



Disability Action Plan

2022–26

Acknowledgment of Country

Victoria's network of parks and reserves form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge and activities of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and their ongoing role in caring for Country.



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Front cover image: Ricky and Adam at Werribee Park

Inside front cover image: Accessible walks, Valley Picnic Ground, You Yangs Regional Park

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Message from the CEO

As the agency responsible for management of our diverse parks and waterways network, Parks Victoria has a responsibility to provide opportunities for everyone to connect to nature and our open spaces. We understand that people with disability can face a wide range of barriers in being able to access and enjoy parks. Through this Disability Action Plan, Parks Victoria will build its efforts to reduce barriers and deliver a range of social, economic, environmental and health and wellbeing benefits for all Victorians.

While Parks Victoria has made good progress in creating better opportunities for people with disability, there is more work to be done. Providing more accessible park information, creating better engagement opportunities to inform park plans and designing more inclusive open spaces and park facilities are some of the ways that Parks Victoria will contribute to the goals of the State Disability Plan. Implementing the actions from the Disability Action Plan will provide many social, economic and environmental benefits to the State.



Matthew Jackson
Chief Executive Officer

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria manages a diverse parks estate covering more than four million hectares, or about 18.5% of Victoria. This includes national parks, marine national parks and sanctuaries, urban parks, wilderness areas, conservation reserves and around 70% of Victoria's coastline. We are the local port manager for Port Phillip Bay, Western Port and Port Campbell and the waterway manager for the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers.

Parks Victoria champions the importance of nature by managing, protecting and sharing Victoria's precious places. In partnership with Traditional Owners, Parks Victoria helps connect people with Country, understand cultural heritage and contributes to positive human health and wellbeing. Parks Victoria's vision is 'into nature to create a better Victoria'.

Our commitment to diversity, access and inclusion

We welcome all people into nature, on the lands and waters of Australia's First Peoples and embrace the diversity of the Victorian community. We are committed to providing accessible, safe, culturally diverse and inclusive park experiences. We are committed to the wellbeing of all Victorians and seek to inspire the community to protect and enjoy our unique natural and cultural heritage.

The Disability Action Plan

The Disability Action Plan is designed to be responsive to the expectations and aspiration of people with disability and guides our continuous improvement activities across the Parks Victoria's estate.

Understanding disability

People with disability are diverse in their culture, language, sexuality, gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status and life experiences. Disability can occur at any stage of a person's life and can be present at birth or acquired, permanent or temporary, obvious or hidden. The contributions that people with disability make to the community are significant and valuable. People with disability have the right to expect the same opportunities as people without disability and live lives of their own choosing.

This plan adopts person-first language, which places the person before their disability (e.g., person with disability). We understand that people's preferred language reflects the different ways people consider their identity and how they experience disability. Parks Victoria will continue to build knowledge and adapt to meet preferred language by the community.

Parks Victoria supports the interconnectedness of the human rights and social models of disability. The human rights model acknowledges an individual's experience of disability as being unique to them and as contributing to their sense of identity. The social model of disability recognises that disability results from the interaction between a person with disability and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that may impact on their full and effective participation in society on an equal.

We acknowledge the existence of Ableism which can be described as the systemic and interpersonal exclusion and oppression of people with disability.

A snapshot of disability in Victoria

17% of Victorians are people with disability, approximately **1.1 million Victorians**

24% of Aboriginal people have disability, which is **twice the rate** of the general population

77% of people with disability, have a **physical disability**

39% of **LGBTIQ+** people aged 14-21 identify as having disability or long-term **health condition**

53% of people with disability participate in the workforce compared to **83% of people** who do not have a disability.

7.7% of Children **under 15** have disability

Disability and nature-based wellbeing

Across the Victorian population, people with disability experience higher incidence of poorer physical and mental health outcomes. Parks Victoria data suggests that participation levels of people with disability are well below other groups in the community. Consistent with Parks Victoria's Healthy Parks Healthy People framework, outdoor and nature-based experiences can provide enormous benefits for wellbeing and life satisfaction. Parks that are accessible and inclusive for people with disability not only result in equitable access to nature's benefits but can also provide economic opportunities through accessible, nature-based tourism for urban and regional economies.

Legislative and policy context

The Victorian Disability Act 2006 requires all Victorian public sector bodies have a Disability Action Plan (DAP) to address four outcomes:

1. Reducing barriers to people with disability in accessing goods, services and facilities
2. Reducing barriers to people with disability in obtaining and maintaining employment
3. Promoting inclusion and participation of people with disability in the community
4. Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with disability.

The DAP reflects Parks Victoria's obligations and commitments to the:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Commonwealth Discrimination Act 1992
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- National Disability Strategy 2021-31
- Inclusive Victoria State Disability Plan 2022-2026
- Victorian Autism Plan 2017-2022
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-23
- Getting to Work: The Victorian public sector disability employment action plan 2018-2025.

State Disability Plan

The Inclusive Victoria State Disability Plan 2022–2026 is Victoria’s plan for making all parts of the community inclusive and accessible for everyone. Parks Victoria has aligned this DAP to support an approach of interconnectivity and will partner with government to deliver on the following commitments:

Priority area: Inclusive communities

1.6 Parks and tourism

Create more inclusive parks so all Victorians can take part in nature by:

- Significantly increasing the number of parks designed in line with universal design principles. The principles will be applied in the planning and provision of park access, settings and facilities to ensure all parts of the users’ experience are accessible and inclusive.
- Ensuring Park information and communications are provided in a range of accessible formats.
- Advocating, educating, inspiring and collaborating with tourism stakeholders (including licensed tour operators and lease holders) to increase the range and quality of accessible tourism products and experiences in parks and waterways.
- Identifying and implementing partnerships and opportunities that grow inclusive volunteering and employment in parks.
- Increasing opportunities and partnerships for more inclusive nature-based and outdoor recreation programs that contribute to health and wellbeing.
- Increasing opportunities and partnerships for more inclusive nature-based experiences through education and interpretation services.
- Engaging with people with disability to find out what specific information is required about parks to support them to better prepare for, and respond to, an emergency while using parks or engaging in outdoor recreation activities.

Continue to support and promote accessible tourism to businesses across Victoria by:

- Promoting accessible tourism opportunities to businesses across Victoria through industry forums, workshops and newsletters focusing on the business benefits and low-cost changes.
 - Supporting consumers to connect with accessible tourism businesses through showcasing via Visit Victoria and encouraging the regions to promote accessible and inclusive experiences.
 - Working with regions on their accessibility projects and identifying new opportunities for collaboration.
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Alignment to Parks Victoria's strategy

The Parks Victoria's DAP 2022-2026 is aligned to the organisation's four strategic 'Shaping Our Future' goals:

Priority area: Inclusive communities

Caring for Country	To sustainably manage, protect and conserve Victoria's natural and cultural landscapes we need to raise the awareness and 'nature literacy' of all Victorians to promote positive and environmental and culturally sustainable behaviours.
Connecting People and Nature	To provide experiences for visitors and volunteers to connect with, and value nature we need to reduce barriers to participation and provide enriching nature experiences for all in a considered and inclusive way
Contributing to Healthy, Liveable Communities	To contribute to improving the health, safety, and economic wellbeing of all Victorians we need to ensure that safety and access are our priority and promote parks as welcoming, inclusive places that promote positive physical and mental health and wellbeing
Organisational Excellence	To enhance our capability, capacity, and culture to deliver on our commitments we need to reflect a diverse and inclusive community

Achievements from the DAP 2017-2020

- Implementing universal design for construction of facilities including the Mt Buffalo Gorge Lookout, Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail at Woowookarung regional park, Changing Places facility and all abilities Nature Playscape at Jells Park, replacement of facilities after the East Gippsland fires included new accessible toilets, showers, and other infrastructure in the Banksia Bluff campground.
- Improved Park information including the creation of ten short videos of different all abilities walks
- New partnerships for more inclusive recreation such as with YMCA to offer all abilities camping and trail opportunities at Wilsons Promontory National Park, Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria delivery of guided walks and Guide Dogs Victoria implementation of the BlindSquare mobility app
- Expansion of the all-terrain TrailRider program to Lake Mountain Alpine Resort and Kinglake National Park.
- Implementation of a wheelchair skills development video at Lysterfield Lake, for access to unsealed trails.
- A new adult beach wheelchair at Port Campbell. Anchor points enabling visitors to bring and use their own Hansa hoists was also installed at the Patterson River boat ramps and at Tooradin jetty.
- Partnerships with disability services at Serendip Sanctuary, Werribee Park, Yarra Bend Park and Gresswell Forest.
- Disability awareness training delivered by Get Skilled Access

How the DAP 2022-2026 was developed

Parks Victoria undertook a range of engagement activities in September and October 2021 to inform this plan. These included consultation through Engage Victoria, online Focus Groups and 24 stakeholder meetings.

Engagement snapshot

Engagement reach



1,610

Visitors to Engage Victoria



112

Surveys



7

Online Focus Groups



24

Stakeholder meetings

Type of participant



29%

people with disability



29%

parents and carers



29%

advocates

Gender

72%

female

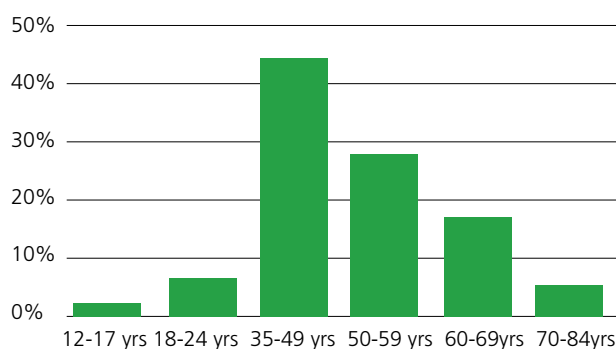
25%

male

3%

other genders

Age



Summary of key findings

The biggest barriers to inclusive and accessible parks are physical

Participants identified physical features are what make parks most welcoming. Suggestions to improve physical facilities included upgrading or replacing trails, toilets, carparks and seats; and maintaining existing assets to an accessible standard

"I have visited some parks that have great shared paths but there are steps or obstacles to get to the path."

Information in and about parks should be accessible

The type and format of accessibility information in-park and about parks is important. Participants suggested improved signage in parks, accessibility information (in-park and online), walk information, and using a broader range of communication channels.

"Address the access barriers, from your website, to location signage, to your physical accessibility issues."

Employment, volunteering and tour operator opportunities can be more accessible

Having a diverse workforce (and volunteer opportunities) will make parks, and working at parks more accessible. Participants suggested training for staff and volunteers and offering mentoring, traineeships and internships.

"Ensure staff are trained in disability awareness and communication"

Continue engaging

Engaging with people with disabilities and partnering with disability organisations will help make parks more accessible. People would like a say on new infrastructure in parks, and are interested in online surveys, focus groups and a regular disability working group.

"Parks Victoria could partner with organisations that have volunteer services".



Strategic pillars, priority areas and actions

Parks Victoria’s DAP 2022-2026 has an overarching vision, four pillars and nine priority areas. Strategies, actions, accountabilities and time frames will outline how we achieve the outcomes of each priority areas. Many actions will be linked to existing resources, workforce expertise and supported by partnerships, while others may be subject to additional funding.

Vision

We embrace the diversity of the community and welcome all people into nature, on the lands and waters of Australia’s First Peoples. We are committed to providing accessible, safe, and inclusive park experiences, sharing Victoria’s precious places with everyone

Pillars

One	Two	Three	Four
Inclusive parks and park management	Universal design, accessible information and communication	Nature-based health and wellbeing	Leadership and culture, employment and safety

9 Priority Areas and Outcomes

<p>Connection and Inclusion</p> <p>We consulted, co-designed and engaged people with disability to inform projects, policies, programs and visitor experiences</p>	<p>Universal Design</p> <p>Through universal design principles we created inclusive opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and abilities to connect with and participate in parks and nature</p>	<p>Community Programs and Partnerships</p> <p>Mutually beneficial partnerships have increased participation, health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Leadership and Culture</p> <p>Our leadership, policies and systems upheld the rights and aspirations of people with disability</p>
<p>Changing Attitudes</p> <p>We celebrated and promoted disability pride and have a disability-confident workforce</p>	<p>Accessible Information and Communication</p> <p>Information and communications about parks and park experiences were inclusive and accessible to everyone</p>	<p>Accessible Tourism, Recreation, Education and Interpretation Services</p> <p>We have advocated, educated and collaborated to increase accessible and inclusive tourism, recreation and interpretation services products and experiences</p>	<p>Employment</p> <p>We have increased employment opportunities, pathways and career progression</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>We advanced our knowledge of risk and developed strategies to safeguard and support people</p>

Whole-of- Government Systemic Reforms

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design with people with disability • Aboriginal self-determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional approaches • Accessible communications and universal design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability confident and inclusive workforces • Effective data and outcomes reporting
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Strategic pillars, priority areas and actions

Pillar one: Inclusive Parks and Park Management

Priority area 1:

Connection and Inclusion	
Outcome - We consulted, co-designed and engaged people with disability to inform projects, policies, programs and visitor experiences	
Strategy	Actions
Improve how we collaborate and co-design activities with people with disability	Establish an Access and Inclusion Advisory group of subject matter expertise
Strengthen community consultation and engagement processes to ensure the experience and expertise of people with disability is captured	Engage with disability peak disability groups and the disability community to inform park planning, major projects, park programs and information products
Provide more opportunities for people with disability to connect with nature and heritage through parks	Actively include people with disability in Parks Victoria's events and communications
Work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Health organisations to ensure that Aboriginal people with disability have power, control and decision-making and can co-design policies and programs	Establish program partnerships with Traditional Owners and with Aboriginal community organisations
Create opportunities for newly arrived migrants and refugees with disability to benefit from engagement in nature	Engage with migrant and refugee organisations to develop in-nature program partnerships Expand the All abilities walks video series to include languages other than English
Enable better access to parks for people with disability	Identify transport gaps/barriers to enable more accessible transport to parks

Priority area 2:

Changing Attitudes	
Outcome - We celebrated and promoted disability pride and have a disability-confident workforce	
Strategy	Actions
Strengthen workforce disability awareness, knowledge and capabilities	Develop inclusion training to meet identified workforce gaps Share learning and training opportunities Establish a baseline of workforce disability knowledge and awareness Create an inclusive meeting and event guide
Promote disability pride and recognise intersectionality	Promote state-wide education and awareness-raising campaigns for people with disability
Strengthen gender diverse partnerships to build knowledge and empower gender diverse Victorians with disability to engage in nature and feel safe and included	Build knowledge and opportunities for gender diverse people with disability Celebrate and recognise people with disability as part of International Women's Day



Pillar two: Universal design, accessible information and communication

Priority area 3

Universal Design	
Outcome – Through universal design principles we created inclusive opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and abilities to connect with and participate in parks and nature	
Strategy	Actions
Embed the whole-of-government Universal Design policy across park management, planning and project management	<p>Review and incorporate relevant universal design principles into Parks Victoria's Open Safe and Clean principles and priorities</p> <p>Mature a strategic approach to universal design by conducting accessibility audits of 'focus parks'</p> <p>Embed whole-of-government Universal Design principles into scoping</p>
Significantly increase the number of parks where universal design principles are incorporated into replaced or new visitor assets including trails	<p>Ensure all new park plans, include stated objectives for all abilities access</p> <p>Endeavour to include all abilities stated objectives for all project plans and designs of new or replaced visitor assets.</p>
Increase all abilities access to beaches in coastal parks, bays and waterways for boat based recreational activities and to rivers	Endeavour to include all abilities stated objectives for all coastal and waterway park plans and project plans for new or replaced visitor assets.
Increase inclusive camping opportunities for people with disability	Identify all abilities camping opportunities in each region and where possible incorporate universal design principles

Priority area 4:

Accessible Information and Communication	
Outcome – Information and communications about parks and park experiences is inclusive and accessible to everyone	
Strategy	Actions
Make our park information more inclusive and accessible for people with disability	Whole-of-government accessibility guidelines to inform (digital and physical) planning and designing of park information
Improve the accessibility and quality of pre-visit information on inclusive park facilities, programs and experiences	<p>Update park accessibility information based on universal design principles including descriptions on Parkweb, prioritising top 75 parks and increasing audio described content</p> <p>Co-design information including virtual experiences, pod casts and applications</p> <p>Increase information provided in Easy English and accessible formats</p>
Ensure that in-park information is provided in accessible formats	Update the signage manual to reflect universal design principles including advice on braille, tactile signage, symbols, simple text and wayfinding

Pillar three: Nature-based health and wellbeing

Priority area 5:

Community Programs and Partnerships	
Outcome – Mutually beneficial partnerships have increased participation, health and wellbeing outcomes for people with disability	
Strategy	Actions
Through Healthy Parks Healthy People, build and sustain partnerships that connect and engage people with disability to parks for improved mental health and physical wellbeing	Partner with disability and community organisations to grow opportunities for inclusive nature-based experiences Tailor the guided Park Walks program to better meet the needs of people with disability
Enable inclusive on Country nature experiences for Traditional Owners that have a disability	Partner with Aboriginal health and Traditional Owner organisations to provide opportunities for people with disability to access Country
Enable more opportunities for people with autism to benefit from nature-based experiences	Expand number of social scripts
Review and improve accessible volunteer opportunities, including the recruitment process	Improve accessible volunteer opportunities Work with volunteering partner organisations to provide more diverse and inclusive volunteering
Refresh the all-terrain TrailRider Program partnership	Explore the TrailRider program to evaluate and improve program sustainability

Priority area 6:

Accessible Tourism, Recreation, Education and Interpretation Services	
Outcome - We have advocated, educated, and collaborated to increase accessible and inclusive tourism, recreation products and experiences	
Strategy	Actions
Advocate, educate, inspire and collaborate with tourism stakeholders to increase the range and quality of accessible tourism products and experiences	Support visitors to connect with accessible tourism businesses Support Licensed Tour Operators to adopt access, inclusion and universal design principles Support inclusive tourism training and education
Provide more inclusive and accessible opportunities for education and interpretation activities and services	Provide more inclusive programs and services through education and interpretation
Update and embed disability/ accessibility specific data sets into Parks Victoria's systems.	Incorporate level of all-abilities access into the Visitor Experience Framework Include level of accessibility data into the Asset Management Information Systems Align evaluation and KPIs with the State Disability Plan's outcomes framework



Pillar four: Leadership, culture, employment and safety

Priority 7:

Leadership and Culture	
Outcome - Our leadership, policies and systems uphold the rights and aspirations of people with disability	
Strategy	Actions
Champion commitment to access and inclusion for all	Leaderships teams will actively promote the social, economic, health and environmental benefits of inclusion for people with disability
Review and strengthen the complaints handling procedure	Review and update the complaints procedure to ensure it is accessible. Strengthen the complaint process and guidelines by exploring staff training and education
Policies and procedures will be compliant and contemporary	Update policies and procedures for universal design

Priority 8:

Employment	
Outcome – We have increased employment opportunities, pathways and career progression for people with disability	
Strategy	Actions
Reduce barriers to increase employment opportunities	Review recruitment, retention and support procedures to attract people with disability Participate in the mentoring program for public sector employees with disability Develop a pilot program to expand the knowledge of hiring managers
Improve knowledge of Parks Victoria's workforce profile	Review workforce data needs and Gender Equality Action Plan to better understand the extent of disability in the workforce
Partner with a disability employment service and disability Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to increase employment pathway opportunities	Develop a partnership with a disability employment service provider (DES) with the aim of increasing the number of employment applications Partner with a disability Registered Training Organisation to establish employment pathways
Build capacity of Parks Victoria to be an autism positive employer	In partnership with Amaze Victoria, pilot the Autism Positive Employment program
Reduce accessibility barriers at work centres	Review, assess compliance against the Disability Access to Premises Standard

Priority 9:

Safety

Outcome - We advanced our knowledge of risk and developed strategies to safeguard and support people

Strategy	Actions
Develop a disability related visitor risk profile	Identify and review visitor disability related risks through incident, complaint and asset management systems Identify risk mitigation strategies
Work with government and partners to better prepare people with disability to respond to an emergency	Partner with Emergency Management Victoria's Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Group in developing emergency safety information

Evaluation metrics and measures of success

Evaluating the success of the DAP will require quantitative and qualitative measures. From the perspective of the community, access and inclusion measures may be subjective. We will seek feedback on meaningful improvements through engagement processes, from individuals, organisations, partners and the advisory group. We will continue to uplift systems to improve quantitative data to better measure accessible park features, assets, facilities and open spaces across parks and waterways.

Quantitative measures will include:

- Percentage of parks (and visitor sites) that provide accessible features (e.g., level of service and compliance) across the parks network, (noting the KPI target will not be all parks)
- Trend in levels of participation of people with disability in park programs (e.g., guided walks, education and interpretation activities)
- Level of, and trend in, recruitment and participation for workforce identifying with disability



