St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

2026 – 2029

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Front cover: Naomi Salacan, a volunteer with Vinnies at our Crows Nest store in Sydney.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith and reconciliation.



Our Continuing Commitment to Inclusion for People with Disability

At the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, our mission is to work for a more just and compassionate society and stand with people experiencing disadvantage. We recognise that inclusion begins within our own community. By fostering accessible workplaces, inclusive practices and a culture of belonging, we ensure that our members, volunteers and employees with disability can contribute their skills, perspectives and talents in meaningful ways, and that the people we assist with disability feel supported to access the services they need.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) has been developed in consultation with people with disability and stakeholders from across the Society. Approximately 21% of the Australian population has a disability and they are over-represented among those who experience poverty, social exclusion and barriers to essential services. This DIAP is an important way of acting on our commitment and belief that every person has the right to fully participate in community life. When people with disability are included, respected and empowered, our services are better, and our organisation is stronger.

Disability inclusion is not a one-off initiative but an ongoing responsibility. The actions we have taken as part of our 2021 to 2025 DIAP, have laid a solid foundation. This new plan builds on that foundation and represents the next step in the Society's journey to build a truly diverse and inclusive community.



Yolanda Saiz
Chief Executive Officer



Message from the Executive Sponsor

As we renew our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) leading us to 2029 it gives me, as the Executive Sponsor, time to pause and look back over our achievements and the footprints we are treading in this important journey for the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. Our four key areas of focus; inclusive culture, communications and technology, career opportunities and development, and accessibility in properties and services, have come a long way.

I personally want to thank each individual and directorate for their contribution to this work changing our space in the inclusion of disabilities, listening to people with disability and applying their experiences and ideas to design services, programs and spaces that are inclusive, accessible and welcoming for all.

This work has deeply focussed our understanding and support for the rights, dignity, and well-being of people with disabilities, and increased our awareness of the benefits of integrating people with disability into all aspects of life.

My hope is that the actions we take to support the new disability inclusion action plan are embedded within existing processes wherever possible, so they become part of our business-as-usual activities rather than separate initiatives. In doing so, we can integrate inclusion into the very “DNA” of the Society in NSW, making it a natural part of how we carry out our work.

Finally, in expressing the deep mission of our DIAP, I am reminded of words by Pope Leo XIV in reflecting the gospel message of John, ‘We were not created for lack, but for fullness, to rejoice in life, and life in abundance’. Through this DIAP, may we continue in our journey building an inclusive culture and our commitment in sharing life in its fullest.



Leo Tucker
Executive Director Mission and Formation, and Executive Sponsor Disability Inclusion Action Plan



About St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has been supporting people experiencing and at risk of hardship for over 145 years.

Our members, volunteers and employees assist people experiencing disadvantage by providing food, financial assistance, help with energy bills and other expenses, budget counselling, school items for children, and the provision of other material items including furniture, clothing, bedding and household items. It is estimated that approximately 35% of the people we assist through Vinnies Services have a disability.

The Society is a leading provider of frontline services, delivering more than 100 local services and programs across New South Wales. These services respond to a range of issues including homelessness, domestic and family violence, disability, mental health, refugee and migrant inclusion, rehabilitation and addiction. As part of this work, the Society is an approved National Disability Insurance Scheme provider, with its disability services and practices regularly audited against the National Standards for Disability Services. The Society operates around 220 Vinnies Shops and several distribution centres across the state, and this provides an important source of revenue that helps sustain the Society's programs and services.

Our Disability Inclusion Journey So Far

Since the launch of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) in 2021, we have made steady progress to improve disability inclusion at the Society.

2021

The DIAP is launched and a Working Group established with stakeholders from across the organisation to oversee implementation of the plan. An Executive Sponsor is appointed to lead the Working Group.

2022

Dr Mary-Ann O'Donovan, Associate Professor at the Disability Studies Institute, University of Sydney, joins the Working Group as an external expert on disability sector issues and practices.

The Australian Disability Network audits our recruitment practices and identifies improvements including offering adjustments during recruitment, changes to the health declaration form, and training.

2023

The People with Disability Employee Network is established with representatives from across the organisation.

Thirteen people with disability are hired into supported open roles with the Society following the transition of two of the Society's disability enterprise operations to a supported open employment model. Disability confidence training is rolled out for teams with the new hires.

Disability Confident Recruiter training is delivered by the Australian Disability Network and an online disability awareness education course developed for staff.

Workplace Adjustment Guidelines are developed.

An Access and Inclusion Checklist for new, renovated, and leased Society buildings is developed.

2024

Vinnies Services successfully receives funding from the Department of Social Services to expand its Supports in Employment program established in 2023. The funding enables more people to access supported employment opportunities.

A property audit of approximately 200 sites owned by the Society gathers information on accessibility to inform property upgrades and refurbishments.

An inclusive recruitment course is developed for hiring managers and launched with webinars for people leaders.

2025

A workplace adjustment passport is developed in conjunction with the People with Disability Employee Network Group so employees can record details of their adjustments.



Liana Davidson, Administration Assistant



Alex Procajlo, Administration Assistant

Supported Open Employment: Liana and Alex

In 2023, the Society made the difficult decision to close two of its Australian Disability Enterprises at Stanmore and West Ryde. For Liana Davidson and Alex Procajlo, this change presented an opportunity and saw them take up new roles through supported open employment at the Society's head office in Lewisham.

Liana commenced at the Lewisham office taking on two different roles, providing administration support to the Society's People, Culture and Safety Team and working as the front desk receptionist for the Procurement and Fleet team. After 18 months, Liana took on additional responsibilities with the Procurement and Fleet team, in recognition of her commitment, capability and growth. Liana is now the primary team member processing Vinnies gift card orders for conferences and issuing them across the state. 'I like the social side of being at work and working with different people and teams,' says Liana. 'Work has given me more independence and the opportunity to learn new things.'

Alex also moved from a disability enterprise to a role with the Procurement and Fleet team at the Lewisham Office in 2023. He looks after reception on alternate days to Liana and assists with administration tasks that includes mailouts and office supplies. 'I get to do quite a few different things which I like," says Alex. 'I like working here [at the Society] and I'm proud of the job I do… I want to try new things in my career.'



Sarah Cullen, Resource Assistant

The Voice of People with Disability: Employee Network Group

The People with Disability Employee Network provides a forum for people with lived experience of disability as well as those who are carers and advocates to come together and look at ways the Society can support the inclusion of people living with disability and impairment.

For much of the time the Network has been running, it has been led by Sarah Cullen, Resource Assistant with the Disability and Inclusion Team.

Sarah lives with the impact of two strokes she experienced as a teenager. She is a passionate champion for improving the lives of people with disability. In addition to leading the Network, Sarah sits on the Working Group that oversees progress on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan commitments.

'The Network group gives employees who have disabilities a place where they can feel they belong,' says Sarah. 'They can share successes and strategies for overcoming obstacles and most importantly they can see where their unique insights can influence practice and contribute to a more inclusive workplace and world for all.'

Our Vision for Accessibility and Inclusion

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW envisions a community where people with disability are fully included, respected and able to participate in all aspects of life and work.

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan reflects our belief that every person has inherent dignity and unique gifts to contribute. We are committed to removing barriers wherever possible, so that people with disability can fully engage with us.

Our vision is informed by the social model of disability and recognises that disability is not caused by a person's impairment, but by barriers in the environment, attitudes and systems that limit participation. This has led us to focus on identifying and removing barriers within our organisation and operations and shifting our thinking from focussing on individuals only to improving our practices and environments to be more inclusive and equitable for everyone.

We see inclusion not as a single initiative, but as a shared responsibility across all areas of the Society. Our vision is to create welcoming environments — in our services, shops, programs and workplaces — that are accessible, safe and responsive to the diverse needs of the people we assist, members, volunteers and employees. This means designing our processes, communications, services and spaces so they work for as many people as possible and making reasonable adjustments where needed to allow for equitable access.

We are committed to listening to and learning from people with disability. Their experience will guide how we improve our services, strengthen our culture and build capability across the organisation. Through ongoing learning and improvement, we will build disability confidence across the organisation so that inclusion is part of our everyday practice and reflected in the way we work.

Above all, our vision is grounded in compassion and justice. We want the Society to be known as an organisation where people with disability feel valued, heard and empowered. By fostering opportunity, promoting accessibility and confronting negative attitudes and misconceptions, we will contribute to a more inclusive society.



Epi Bonsignore, Vinnies Van Kitchen Hand

Consultation on the Plan

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan has been developed in consultation with stakeholders and feedback from across the Society including the members of the People with Disability Employee Network Group, our Disability and Inclusion Team who work with NDIS participants and employment coaches for people with disability to ensure the voice and experiences of people with disability informs the Plan. Consultation also involved discussion with people from a range of functions and support areas across the organisation.







Supported Employment Process Workers at Castlereagh Industries in Coonamble.
Clock-wise from top left: Mark Sefton, Frasier Rodgers-Smith and Jessica Crawford

Priority Areas

The Society's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) has four priority areas:

- Priority 1: Commitment to an inclusive culture
- Priority 2: Accessible communications and technology
- Priority 3: Meaningful employment and careers
- Priority 4: Accessible services and property

Priority 1: Commitment to an Inclusive Culture

We will continue to build a culture where people with disability feel welcomed, respected and supported. This includes listening to the voices and experiences of people with disability, removing barriers, providing reasonable adjustments, building disability confidence and awareness. We respect lived experience and recognise the important contribution people with disability make to our workplace, our services and our communities.

Objective	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1 Our Governance structures are effective and fit for purpose.	1.1.1 Review the governance and reporting structure for the DIAP to ensure it is fit for purpose, supports implementation and includes people with lived experience of disability.	Reviews undertaken of: • Working Group membership and terms of reference. • People with Disability Employee Network Group and terms of reference.	Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026
1.2 We value lived experience and recognise the important contribution people with disability make to our workplace, our services and our communities.	1.2.1 Members of the People with Disability Employee Network Group are consulted and provide advice and feedback on policies and practices that impact people with disability.	Network Group is consulted on relevant policies and processes when they are due for renewal. Increase membership of the group by 10%, with representation from all directorates.	Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
	1.2.2 Annual listening session led by the Executive Sponsor / senior leader with members of the Employee Network Group to discuss workplace experiences and inclusion.	Meeting is conducted and summary of discussion reviewed to identify any actions.	Executive Sponsor	Sept 2026 Sept 2027 Sept 2028 Sept 2009
	1.2.3 Benchmark the Society's maturity and progress, and ways to improve our disability inclusion practices.	The Society uses the Access and Inclusion questionnaire (Australian Disability Network) to identify areas for improvement. Improvements in engagement, wellbeing and progress measures in employee engagement survey to be conducted in 2027.	Culture & Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026 Aug 2027
	1.2.4 Advocate for the rights of people with disability and where possible contribute to public debate and policy on issues related to people with disability.	The perspectives of people with disability are reflected in the Society's social justice advocacy where possible.	Manager Policy and Advocacy	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029

Objective	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.3 Highlight the benefits of inclusion for people with disability and raise awareness of DIAP progress.	1.3.1 Regular updates on DIAP progress and actions being taken by the Society.	At least four times a year updates are promoted internally and externally through a variety of channels.	Director Communications and Marketing	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
	1.3.2 Authentically represent people with disability in Society imagery and regularly feature in internal and external communications (traditional and social media).	Publish six or more articles, stories or photos each year that illustrate inclusion of people with disability and share through social media channels.	Director Communications and Marketing	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
1.4 Ensure members, volunteers and employees have access to disability-related resources, training and events to improve their disability awareness and confidence.	1.4.1 Improve awareness and understanding of disability by marking significant dates for people with disability including: • Inclusion @ Work Week, and • International Day of People with Disability	Develop a calendar of significant disability-related days. Promote awareness through stories, Viva Engage posts and events.	Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S PWD Employee Network Group	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
	1.4.2 Update support materials (checklists and guidelines) located on the disability inclusion Staff Portal page and ensure they are current and relevant.	Review undertaken and refresh of content completed.	Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S PwD Employee Network Group	Dec 2026
	1.4.3 Deliver disability confidence training for people leaders, to increase knowledge, skills, and practical strategies to create inclusive environments.	Deliver 2 x training sessions for people leaders and promote training opportunities with Diversity Council Australia and affiliated service providers.	Culture and OD Manager, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
1.5 Promote the Society's Reasonable Workplace Adjustment Guidelines to support the participation of people with disability.	1.5.1 Raise awareness of the Society's Reasonable Workplace Adjustments Guidelines to members, volunteers and staff.	Quarterly reminders and two information sessions held yearly on workplace adjustments. Centralised reasonable workplace adjustment budget maintained by Culture and Organisational Development Team.	Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S Culture and OD Manager, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029

Priority 2: Accessible Communications and Technology

We will continuously improve the accessibility of our communications and technology by embedding accessibility considerations into design and procurement and responding promptly to access needs and feedback from stakeholders. We will meet recognised accessibility standards, seek out technologies to improve accessibility and provide information in alternative formats when needed.

Objective	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1 Information is provided in accessible formats.	2.1.1 Develop an online guide for accessible communications and promote standards covering online communications and design including the Staff Portal, external web pages, documents and slides.	Accessible communications guide developed and shared with relevant stakeholders and available on the Staff Portal.	Director Communications and Marketing	August 2027
	2.1.2 Where possible the Society's written communications, particularly key documents, policies and reports, are provided in an Easy Read format with training for key stakeholders across the Society to support the development of accessible communications.	Key documents developed as Easy Reads. Easy Read training delivered so personnel in different directorates can develop materials.	Director Communications and Marketing Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029 July 2026 July 2028
	2.1.3 Ensure captioning is included in videos created by the Society NSW.	Videos include captioning, including closed captioning option.	Director Communications and Marketing	Ongoing
2.2 Websites and online platforms managed by the Society are accessible for people with disability.	2.2.1 Use Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to support digital accessibility.	Form a working group to review the WCAG and recommendation of next steps.	Chief Technology Officer, Technology Services	Dec 2027
	2.2.2 Identify risks in relation to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools so they do not erode the Society's principles of inclusion.	Review the Society's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy to ensure it covers AI risk. Develop guidelines to minimise unintended bias when AI is used by employees, members and volunteers.	Chief Technology Officer, Technology Services Executive Director, PC&S Executive Director, Strategy and Engagement	Dec 2026 June 2027
	2.2.3 Improve online accessibility for people with disability by increasing awareness of accessibility features and tools available through Teams and Microsoft Office.	Online accessibility information is promoted to employees including via webinars to promote accessibility features and tools.	Chief Technology Officer, Technology Services	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029

Priority 3: Meaningful Employment and Careers

We will continue to address barriers to recruitment and progression to improve employment and career opportunities for people with disability. We will foster an inclusive hiring process and provide reasonable adjustments when needed, equip people leaders to be disability-confident, and support people with disability to develop and grow their careers. We will work with people with disability to inform our approach.

Objective	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Completion
3.1 Our recruitment process is inclusive and reflects good practice for hiring of people with disability.	3.1.1 Partner with JobAccess to review current hiring and onboarding practices to ensure they reflect good practice.	Review conducted by JobAccess and recommendations report received.	Recruitment Manager, PC&S Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026
	3.1.2 Allocate a lead within the recruitment team to oversee recruiting procedures to support accessible hiring.	Person identified and part of the DIAP Working Group.	Recruitment Manager, PC&S	June 2026
	3.1.3 Develop an inclusive recruitment toolkit for people leaders covering hiring and selection, job design, career development and workplace adjustments.	Toolkit developed and launched to people leaders with webinar sessions.	Culture & Inclusion Partner, PC& Recruitment Manager, PC&S	Dec 2026
	3.1.4 Provide our recruitment team with training on inclusive recruitment practices so they are disability confident to assist hiring managers during recruitment.	Training provided at least every two years to build disability confidence.	Recruitment Manager, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2028
3.2 The Society is able to attract people with disability to the organisation and is known as an employer that values diversity.	3.2.1 Develop an attraction and hiring strategy to recruit talented candidates with disability to the Society including content on career pages.	Career pages include specific information on the Society's commitment and support for people with disability. Track and monitor applications of people with disability with goal of year-on-year increase. Track and monitor hiring of people with disability with goal of year-on-year increase.	Recruitment Manager, PC&S Culture & Inclusion Partner, PC&S	June 2026 Dec 2029 Dec 2029



Objective	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Completion
	3.2.2 Promote employment and volunteering opportunities for people with disability and put in place recruitment partnerships with Inclusive Employment Australia providers and disability specialists.	Partnerships in place with at least three Inclusive Employment Australia providers. At least eight roles are shared with the IEA providers and Job Access annually.	Recruitment Manager, PC&S	December 2027
	3.2.3 Support people with disability to build employment skills through the retail skills program managed by the Disability and Inclusion Division.	Retail skills program is piloted and evaluation report provided to Vinnies Services Leadership Team.	Director - Health, Ageing and Disability, Vinnies Services	December 2027
3.3 People with disability have the resources to do their job and progress their career.	3.3.1 Learning and development materials are accessible for people with disability. Online learning content meets or exceeds Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. People Leaders discuss reasonable adjustments as part of regular performance discussions.	Review of learning and development materials for accessibility is completed. Performance and Development information available in Easy Read format. Workplace Adjustment information included in performance guides.	Manager OD and Culture, PC&S	December 2027

Priority 4: Accessible Services and Property

We will take action to improve accessibility across the Society's properties and listen to feedback from people with disability when upgrading sites. We will work to make our services easy to access and delivered in ways that are flexible and responsive to individual needs.

Outcome	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Timeframe
4.1 The Society has reliable data on people with disability we assist to better inform the services we provide and the way they are delivered.	4.1.1 Improve and standardise collection of disability data for people we assist through Vinnies Services and Conferences.	Disability data collection method for people we assist reviewed and deployed.	Executive Director Vinnies Services Executive Director MVEI	Dec 2027
4.2 People with disability can access information about the accessibility of our sites.	4.2.1 Use available property audit accessibility information for Society locations and services.	Publish site accessibility information using property audit information	Director Communications and Marketing	Dec 2027
4.3 People with lived experience of disability help shape our services.	4.3.1 Build on current good practice in Vinnies Services to develop a resource to support meaningful consultation and co-design with people with lived experience of disability.	Develop and publish Consultation and Co-Design Guide for use across Vinnies Services.	Director Community Impact and Partnerships, Vinnies Services	Dec 2027
	4.3.2 Continue implementation and strengthening of the Care and Support Quality Framework to support inclusive, accessible and high-quality services for people with disability, informed by lived experience and feedback.	Maintain accreditation against industry standards, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Practice Standards and The QIC Health and Community Services Standards.	Executive Director Vinnies Services	Dec 2027
4.4 Accessibility to the Society's property assets is improved.	4.4.1 Incorporate accessibility into the planning and delivery of property upgrades and acquisitions so spaces are inclusive for people with disability.	Accessibility considered in planned property improvements and acquisitions.	Director Property and Facilities	Dec 2026 - Dec 2029

Outcome	Action	Measures	Responsibility	Timeframe
	4.4.2 Annually investigate funding opportunities for property improvements through programs like the Stronger Communities Program and annual Clubs Grants.	Grant funding opportunities identified aligned to the annual capex program.	Director Property and Facilities Grants Team, Fundraising	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029
4.5 Vinnies stores and staff provide a more inclusive shopping experience.	4.5.1 Conduct trial for quiet shopping for Vinnies stores and support retail staff with education and materials to increase disability awareness and increase accessibility for those with hidden disabilities.	Trial of quiet shopping for retail stores undertaken with possibility to extend and make permanent based on feedback and evaluation.	Director Retail	June 2027
	4.5.2 Pilot Sunflower Hidden Disabilities program in selection of stores and option to extend more broadly, if successful.	Pilot is conducted and evaluation undertaken for consideration to expand across all retail stores and client facing centres.	Executive Director CERF Executive Director Vinnies Services	Jun 2027
4.6 Society personnel, particularly those dealing with clients, are disability confident and knowledgeable when assisting a person with disability.	4.6.1 Provide disability confidence training and materials for members, volunteers and employees.	Delivery of disability confidence training through a mix of online and face to face training. Guides on supporting people with disability provided for frontline staff. Conduct post-training survey to evaluate the impact of the training and changes in confidence.	Executive Director Vinnies Services Executive Director MVEI Director Retail, CERF Culture and Inclusion Partner, PC&S	Dec 2026 Dec 2027 Dec 2028 Dec 2029



Implementation and Reporting

For each initiative, directorates and roles have been identified. Coordination of the Plan will be the responsibility of People, Culture and Safety.

Disability Inclusion Working Group

- Responsible for overseeing the implementation of the plan and meets regularly to track progress.
- Is led by the Executive Sponsor who chairs the Working Group meetings.
- Has representatives from across all directorates of the Society.
- Includes an external representative who brings expertise in the disability sector.

People with Disability Employee Network Group

- Is open to employees with lived experience of disability, carers and allies.
- Provides advice and guidance on initiatives, relevant policies and practices.
- The leader of the Network Group represents the network on the Disability Inclusion Working Group.

Reports on progress will be made to the Executive Leadership Team.



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