

Terms of Reference

Disability Inclusion Action Plan Subcommittee

University of Newcastle

1.0 Purpose and Principles

1.1 The Disability Inclusion Action Plan Subcommittee (Subcommittee) is a subcommittee of the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Subcommittee was established to develop the University of Newcastle's 2023-2025 Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The DIAP will improve accessibility and inclusivity in areas such as, campus infrastructure; digital environment; teaching and learning; student services and engagement; the professional and academic employee experience; leadership and culture.

The Subcommittee ensures the DIAP is properly:

- Informed by staff and students of the University and most especially, those with disability.
- Aligned to University strategy and other EDI related policy and plans.
- Appropriately paralleled with current social policy objectives and legislation, see appendix 1.

The Subcommittee works to build engagement, establish buy-in and consider resourcing in order to develop a plan which can be implemented.

1.2 The Subcommittee observes the following principles in operating and producing the DIAP:

- The pursuit of equity, access and inclusion underpin all action undertaken and planned.
- Respect and consideration for the intersectional disabled experience is always front of mind when taking actions and making decisions to ensure that the DIAP is inclusive of all people with disability (intersectionality refers to the impact of experiencing marginalisation because of more than one aspect of identity, such as being disabled and being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person).
- The voices and experiences of students and staff with disabilities are sought and represented equally.

2.0 Functions and Scope

2.1 Develop a draft DIAP for endorsement by the Executive Committee of the University of Newcastle by October 2023.

2.2 Review the Accessibility Action Plan 2015 – 2020, identify successes, challenges and current status of accessibility to inform the new plan.

2.3 Establish sub-groups as required to assist in progressing the work of the broader group.

3.0 Membership

3.1 The membership of the Subcommittee will have the skills and experience to enable the University to develop an informed, appropriately ambitious and implementable DIAP which upholds principles of equity, access and inclusion for staff and students with disability.

3.2 Membership will comprise:

- Co-chairs
- IFS representative
- Access and Equity Collective representative
- AccessAbility representative
- Student representatives
- Ex Officio members, including the University Lead, EDI; EDI Unit Manager

3.3 At all times, it must be ensured that:

- At least 50% of members must be people with disability
- At least one chair of the committee must be a person with disability
- Membership should be at least 30% students of the University
- The membership should be comprised of a minimum of 8 members.

3.4 Members remain on the Subcommittee for the duration of the DIAP development. After this time, reconsideration for future implementation groups and appropriate membership will be required.

3.5 Where a member leaves the Subcommittee, their position must be replaced within 4 weeks if their position is required to fulfill requirements under 3.3.

3.6 By discretion of the Chairs, the subcommittee may from time-to-time form sub-groups or seek advice and expertise from outside its membership, to assist with particular areas of the DIAP development. In the case of this DIAP's development, it is likely members will consult and work with College Assistant Dean EDI's, Heads of School, Human Resources, the Library, Safety and Security, Teaching and Learning.

3.7 The roles and responsibilities of the Chairs include:

- Coordinating, chairing and circulating minutes of meetings and communicating with the subcommittee
- In consultation with the University Lead EDI, determining the overall direction of the DIAP development and leading the subcommittee through relevant processes and activities
- Ensuring proper consultative processes are undertaken
- Report to the EDI Committee

3.8 At all times, all members must act in accordance with the University's [Code of Conduct](#). It is expected that all members will communicate about the University and the DIAP in a respectful and constructive manner inside and outside meetings.

3.9 Members must recognise that minutes, communications and documents created during the course of the subcommittee's work are confidential. No materials are to be shared beyond the subcommittee without permission of the University Lead EDI.

4.0 Meetings, Attendance and Communication

4.1 The Subcommittee will meet monthly. At times when the Subcommittee needs to progress a particular activity, the subcommittee may agree to meet more frequently.

4.2 It is expected that each Subcommittee member will attend regularly and provide an apology if unable to attend. Where a member is unable to attend, they will ensure they stay abreast of the Subcommittee's activities through reviewing minutes and by seeking alternative opportunities to meet with the Chairs of the Subcommittee.

4.3 Members are expected to be able to commit approximately 2 hours a month to progress the work of the DIAP development outside of meetings. Specific actions will be determined at meetings.

4.4 Members are expected to engage in constructive and timely communication in between meetings, whether to agree on a course of action, review documents or indicate availability. Communication may be via email or by using the MS Team for this Subcommittee.

4.5 The Membership on the Subcommittee does not attract remuneration.

5.0 Reporting and Approval

5.1 The EDI Committee represents the work of the DIAP Subcommittee by progressing reports for approval to the University Lead EDI / Chair of the EDI Committee.

5.1 The Subcommittee will provide written progress reports to each EDI committee meeting.

5.2 The University Lead EDI, will seek endorsement from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) for the draft DIAP.

5.3 Once the DIAP draft has been endorsed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), the University Lead EDI will seek endorsement from the Executive Committee for the draft DIAP.

5.4 Updates to the University community will be provided via a range of communication channels including In the Loop and the Navigator.

Created October 2022, revised March 2023.

Appendix 1

Social Policy Context

There are a number of current pieces of social policy which are relevant to the development of the DIAP. While the University is not mandated to have a disability action plan by any state-based or Commonwealth legislation, there are many other obligations of law and objectives of policy which will be well addressed by the use of a DIAP.

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)

Australia ratified the CRPD in 2008, becoming a States Party to the convention. States Parties are obligated to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities while promoting respect for inherent dignity.

Of particular relevancy, Article 24 – Education, sets out those rights and freedoms relating to receiving an education. Similarly, Article 27 – Work and Employment promotes the right of persons with disabilities to be able to work on an equal basis with others and to have access to open, accessible and inclusive employment.

[Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(DDA\)](#)

The DDA makes direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of disability against people with disability and their associates unlawful. The DDA applies to access to premises, accommodation, goods and services, education, employment, health care and transport.

Part 3 of the DDA discusses the development of Disability Action Plans, however it does not mandate any agency, organisation or authority to have a disability action plan. If an agency, organisation or authority does choose to create a disability Action Plan, the DDA stipulates essential requirements under this part.

The DDA has associated standards which are unlawful to contravene. Particularly relevant to the University are the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) and the [Access to Premises: Buildings Standards 2010](#).

[Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031](#)

The Disability Strategy is a national framework developed to improve the lives of Australians with disability.

The strategy has an outcome area and policy priorities relevant to the University. The first outcome area of the strategy relates to improving employment and



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financial security for Australians with disability. Specific policy priorities include, Policy Priority 1: Increase employment of people with disability; Policy Priority 2: Improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment.

All state governments are signatories to the strategy. State Governments have their own plans cascading from this broader strategy. In NSW, The [NSW Disability Inclusion Plan](#) sets out obligations for state government departments and local councils under four outcome areas:

- Improve attitudes and behaviours
- Create liveable communities
- Improve meaningful employment outcomes
- Better systems and processes

[NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#)

The Disability Inclusion Act first mandated NSW government departments, agencies and local councils to have a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). Part 2 of the Act sets out requirements of disability action planning. While the University is not obligated to undertake planning in line with this Act, the structure created ensures appropriate consultative processes to be undertaken and action to be planned in line with social policy priorities as outlined above. The NSW Government has also created resources and guidelines to assist those creating DIAPs: [Disability Inclusion Action Planning resources](#).

It is suggested that the framework of a DIAP is currently the best-practice model for creating a disability Action Plan. However, it should be noted that not all aspects of the structure articulated will suit the University environment as it is not created to suit higher education. As the University is not obligated to follow the structure, it can utilise those elements which enhance the planning and implementation, and adjust others where required.