key activity Organisational consultation:
Seek members across YPRL to establish a working group to support the development and implementation of our AAP.

Mar 2022

Review previous AAP (2013–2017) to identify any outstanding items or issues and add to draft interim plan.

Apr 2022

Key activity Survey:
Develop and implement a survey of people with disability, their carers and families to identify barriers to inclusion and accessibility.

Apr – Jul 2022

Key Activity Community consultation and connection with the below stakeholders:
1. People with disability.
2. Advisory groups.
3. Staff.
Social impact businesses will also be contacted to discuss potential procurement and partnership opportunities

Aug 2022

Key activity Journey mapping:
Engage people with disability and relevant partners to identify barriers in service and performance.



Phase 2

Review of current practices, policies, procedures and operations

Date	Key Activities
Sep – Nov 2022	Review of current practices and services in YPRL, which will include collecting information and feedback about the physical, communication and attitudinal barriers that exclude people with disability from using our services.
Nov 2022 – Mar 2023	Review relevant policies, website and procedures to ensure they reflect inclusionary thinking and practices. Key Activity Evaluate and consider reports from consultations and survey.

Phase 3

Production of the Accessibility Action Plan

Date	Key Activities
Apr – Aug 2023	Key Activity Production of plan: Develop a detailed Accessibility Action Plan (4-year plan) Points to include in the plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of what our organisation does.• Vision of our organisation.• How the information was collected.• Barriers identified in the review.• Information about disability, including invisible disabilities. Key activity Develop and implement a robust framework for the assessment of disability related actions: Consider and agree on how strategies will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated to measure progress and ensure continuous improvement of outcomes for people with disability.



Phase 4

Final consultation

Date	Key Activities
Sep 2023	Key activity Seek feedback from the committee, staff and other stakeholders on the draft AAP.
Oct – Nov 2023	Key activity Seek approval of the AAP by the YPRL Board.

Phase 5

Communicate the AAP

Date	Key Activities
Dec 2023	Key Activity Communicate plan: Subject to board approval, the plan will be communicated to all staff and the public via our website and associated communication platforms. Key Activity Registration: Lodge AAP with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Guidance on lodging an AAP is available on the Commission’s website: https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/register-disability-discrimination-act-action-plans



APPENDIX A


Phase 1

Self-assessment

The Access and Inclusion Index is a benchmarking tool that provides a snapshot of current performance against key access and inclusion criteria. YPRL will be doing the full Access and Inclusion Index in consultation with the Australian Network on Disability (AND).

Key focus areas of the Access and Inclusion Index are:

- **Self-assessment through an auditing process against other organisations using a scoring system.**
- **Offers opportunity to set own baseline.**
- **Assists organisations to refine processes, policies and procedures to achieve inclusivity and access outcomes.**
- **Provides a clear list of actions over 4 years.**
- **Use of Access and Inclusion Index Quick 10 as an initial tool.**



YPRL will utilise the Access and Inclusion Index, industry consultation and surveying to self-assess and identify barriers to access to persons with disability.

Industry consultation: YPRL will turn to other libraries to measure and consult to gauge best practice and assess where YPRL is doing well, where we can improve and to set new levels of best practice for our organisation.

Survey: A survey will be conducted with people with disability, their families and carers, to explore what currently works, what could be improved, and to identify customer service, accessibility and partnership opportunities.

Community consultation

YPRL will consult with service providers that represent a diverse range of disabilities to grow an understanding of the needs and barriers experienced by people with disability. The consultation process will inform our AAP.

A confidential staff survey will be conducted to learn about employees' understanding of disability and Accessibility Action Plans, and the current mindset in relation to our human rights model of disability. The survey will also help us to learn if they have lived experience of disability and identify training needs and inform the AAP.

YPRL wants to give a voice to the people living with disability and will invite conversation with them and the broader community. Through the suggested inclusion and participation means listed below we will create a plan that will include all people with disability and make YPRL a safe and welcoming space for all.

Community consultation may be conducted by:

- **A 'Have Your Say' page on YPRL's website to allow for input from community on the new plan.**
- **Hosting Council Disability Network meetings and seeking feedback on experiences with our libraries. This may be done at a library branch with each member council.**
- **Reaching out to other community groups – this presents an opportunity for library staff to learn more about the day-to-day experiences of people with a particular type of disability, exchange ideas and for visitors to learn more about what the library can offer across our suite of programs, events and resources.**

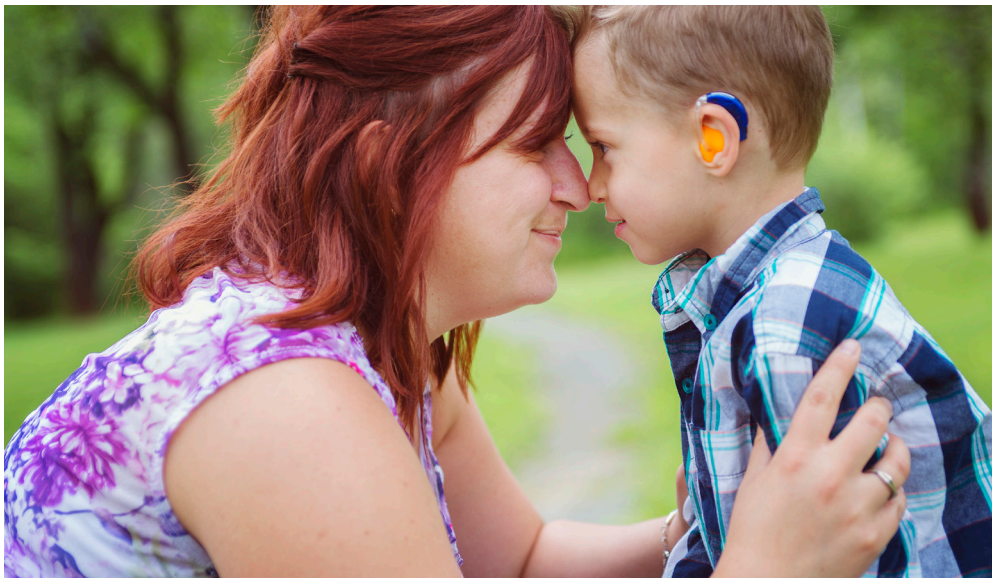


Journey mapping

The journey map will be an illustrative diagram that depicts a person with a disability's service experience at YPRL.

The mapping will be done in consultation with people with disability and a service provider or advisory body who can inform us of users' journeys from the perspectives of multiple disabilities. The journey will map the barriers that persons with disabilities experience through our physical libraries, along with their experience of accessing our website.

The mapping process allows YPRL to gain a view of our performance and services from the perspective of a person with disability. The information gathered will be utilised to shape our future long-term Accessibility Action Plan.





Phase 2

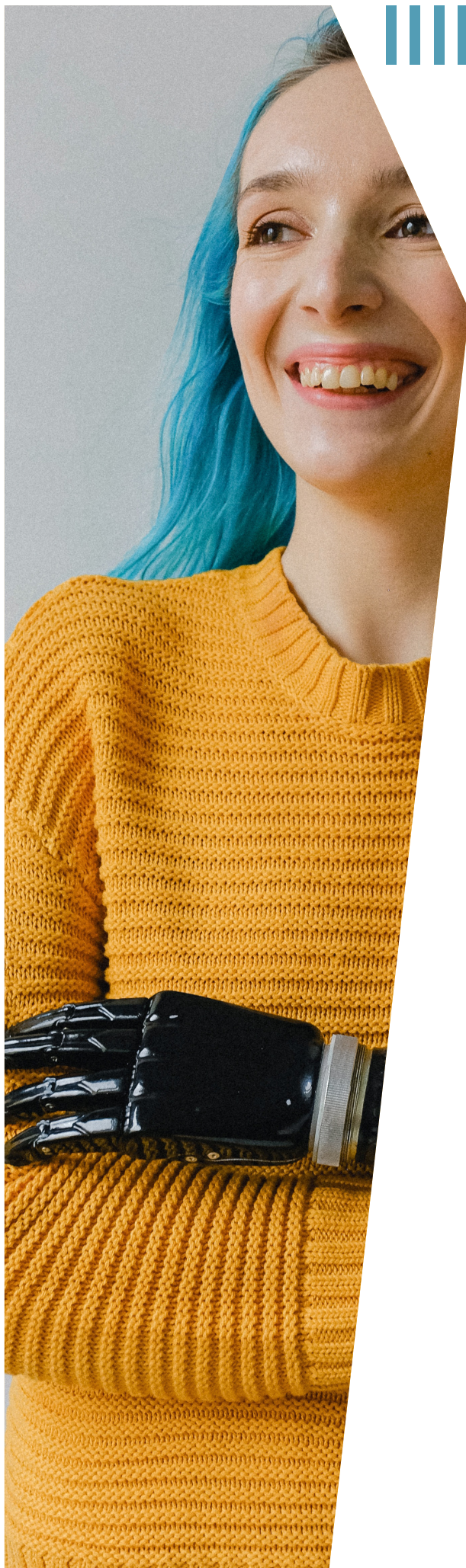
Reviewing of current practices, policies and procedures

A review of current practices and services in YPRL, which will include collecting information and feedback about the physical, communication and attitudinal barriers which exclude people with disability from using our services.

Phase 3

Production of the Accessibility Action Plan

Develop and implement a robust framework for the assessment of disability related actions. Consider and agree on how strategies will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated to measure progress and ensure continuous improvement of outcomes for people with disability.



Phase 4

Final consultation

Present the AAP to community for final consultation - advisory networks, peak bodies and groups that are advocates for disability and community for consultation on the final plan.

Phase 5

Communicate the Accessibility Action Plan

Subject to board approval, the plan will be communicated to all staff and public via our website and associated communication platforms.