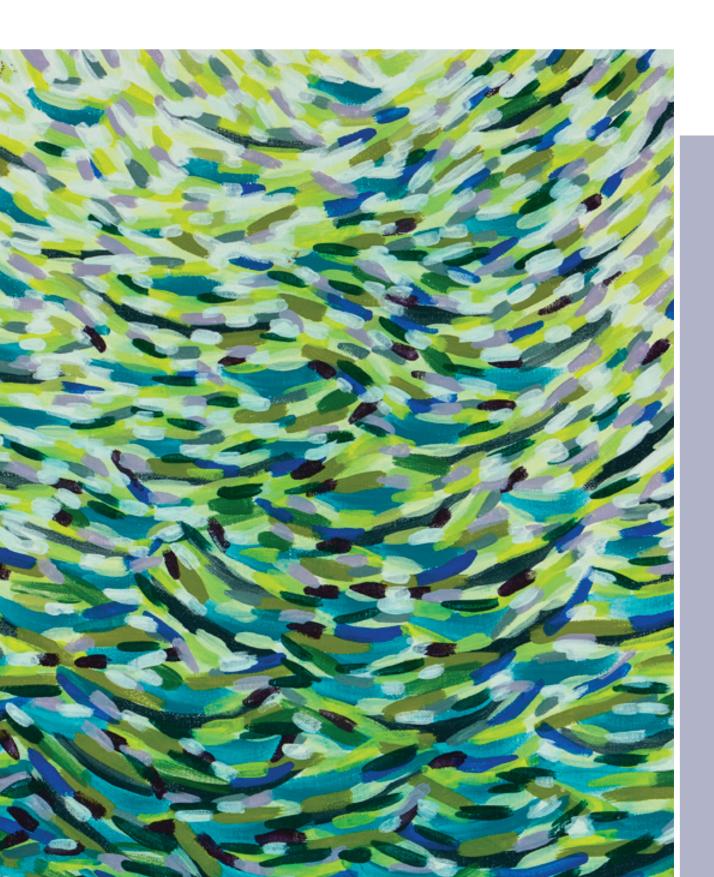


**Australian Government** 

## Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25



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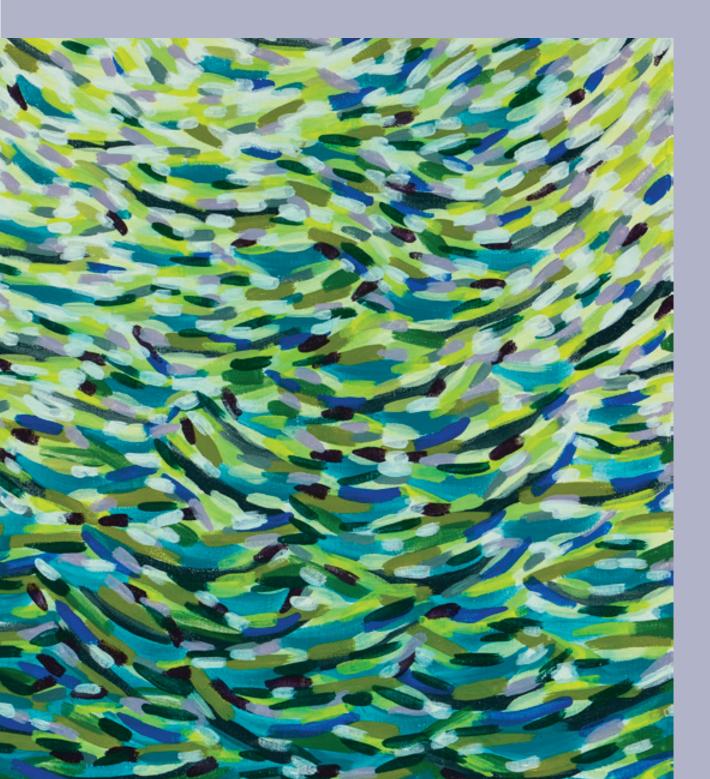
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# Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25



### **Ministers' foreword**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge all Indigenous Australians and their continuing connection to Country, culture and community.

The Australian Government values the immeasurable contribution people with disability make to Australian communities, workplaces and our economy. People with disability have the right to lead rich, fulfilling and diverse lives and a key area where government can do more is employment.

We know that people with disability want greater opportunities to fully participate in the economic life of our nation. People with disability can sometimes find it hard to get a job and keep it. For people with disability who want a job, we need to support them to find and keep one.

Employment is the key to unlocking improved economic security, independence and wellbeing for all Australians, including people with disability. Employment gives people more choice and opportunity to fulfil their other ambitions in life.

As a nation, we need to rise to the challenge of improving the employment outcomes for people with disability. All workplaces have a role to play, including the Australian Public Service (APS). With more than 150,000 employees, the APS is one of the largest employers in Australia, with an enormous range of roles and opportunities.

The Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25 is an important part of the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to improving the employment outcomes for people with disability. Continuing the momentum from the previous APS disability employment strategy, this new Strategy sets out a comprehensive plan to improve the employment outcomes for people with disability. It aligns with the National Disability Strategy and reinforces the Australian Government's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Improving the representation of people with disability at all levels in the APS is a critical first step to ensuring the APS workforce reflects the communities they serve. Therefore, this Strategy sets out an ambitious vision for achieving a significant increase in representation of people with disability employed in the APS. If we approach recruitment differently, focus on ability and provide appropriate supports, then together we can make a real difference.



In order to achieve positive long-term employment outcomes for people with disability, APS agencies also need to create accessible, innovative and inclusive workplaces for new and existing employees with disability. This will enable all employees to perform at their best.

It is imperative that leaders across the APS work collaboratively to drive change and innovation. By working together to embed an inclusive culture, improve recruitment processes and streamline accessibility, we can create rewarding career pathways and increase the recruitment and retention of people with disability in the APS.

#### The Hon Ben Morton, MP

#### Senator the Hon Anne Ruston

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Minister for Families and Social Services

### Australian Public Service Commissioner's Message

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we operate. I pay my respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging, acknowledging their history and continued connection to Country.

I am proud to present the *Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25* (the Strategy).

We have a responsibility to create a workforce that represents and best serves the Australian community. Our goal is to increase the employment of people with disability across the APS to 7% by 2025.

Aligning with the APS reform agenda and the National Disability Strategy, the Strategy sets out an ambitious change in culture and mindset for the APS. We must continue to build on the strengths of agencies that have already demonstrated successful models for employment of people with disability. Sharing resources, success stories and engaging with expertise will assist in delivering the cultural shifts necessary. This Strategy itself is an example of strong collaboration between agencies across the APS. It was developed by a cross-agency team, led by the Australian Public Service Commission and the Department of Social Services.

It is also the product of extensive consultation with people with disability, both within and outside the APS. I would like to acknowledge their contributions to this Strategy and the important role that the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Ben Gauntlett, played in helping to enable this consultation to occur. Examples of this are the two consultation sessions with groups of young people with disability who could be potential APS employees that were held in Sydney and Melbourne. They provided valuable insights that have informed the development of this Strategy.

The government and the Australian community have high expectations for the outcomes delivered by the APS. A workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian community will help produce programs, polices and services that meet the community's diverse needs. There are clear benefits in having stronger representation of people with disability in the APS.



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Alongside a strong focus on recruitment, the Strategy focuses on the need for improvement in our workplace culture and employment environment. To succeed, we must attract, retain, develop, support and value people with disability in our organisations.

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Accountability will be critical in driving change on this scale. Taking ownership and responsibility for progress will be key to our success. We all have a role to play.

#### Mr Peter Woolcott AO

Commissioner, Australian Public Service Commission



### Department of Social Services Secretary's Message

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledge the continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respects to the people, the culture and the Elders, past, present and emerging.

The Department of Social Services has a leading role in the development and implementation of the Australian Government's approach to support people with disability in all facets of life, particularly increasing the number of people with disability employed in the APS. Employment is a key enabler of wellbeing and economic prosperity.

The Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25 provides an important roadmap to increase disability employment across the APS.

With 4.4 million people in Australia identifying as having a disability, improving the representation of people with disability is vital to building a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the Australian community we serve.

The government rightly expects the APS to set an example to other employers of the benefits of accessing a diverse talent pool and the value of employing people with disability.

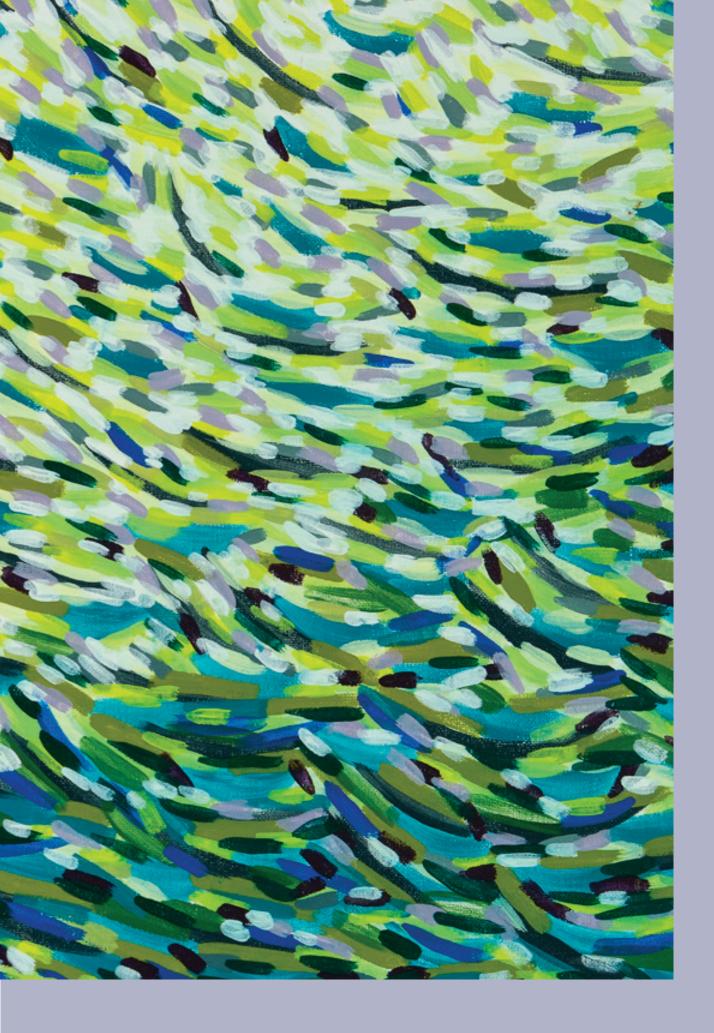
There are already outstanding APS examples of leadership in disability employment, including the Department of Social Services, Services Australia, the National Disability Insurance Agency, the Australian Taxation Office and the Department of Defence, which all agencies can learn from and emulate.

To make the APS an employer of choice for people with disability, and to achieve our target of a 7% employment rate by 2025, all agencies must take an active approach to recruitment, promotion and retention.

I encourage all APS agencies to embed the objectives of this Strategy within their organisation. I am confident the APS will look to the Strategy to build their future workforce.

#### Ms Kathryn Campbell AO, CSC

Secretary, Department of Social Services





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### Our vision

The *Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25* provides a foundation for building an inclusive and diverse Australian Public Service.

The Strategy has two focus areas:

- · Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability
- Accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments

There is a strong interrelationship between the elements of this Strategy. First, attraction, recruitment, and retention; and secondly accessible and inclusive workplace cultures. This is important because disability can affect anyone, at any age, and at any stage of the employment cycle.

Existing employees and disability employee networks will be key allies for change. Leadership, at all levels and in every agency, will be required to ensure the Strategy achieves its outcomes.

Through collective and sustained effort, we can create an APS culture that benefits and supports all people with disability.



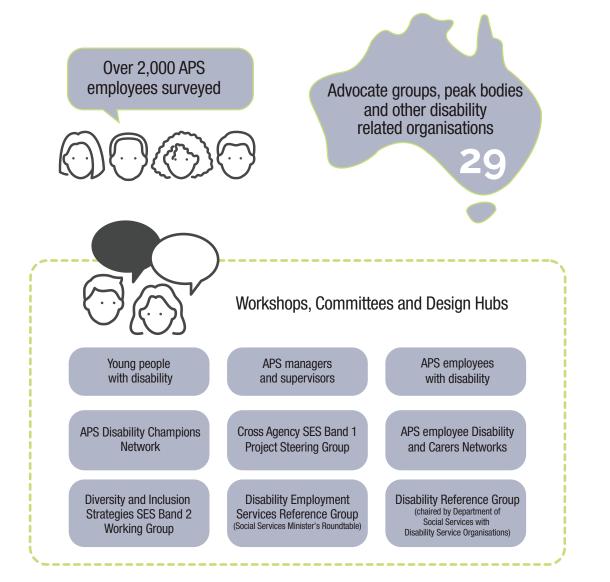


### Part 1: Development of the Strategy

A broad range of stakeholders across the public and private sector and those with lived experience contributed to the development of the Strategy. Organisations and individuals were generous with their time, experience, insights and personal stories. Input came from a broad range of sources:

- APS departments and agencies, and state and territory jurisdictions who provided insight into how employees with disability are supported in their respective agencies through networks, initiatives and avenues for feedback:
  - APS Disability Champions Network
  - Diversity and inclusion committees and working groups
  - APS Human Resource (HR) and Corporate areas
  - APS employee disability networks
- Regular dialogue with Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Advocacy groups, peak bodies and other disability related organisations. These
  organisations provided key perspectives from people with disability in the broader
  Australian community, on current approaches, best practice, and preferred language
  with regard to disability employment matters.
- Disability Employment Service providers for insight into the requirements of people with disability seeking employment.
- Focus groups (in collaboration with Department of Veterans' Affairs) for input from those with lived experience and those supervising people with disability within the APS:
  - APS managers and supervisors 19 agencies represented
  - APS employees with disability 29 agencies represented
- Online survey of APS employees (in collaboration with Comcare) for input on best practice and challenges for people with disability in the APS.
- Workshops with young people with disability (in collaboration with Australian Human Rights Commission) in Sydney and Melbourne. These focused on young people seeking employment and their perspectives of what they need and look for in an employer.

### **Over 60 APS Departments and Agencies**



'The employment of people with disability throughout all levels of the APS should not be seen as exceptional – rather, it reflects the APS' commitment to retaining talented people. Employing people with disability ensures the policies developed by public servants are informed by lived experience and are beneficial for all Australians.'

- Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner

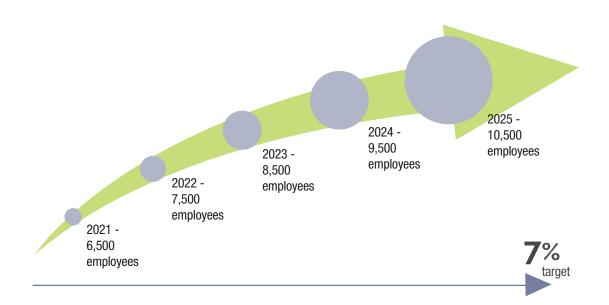


### Part 2: The context

Over the last 30 years the proportion of employees with disability employed in the APS has declined; from 6.8% at its highest point in 1986 to 4.0% in 2020. In fact, the labour force participation for people with disability has remained stable since 2015, in contrast to an increase in the participation rate for people without disability.<sup>1</sup>

In May 2019, the Australian Government committed to a new employment target for people with disability in the APS of 7% by 2025.

Across the APS, 7% equates to employing at least an additional 4,500 people with disability by 2025.



<sup>1 4430.0 -</sup> Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018



The APS will require more than 1,600 new employees with disability per year to join the APS over the life of the Strategy. This takes into account the number of people with disability that leave the APS each year and those who acquire or choose to share their disability status during their employment.

As well as this increased recruitment activity, the APS needs to create a culture which celebrates and welcomes diversity. It needs to make working environments more accessible and take a more flexible approach to job design. A more inclusive culture will increase retention and encourage employees with disability to share their disability with their agencies so that, where appropriate, arrangements can be made to maximise their job satisfaction, engagement and productivity.

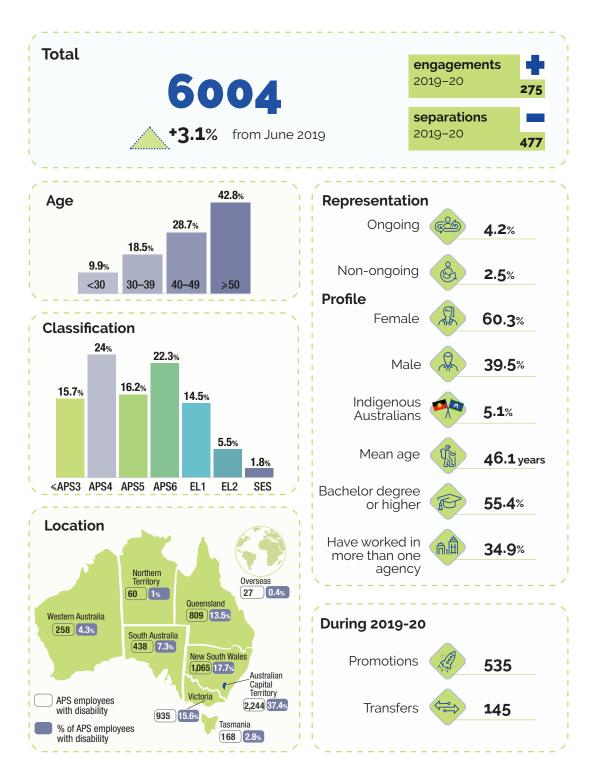
The Strategy strives to empower agencies and individuals to positively influence the environment and culture of the APS. It also promotes a strengths-based approach, highlighting the inherent abilities of individuals with disability.<sup>2</sup>

For those with disability who are women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people who identify as LGBTQI+, there can be increased barriers to inclusion. The Strategy is part of a suite of strategies and actions to support and promote diversity, and inclusive practices across the APS.

The Strategy's successful implementation will require broad agency commitment and the collaboration of Senior Leaders and APS employees to deliver real progress.

<sup>2</sup> The appendixes provides a definition of disability in the APS employment context.

# At a glance - APS employees who have shared their disability status



Source: APS Employment Data release 30 June 2020

#### Why we need change

An APS workforce that better reflects the diversity of the Australian community will help produce programs, policies and services that meet the community's diverse needs. People with disability bring lived perspectives and expertise to the workplace and want to make a positive difference.

'If our workforce and internal experience doesn't reflect the population then we will have blinkers on when developing programs, policies or providing service delivery.' – APS small agency

The Australian Government has indicated that the Commonwealth's increased role in the provision of services and care for people with disability needs to be supported by a significant increase in the number of people with disability employed in the APS.

This will be achieved by recruiting a large number of employees with disability supported by a working environment that values diversity. We need to increase retention rates as well as encouraging an increased number of employees with disability to share their disability status on agency HR systems.

Our consultations with people with disability during the development of the Strategy highlighted both the level of interest that many have in public sector careers and the barriers they perceive to entry and to career progression. They see the public service as offering secure and meaningful employment doing jobs in which they can make a real difference to the community. However, there was also feedback that APS agencies are not currently seen as employers that are actively seeking to engage people with disability as potential employees, nor as well set up to create the environment and make the adjustments that enable their employees to perform at their best.

There is a strong business case for this change. International research shows that private sector organisations that lead on the employment of people with disability show significantly increased results on revenue, net incomes and profit margins compared to organisations that are not focused on the employment of people with disability.<sup>3</sup> Diversity Council Australia reinforces the business case that organisations leading in access and inclusion of people with disability experience benefits such as increased productivity, increased employee job satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, and increased creativity and innovation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Accenture, Getting to equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage, <a href="https://www.accenture.com/\_acnmedia/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf">https://www.accenture.com/\_acnmedia/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf</a>.

<sup>4</sup> Diversity Council Australia, Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion, <a href="https://www.dca.org.au/di-planning/getting-started-di/business-case-diversity-inclusion">https://www.dca.org.au/di-planning/getting-started-di/business-case-diversity-inclusion</a>.



'Having people with disability in the workplace is an asset rather than a deficit.' – State Government Disability Advisory Council

Some of the approaches linked to employment of people with disability, such as workplace adjustments, can benefit all employees, not just those with disability. Our research shows that most people with disability do not require costly adjustments to the workplace or equipment, with a common adjustment being 'flexible work arrangements'.

A strong evidence base of research, lived experience and practitioner experience demonstrates that there are a number of benefits from employing people with disability:

#### Benefits for the APS and agencies

- larger talent pool
- increased creativity, productivity and morale
- innovation and flexibility
- an employer of choice for employees with disability
- retention of valuable employee experience
- increased employee job satisfaction
- better representation and understanding of the Australian community the APS serves
- lived experience is incorporated into the development of policies that directly impact people with disability
- an APS that values inclusion and diversity

#### Benefits for people with disability

- empowerment
- included and valued within the workplace
- greater social connections and inclusion in society
- improved living standards and financial independence
- renewed sense of identity and increased self-esteem
- positive health impacts





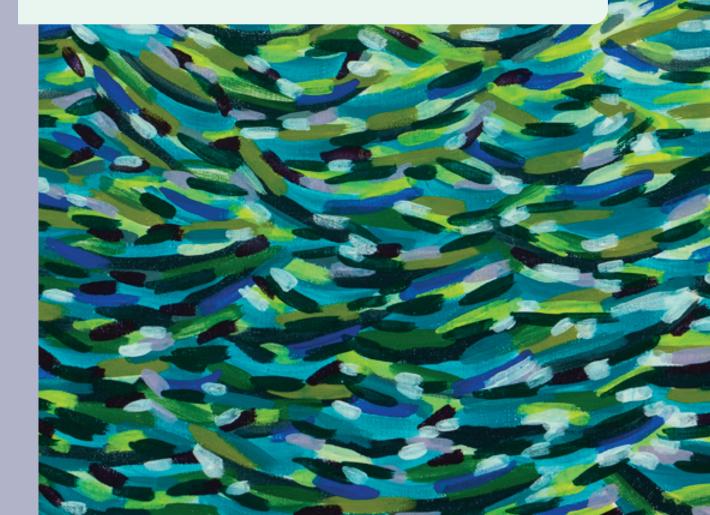
#### Benefits for the Australian community

- an APS workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian community
- improved products and services
- better use of tax dollars
- more people in meaningful employment
- development of better products and services that are able to be used by the entire population
- increased economic stability
- reduced demand for social welfare support

'Maximise people's ability to do their job well and everyone benefits - including the organisation.' – Inclusion specialist

'We know that people with disability want the opportunity to fully participate in the economic life of our nation. For people with disability who want employment, we should support them to find and keep a job. Employment gives people with disability more choice and opportunity to fulfil their other ambitions in life as well as generating demonstrable business benefits for employers.'

- Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services





# Part 3: Increasing the recruitment of people with disability and building a more inclusive APS

Implementing the Strategy will require both short-term and long-term actions and goals. The APS and broader employment landscapes will continue to change over the duration of the Strategy. The capacity to continuously improve will be crucial and Strategy implementation will need to be adaptive and flexible.

#### Outcomes of focus areas 1 and 2

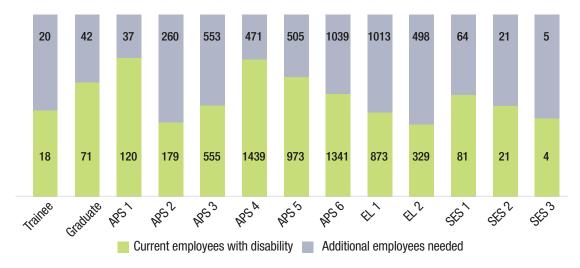


#### Focus area 1: Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability

**Outcome**: We will increase the number of people with disability in the APS through attraction, recruitment and retention initiatives. We will ensure that the APS is an employer of choice that is well regarded in the broader disability community.

The APS has been seeking to increase employment of people with disability for a number of years, with limited and inconsistent progress. This Strategy is an opportunity to approach recruitment differently. Our aim is to almost double the number of APS employees with disability in just 5 years.

Meeting our target will require agencies and the APS as a whole to make an immediate, discernible shift in recruitment practices. This requires a positive change in attitudes towards recruiting and supporting long-term employment of people with disability. There is a large talent pool we can draw from with 2.1 million people with disability being of working age (15-64 years).<sup>5</sup>



APS employees who have shared their disability status by classification and the additional employees required to get to 7%

This graph provides a picture of the recruitment levels required by classification level if the 7% target were applied to each APS classification level. Although the target is for the whole of APS, these figures may assist agencies to consider attraction and career development needs at all levels, not entry level recruitment alone.

'The APS should be a role model for other large employers and celebrate its employees with disability, highlighting the valuable contribution they make to the public service.' – APS employee with disability

We need to rapidly expand entry pathways and remove the barriers present in our recruitment methods and systems. To complement that work, we need to promote APS employment and its benefits to jobseekers with disability, particularly young jobseekers with disability.



Source: APS Employment Data release 30 June 2020



Action 1: Develop a whole-of-government approach to large-scale recruitment of people with disability designed to meet the government's recruitment target. Expand the range of employment pathways into the APS, including through the use of Affirmative measure – disability for entry level, middle management and senior roles.

The Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to develop and implement a whole of APS recruitment approach that will enable the APS to meet the level of increase needed to achieve the government's target. To support this, we will define and develop incentives for agencies to engage this group of potential employees.

Our recruitment efforts must engage people with disability as widely as possible. For example, the APS should be providing as broad a range of entry-points as possible. To achieve this, the Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to expand the range of employment pathways into the APS, including through the use of Affirmative measure – disability for entry level, middle management and senior roles.

Positions advertised under Affirmative measure – disability are designated for people with disability as set out in the *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016.*<sup>6</sup> Affirmative measure – disability and targeted pathways can act as a strong attractor for prospective employees, and demonstrate our commitment to employment of people with disability. Agencies must actively identify opportunities to use Affirmative measures across all levels, entry points and roles within the organisation.

'There is a perception from Disability Employment Services providers that we're only looking for graduates.' – APS Senior Executive

Employment pathways can include internships, work experience placements, entry-level graduate positions, traineeships, cadetships and specialised programs. The success of targeted pathways increases when there is significant attention paid to supporting job-readiness and the readiness of the workplace. Agencies should work with employees with disability, disability peak organisations and specialist providers to ensure the job is designed to their individual capability and for sustainable employment outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> Section 27 of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016, https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2019C00615



Action 2: As part of the broader APS reform work, develop APS-wide branding and employee value proposition that enables the promotion of the APS as an employer of choice for people with disability. Actively seek out skilled and talented people with disability.

Successfully promoting the APS as an employer of choice will depend on a strong and unified brand that appeals to prospective employees with disability. We are competing with other organisations for talent and we need to make a good case for the APS and its agencies as employers.

'I saw the APS as an employer who would provide me with opportunities to develop and provide an inclusive and supportive work environment.' – APS employee with disability

Our reputation and employee value proposition is directly connected to the experiences of current APS employees with disability.

There is an external perception that employment in the APS is inaccessible for people with disability, and that required workplace supports may not be available. We need to understand why these perceptions exist so that we can actively promote the value and range of APS careers to change this perception.

APS recruitment must move from a passive to an active approach to recruit and retain people with disability. Actively engaging with people with disability and encouraging them to join the APS will support this. To meet the APS disability employment target for the employment of people with disability, agencies will need to present themselves as employers of choice directly to prospective employees with disability.

'You need to go to them; they don't see the APS as a genuine possibility.'

– Disability Employment Services provider



Action 3: Agencies to work with the Australian Public Service Commission to conduct a review of recruitment practices (including application of Affirmative measures) to ensure alignment with contemporary and inclusive practices.

APS recruitment practices need to be flexible enough to access the broadest range of talented applicants. They need to be contemporary and equitable ensuring meritbased selection is robust and inclusive. Employees with disability who are unsuccessful in securing an APS role must feel they had a fair assessment and feel encouraged to apply for APS jobs again. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, it is unlawful for an employer to treat an applicant with disability less favourably because of their disability.

"...a decision relating to engagement or promotion is based on merit if: (a) all eligible members of the community were given a reasonable opportunity to apply to perform the relevant duties...' – Subsection 10A(2)(a) of the Public Service Act 1999

RecruitAbility is an APS scheme which aims to attract and develop applicants with disability, and facilitate cultural changes in selection panels and agency recruitment.<sup>7</sup> The scheme has been shown to improve recruitment experiences and outcomes, but has been applied inconsistently across the APS. Improving the operation of the RecruitAbility Scheme will assist in building our reputation as a genuine employer of people with disability.

#### 'Asking: "what do you need to do your job well?" should be standard practice.' – APS Senior Executive

Inclusive recruitment practices can provide prospective applicants with confidence that the organisation is prepared and well-placed to provide the support and tools they will require to be successful in the role. Agencies must adopt more personalised recruitment methods and assessment processes. Effective practice in this area varies between agencies and the Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to review current practice and build awareness of good practice alternatives.

To be effective, expanded recruitment efforts need to enable people with disability to perform at their best in recruitment processes, and in the workplace.

'I have skills, but I struggle to show them in interviews. Job trials are good for me!'
Participant at Workshop for Young People with Disability (hosted by the
Australian Public Service Commission and Australian Human Rights Commission)

<sup>7</sup> Section 28 of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016 https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/ F2019C00615





#### Attorney-General's Department - Case Study

We are committed to breaking down barriers and building an inclusive culture, where adjustments are accepted as part of everyday operations that enable staff to fully participate in our workplace, and where the value of diversity is recognised and embraced. We have come a long way as an organisation and we're proud of this progress. We also acknowledge there is still much work for us to do.

We have developed an accessibility catalogue, providing staff with a range of assistive technologies to assist with their everyday work needs. Our Celebrating Ability Network has hosted accessibility challenges, providing staff a unique insight into the experiences of life with disability. These challenges provide insights for colleagues and managers as to how we can better support staff with disability. All assistive technology is assessed for compatibility with our enterprise architecture, rated to PROTECTED. Information Division has introduced laptops to replace traditional desktops. This step has increased the flexible work environment across the department, which is critical in meeting the needs of staff with disability.

The Disability Royal Commission (DRC) has driven the broader introduction of assistive technology. The DRC workforce has 12% of staff identifying as having disability (and as high as 64% in some teams). Mobile technology solutions allow the DRC to operate a genuinely, fully-flexible working environment which is critical to meeting the needs of staff with disability. This has provided scope for the DRC to employ people with exceptional skills who otherwise may have been excluded from the workplace and has by extension built a supportive and inclusive culture where disability is simply accepted as the norm and not as a limitation. The effect of an accessible digital/IT environment therefore extends much further within an organisation than the ability to achieve a task; it's also a cultural and productivity benefit across the board for the APS and the Australian community as a whole. It allows us to model the behaviours the Australian Government has committed to through the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, including full and effective participation and inclusion in society, and equality of opportunity.



#### Focus area 2: Accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments

**Outcome**: We will develop workplace cultures and environments that remove barriers to performance and support career development for all employees, including people with disability.

While recruitment will increase the number of employees with disability, we also need to make changes to ensure we retain new employees. When we improve the workplace experience of employees with disability we improve the retention rate of new and current employees. Over time, this may encourage more people with disability to share their disability status on agency HR systems. The key areas for improvement are inclusive culture and accessibility.

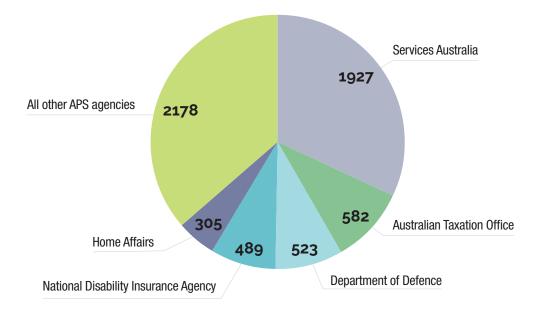
Improving these will take concerted effort over a longer period. It will involve changing the attitudes and mindset of our workforce and changing the way we work and engage with each other. APS employees with disability must be central to, and consulted on, these actions.

# 'Ask us what we need to develop and improve, and work with us to make adjustments.' – APS employee with disability

When current and prospective employees with disability have confidence that an APS career can meet their needs and aspirations, the APS will see better results in recruiting talent, employee performance and retention. This has already been the experience for the National Disability Insurance Agency, Services Australia, Department of Defence and Australian Taxation Office.

'Here, we believe that diversity and inclusion is the key to getting good results and is ingrained in everything we do.' – HR, APS small agency





#### Agencies with the largest number of employees who have shared their disability status

Source: APS Employment Data release 30 June 2020

#### Inclusive culture

# Action 4: Agencies to provide disability awareness and capability uplift for managers and senior leaders.

The behaviour of APS leaders has a significant impact on employee engagement as well as on organisational performance. Leaders play a vital role in creating and maintaining positive workplaces that are free from stigma and discrimination. We need our leaders to act as role models – and ideally as coaches and mentors.

We should provide consistent disability awareness and confidence training to managers, to embed the confidence and knowledge needed to effectively support employment of people with disability. Many of the manager-related issues employees with disability encounter are not disability-specific, however they may have an increased impact on employees with disability.

Through modelling consistent and unbiased behaviours, our leaders and managers can foster a culture where all employees, including employees with disability, feel safe, valued and respected, and are supported to perform optimally. Visible commitment by senior leaders backed by meaningful assessment mechanisms can ensure acceptance and support for workplace initiatives concerning disability.



# Action 5: Agencies to implement the disability liaison officer model to support employees with disability.

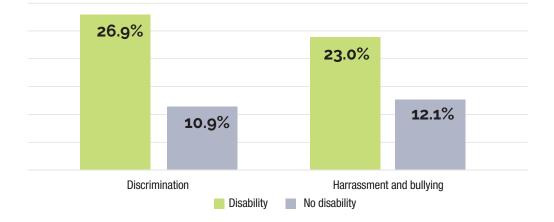
Introducing a disability liaison officer model widely in the APS can provide employees with disability with a knowledgeable touchpoint to navigate systems and access supports. Liaison officers provide support to employees with disability at any stage of the employment lifecycle when it is beyond the manager's capability. Disability liaison officers should be impartial, objective employees who understand the barriers and systems in the workplace. These officers can have honest, safe and confidential conversations with employees with disability, to best support resolving their needs. Liaison officers can play a leading role in uplifting the experience of employees with disability and guiding managers and senior leaders.

The Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to develop a disability liaison officer network to share experience and maximise the effectiveness of the model.

#### Action 6: Improve disability awareness and confidence to create an inclusive culture.

The Strategy depends on commitment from all APS staff to include and value employees with disability.

Results from the 2019 APS Employee Census indicate that employees with disability are more than twice as likely to report having experienced discrimination in the course of their employment during the last 12 months (26.9% compared with 10.9% for employees who do not share their disability status). More than half (53.5%) of these employees identify disability as the basis of the discrimination.



#### Percentage of employees who have experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying

Source: 2019 APS Employee Census

Encouraging and enabling employees to undertake disability awareness, confidence and rights training will promote inclusiveness and dispel misconceptions about people with disability. Celebrating days of significance and sharing stories of success will continue to positively influence the cultures of APS agencies. Employee disability networks can also help to drive agency culture and systemic change.

# Action 7: Agencies to review business practices to include workplace adjustments and to embed conversations about workplace adjustments into all stages of the employee lifecycle.

We must be able to provide our employees with the tools they need to perform at their best. We need efficient and reliable procedures to put these workplace adjustments in place from: attraction, recruitment and onboarding to performance, talent and career management and succession planning for employees.

Conversations about workplace adjustments should take place before an employee starts, with an aim to have any adjustments ready on day one. Regular conversations asking 'what do you need to do your job well?' and 'do you feel supported in relation to your work?' should occur throughout an employee's career.

Workplace adjustments are a performance enabler and can have a strong impact on an employee's experience. Managers must address them proactively to support and retain their employees.

'My manager ensured staff in the office were aware of guide dog etiquette before I commenced employment. She arranged an opportunity for me to speak with all staff on how they can assist me in the workplace.' – APS employee with disability

Action 8: Ensure employees with disability are supported and encouraged to take up mobility and career development opportunities.

Professional development is a crucial part of an APS career. The 2019 APS Employee Census results indicate that employees with disability are less likely to be satisfied with the opportunities for career progression in their agency. The development of career pathways for employees with disability requires particular attention to reduce career stagnation. Both agencies and employees benefit from mobility and professional capability growth.



We should provide career development support for employees with disability, including through mentors, coaches, mobility opportunities and employee networks. Professional development and talent management programs should actively include employees with disability.

Career satisfaction and a genuine sense of opportunity within the APS are central to retaining our existing employees with disability, and the many more we aim to recruit.

#### Accessibility

## Action 9: Agencies to ensure all internal and external products and services are accessible.

Our workplaces must not be barriers to our employees' performance. We must act to address and prevent issues with workplace design and systemic barriers to the use of assistive technology.

Like any employee, when those with disability have the systems, tools and access to carry out their work, they can perform at their best. Acting to ensure accessibility and inclusion must be business as usual in the APS, for our employees and for the Australian community. Taking a proactive approach to accessibility is efficient and effective. Agencies must also consider accessibility requirements for working from home arrangements for people with disability. This also includes consideration of flexible work hours.

All our employees should have access to information and training on accessibility, so they can produce documents, conduct meetings, communicate with colleagues and the general public and collaborate in an inclusive way. All APS employees should be able to recognise when a product or service is not accessible and have the ability to make it accessible or refer the matter to a party who can ensure the product or service is accessible.

'Assistive technology is a long-term investment, rather than a cost, with immediate and medium-term gains.' – Inclusion specialist

# Action 10: Audit of existing Australian Government owned and rented premises for their current levels of accessibility.

Agencies should involve employees with disability and experts on organisational planning, digital and IT policy, change management, and job design to improve accessibility. The Australian Public Service Commission will consult with the Department of Finance on the conduct of an audit of existing Australian Government owned and rented premises and a review of current leasing arrangements to ensure entity compliance with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and other relevant standards.

# Action 11: Collaborate to share assistive technology and equipment across APS agencies and digital environments.

Feedback from employees indicates that uncertainty about retaining assistive technology and equipment may discourage them from seeking further career opportunities across the APS.

We have invested in assistive technology and equipment for our employees and we should make the most of this investment by sharing them across the APS. When an employee moves within the APS, they should retain what they need to perform.

'Creating opportunities for mobility to foster more collaboration and partnerships is key – more movement of ideas, people and approaches.'

- Public administration specialist

Agencies should continue to implement workplace adjustment passports to facilitate the movement of their employees within agencies and the APS. An APS-wide workplace adjustment passport, supported by advice and guidance, could provide consistency and portability across the APS.





'As Chair of the APS Disability Champions Network, I am delighted to work across the APS to help ensure we can all attract, support and value people with disability in all our work places. In my own department, we have recently launched our first Accessibility Action Plan which identifies specific actions, responsible areas and timeframes to continue building an inclusive workplace. I look forward to working with the Network to ensure that - as a result of the Strategy - we strive across the APS to create inclusive cultures where we can all be at our best.'

- David Fredericks PSM, Chair, APS Disability Champions Network



#### Action 12: Agencies must consider accessibility when procuring goods and services.

The APS can influence the wider Australian community regarding accessibility and inclusivity in the workplace. We should support businesses that focus on accessibility. This includes the acquisition of IT systems, software/hardware, accommodation and travel arrangements for interstate and international travel.

The Commonwealth Procurement Rules contain mandatory requirements for applying Australian Standards, including the Australian Standard *Accessibility requirements suitable for public procurement of ICT products and services* (AS EN 301 549:2016). This Australian Standard requires that all technology procured is accessible. This will help foster universal design and improve the experience of all APS employees.

'Working at Questacon has been a very rewarding experience, being able to come into work and being able to work with a wonderful team of people has been a joy for me. Having the opportunity as an employee at Questacon has helped me with my independence financially but also in problem solving and gaining confidence. In learning new skills I have the ability to feel I am contributing to the community.' - Questacon employee







#### Questacon's inclusive employment journey - Case Study

A great way to build disability confidence in staff and to better understand the needs of visitors with disability is to hire people with disability.

In 2018, Questacon began a journey to increase the employment opportunities for people with disability and aimed to become a recognised leader as an inclusive and accessible workplace.

The process began as one identified position for a person with disability and has now grown to become an organisational wide disability inclusion strategy with a number of people with disability employed across a number of different roles.

During one of our recruitment rounds an applicant was identified as someone who had the right attitude and skills to work at Questacon. Although their abilities were not the best match for the advertised role, their abilities were the right match for Questacon.

With our diverse activities and operations, we thought we must be able to create a position that would suit this applicant's personality, skills and aspirations.

We did away with position descriptions and a meaningful job was designed which started with a four hour shift every week.

We didn't realise at the time but we had created a role that suited the individual while adding value to the business through inclusive job design.

Our employee is now piloting our Disability Cadetship program and has increased their hours to 3 shifts a week.

We learnt that to build an inclusive team that reflects our audience, a flexible person-directed management approach is required. In this approach managers are also mentors. We strive to ensure all employees have good working relationships, interesting work and the ability to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation and community.

## Part 4: Ensuring progress

The Strategy recognises the shared responsibility of all agencies to be employers of choice for people with disability. There needs to be accountability shared across the APS to affect positive change and achieve the Strategy's objectives. Clear roles, responsibilities, and governance processes are critical. Public accountability will be important in building trust with stakeholders and potential employees.

#### Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

**Outcome**: We will monitor the implementation of the Strategy, evaluate progress and adjust actions as required to ensure success.

Internal reporting and monitoring will differ across APS departments and agencies due to their diverse size, structure and function. This Strategy provides a consistent framework for monitoring and reporting of the employment of people with disability.

The 7% target is not the sole measure of the Strategy's success. Some agencies already have representation above 7% and it is important that these agencies continue to build on their success and share lessons learnt across the APS.

'Success is not just about employment targets, it's about what we want to achieve in our culture.' – APS Senior Executive

#### Action 13: Monitor and report progress.

Agencies should seek to improve inclusion of people with disability by addressing their culture, recruitment and employee experience, rather than narrowly focusing on the numbers. Additional measurements, both qualitative and quantitative, should be developed and shared between agencies to assist in monitoring improvement. These measurements should consider intersections with reporting of other APS diversity and inclusion strategies.

Portfolios will be required to report on measures of success. Portfolio coordinators will be responsible for coordinating reporting requirements to the Secretaries Board and other governance bodies through the Australian Public Service Commission.

Public reporting will provide transparency in implementation and progress towards the 7% target. Agencies will be held to account by publicly reporting progress through:

- agency Annual Reports
- the annual State of the Service Report
- updates to the APS contribution to the National Disability Strategy
- a mid-Strategy progress report
- a final evaluation of the Strategy

The Australian Public Service Commission will co-design data collection and reporting mechanisms to capture a whole of APS perspective.

The Australian Public Service Commission will commission evaluations of the Strategy in 2022 and 2025.

Action 14: Build a clear understanding across the APS of the benefits of sharing and updating disability status in HR systems. Monitor and report on reported levels and their links to culture, accessibility and job satisfaction.

Employees with disability often choose not to share their disability status in HR systems. This may be due to concerns around stigma, privacy, how the data might affect their career and how they might be treated differently.

#### 'Benefits have to outweigh the costs, right now the benefits aren't clear.'

#### - APS employee with disability

We must be clear about what is being asked for, how this data will be used, and why it is being collected. We should also ensure employees understand how they may benefit from sharing their disability status in HR systems. This data should be collected in a consistent manner across the APS.

It is important that agencies collect this data to understand disability demographics and how they are tracking against the target. Collecting this data from existing employees should not be seen as a primary tool for increasing reported representation.

We will correlate this data collection to efforts to enhance culture, accessibility and job design. The clear intent will be to ensure that agencies are seen to be working with their staff to use these tools to maximise job satisfaction, engagement and productivity.

The value of sharing this information with an employer and psychosocial safety are key considerations as to whether we can meet the target.



## **Departments and Agencies**

**Outcome**: Departments and agencies will collaborate to leverage good practice across the APS.

Action 15: Build a partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission to identify, support and enhance good practice.

By working collaboratively with the Disability Discrimination Commissioner's Office at the Australian Human Rights Commission, the APS can build a partnership which underpins the robust measurement and evaluation of progress. This partnership will provide continued connection to good practice in employment of people with disability, accessible workplaces, and inclusive cultures. It will also support training and other initiatives to help agencies improve their approach.

Action 16: Agencies to collaborate to develop and share exemplary initiatives and innovative practices.

We must take full advantage of existing knowledge and successful practice in the APS. When agencies share their expertise and support each other, we implement change more quickly and efficiently.

'Portfolio coordinators should support smaller APS agencies in implementing diversity initiatives.' – APS agency

The Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to increase collaboration and the sharing of experience. It will support the development of networks within and across portfolios.

The Australian Public Service Commission will work with agencies to draw on knowledge, expertise and experience across the system, identifying partner agencies to develop, lead or deliver initiatives.

The Australian Public Service Commission will establish forums and mechanisms to share good practice including people with disability from the public sector, private sector, industry and academic institutions.



## **The Senior Executive Service**

# **Outcome**: We will ensure the Strategy is implemented across all agencies and that accountability for action rests with senior APS leadership.

The Senior Executive Service (SES) has an important role to play in implementing this Strategy. This is consistent with their responsibility to provide the APS-wide strategic leadership that contributes to a diverse, inclusive and effective public sector, promotes cooperation within and between agencies, including delivering outcomes across agency and portfolio boundaries.

Action 17: All Heads of departments and agencies will be accountable for implementing the Strategy and taking actions to support the key areas of the Strategy.

Agency Head Agreements will include Key Performance Indicators as part of their agency's commitment to a disability confident and inclusive workforce.

Agency Chief Operating Officers will play a crucial role in sponsoring and guiding implementation, and in monitoring agency and portfolio progress.

Action 18: Disability Champions are to promote and drive implementation of the Strategy within their agency and collaborate APS-wide through the APS Disability Champions Network.

APS Disability Champions have an active role to play in leadership, seeking to remove barriers and visibly championing activities related to access and inclusion in the workplace.

'I need to lead by example. I am a SES officer, a Disability Champion, and I have disability.' – Disability Champion

Disability Champions should ensure they are aware of the needs and workplace context of employees with disability in their agency and champion inclusive, accessible practices. The Disability Champions Network will be a forum to monitor progress in Strategy implementation and the effectiveness of initiatives. The Network will undertake a formal annual review of its progress.

# Appendixes

## Definition and the social model

This Strategy supports all employees with disability: whether they have conditions, limitations or impairments that are visible, invisible, chronic or episodic; or whether they are life-long, or acquired throughout life, from injury or other conditions. It encompasses a broad range of lived experience and focuses on reducing the specific barriers or challenges that individuals with disability may experience in the workplace. Of course, this Strategy recognises that not all disabilities are visible.

'It's about what support people need to perform their best - not what their disability status is!' – APS employee with disability

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition of disability is used across the APS, including in Australian Public Service Employment Data metrics. This definition states that 'a person has a disability if they report they have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities'.<sup>8</sup>

Language used to discuss disability has shifted over time and is often reflective of an underlying perspective of disability. The Strategy is aligned to contemporary language supporting a social model of disability rather than a medical model.

The social model of disability considers the barriers that people with disability can face. It is based on the premise that an environment and culture can be altered or adapted to include and accommodate the full range of human diversity. The APS needs to ensure this for all our employees.

<sup>8 4430.0 -</sup> Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018 <a href="https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018?opendocument&tabname-Summary&prodno=4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018?opendocument&tabname-Summary&prodno=4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018?opendocument&tabname-Summary&prodno=4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018?opendocument&tabname-Summary&prodno=4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0&issue=2018&num=&view=>">https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.gov.au/ausstatstats/ausstats/ausstats/ausstats/ausstatstatstats/ausstats/ausstatst



## **Outcome and action matrix**

Increasing the recruitment of people with disability and building a more inclusive APS

Focus area 1:

Attract, recruit and retain more people with disability

**Outcome**: We will increase the recruitment of people with disability into the APS. We will ensure that the APS is an employer of choice that is well-regarded in the broad disability community.

Act	ion	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
1	Develop a whole-of-government approach to large-scale recruitment of people with disability designed to meet the government's recruitment target. Expand the range of employment pathways into the APS, including through the use of Affirmative measure – disability for entry level, middle management and senior roles.	Australian Public Service Commission and Department of Finance	2022
2	As part of the broader APS reform work, develop APS-wide branding and employee value proposition that enables the promotion of the APS as an employer of choice for people with disability. Actively seek out skilled and talented people with disability.	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Australian Public Service Commission	2022
3	Agencies to work with the Australian Public Service Commission to conduct a review of recruitment practices (including application of Affirmative measures) to ensure alignment with contemporary and inclusive practices.	Australian Public Service Commission	2021



#### Focus area 2:

Accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments

**Outcome**: We will develop workplace cultures and environments that remove barriers to performance and support career development for all employees, including people with disability.

Acti	on	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
4	Inclusive culture – Agencies to provide disability awareness and capability uplift for managers and senior leaders.	All agencies supported by Australian Public Service Commission and Australian Human Rights Commission	2022
5	Inclusive culture - Agencies to implement the disability liaison officer model to support employees with disability.	All agencies supported by Australian Public Service Commission, Australian Human Rights Commission, National Disability Insurance Agency and Services Australia	2022
6	Inclusive culture - Improve disability awareness and confidence to create an inclusive culture.	All agencies supported by Australian Public Service Commission and Australian Human Rights Commission	2022
7	Inclusive culture - Agencies to review business practices to include workplace adjustments and to embed conversations about workplace adjustments into all stages of the employee lifecycle.	Allagencies	2021





Actio	on	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
8	Inclusive culture - Ensure employees with disability are supported and encouraged to take up mobility and career development opportunities.	Allagencies	2023
9	Accessibility - Agencies to ensure all internal and external products and services are accessible.	Allagencies	2023
10	Accessibility - Audit of existing Australian Government owned and rented premises for their current levels of accessibility.	Department of Finance	2021
11	Accessibility - Collaborate to share assistive technology and equipment across APS agencies and digital environments.	Department of Social Services and Digital Transformation Agency	2023
12	Accessibility - Agencies must consider accessibility when procuring goods and services.	Department of Finance	2023

## **Ensuring progress**

#### Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

**Outcome**: We will monitor the implementation of the Strategy, evaluate progress and adjust actions as required to ensure success.

Acti	on	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
13	Monitor and report progress.	Australian Public Service Commission	2023
14	Build a clear understanding across the APS of the benefits of sharing and updating disability status in HR systems. Monitor and report on reported levels and their links to culture, accessibility and job satisfaction.	Australian Public Service Commission	2022

#### **Departments and Agencies**

**Outcome**: Departments and agencies will collaborate to leverage good practice across the APS.

Acti	on	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
15	Build a partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission to identify, support and enhance good practice.	Australian Public Service Commission	Ongoing
16	Agencies to collaborate to develop and share exemplary initiatives and innovative practices.	All agencies	Ongoing





#### The Senior Executive Service

**Outcome**: We will ensure that the Strategy is implemented across all agencies and that accountability for action rests with senior APS leadership.

Actio	on	Lead/s	Projected delivery date
17	All Heads of departments and agencies will be accountable for implementing the Strategy and taking actions to support the key areas of the Strategy.	All agencies	Ongoing
18	Disability Champions are to promote and drive implementation of the Strategy within their agency and collaborate APS-wide through the APS Disability Champions Network.	Chair, APS Disability Champions Network, and Australian Public Service Commission	Ongoing



#### About the artist

Megan Munro has been a practicing artist since graduating from the ANU Canberra School of Art in 1996. Over the years they have used many different techniques to express their art, including painting, drawing, printing, crochet and performance.

Megan identifies with a few letters of the the LGBTQI+ community, is a strong social justice advocate and worked as an educator for 17 years, supporting many disadvantaged and marginalised groups of people to grow and learn. In 2018, Megan was diagnosed with a chronic illness, and took their career in a new direction, completed a business course and launched their online business, Arachne Art.



J is copyright Megan Munro. Used with permission.



The artwork, titled 'J', represents the essence and feel of an important person in Megan's life. Megan describes the piece as sun shining on water, but you can't tell where the water ends and the sky begins. To Megan, water represents emotion and empathy, 'J' is someone you can relate to.

