



Access Inclusion and  
Employment Plan  
**2022-2025**

**LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS**

# Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this Country and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs, and their Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth-telling and reconciliation. We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, people we support, peak bodies, organisations, leaders and communities across Australia as we continue our reconciliation journey together.



# A Message from DAWN

Life Without Barriers' disability employee network, Disability Ability Wellness Network (DAWN), was established in 2019. The establishment of DAWN stems from our initial Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) which has helped spark cultural change and provide a voice for employees with disability.

Our goal is to create a great place to work for everyone by embracing the individual skills, perspectives, and experiences our people bring to the workplace. DAWN serves as a network and resource for employees with disability and their allies.

DAWN is led by a committee in which 80% of members have a lived experience of disability and is strongly supported by our Chief Executive and Executive Team. An employee-led network with strong integrated connections across all parts of the business, DAWN continues to meaningfully influence strategy and advance accessibility and inclusion outcomes for everyone.

Holding ourselves accountable to our AIEP has been integral to the positive changes we have made and continue to make as an employer of people with disability.

We support the commitments made in this AIEP and hope employees with disability feel supported and empowered to bring their authentic selves to work each day.

– Emily Reaper and Dwayne Brumby, DAWN Co-Chairs

## Special thanks

We acknowledge the guidance and contributions from people with disability and our organisational partner Australian Network on Disability (AND), who supported the development of this Plan.

# Creating Employment Without Barriers

People with disability comprise nearly 20% of Australia’s population; however, they are yet to experience consistent and equitable access to employment. Around 93% of people with disability of working age report experiencing barriers in gaining employment, and less than half are employed. This trend is not only at the entry-level of employment; people with disability are also under-represented in leadership positions, and jobs are often short-term. This is deeply concerning and must change.

Disrupting the barriers people with disability experience is not about benevolence; it is critical to the fabric of society. It is the right of all people to have equal access to employment, and when Australian workplaces are genuinely diverse and reflective of our communities, all of society benefits. It also makes good economic sense for any business to have skilled and talented people in the workforce. People with disability significantly contribute to making any workforce highly productive.

The care and support sector is one of Australia’s top industries for employment growth. It has the capability to lead the way in the employment of people with disability and, in doing so, ignite governments and corporate employers to follow.

Life Without Barriers is committed to improving employment opportunities for people with disability by leveraging our resources, knowledge, experience and scale to enhance our workforce practices and lobby and encourage all Australian employers to do the same.

Our work in this area stems from our Strategy 2025, our overarching organisational strategy, and centres on four key areas:

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- 1. Our role as an inclusive, progressive and welcoming employer**

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  - 2. Creating opportunities for employment through the range of our service offerings**

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  - 3. Engaging in the reforms to the Disability Employment Services system**

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  - 4. Influencing social policy in the area of employment opportunities for people with disability**

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The commencement of this Plan comes at a time when Australia is experiencing record lows in unemployment, yet barriers continue to be faced by people with disability.

This Access Inclusion and Employment Plan will steer Life Without Barriers to work alongside people with disability to lobby employers and work with governments to drive sustained progress and real change. It is employers that will make an immediate difference in what is a pressing economic, social justice and human rights issue.





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Life Without Barriers is committed to creating change for people with disability, by people with disability. ”

Emily Reaper,  
Executive Officer and  
DAWN Co-Chair

# Board Message



**Greg Ridder**  
**Chair**



**Graeme Innes**  
**Director**

Employment has the capacity to offer so much to a person, including social and community connection and financial independence. However, people with disability continue to face barriers and difficulties in accessing and maintaining jobs and careers. The economic benefits of employing people with disability are well reported as are the realities that people with disability are strong and loyal performers in their workplaces.

Life Without Barriers has recognised for many years that the labour market is not as accessible for people with disability as it is for people without disability. In 2016, we began a journey to create change in our own workplace with our first Access Inclusion and Employment Plan, which we believed would directly transform our workplaces over time to be more accessible and inclusive. Over the past several years, we have challenged ourselves to disrupt the barriers that prevent people with disability from having fair and equitable access to employment and all

the positive benefits having a job, and a career brings to a person's life.

Life Without Barriers fundamentally believes that all Australians should be able to access meaningful and rewarding employment—not just a short-term or transitory job. We believe that the proportion of people with disability in the workforce, at all levels of seniority and responsibility, should reflect the make-up of the broader Australian community. It really should be that simple.

Life Without Barriers' Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) 2022-2025 affirms our commitment to creating employment without barriers and builds on the achievements and challenges of our previous Plans. Under the new Plan, we are committed to increasing employment rates through set targets which makes us accountable for building a workforce that reflects the communities we serve.



**My Stepping Into Internship was my step into a disability confident world. I felt truly accepted for the first time in a workplace. I now have the privilege of calling myself a Provisional Chartered Accountant and Co-Chair of DAWN. I look forward to a long career using these skills to create further opportunities for other people with disability.** ”

*Dwayne Brumby, Assistant Financial Accountant and DAWN Co-Chair*

**Central to our Plan is our deeply held aspiration that 15% of our workforce, at all levels of our organisation, comfortably and openly identify as having lived experience of disability.**

With the benefit of substantial stakeholder and employee feedback, including involvement of our Disability Ability Wellness Network, our 2022-2025 Plan includes a deeper commitment to being an organisation that leads by example. Through this AIEP, we will continue to demonstrate to people with disability that we want them to consider us as their future place of work—where they can contribute to partnering with people who access our services and change lives for the better.

We have identified 66 actions that require our investment over the next three years. These action items extend across all Life Without Barriers' operations and have the full support of the Board and the Executive Management Team.

Life Without Barriers has come a long way since our first AIEP in 2016, and while we have taken positive steps, we recognise there are ongoing challenges, and there is still work to do. This is reflected in the new Plan, which exemplifies our commitment and speaks to who we are, the impact we want to have, and the organisation we want to be.

# Our Story So Far

The overall aim of the AIEP is to improve access and inclusion for employees, the people we support, and the communities in which we live.

## Key achievements to date

- Our 2021 anonymous employee survey showed that 14% of employees shared their lived experience of disability; an increase from 9% in 2018. We acknowledge this figure is from a small cohort of employees, cementing our commitment to having a truly representative target of 15% across all levels of our organisation.
- Australian Network on Disability (AND) first awarded Life Without Barriers Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR) status in 2019. We renewed our DCR status in 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- Achieved 4th place in AND's 2019 and 2021 Access and Inclusion Index and earned the top score in the Premises category of the Index in 2021.
- Welcomed 224 new employees who shared a lived experience of disability when joining our organisation (July 2019 to June 2022).
- Welcomed nine interns in 2019, six in 2020, and six in 2021 through the AND's Stepping Into Internship program. 81% (17) of our Stepping Into interns secured permanent employment with us.
- Redesigned our Intranet Accessibility Hub and developed two in-house eLearning modules: *Working Without Barriers* and *Accessible Content Creation*.
- Established a Disability Employment Unit, which works to improve employment outcomes for the people who choose our services.
- Released our Inclusive Language Guide in 2021.
- Endorsed the Australian Government's Employ My Ability strategy and the #WeThe15 campaign.
- Participated in several forums, including the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS following our submission to the Committee's Workforce Inquiry (2020).
- Presented at the National Disability Services (NDS) Provider Essential Briefing alongside Disability Discrimination Commissioner Ben Gauntlett (2020).
- Presented at NDS Disability at Work Conference with Joblife (2020).
- Supported Woolworths in developing its Quiet Hour initiative.
- Partnered with Community Services Industry Alliance, Queenslanders with Disability Network and Joblife on an NDIS Economic and Community Participation grant.



# Life Without Barriers Access Inclusion and Employment Plan 2022-2025

## Challenges

We have identified several challenges that have informed the 2022-2025 Plan:

- Challenging community attitudes so that systemic barriers, obstacles and stigmas are eliminated
- Creating an environment where employees and prospective employees are comfortable sharing their lived experience of disability
- Increasing retention rates of people with disability
- Increasing the number of people with disability in leadership positions
- Increasing career development opportunities
- Improving our use of language to be respectful and inclusive
- Reviewing requirements for frontline and operational roles to expand opportunities for people with disability
- Consider how targets and aspirations lead to real change by authentically promoting better processes and outcomes
- Break down the silos between the range of employment programs in Australia today

## Overview

Our Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) 2022-2025 has two streams with 66 identified actions. These actions will be reviewed annually.

The two streams are:

### 1. Making our organisation inclusive and accessible

- Commitment to Best Practice
- Premises
- Workplace Adjustments
- Communication, Content and Marketing
- Information and Communication Technology
- Suppliers and Partners
- Products and Services

### 2. Promoting greater employment opportunities in our organisation

- Leadership and Innovation
- Recruitment and Selection
- Career Development
- Employment Pathways
- Individual Employment Outcomes



Using inclusive language says I see you; you are welcome here. ”

Ashleigh Sternes, Diversity and Inclusion Lead

# Our Actions

## Stream 1 – Making our organisation inclusive and accessible

**This stream commits us to 41 identified actions:**

### Commitment to Best Practice

**We commit to best practice on access and inclusion for people with disability**

1. Campaign to encourage employees to share their diversity information
2. Biannual submission of Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index
3. Support employee mental health by promoting psychological safety and wellbeing
4. Increase visibility and reach of the Disability Ability Wellness Network (DAWN)
5. Develop a flexible work policy and supporting resources
6. Establish quarterly AIEP reporting metrics

### Premises

**Our premises are accessible and we make adjustments for individuals**

7. All new properties are assessed and refurbished with relevant accessibility requirements
8. All existing properties are adjusted based on the accessibility needs of current and new employees

### Workplace Adjustments

**We anticipate the needs of people with disability and have a robust process for making adjustments for individuals**

9. Establish regular reporting from Property and ICT for workplace adjustments

10. Implement a workplace adjustment passport
11. Explore a ticketing system for workplace adjustment requests
12. Monitor process and improve feedback mechanisms

### Communication and Marketing

**Our communication and marketing channels are accessible to people with disability, and we make adjustments for individuals**

13. Develop an accessible communications strategy
14. All relevant communication employees complete accessibility training
15. Consistent promotion of National Relay Service to all employees
16. Communicate with our employees using their preferred method of communication
17. Complete digital accessibility review
18. Review all standard document templates for accessibility and inclusive language
19. Ensure accessibility of new Intranet platform
20. Review social media accessibility, inclusive language, and imagery
21. Ensure media releases and statements are accessible
22. Identify and pursue key external relationships that aid communication and marketing accessibility commitments

### Information Communication Technology

**Our ICT is accessible for people with disability, and we make adjustments for individuals**

23. Develop an accessibility matrix for purchasing
24. Have a written process to scope the accessibility requirements of users
25. Utilise more stringent accessibility auditing software
26. Aim for compliance where possible with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AAA
27. All relevant ICT employees complete accessibility training
28. Have a technical source of truth for the preferred method of communication for people we support

### Suppliers and Partners

**We expect our suppliers and partners to reflect and enable us to meet our commitment to best practice**

29. Review procurement policies and procedures
30. Create guidelines for the selection of suppliers and partners
31. Document a process for engaging with our key suppliers on access and inclusion
32. Monitor key suppliers on their progress towards access and inclusion

### Products and Services

**We seek and value the contributions of people with disability in developing and delivering our services**

33. Develop and implement a Client Rights Statement that affirms, raises awareness and supports the rights of people with disability who use our services
34. Remodel the Disability Services Advisory Council (DSAC) aligned to the Client Voice Strategy
35. Support people who use our services when things go wrong by embedding the Active Apology approach to open disclosure
36. Develop and implement a centralised approach to manage and respond to Community Visitor reports (Community Visitors program)
37. Help the people we support to achieve their home and living goals (Home and Living project)
38. Measure and communicate our strategic impact through data and insights (Impact Measurement project)
39. Develop and implement a centralised approach to DMH (Disability Mental Health) Intake and Engagement
40. Review DMH policies and procedures for accessibility and inclusive language
41. Develop and implement Client Voice initiatives aligned to the Client Voice Strategy

# Our Actions

## Stream 2 – Greater employment opportunities in our organisation

**This stream commits us to 25 identified actions:**

### Leadership and Innovation

**Enhancing our leadership role in the sector and community through strong external partnerships and innovative practices**

1. Meet our aim to have 15% of our workforce identifying as having lived experience of disability across all levels of the organisation
2. Engage senior industry stakeholder discussion and thought leadership by connecting with key community sector organisations
3. Actively contribute to Government inquiries and consultations that examine employment outcomes for people with disability
4. Seek opportunities to share our learnings with corporate partners and encourage employers to promote careers and ongoing opportunities for people with disability, with a specific focus on supporting larger employers
5. Support the implementation and realisation of the Australian Government's Disability Strategy 2021-2031; the Employment Targeted Action Plan; and Employ My Ability, the Disability Employment Strategy.
6. Support the implementation and realisation of the Australian Human Rights Commission's IncludeAbility project
7. Participate in the Australian Government's reforms of Disability Employment Services (DES) and consider a new offering for DES services

### Recruitment and Selection

**We attract and recruit people with disability, which gives us access to the broadest talent pool at every level**

8. Ensure external recruitment agencies are disability confident
9. Review the requirements of frontline roles through a targeted strategy to explore and expand options for people with disability
10. Annual participation in AND Stepping Into Internship program
11. Annual renewal of Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR) status
12. Increase disability confidence among hiring managers
13. Review how workplace adjustments are discussed during the interview process
14. Review our position requirements and our recruitment processes to identify and remove barriers such as driver's licence requirements

### Career Development

**We value the leadership of people with disability and are committed to their retention and development**

15. Include a specific identifier in our Employee Experience survey to measure engagement for people with disability
16. Incorporate inclusive leadership into our talent management frameworks and capability programs
17. Ensure induction processes include specific support for employees with disability

18. Explore a mentoring/peer support mechanism for employees with disability
19. Ensure inclusion is recognised in our new reward and recognition program
20. Ensure talent management frameworks and capability programs support employees with disability to develop their career

### Employment Pathways

#### Innovating and investing in new employment initiatives and pathways

21. Research evidence-based programs (including social enterprises) targeting skills improvement and development and work experience opportunities
22. Seek cross-referral opportunities through strengthening relationships with our key partners
23. Seek opportunities to work with our partners to secure career pathways for people with disability

### Individual Employment Outcomes

#### Partnering with individuals to improve employment outcomes

24. Embed and expand Young People's Employment Pathways (YPEP) to support young people with disability to transition from school to employment
25. Offer new employment readiness supports for participants aged 23+, including existing Life Without Barriers clients, new participants, and those looking for support outside Australian Disability Enterprises

### Implementation and Governance

The Life Without Barriers' Board has approved the AIEP, and the Board is overseeing its implementation. The AIEP is supported by a detailed implementation process, with regular reporting to the Executive and the Board.

We also commit to biannual participation in Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index to measure progress.

### Measuring our impact

We will measure our impact using a number of metrics, including:

- % of employees who have shared they live with a disability
- % of employees with disability in leadership roles (total, and by gender)
- Employee experience (employees with disability compared to employees without disability)
- Attraction (new employees with disability)
- Retention (employees with disability compared to employees without disability)
- Recruitment (interview and offer outcomes)









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From the day of my first interview with Life Without Barriers to when I was offered a job, I knew I had found an employer who saw me for my true value and not my disability. With the right workplace adjustments, I can do my job just as well as any non-disabled person. ”

*Dominic Freestone, Senior Graphic Designer*

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