

**Ambulance  
Victoria**



# Accessibility Action Plan

2020–2022

**Engaging with our community and  
our people to improve access  
and inclusion for everyone**



# Accessibility

This Accessibility Action Plan is available in alternative formats including e-text, audio and Easy English from:

**[www.ambulance.vic.gov.au](http://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au)**

To receive this publication in your preferred format, if not otherwise available, please phone **0448 901 775**, using the National Relay Service **13 36 77** if required, or email: **[accessibility@ambulance.vic.gov.au](mailto:accessibility@ambulance.vic.gov.au)**



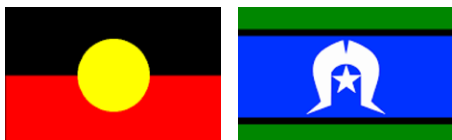


# Contents

▶ Forewords	4
▶ What is Accessibility?	5
▶ Why is this plan important for Ambulance Victoria and our community?	6
▶ Our Strategic Priorities and the Accessibility Action Plan	7
▶ Consultation	8
▶ Our Commitment	10
▶ Action Plan	11
▶ Monitoring and Reporting	13

## Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

Ambulance Victoria would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Victoria and acknowledge their ancestors and elders, both past and present.



# Forewords

## Message from the CEO



Ambulance Victoria's Accessibility Action Plan 2020–2022 outlines how we will work with our patients, our staff and our community to ensure we better meet the needs of people with disability who interact with our organisation.

Our Patient Care Commitment and the needs of the community sit at the heart of everything we do, and this plan will detail

how we will provide a fully accessible ambulance service for everyone.

We cannot improve emergency health outcomes by doing it alone. Through our consultations with the community we have heard that we need to do better at understanding and servicing the needs of the community. We acknowledge that this is a difficult task and by working together with our patients, our community and our staff, I am confident that we can deliver a better service that supports everyone in their time of need.

We want to ensure all members of Ambulance Victoria's workforce are supported and empowered to make our organisation stronger through diversity of thinking, perspectives and experiences. We want Ambulance Victoria to be an employer of choice for people with disability where our staff and volunteers are recruited from a wide pool of talent, and are provided with the appropriate support they need to excel in the workplace. We recognise that by implementing modern work practices that support workplace flexibility at all levels of the organisation, we will increase participation and be well-placed to provide a truly inclusive workplace.

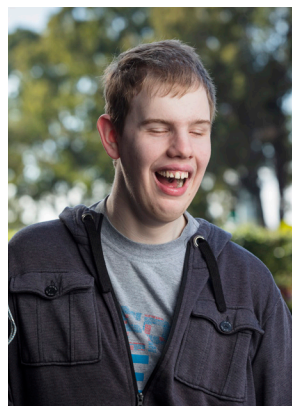
The plan forms part of a series of initiatives aimed to reinforce a safe and inclusive culture at Ambulance Victoria.

The plan is designed to align to the Ambulance Victoria Strategic Plan 2017–2022; Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019–2022; the Social and Environmental Responsibility Framework and Best Care Framework: Every Patient, Every Time.

It gives me great pleasure to share with you Ambulance Victoria's Accessibility Action Plan 2020–2022.

**Assoc Prof Tony Walker ASM,**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Ambulance Victoria**

## Message from a Community Member



What is important about Ambulance Victoria is that they "Save Lives!"

The Accessibility Action Plan gives an insight into what Ambulance Victoria will do to improve services for people with disability.

It is important that patients and community members understand what will happen if they need

an ambulance – I've never been in an ambulance before so I don't know what happens to people with disability, especially people with vision impairment.

On the road, or in the ambulance, patients may explain in Easy English what they need help doing. They may be wearing a medical ID bracelet. It is important that staff can communicate with people in their language and understand what their accessibility needs are.

This plan will help to make sure that everyone feels safe and included, that the role of carers and support workers are recognised, that websites and facilities are accessible, and that people know how to provide feedback to Ambulance Victoria if required.

To make sure Ambulance Victoria is listening to community members, it is important that people with disability are represented on committees and that Ambulance Victoria reaches out to the community and participates in community events.

Addressing the accessibility and mental health needs of staff is important too. The more I learn about Ambulance Victoria through things like the Paramedics TV show, the more insight I have into what you guys do, the types of jobs, and how stressful it is.

Everyone is different so what works for one person may not work for someone else.

I am very happy to help introduce to the community Ambulance Victoria's first Accessibility Action Plan.

**Damian Paterson,**  
**Self Advocate, VALID Working Group Member**







# What is Accessibility?

The term accessibility can mean different things to different people. We have chosen a definition that incorporates the key elements of universal design and inclusion, recognising that accessibility goes far beyond just physical access.

“Accessibility is the ability for everyone, regardless of disability, to access, use and benefit from everything within their environment. It is the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. The goal of accessibility is to create an inclusive society for everyone.”



# Why is this plan important for Ambulance Victoria and our community?



“To put accessibility at the front and centre and think about how to make things more inclusive is just better for everyone.”

Mike, Community Advocate

## Our Patients

Ambulance Victoria services a population of over six million people, with more than one million people identifying as a person with disability. We aim to be responsive and respectful of patient needs and provide the Best Care for every patient, every time.

Through the plan we will be better equipped to ensure our patients and their carers can participate in health care decisions, that they are listened to and respected, and that our paramedics are better able to deliver the right care, at the right time, in the right way with the best possible outcomes.



## Our Community

Ambulance Victoria has strategic goals to educate the community and build stronger partnerships to achieve better health outcomes for all Victorians.

Through the plan we will be able to build stronger relationships to better understand our community and be more responsive and respectful of individual needs. We will be able to provide more inclusive education and ensure that our community members with accessibility requirements have greater choice and control over their health care.

## Our People

We have approximately 4,900 employees and 1,400 Community Response Team volunteers and Community Support Officers, and around 500 Auxiliary members.

Through the plan we will be able to go beyond just improving the representation of people with disability in the workforce and ensure that accessibility and inclusion is recognised across roles, at all levels of the organisation, and through different stages including recruitment, promotion, transfer and succession planning.



“It’s OK to sit with uncertainty and be guided by those around you. AV paramedics don’t need to understand every condition and disability. They just need to recognise and value engaging with the patient, family and carers who can guide them.”

Community member

The Accessibility Action Plan reflects Ambulance Victoria’s core values and will assist us to provide better and more inclusive services for our patients, our community and our people.

## We live by our values in all that we do:

- ▶ Being respectful
- ▶ Working together
- ▶ Openly communicating
- ▶ Being accountable
- ▶ Driving innovation

# Our Strategic Priorities and the Accessibility Action Plan

## 1 An exceptional patient experience

- Providing best care for every patient, every time
- Supporting the different needs of our patients
- Recognising the role of carers and support workers
- Facilitating continuity of care

## 2 Partnerships that make a difference

- Adopting a whole of community approach
- Partnering with people with lived experience, families and advocates
- Working with disability and health services
- Sharing knowledge and outcomes with emergency partners

## 3 A great place to work and volunteer

- Supporting an inclusive and flexible workplace
- Establishing accessible recruitment and induction processes
- Providing reasonable workplace adjustments
- Embedding best practice in inclusive employment

## 4 A high performing organisation

- Driving innovations in inclusive service delivery
- Achieving high standards in accessible design
- Supporting new assistive tools and technology
- Being accountable to our patients, people and community

## Examples of best practice in accessibility

### Supporting decision-making:

Helping people to make informed decisions about their lives and emergency health care is a key priority for Ambulance Victoria. We know that supported decision making promotes independence, self-determination and empowerment. In order to facilitate decision making we need to consider how we deliver our services, create tools and resources in a variety of formats and train our staff to be effective communication partners.

### Co-design approach:

Co-design involves establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with people with disability and their representatives to improve service delivery. Ambulance Victoria recognises the value of co-design in understanding more about lived experience or disability, addressing assumptions, finding solutions, and achieving sustainable outcomes.

### Employer of choice:

Ambulance Victoria aims to be an employer of choice for people with disability and create a work culture and environment that attracts and retains staff from diverse backgrounds and abilities. By creating a more accessible and inclusive workplace we have access to a wider talent pool of people with the right skills, qualifications and experience for our organisation.

### Driving innovation:

In order to become a leader in accessibility we will need to keep up-to-date with innovations within the sector, embrace new ideas, systems and technology and promote them across the organisation. We are open to change and welcome new and exciting initiatives that will help us to improve performance, maximise the quality and safety of our services, and support independence and inclusion.

# Consultation

More than 750 individual comments from 300 people representing our patients, our partners and our staff contributed to the development of the plan. They did this in various ways over two rounds of consultation.

We would like to acknowledge the many individuals and groups who shared their ideas, expertise and lived experience. The incredible feedback received showed us just how important the Accessibility Action Plan is to our patients, our community and our people, and how we can work better together to implement the actions in the plan to achieve successful outcomes.

## Internal Reference Group

An Internal Reference Group was formed to review the consultation materials and provide input into the plan. The reference group includes operational and non-operational staff and members of Ambulance Victoria's Community Advisory Committee.

## Public Consultations and Focus Groups

Two online consultation surveys were developed in alternative formats and widely circulated across the organisation and community. A series of focus groups were also held with sector partners exploring key themes and directions to help inform the plan.

## Community Discussion Forum

In November 2018, an accessibility forum was held at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to further shape the plan. The forum was attended by over 50 people with disability, family and carers; representatives from peak disability, health and advocacy services; and members of the Ambulance Victoria workforce.

## Digital Media

We have gained a lot of interest and community input in the Accessibility Action Plan through our 'Better Together - For Everyone' web page and on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The feedback we have received through these channels has been central in the development of key themes and actions captured in this plan.



"Not only the obvious, it's the hidden disabilities. You wouldn't know I have speech issues and hard to understand when stressed – I can't get it out."

**Community member**

## Rosie and Blake, Community members and idea generators

"You all do a fantastic job, my son has cerebral palsy and epilepsy, and as a result is non-verbal. We've had numerous rides in the ambulances. What would be great is if the paramedics knew a bit of sign language just to be able to communicate in their language. Sometimes nothing works but I saw first-hand the benefits of this when we recently turned up at the Children's Hospital and the nurse there immediately recognised (maybe she read his file) that our son was non-verbal and communicated with some sign which made our son realise that there was someone that understood him. I also think it would be useful if each ambulance had access to a communication device such as an iPad with Proloquo, to communicate where the pain is or how bad it was."

**Rosie, Community member**







“It would be great if paramedics could come and visit disability day services, programs or supported residential services and talk about when and how to call an ambulance.”

Community member



# Our Commitment



## Outcome 1

Promoting inclusion and participation

Improving access to employment, training and volunteering



## Outcome 3

## Outcome 2



Improving access to information, services and facilities

Promoting fairness, respect and safety

## Outcome 4



The Accessibility Action Plan has been guided by our commitment to the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006](#); [Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#); [Victorian Disability Act 2006](#); [Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#); [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#) and [Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights](#).

The plan has also been developed to reflect key state and national strategies including the [National Disability Strategy 2010–2020](#); [State Disability Plan 2017–2020](#) and [Victorian Carer Strategy 2018–2022](#).

Our commitment to inclusive practices and eliminating and preventing barriers for people with disability goes far beyond our legal obligations. We are committed to not only embracing innovations and best practice

in accessibility but also welcome the prospect of becoming a future leader in this area.

The plan focuses on achieving four key outcomes. These outcomes incorporate the four pillars of the [State Disability Plan 2017–2020](#), and cover the goals for all disability action plans in Victoria, as cited in Section 38 of the [Victorian Disability Act 2006](#).



“No matter the situation, there is always room for improvement.”

Community member



# Action Plan

Ambulance Victoria will take a phased approach to the implementation of the Accessibility Action Plan.

Year 1 (2020) will see the organisation deliver a range of foundational activities that will have an immediate impact on our patients, our community and our people.

Year 2 (2021) will be a year of continued action, as we build momentum by delivering a range of programs and services that will better serve the diverse needs of those we care for and employ. Year 3 (2022) will see us embed a number of best-practice efforts that will ensure we are well-placed to provide a world-class emergency health service that is accessible to everyone, now and into the future.

## Outcome 1. Promoting inclusion and participation

	Action	We will know we are successful when:
1.1	Work with people with disability and their representatives in the development of future Ambulance Victoria policies, plans and activities that consider, acknowledge and celebrate accessibility and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ People with disability and their representatives are involved in decision making and the implementation of the Accessibility Action Plan</li><li>▶ People with disability are engaged through our program of activities and represented in our media and publications</li><li>▶ We have successfully implemented the plan throughout the organisation and clearly communicated group and individual responsibilities</li></ul>
1.2	Ensure Ambulance Victoria staff, and those that work with us, consider accessibility requirements when delivering our services	

## Outcome 2. Improving access to information, services and facilities

	Action	We will know we are successful when:
2.1	Deliver educational campaigns, tools and engagement platforms that empower people with disability to better understand and access Ambulance Victoria's services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Resources and communication platforms can be accessed by people with different accessibility requirements</li><li>▶ Our staff have the knowledge and tools to effectively communicate with people with varying accessibility requirements</li><li>▶ Our ambulance services, branches, corporate offices and other sites comply with relevant accessibility standards</li><li>▶ People with disability can safely access and travel in our ambulances</li></ul>
2.2	Train and equip Ambulance Victoria staff with the knowledge, skills and resources to better engage with people with disability, their carers and support networks	
2.3	Improve access to our buildings, facilities and ambulances for people with disability	





### Outcome 3. Improving access to employment, training and volunteering

	Action	We will know we are successful when:
3.1	Explore programs aimed to increase the representation of people with disability in the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is an increased representation of people with disability in the workforce</li> <li>▶ Our staff have access to the information and tools they need to implement and monitor workplace adjustments and ensure the workplace is accessible and inclusive</li> </ul>
3.2	Improve access to the workplace and to recruitment and selection processes through staff training and the implementation of workplace adjustments	

### Outcome 4. Promoting fairness, respect and safety

	Action	We will know we are successful when:
4.1	Build the capacity of the Ambulance Victoria workforce through training and policy development, to improve understanding of accessibility, inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Through meaningful partnerships and knowledge sharing we have created a disability confident workplace</li> <li>▶ Our feedback, compliance and grievance procedures are accessible and inclusive of people with disability</li> <li>▶ Our paramedics have the tools to better capture information on accessibility and ensure continuity of care</li> </ul>
4.2	Establish accessible methods to capture, monitor and respond to feedback, complaints and grievances from people with disability and their representatives	
4.3	Continue to work with partners within and beyond the emergency services and health care sector to improve Ambulance Victoria's services and health outcomes for patients with disability	





# Monitoring and Reporting

- ▶ Governance and reporting mechanisms have been set up by Ambulance Victoria to guide and monitor the implementation of this plan.
- ▶ This plan has been sent to the Department of Health and Human Services and widely distributed across the organisation and the Victorian community, through multiple communication channels.
- ▶ A summary of performance against each outcome will be reported in Ambulance Victoria's Annual Reports from 2019/20 to 2022/23.
- ▶ The Accessibility Action Plan will be reviewed in 2022 via a series of internal and public consultations. Achievements and feedback will be evaluated and used to inform the next Accessibility Action Plan.

**In an emergency call Triple Zero (000)**

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