



**Department of Environment and Science
Disability Service Plan**

2023-2026



**Queensland
Government**

Prepared by: Corporate Services, Department of Environment and Science

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The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019.

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March 2023

A message from the Director-General

I am pleased to present the Department of Environment and Science Disability Service Plan 2023-2026.

Guided by the State Disability Plan, *Queensland Disability Plan 2022-27: Together, a Better Queensland*, our plan details a range of specific actions for how we will work towards key government objectives to actively promote inclusion and diversity and increase opportunities for people with disability.

The diversity of the people in the Queensland public service, including people with disabilities, is one of its greatest strengths. Successfully managing diversity means creating an environment which values and utilises the contributions of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

We are committed to creating and maintaining a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity, courtesy and respect and can work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment. This aligns with the department's Equity and Diversity Plan, to be released in July 2023.

Over the next 3 years we will continue to focus on providing accessible workplaces, creating inclusive environments, and reducing perceived barriers for people with disabilities to engage with our department. We are proud to be advancing from awareness-raising to acting in DES.

Jamie Merrick

Director-General

Department of Environment and Science

Contents

A message from the Director-General	iii
About us	1
About Disability Service Plans	1
The purpose of Disability Service Plans	1
Policy context	1
Our commitment.....	2
Monitoring and progress	2
Contact for more information.....	2
About our plan.....	2
Identifying and addressing issues	2
Building Block statements	3
Co-design	3
Measurement of outcomes and impact	3
Human rights	3
Cultural and systems change	3
Our plan	4
Our service users	4
Our people.....	5
Our places	7
Our community	8

About us

The Department of Environment and Science (DES) aims to ensure one of the world's most diverse natural environments is maintained for the health and prosperity of current and future generations. We lead and partner with First Nations peoples to manage, protect and restore Queensland's natural environment and heritage through a broad range of work areas.

The department is committed to promoting a safe, equitable and inclusive workplace. We recognise the value of a diverse and inclusive workforce that is representative of the community we serve. The department is committed to improving the experiences of persons from diverse groups across all levels of our organisation, including through actions that promote equality of opportunity for persons from diverse groups. We acknowledge that diversity encompasses a range of visible and non-visible characteristics.

The Disability Services Plan (DSP) works alongside programs, tools and resources aimed at educating and supporting employees to maintain and ensure a respectful and safe workplace culture. DES's *Workplace Behaviour Policy* outlines the expected behaviours, principles and procedures for establishing, maintaining, and ensuring a respectful and safe workplace culture compatible with human rights, free from workplace bullying, sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination.

Additionally in 2022, DES launched the Respectful Workplaces program to further support the department's dedication to creating a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity, courtesy, and respect, and can work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

About Disability Service Plans

The purpose of Disability Service Plans

The *Disability Services Act (Qld) 2006* (the Act) provides a strong foundation for promoting the rights of Queenslanders with disability, increasing their wellbeing, and encouraging their participation in all aspects of community life. This legislation requires all Queensland Government departments to develop and implement a Disability Service Plan (DSP). The purpose of a DSP is to ensure each department meets the Act's Human Rights and service delivery principles, and the government's policies for people with disability. These plans aim to improve access to services and opportunities across government for people with disability, including more coordinated responses.

The department's DSP outlines the actions that we will take to support the delivery of the Queensland Disability Plan.

Policy context

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS) was launched on 3 December 2021 and is committed to "creating an inclusive community together". The ADS builds on the previous National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and renews the joint commitment of all levels of government to improve the lives of Australians with disability and achieve an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential.

The ADS includes seven core outcome areas that collectively represent the areas, that people with disability have said are important to them and need to be improved to achieve an inclusive Australian society: (1) Employment and financial security; (2) Inclusive homes and communities; (3) Safety, rights, and justice; (4) Personal and community support; (5) Education and learning; (6) Health and wellbeing; and (7) Community attitudes.

Queensland's *Disability Plan 2022-2027: Together, a Better Queensland* tailored the ADS's approaches for the diverse and unique nature of individual experiences across the Queensland community. The department's DSP aligns with the state's disability plan and will deliver on Queensland's commitments under the ADS. The department's DSP is to be considered alongside other relevant DES policies, including the *Diverse Ability Recruitment Policy and Procedure*, *Flexible Work Policy*, and *Workplace Behaviour Policy*.

Additionally, the DSPs contribute to meeting the Queensland Government's obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (the Convention). The Convention, ratified by Australia on 17 July 2008, obligates all governments in Australia to work towards promoting, protecting, and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disability and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Our commitment

We are committed to developing and maintaining a workplace that is positive, engaging and respectful for all employees. Through inclusive practices and the way we value diversity, we are committed to:

- ensuring Queenslanders with disability have the same opportunity to access our services, facilities and systems as all other Queenslanders
- ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and creating an inclusive, supportive working environment
- meeting our workforce target of eight per cent for people with disability by 2026.

This commitment forms the basis of the department's Equity and Diversity Plan, which aligns with DES's DSP, and will be released in July 2023.

Monitoring and progress

The department will report annually on the implementation of the DSP on our website www.des.qld.gov.au and contribute to yearly progress reports on the implementation of the state disability plan.

Information from the annual progress reports on DSPs and the state disability plan will also be shared with the Australian and other state and territory governments as part of reporting on Queensland's commitment to the Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.

Contact for more information

For more information contact the department on 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you need an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450. We will provide alternative formats (including large print) on request. If you would like an alternative format, please email inclusion@des.qld.gov.au. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you may contact the National Relay Service — telephone 133 677 (TTY/Voice) / 1300 555 727 (Speak and Listen (SSR)).

You can also email the department at info@des.qld.gov.au with your enquiry, or write to:

GPO Box 2454

Brisbane QLD 4001

About our plan

DES has identified that improving diversity and inclusion is about much more than meeting employee representation targets. It is about striving towards a workplace that understands and values the experiences of all DES employees. DES is committed to a culture of respect and inclusion and will actively take steps in the workplace to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

The department's DSP was informed through collaboration with employees with lived experience of disability. This included discussions with these employees to review and reflect on the actions taken under the ADS and previous DSP, to deliver better outcomes for people with disability. Following review of DES' achievements under the previous DSP, the group also proposed future actions, which have been incorporated into this plan.

Over three months, DES worked with these employees to gain a sense of employee experiences of inclusivity within DES. This consultation included employees of diverse gender, locations, and roles. Employees were spread across divisions within the department and in varying roles both technical, operational, and administrative. These experiences and discussions informed our DSP, providing a voice for employees with disability and ensuring this DSP reflected their perspectives.

Identifying and addressing issues

The state's disability plan identified building blocks for how any action under the plan is undertaken. It states that all DSPs are to be developed with an emphasis on co-design, measurement of outcomes and impact, serious consideration of human rights and long-term cultural and systems change. The building blocks of the state's disability plan have guided us to identify steps that we can take in DES to work towards an inclusive workplace.

It is not enough to tell someone that they belong, we must create a respectful workplace where all employees can

thrive and achieve, recognising and valuing each employee's unique experience, perspective, and contribution.

Building Block statements

Co-design

We do things with people with disability, not to them or for them. DES currently utilises both formal and informal advisory bodies to co-design initiatives and programs of work. This includes the Diversity and Inclusion Employee Resource Group (D&I ERG) and direct engagement and collaboration with employees with disability.

DES will continue to provide opportunities for people with disability to be at the table when decisions are made about their lives and their employment opportunities. DES will afford employees the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programs, specifically those directly concerning them.

Measurement of outcomes and impact

DES is committed to creating a respectful and inclusive workplace environment where all staff feel safe to come to work and feel supported to speak up about issues without fear of reprisal. DES acknowledges that we are all responsible for building a workplace culture that allows people to be, and achieve, their best at work. We are committed to setting clear targets that are measurable, monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure a greater level of accountability and governance for inclusion outcomes across the department.

The department measures outcomes and impact through annual reporting mechanisms (such as the annual Working for Queensland survey), initiatives that elicit feedback and recommendations (such as Refining DES and discussions with the D&I ERG), and regular evaluation of learning and development programs (such as post-training surveys). In turn, the department will seek opportunities to continue offering relevant learning opportunities for employees.

DES's Working for Queensland survey data indicates a greater percentage of employee's report disability in this anonymous survey than they do through the departmental record management system. This indicates that we have some way to go in ensuring a respectful workplace where people feel comfortable to be their true self. DES is aware that inclusive leadership will be integral to achieving diversity and inclusion within the department. We recognise that confident and capable leaders will be required to drive the adoption of inclusive practices and attitudes needed to support a diverse workplace. A leader who is confident in managing disability will unconsciously lead by example, which will in turn make employees feel safe and more likely to be their true self, happier and more productive in the workplace.

Human rights

The department's DSP considers the department's commitment to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, DES has an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights. The *Human Rights Act 2019* will be embedded throughout DES policies, programs, services, and directives to ensure consistent application of human rights of people with disability at every decision point.

Cultural and systems change

DES is committed to growing inclusion from within the department by removing barriers embedded in internal structures and systems. We currently run regular learning and development sessions and events to drive cultural and systems change. This includes regularly promoting events, webinars, and resources, a membership with Nationally Accredited Bodies such as the Diversity Council of Australia to utilise and share the latest research and findings in this space, and engagement with an external company to improve recruitment of people with a disability across the department. Additionally, we communicate initiatives and progress towards a safe and inclusive workplace on Microsoft Teams pages and in all-staff emails.

DES will continue to take active steps to increase representation and perceptions of inclusivity of people with a disability within the department and will be held accountable for this commitment. DES recognises the importance and responsibility of cultural change and will partner with disability employment services to ensure that changes can be implemented, maintained and sustainable over time.

Our plan

Our service users

Our service users include all people who use DES services. This section focuses on respecting and promoting the rights of people with disability and recognising diversity, as well as ensuring accessible information through communications.

Action	Detail	Measurement	Timing	ADS Outcome Areas
Create welcoming and inclusive communities	<p>Support projects which enhance social outcomes and lead to improvements in service delivery for all Queenslanders. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to ensure access requirements for people with disability are considered for all DES managed buildings and venues, including National Parks select venues for departmentally organised events based on accessibility and suitability of facilities for people with disability and their carers respond to any identified needs for event participants and guests provide specialised support services (e.g., AUSLAN interpreters, Companion Card, and similar support programs) as required. 	<p>DES-managed buildings will be compliant with industry standard building codes.</p> <p>Event evaluation feedback will indicate if reasonable adjustments were offered and utilised.</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive homes and communities Health and wellbeing Community attitudes
Accessible information	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an accessibility guide for communication material, to be published on the Intranet. make available communication platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams, video conferencing, and apps) comply with national government Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) and the Digital Service Standard. investigate and implement assistive technology services for employees with a disability ensure all communication strategies align to the principles and objectives of the ADS promote inclusiveness and creation of opportunities for employees with disability in DES. 	All new website content is accessible and complies with guidelines.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive homes and communities Education and learning Health and wellbeing Community attitudes

Our people

Our people include all DES employees, including temporary employees and contractors. This section focuses on including people with disability in consultation, civic participation and decision making and supporting leadership development. It also considers improving job opportunities and experiences for people with disability in the department.

Action	Detail	Measurement	Timing	ADS Outcome Areas
Increase employment opportunities in the Queensland Public Sector	<p>DES will partner with Disability Employment Agencies to promote disability recruitment and onboard employees. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate and implement focused programs for employees with disability educate and support managers and supervisors about the benefits of being a diverse workforce support employees and managers to transition into long-term employment in the department. 	The proportion of people with disability in DES will increase to eight per cent by 2026.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment and financial security
Promote flexible work practices for all employees	<p>Continue to promote flexible work practices for all staff with a particular emphasis on improving accessibility to work and adjusting for specific needs. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> share stories showcasing how we support employees increase participation and encouragement of access to flexible work options educate managers and employees regarding flexible work options that are available. 	The proportion of people accessing flexible working arrangements will increase by 2026.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment and financial security
Provide strategic recruitment advice and support to panels about recruiting people with disability	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that hiring managers are familiar with “DiverseAbility” recruitment policies and procedures consider any requests for reasonable adjustment ensure that candidates are provided equal opportunity to fully participate in the recruitment and selection process develop guides to support contemporary recruitment practices provide development opportunities for divisions to increase awareness of barriers to inclusion and creation of unbiased recruitment processes 	Increase in percentage of employees who have completed panel training and/or unconscious bias training	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment and financial security

Action	Detail	Measurement	Timing	ADS Outcome Areas
Provide information about diversity and inclusion including disability as part of induction processes	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review induction onboarding material to ensure that diversity and inclusion, including disability are adequately addressed • ensure the accuracy of content remains best practice • ensure that employees are familiar with policies and guidelines in relation to reasonable adjustment and flexible work agreements. • investigate and develop options to provide disability inclusivity training to all employees as part of DES induction programs. 	Yearly audit to ensure continuous improvement opportunities.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning
Implement early awareness strategies in approach to neurodivergence in the workplace	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide learning and development opportunities specific to neurodivergence • promote participation in online training resources encouraging all employees to consider the impact of neurodiversity on policies and procedures. 	Increase in percentage of employees who have completed diversity and inclusion training	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning
Learning and development opportunities	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all internally delivered leadership training and development programs are accessible in several formats (for example videos produced with captions, use of interpreters where appropriate or undertaken online) and can be targeted to meet the specific needs of participants. 	Biennial audit to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 guidelines	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning
Promote opportunities for meaningful contribution to the workplace	<p>The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage participation in employee led resource groups • promote the mentoring program with a focus towards increasing participation of diversity groups • provide learning and development opportunities targeted towards disability that are available to all employees 	Learning and Development data will indicate increased participation rates in opportunities.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning

Our places

Our places include recognising the value of diversity within the department and ensuring accessible places and spaces for all employees.

Action	Detail	Measurement	Timing	ADS Outcome Areas
Respecting and promoting the rights of people with disability and recognising diversity	<p>The department will ensure that DES policies and programs consider the needs and interests of people with disability and uphold the human rights of people with disability in accordance with sections 3 and 4 of the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with employees with disability to ensure their voices are reflected in updates, either through the Diversity and Inclusion ERG or alternative channels. 	Biennial audit to ensure continuous improvement of all policies and programs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, rights, and justice • Health and wellbeing
Inclusive outdoors	<p>DES will improve access to Queensland's National Parks for people with disabilities and their accompanying friends, families, and carers. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor, evaluate and improve accessibility requirements in Queensland National Parks • ensure accessible visitor facilities are incorporated into the design and construction of new or upgraded facilities. 	Increase in percentage of Queensland national parks that offer accessibility options	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive homes and communities • Community attitudes

Our community

Our community focuses on creating welcoming and inclusive communities that drive culture change and break down barriers by raising awareness and increasing capability.

Action	Detail	Measurement	Timing	ADS Outcome Areas
Support communication strategies	<p>Communicate ADS messaging via internal and external channels. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively promote Disability Action Week and provide opportunities for employees to participate in activities across DES maintain membership of Nationally Accredited Bodies such as Diversity Council of Australia to promote the broad range of accommodations that employees are entitled to. 	Queensland participates and contributes to national communication strategies and activities	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety, rights, and justice Education and learning Health and wellbeing Community attitudes
Raise awareness and increase capability	<p>Increase capability of managers and supervisors to support all employees, including employees with a disability, to participate in a respectful workplace. The department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain commitment to the Respectful Workplaces program to ensure all employees understand that they are responsible for building a workplace culture that allows people to be and achieve their best at work actively promote participation and engagement with the D&I ERG publish and promote online inclusion and diversity awareness training including a specific focus on disability awareness for all employees continue to review and assess disability awareness training and programs to ensure they remain relevant and fit-for-purpose Identify and provide additional tailored development opportunities to support Managers capability in this space Support managers to create an inclusive workplace and host employees with lived experience through the Jigsaw program. 	Managers/ supervisors access supporting mechanisms (e.g., coaching, training) to onboard and manage employees with lived experience.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety, rights, and justice Education and learning Health and wellbeing Community attitudes