



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE



Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability

2023-2025



Our Mission

As a Catholic health and aged care service, our mission is to bring God’s love to those in need through the healing ministry of Jesus. We are especially committed to people who are poor or vulnerable.

We draw on the talents of our people and collaborate with others who share our vision and values to continue the pioneering spirit of Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity.

We are committed to providing compassionate and innovative care, enabling hope for those we serve.



Our Vision

To lead transformation in health care inspired by the healing ministry of Jesus.

Our Values



Compassion



Integrity



Justice



Excellence

Our values of compassion, integrity, justice and excellence underpin all we do and are demonstrated through our everyday actions, giving our mission life.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

As a facility of St Vincent’s Health Australia, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we live and work.

We respect their historical and continuing spiritual connections to country and community and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. As a health and aged care ministry, we commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Cover photo: Angela Fitzpatrick, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne patient and Consumer Advisory Committee member.

Executive summary

This Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability (The Plan) aims to provide a framework for St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) to become a more accessible service and employer and ensure we align with Inclusive Victoria, the Victorian Government’s Disability Plan 2022-2026.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with consumer representatives and employees who participated in a workshop or were interviewed separately to capture their ideas and concerns. Staff who have contributed to this plan are representative of a range of services including specialist clinics, inpatient services, allied health, mental health, addiction medicine, pain services, community services, cultural inclusion, correctional health, quality and improvement, engineering and infrastructure, people and organisational support, strategy and planning and the SVHM Executive.

Together, we developed a new Vision and set of Priorities to improve access and inclusion for people with disability.

Our vision is to create an environment that enables, not disables people.

To do that, we must first understand the experience of interacting with our organisation from the perspective of people living with disability. We must do more to involve people with lived experience in our decision making and provide mechanisms to support staff so they are confident to identify and meet the needs of people with disability. We must build this knowledge and cultural awareness into our induction and training and embed the lens of lived experience into the design of policies, programs, services and facilities. By taking these steps, we will maximise opportunities for all people with disability to engage fully with and thrive within our organisation.

“The new Access and Inclusion Plan breaks down barriers and fosters inclusivity, enabling people with disabilities the confidence to navigate their healthcare journey at St Vincent’s.”

Angela Fitzpatrick, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne patient and Consumer Advisory Group member.



1

From the Chief Executive

I am delighted to present the St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability 2023–25.

Our ambition within and beyond this Plan is to lead the way in improving accessibility to person-centred care and support when people need us most. We will continue working to break down societal barriers that systematically disadvantage people with disability, and we will showcase the positive impact that our staff who live with disability have in our organisation.

The Plan’s foundations are deeply connected to SVHM’s Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The document’s four priorities provide overarching guidance for improving accessible services over the short, medium and longer term.

With this Plan, we will:

- Deepen our understanding
- Elevate lived experience
- Enable access and inclusion
- Embed inclusive organisational culture.

We will strive to make SVHM an inclusive place to work and be cared for. We will do this in partnership with people with lived experience of disability. With their input, we will use our talent and resources to help overcome the barriers of a disabling world, including system and process design, language and signage barriers, discrimination and unconscious bias.

The voices of many of our staff, patients, lived experience leads and people of significance to these groups have helped guide this document.

Thank you to all those who have been involved in creating this plan and helping us to become a more accessible service and employer. This plan and our vision would not have come together without you.



Nicole Tweddle
Chief Executive,
St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne

2

Background

2.1 Social model of disability

When discussing disability, SVHM applies the social model of disability, which was developed by people with disability to describe how barriers within society (attitudinal, environmental, institutional, communication) prevent their full participation. This contrasts with the medical model of disability, which focuses on what is 'wrong' with the person. Removing barriers creates equity and enables full participation.

SVHM recognises that a person's disability is situation dependent and that not all disabilities are visible. Disability may be experienced as sensory, cognitive, intellectual, communication, psychosocial or physical. SVHM also recognises the intersection of disability with other social groups, such as race or gender identity; as together they may compound discrimination or disadvantage. This is often referred to as 'intersectionality'. In recognition of intersectionality, our Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability will contribute to a larger scope of work that seeks to improve equitable access to services and employment opportunities for people who are marginalised and who face barriers to full participation.

2.2 Policy and legislative context

Our Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability has been developed in the context of international recognition of the rights of people with disability, Commonwealth and State legislation regarding disability and discrimination and the formal strategies developed by the Commonwealth and State Governments to enact structural change to support more equitable access and inclusion.

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention promotes, protects and ensures equal enjoyment of human rights, respect and dignity.

The Australian Government's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 provides national leadership towards greater inclusion of people with disability and defines how this will be supported by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 aims to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the ground of disability in areas such as work, education, the provision of goods and services and the administration of government programs.

The Commonwealth Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, due to be completed in late 2023, is expected to provide additional insight and recommendations, particularly in relation to providing healthcare and services for people with cognitive disability.

In Victoria, the Disability Act 2006 is currently under review, following the release of 'Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026'. Inclusive Victoria seeks to generate systemic reform through co-design with people with disability, Aboriginal self-determination, intersectional approaches, accessible communication and universal design, disability confident and inclusive workforces and effective data and outcomes reporting.

As a provider of public healthcare, SVHM is committed to developing and driving an Access and Inclusion Plan that will better meet the needs of people with disability who access our services and are employed by our organisation. Our work is guided by these key documents, along with the voices of people with lived experience.

2.3 Strategic Alignment

This Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disability is an important step towards addressing the over-representation of people with disability in adverse outcomes and mortality in hospital presentations in Australia.

SVHM is committed to serving people who are marginalised and acknowledges that people living with disability are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. There is significant intersectionality between persons with disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons, those experiencing homelessness, mental health and alcohol and other drug conditions, compounding the need to provide more accessible and responsive care.

This Plan presents an opportunity to improve quality and safety for people with disability who access our services. It will enable SVHM to become a more inclusive workplace and a leader in engaging people with lived experience in the design, development and provision of public healthcare, in accordance with our values of compassion, integrity, justice and excellence.



Dr Harry Eeman and Polio Services Victoria patient, Gulan.

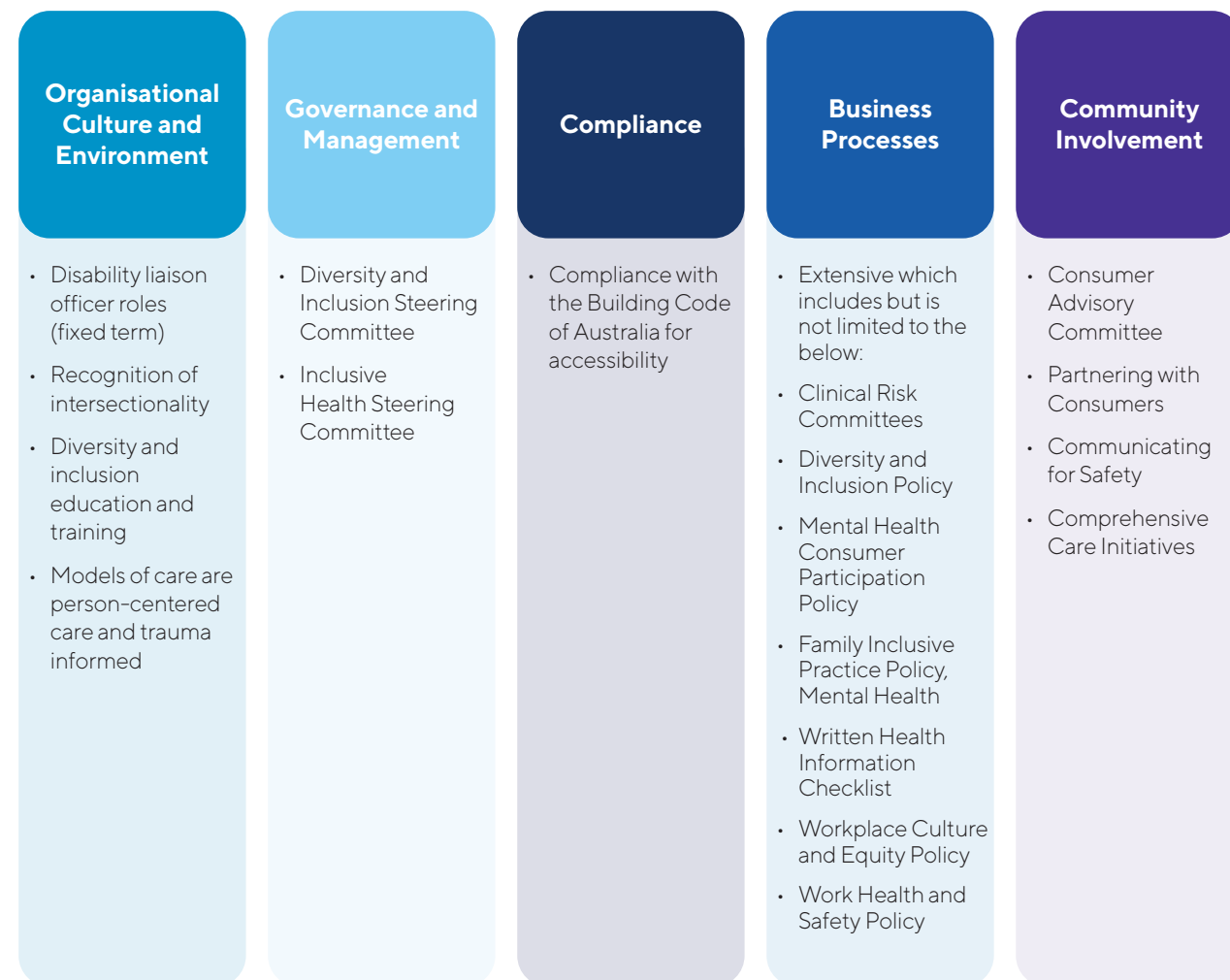
3

Current state

3.1 How we support diversity and inclusion

SVHM has several mechanisms in place to support diversity and inclusion, from formal committees and dedicated support roles to policies and procedures that govern our work.

These include:



3.2 Improving our support

In preparation of this Plan, staff and consumers were invited to provide feedback on how well they perceived SVHM met the needs of consumers and staff with disability.

When asked to rank their response to the question 'Tell us how you think we respond to the needs of employees living with disability' from a scale of 0 (very poorly) to 10 (Extremely well), SVHM received an average score of 5.7.

The average response to the question 'How well do you think we respond to the needs of consumers living with disability' from a scale of 0 (very poorly) to 10 (Extremely well), was slightly higher at 5.9.

When asked to provide more detailed feedback on what they believed SVHM was doing well, respondents discussed our culture, mission and values and our focus on person centred care. Respondents perceived SVHM to be a caring organisation with good intentions and an openness to learning and improvement.

When asked to comment on barriers to access and inclusion, the feedback indicated a gap between SVHM's intentions and our actions. Respondents spoke of reliance on individual champions and local 'work arounds' and described a lack of confidence in knowing how to appropriately identify and meet the needs of people with disability. References were made to our ageing infrastructure and the challenges of accessing facilities such as accessible toilets.

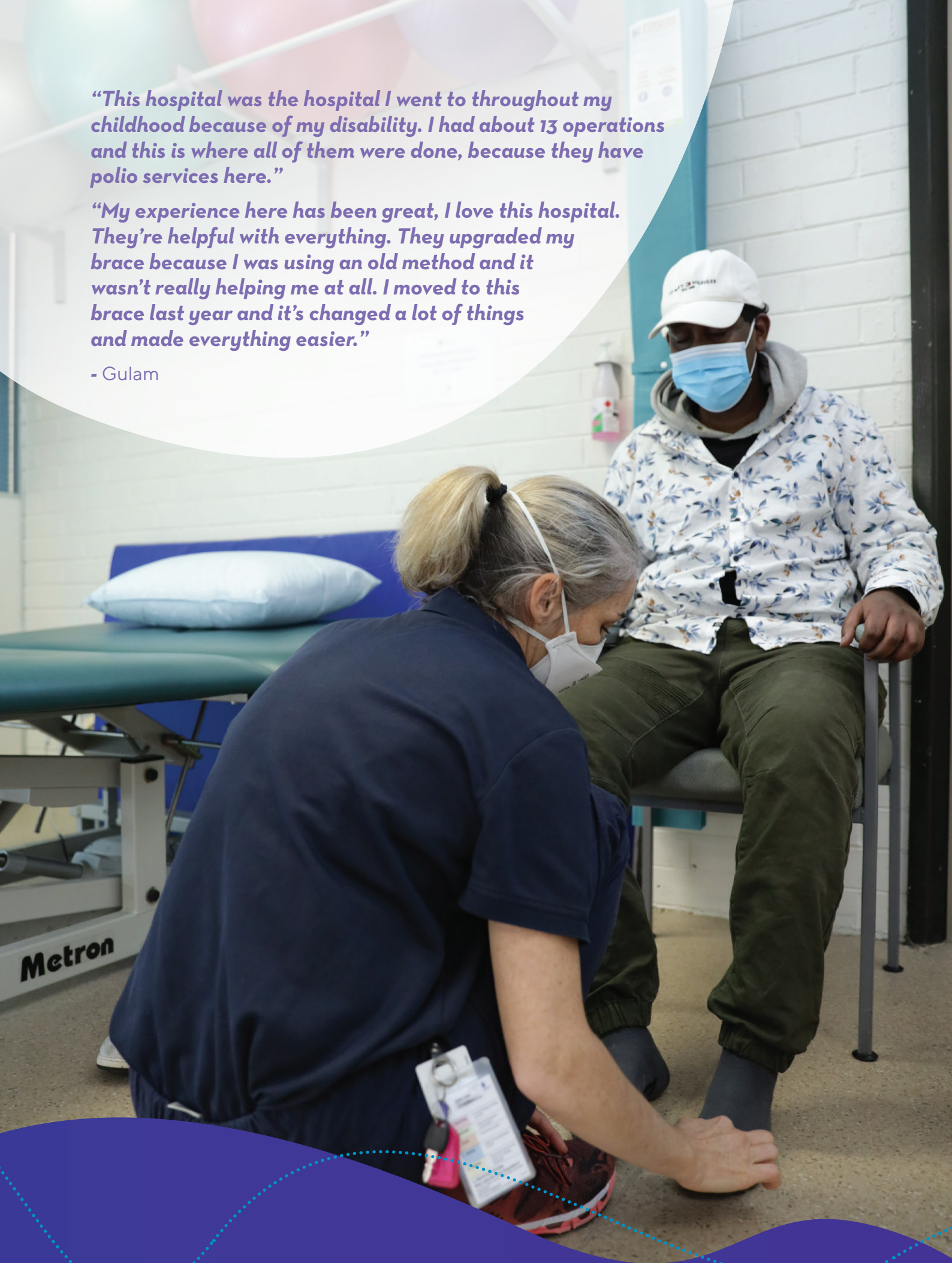
Staff highlighted the inability to capture patients who identify as persons with disability, inhibiting capacity to measure and evaluate service improvement initiatives. It was felt that if support or modifications were available, they were not always maintained across the patient's journey. There was also a perception that some less visible forms of disability, e.g., psychosocial disability, were treated differently.

People who participated in the workshop and consultation interviews provided more than 100 suggested actions that have been reviewed and prioritised to guide the development of this Plan.

“This hospital was the hospital I went to throughout my childhood because of my disability. I had about 13 operations and this is where all of them were done, because they have polio services here.”

“My experience here has been great, I love this hospital. They’re helpful with everything. They upgraded my brace because I was using an old method and it wasn’t really helping me at all. I moved to this brace last year and it’s changed a lot of things and made everything easier.”

- Gulam



Patient, Mohamed, undergoing physiotherapy at St Vincent's Fairfield Community Rehabilitation Centre.

4

Our vision and priorities

OUR VISION

‘to be an inclusive health service that enables full participation for employees and consumers with disability, underpinned by safe, dignified, equitable access to services, information and facilities’

OUR PRIORITIES



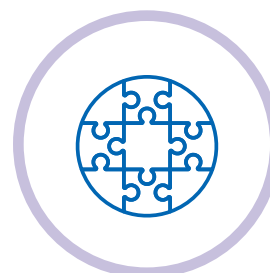
Deepen our understanding

Interrogate our current practice to find ways to improve equity



Elevate lived experience

Create more opportunities for staff and consumers with disability to have meaningful input



Enable access and inclusion

Provide systems and tools so all staff can put our intentions into action



Embed inclusive organisational culture

Ensure equity is embedded in our culture, recruitment, training, service planning, design and implementation

4.1 Our commitments



Deepen our understanding

Interrogate our current practice from the perspective of all disabilities to improve equity, build on current success and identify opportunities for improvement

Short term: July 2023 - June 2024

- Work with consumer representative to undertake environmental audit to inform future recommendations
- Establish mechanisms for disability identification for employees and consumers
- Establish working groups to review recruitment process, staff training program and communication tools
- Conduct gap analysis of current policies and procedures
- Review successful initiatives (SVHM and external) to identify potential for broader application

Medium term: July 2024 - June 2025

- Identify ways to scale successful initiatives across the organisation
- Engage with consumers and partners to better understand how culture can impact identification of disability

Long term: July 2025 and beyond

- Embed co-design and the lens of lived experience into design of all policies, programs, services and facilities



Elevate lived experience

More opportunities for staff and consumers with disability to have meaningful input

Short term: July 2023 - June 2024

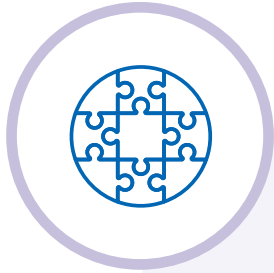
- Build bank of lived experience consumers and carers for consultation and input
- Create opportunities for staff with lived experience to have greater input

Medium term: July 2024 - June 2025

- Launch intranet hub to share resources, ideas and success stories
- Incorporate representation in promotional materials to raise visibility

Long term: July 2025 and beyond

- Embed lived experience representation across committees and governance structures



Enable access and inclusion

Provide systems and tools so all staff can put our intentions into action

Short term: July 2023 - June 2024

- Pursue quick wins with access (e.g. disabled toilets in ED)
- Identify resources that could be made available as reasonable adjustments for staff and consumers
- Establish escalation process and governance to support access and inclusion
- Investigate capacity of current systems (PAS, workday, complaints monitoring) to capture data and facilitate analysis

Medium term: July 2024 - June 2025

- Promote access to resources to support reasonable adjustments
- Update policies and procedures to support identification and accommodation of needs
- Incorporate identification and needs assessment in data management systems
- Develop business case to implement findings of environmental audit
- Update recruitment process to be more disability confident
- Commence roll-out of improved communication tools for staff and consumers

Long term: July 2025 and beyond

- Apply equity impact assessment across all significant projects and initiatives
- Increase number of staff who identify as living with disability



Embed inclusive organisational culture

Equity is embedded in our culture, recruitment, training, service planning and design

Short term: July 2023 - June 2024

- Update induction/orientation process to support safe staff identification
- Add requirement for consumer consultation as a budget line item for any new project or initiative

Medium term: July 2024 - June 2025

- Obtain feedback annually from staff and consumers to assess progress
- Develop resources and standard of practice to support co-design
- Embed intersectionality in cultural awareness training and other modules of mandatory learning
- Establish performance measures and add targets to 'Performance Board'

Long term: July 2025 and beyond

- Create annual event to celebrate accessibility and inclusion
- Develop broader inclusive health framework across SVHM
- Advocate for vulnerable consumers across settings (homelessness, corrections)
- Influence enterprise-wide policy and practice across SVHA

5

Staff story

Molly Kennedy, First Nations Practice Nurse

Commencing as a health assistant in nursing, Molly Kennedy now works as a First Nations practice development nurse at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, supporting First Nations staff to feel safe in their work environment and advocating for opportunities for them to grow within the organisation.

When Molly was two years old, she was diagnosed with right hemiplegia cerebral palsy, caused by a stroke in utero. Since this time, Molly has undergone 18 operations.

In 2018, when the chance came up to work at St Vincent's, Molly took the opportunity to embrace her experience and use this to support others.

"Being in this role allows me to advocate for patients and staff because I know the hardships that people can face outside of work – it is easier to empathise when you've lived through this," Molly said.

"I did my nursing training here, and wouldn't work anywhere else – St Vincent's enables me to use my voice and advocate for things I strongly care about, and provides opportunities to explore new things and make a difference," Molly said.

Molly shared information about her disability in her job interview, and found her managers to be very supportive.

"The Education team arranged extra training for me, ensured it was a safe environment for my fine motor skills, and helped me work around what I couldn't do and work to the best of my ability. They are very flexible and always provide me a helping hand or support," she said.

"Never once have I been bought down or not given any opportunities because of my disability."

To Molly, St Vincent's inaugural Access and Inclusion Plan for People with Disabilities is a positive step forward that acknowledges there is still room for improvement.

"St Vincent's is providing an opportunity for staff and patients to be recognised as more than their disability, and the plan will enable better opportunities, a safer environment and better outcomes because we feel supported and acknowledged, and have avenues to address concerns and recognise strengths."



Molly Kennedy, First Nations First Nations practice development nurse, working in her modified work environment.



Contact us:

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

PO Box 2900, Fitzroy, VIC 3065, Australia

Telephone (03) 9231 2211

svhm.org.au