

NORTHEAST HEALTH WANGARATTA  
**DISABILITY**  
**ACTION PLAN**  
2026 - 2028





Northeast Health Wangaratta acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Bpangerang and Yorta Yorta people, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We respect and celebrate diversity. We welcome and value all people to access our services and join our team.

**Disclaimer:**

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information in this document at the time of publication, it is the responsibility of users to check the currency of key documents and statistics referenced within.

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# CEO Message

At Northeast Health Wangaratta, we are committed to creating a health service where everyone feels welcome, supported and able to participate fully in their care, their work and their community.

This Disability Action Plan 2026–2028 represents an important step forward in strengthening that commitment. It reflects what we have heard from our community, our consumers and our workforce, and sets a clear direction for how we will continue to improve accessibility, inclusion and equity across our organisation.

Importantly, this plan builds on strong foundations established through our previous Disability Action Plan. Over recent years, we have taken meaningful steps to improve access and inclusion across our service. This has included the fit out of a dedicated sensory room within our Admissions and Day Stay Unit, supporting people to feel safe and comfortable during their care, and the distribution of sensory kits across our service.

We have strengthened our workforce capability through targeted education and partnerships. This has included autism awareness training for Emergency Department staff, Office of Public Advocate “Healthy Discussions” sessions to support decision-making, and practical sessions on assistance dogs in healthcare. We have also partnered with organisations such as Down Syndrome Victoria to bring lived experience into our workforce through a Health Ambassador program, and with JobAccess to review and improve our recruitment processes.

We have worked to build a more inclusive workplace culture by sharing the stories of employees with disability, implementing a disability ally program, and creating opportunities for learning and understanding across our organisation. Practical improvements, such as sealing accessible car parking spaces near our Community Care Centre and delivering workshops with Ambulance Victoria to support confidence in accessing emergency care, have also made a tangible difference.

These achievements reflect our commitment to listening, learning and taking action. They also highlight the value of working in partnership with people with lived experience to guide meaningful change.

We recognise that people with disability are not a single group. Each person brings their own experiences, strengths and perspectives. Some disabilities are visible, others are not, and each experience is unique. This plan acknowledges that diversity and challenges us to remove barriers, improve understanding and ensure our services and workplaces are designed for everyone.

This plan has been shaped through meaningful consultation with staff, consumers and people with lived experience. It is grounded in our values of Respect, Integrity, Kindness, Excellence, Fairness and Courage.

Importantly, this is not just a document. It is a shared commitment. Its success will depend on all of us working together, listening, learning and taking action.

I encourage every member of our workforce and community to engage with this plan and be part of the change. Together, we can create a more inclusive, accessible and welcoming health service for everyone.

Libby Fifis  
Chief Executive Officer

# Introduction

At Northeast Health Wangaratta, we recognise that our people are at the heart of delivering exceptional healthcare to our community. Through this plan, we aim to build on our strengths, address critical gaps and set a clear path forward. This plan reaffirms our commitment to investing in our greatest asset, our people, to ensure they feel valued, supported, and equipped to deliver excellent care. By strengthening our workforce capability, inclusion and confidence, we will improve quality, safety and accessibility of care for the diverse community we serve.

In 2022, 5.5 million (21.4%) of Australians lived with disability. For people aged 15-64 years with disability there was a 60.5% participation rate in the labour force, for people without disability this was 84.9%<sup>i</sup>. This gap highlights the systemic barriers that continue to limit equitable access to employment for people with disability. For Northeast Health it presents an opportunity to strengthen inclusive recruitment, retention and career development practices, ensuring people with disability are supported to contribute their skills, experience and perspectives. By cultivating a more inclusive workforce, we not only create fairer employment opportunities but also enrich our organisation with diverse lived-experiences and that strengthen the care we provide.

People with disabilities, like all people, are diverse in culture, language, sexuality, gender, identity, age, ability, socio-economic status and life experiences. Some people's disabilities are hidden, while others are visible. The effects of all disabilities are therefore unique. Recognising and responding to this diversity enables us to deliver more inclusive, person-centred care and achieve better health outcomes for our community. This plan will support our consumers by improving access to services, strengthening communication and inclusion, and ensuring care is delivered in a way that respects individual needs and preferences.

Together, we will foster a workforce that thrives on collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community. This plan details the priorities, actions, and measures that will guide our work in the years ahead. We welcome you to be part of our shared commitment to better health for Northeast Health Wangaratta. The implementation of this Disability Action Plan strives to contribute to Northeast Health's organisational values; Respect, Integrity, Kindness, Excellence, Fairness, Courage. Reporting of its implementation will be included in Northeast Health's Annual Report.

# About Northeast Health Wangaratta

We are a major health service provider in Northeast Victoria, situated centrally within the Hume region. For more than 150 years, we have delivered an extensive range of healthcare services at the Green Street campus, a residential aged care facility in Illoura, and through many outreach services into the home and through telehealth.

Acute inpatient and community services are located in Green Street, Wangaratta. Our Hospital in the Home (HITH), non-admitted patient services and community-based care programs reach across the central Hume area and are essential to achieving our goal of keeping care as close to home as possible. Clinical services provided on the Green Street campus include accident and emergency, critical and intensive care, general surgery, orthopaedics, urology, obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics, general medicine, oncology, renal dialysis, rehabilitation, dental, medical imaging, community nursing, allied health and outpatient services. Our staff also provide a range of preventative health programs.

In addition to acute and community services, we also provide residential aged care and transitional care at Illoura our purpose-built facility, located 5 minutes from the main Green Street campus in College Street Wangaratta.

The community we serve is at the core of who we are and is made up of four distinct catchments.

Our primary catchment and purpose is meeting all the healthcare needs of our core community being the 30,000+ people who live within the Rural City of Wangaratta, and who access the full range of our services as a first point of call.

As a secondary catchment, our community also includes the more than 60,000 people who access NHW through other Hume health services and providers within our region, many of whom rely on NHW to provide higher level and specialist care. This catchment includes people living in the Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Moira (Katamatite/Yarrowonga district) and Corowa districts, and their local health services as our valued partners.



Beyond these, there are many additional people who form part of our community, including those who live across the border in NSW, for whom we provide a wide range of services for and represent nearly 7% of our total activity. We also recognise those who access NHW services as a visitor to our region, noting the increasing popularity of the Alpine and river towns as destinations for both short and long-term visitors.

We are a diverse community with 10.3% of people born overseas<sup>ii</sup> and a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents than Victoria. We recognise and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our land, and pay respect to the history, culture, diversity and value of all Aboriginal peoples. Creating a safe and welcoming environment for all consumers, patients, residents and their families is at our core.

As well as the delivery and support of health care, we play a number of important roles within and for our community. We are a large local employer who will always preference local where we can. We are also an educator for our staff and for others, an innovator across every area of our business, and an advocate for our consumers, patients, residents and community.

Northeast Health Wangaratta is the largest employer in North East Victoria and employs over 1,500 people across our region. We also engage more than 150 volunteers, who are a critical part of both our team and our community.

In our 2025 People Matter Survey (Victorian public sector's independent employee opinion survey), 7% (24) of the 324 respondents answered 'yes' to whether they live with disability, 4% (12) preferred not to say and 89% (288) said no. 4% (13) of respondents also indicated they had caring responsibilities for 'Person(s) with disability'.

Northeast Health has been a NDIS provider since 2017, providing both residential services through our Illoura Residential Aged Care Facility and services through brokerage.

# About disability

## Definition

In line with *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022-2026)*, Northeast Health acknowledges there is not a single definition of disability. People have different preferences regarding how they describe their disability.

Disability is defined within the *Disability Act 2006* in relation to a person as:

- a) A sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof, which:
  - i. Is, or is likely to be permanent; and
  - ii. Causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility, or communication; and
  - iii. Requires significant ongoing or long term episodic support; and
  - iv. Is not related to ageing
- b) An intellectual disability; or
- c) A developmental delay

## Societal understandings of Disability

In conjunction with the definition from *Disability Act 2006*, World Health Organisation provides:

“Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which a person lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.”

This complex interaction between the nature of disability and society presents unique experiences for the person. Discriminatory practices are a part of the experiences if the removal of systematic, environmental and social barriers are not considered.

This is supported by the *Discrimination Act 2002* (DDA), protecting all Australians from being discriminated based on disability. The main obligations under this are:

1. Not to discriminate directly by less favourable treatment
2. Not to discriminate indirectly by treatment which is less favourable in its impact
3. To make reasonable adjustments where required
4. To avoid and prevent disability harassment

# Discrimination Types

## Direct

When someone treats a person less favourably, or proposes to treat them less favourably, than they would treat someone else who does not have a disability in similar circumstances.

## Indirect

When people do not consider the needs of people with disabilities because they have little or no knowledge of those needs.

# Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple social identities intersect to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. Rather than treating identities like race, gender, class, sexuality and disability in separate categories, intersectionality recognizes that people hold all of these identities at once, and those identities shape each other<sup>iii</sup>.

Northeast Health is committed to the improvement of equitable health outcomes and understands that having more than one indicator of diversity increases vulnerability and poorer outcomes.

- In 2022, one quarter (25.3%) of **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** people had disability<sup>iv</sup>
- **Women** with disability are more likely to have experienced sexual violence (4.0%) than women without disability (2.5%)<sup>v</sup>.
- **LGB+ individuals with disability** faced discrimination at almost three times the rate of their heterosexual counterparts (27.7% vs. 8.7%)<sup>vi</sup>.

## Disability in Victoria

- 17% of Victorians are people with disability<sup>vii</sup>
- In Victoria, 46% of people with disability are employed compared to 79% of people without disability<sup>viii</sup>.
- Only just over 10% of the 1.1 million Victorians with disability are eligible for an NDIS plan<sup>ix</sup>.
- 77% of people with disability have a physical disability<sup>x</sup>.
- 32% of people with disability sometimes or always need support with daily self-care, mobility or communication activities<sup>xi</sup>.
- 24% of Aboriginal people have disability, which is twice the rate of the general population<sup>xii</sup>.
- 39% of LGBTQIA+ people aged 14 to 21 identify as having disability or long-term health condition<sup>xiii</sup>.
- 7.7% of children under 15 have disability<sup>xiv</sup>.

The Victorian Government released *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022-2026)*, (Inclusive Victoria) in 2022.

“Inclusive Victoria: the state disability plan (2022 – 2026) is Victoria’s plan for making things fairer for people with disability. The plan is a key way for the Victorian Government to be accountable for making all parts of the community inclusive and accessible for everyone”. *Inclusive Victoria: the state disability plan, State of Victoria, Department of Families Fairness and Housing*<sup>10</sup>.

*Inclusive Victoria* has four pillars and priority areas, these are:

1. Inclusive communities
2. Health, housing and wellbeing
3. Fairness and safety
4. Opportunity and pride

The Northeast Health Wangaratta Disability Action Plan 2026-2028 aligns to a number of actions and outcomes of the *Inclusive Victoria* plan.

# Disability Support at Northeast Health

## Consumer and Carer Support

We are committed to strengthening access, inclusion and meaningful participation for consumers and carers across every aspect of our services. Below are some of the resources that we have implemented to build a more responsive, inclusive and supportive health service. While important progress has been made, we recognise that there are still significant opportunities to grow, learn and do better.

### Accessibility Kit

Our Accessibility Kit contains a number of tools used to support communication for people with communication differences. It includes items such as:

- Communication Access Boards
- Hearing Amplifier
- Hearing aid batteries
- Light up magnifiers
- Key word sign prompts
- 'My health cards' conversation started developed by the Council for Intellectual Disability



*Image: Tracey and Amanda from our Disability Support Team with some of the accessibility resources available to consumers*

## Accessible call bell

An accessible call bell is designed so that patients with a range of abilities can activate it easily. It has a large, pressure activated button that can be operated using different parts of the body, depending on what best suits an individual's mobility and dexterity. Accessible call bells promote safety, independence and dignity by allowing patients that are unable to use a traditional nurse call bell to call for assistance when needed.



*Image: Sensory room utilising low lighting to minimise stimulus in the environment for patients waiting for surgery.*

## Sensory Room in Admission & Day Stay Unit

A sensory room can support emotional regulation, reduce stress and promote focus and positive engagement for individuals with diverse sensory needs.

Our sensory room is an intentionally created space that is intended to stimulate or calm an individual's senses, depending on how they engage with the environment. It is an area separate to the general waiting area in our Admissions department. The room has soft lighting options, an image projector, tactile materials, fidget toys and other sensory tools.

Sensory rooms can benefit a wide range of individuals including those with sensory processing differences, disabilities and can also be a haven for patients experiencing stress, anxiety or sensory overload.

Our sensory room is available to patients waiting to be called to theatre on request.

## Workforce Support

Individuals who are current or potential members of the Northeast Health workforce, who identify as having disability are able to access support through our Disability Support Officer. The Disability Support Officer is a role dedicated to ensuring people with disability have the support they require to fully participate in all aspects of our workforce including recruitment, onboarding, career development and day-to-day work activities. The supports available include:

- Support to apply for a workforce role (application development and lodgment)
- Ensuring individual needs are met at interviews
- Workplace modifications and resources
- Manager/supervisor training and support
- Liaising with disability employment services
- Assistance with paperwork

### Tidy Team

The Tidy Team was established by a group of employees with disability to provide peer support and to stay up to date with current news at Northeast Health. The team supports each other to maintain mandatory training and the opportunity for social connection. The success of the Tidy Team model of support was acknowledged when they were awarded highly commended runner up for Disability Employment Outcomes in the 2022 Victorian Disability Awards.



*Image: Jacob, a member of the Tidy Team, acknowledging Greg from Food Services as a disABILITY Ally for International Day of People with Disability in 2025*

## Nathan's Story

My name's Nathan and I've been at Northeast Health Wangaratta for 9 years now. I work in the kitchen, so that's everything from dishes to mopping to delivering meals to patients. I like being busy. You feel useful. You're doing something that helps someone else.

I've got a learning disability and sometimes I get stuck on things like online modules or understanding the chemicals at work. I don't always get it straight away. But my team jumps in every time. They sit with me, help me work things out, write things down if I need it. There are good people here. Good people everywhere, really. Sometimes you just have to ask, and most people will help if you do.

Outside of work, I have a full life. Sport keeps me going. I play rugby with the Wang Knights, soccer with the Rebellion, and I've played for the Magpies in the Disability League. When I was younger, I even played goalkeeper for Victoria in the Special Olympics. We came second. That week in Melbourne was awesome.

I try to give back too. At the clubs we do sausage sizzles, raffles, fundraisers for different causes. I don't remember all of them, but that's the point. You help where you can, and you get help in return.

One of my proudest moments was receiving a staff award in 2018 for being helpful [the Northeast Health Award for Excellence in Operational Support]. That meant a lot. Another big achievement was going to the Wangaratta District Special School. I used to be really quiet, and they helped bring me out of my shell.

At work, one of my favourite things is being part of the Tidy Team. We're a group with different disabilities and we meet every



*Image: Nathan cleaning trays in the hospital kitchen*

Monday. It's half an hour of helping each other with things like online learning and paperwork, but it's also talking about our days, our worries, having a laugh. It's companionship. I've made great friends out of it, and it always puts a smile on my dial.

People don't always see disabilities. Sometimes they're invisible. More education would help, so people understand the different kinds out there. But I see a lot of good too - clubs that accept people, workplaces that help you grow, managers who listen, a whole hospital full of people willing to give you a hand.

I've got a full-time job now. I get to play sport, help the community, talk to people, be part of something. I really love my life, and I love being part of Northeast Health. I'm happy here. That's the truth."

## Development of this plan

The *Disability Act 2006 (Vic)* outlines four focus areas that must be addressed in disability action plans. The four areas are:

1. Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;
2. Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;
3. Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;
4. Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

With this in mind, Northeast Health Disability Action Plan 2026-2028 aims to ensure people with disabilities receive high quality care and employment opportunities that are accessible, welcoming, safe and effective, as everyone else.

We also have considered *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)* and United Nations International Convention of Human Rights and lastly, not least, *Inclusive Victoria: state disability action plan (2022-2026)*.

Our Disability Action Plan will be championed by Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and will utilise Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group to support the actions.

Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group will:

- report on Disability Action Plan management to Diversity and Inclusion committee
- work with stakeholders to improve and plan on actions

## Consultation process

The development of this Disability Action Plan included a number of ways for our community to contribute.

- Tidy Team meetings – 4 meetings were dedicated to the discussion of each of the focus areas with the Tidy Team
- Survey – An online survey was made available to our workforce and general public asking their input on what is required for Northeast Health to be inclusive and accessible to our workforce and consumers. The survey was promoted across social media, posters on noticeboards around Wangaratta, adverts in the local newspaper and email invitations extended to the Wangaratta disability services network.
- Face to face staff sessions – Facilitated sessions were held across both Northeast Health campuses discussing barriers to access and inclusion for our workforce and consumers across the 4 focus areas.

## Tidy Team

The Tidy Team were able to provide their lived-experience as members of our workforce as well as community access and participation.

### Some themes from these discussions included:

- Communication is key to feeling included
- Language used in job advertisements and position descriptions can be a deterrent to applying for employment
- Group style recruitment activities can reduce fear. Applicants have a collective goal and there is safety in numbers
- Disability Support Officer is crucial through early stages of employment
- Tidy Team assists with confidence to ask for help and knowing who to ask
- Public transport is not available after lunch time on weekends, limiting work attendance.

## Survey

Invitation to participate in our consultation survey was shared through advertisements in Wangaratta's local newspaper, posters displayed at disability service providers, social media channels, internal emails and through email to Northeast Health staff and disability service network contacts.

When asked about whether Northeast Health is an inclusive organisation, there were many positive responses as well as suggestions for improvement.

### A number of strengths mentioned in the comments included:

- Concierge makes it easy to access Northeast Health
- Everything is accessible via public transport
- Communication boards at reception desks are helpful
- Knowing how to contact the Disability Liaison Officer when required

### Some of the suggested target areas were:

- Availability of accessible parking
- Physical access barriers (including main corridors) around the hospital that make it difficult to access Northeast Health
- Education to build staff capacity to communicate with people with disability
- Sharing stories and lived-experience to challenge biases and assumptions and build staff understanding of disability
- Visibility and feeling heard are important for people living with disability to feel included and welcome in our community
- Clear pathways and supports that assist people living with disability to apply for work, volunteering and student placement
- Easy read guides and short videos to support care

## Face to face staff sessions

Engagement with our workforce was a key element of our consultation. A total of 10 face-to-face sessions were held with staff across both Northeast Health campuses, providing multiple opportunities for staff to contribute their ideas and perspectives.

These sessions allowed staff to share their views on how Northeast Health operates, what's working well, what's not working well and what improvements can be made. 38 staff attended these sessions with representation from dental, allied health, nursing, performance improvement, aged care, research, complex care, outpatients, recruitment, health and safety and administration.

### Some of the strengths discussed included:

- Visibility of staff with disability through profiles and celebration activities shows that our workforce represents the community we serve
- Sensory Room in ADSU is a great resource
- Recruitment team provide support to applicants with limited computer literacy to submit applications

### Some of the common themes identified through these sessions were:

- Lack of flags and information within patient administration systems to identify consumer access needs (e.g. specific communication needs, appointment scheduling, mobility)
- Seating across waiting areas, common public spaces and consultation rooms is not accessible
- Patient information is not available in easy read or other alternative formats to meet consumer health literacy needs
- Staff across most disciplines lack awareness of invisible disabilities and are not confident in how to ask about or respond to requests for reasonable adjustments
- Social event and training communications are not always in an accessible format
- Lived-experience would be a welcome and valuable addition to staff education
- No consistent discharge pathway or transfer of care for patients that have in-home supports or live in supported accommodation
- Uncertainty about process for staff to request reasonable adjustments to do their job
- Lack of formal engagement of consumers with lived-experience for co-design of services

## Consultation outcome

All suggestions and feedback have been considered by the Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group. Where appropriate this information has been developed in to actions for this plan.

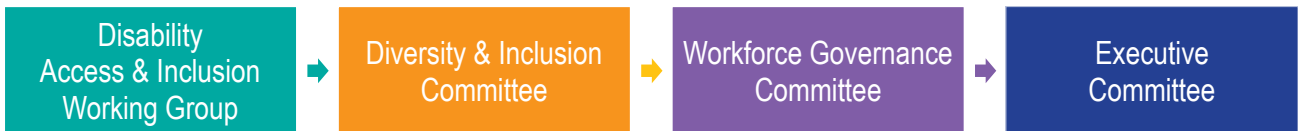
The draft action plan was shared for feedback with the following groups for final feedback and endorsement:

- Northeast Health staff
- Survey participants that provided contact details
- Northeast Health Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group
- Northeast Health Workforce Governance Committee
- Northeast Health Board of Directors

## Governance

The development, implementation and evaluation of the Disability Action Plan is overseen by the Disability Access and Inclusion Group. The group membership has included employees with disability, and representation from nursing, allied health, aged care, performance improvement, health and safety, administration and disability support teams.

The working group meet monthly and report to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.



# Action Plan

## Pillar 1 – Accessibility

**Outcome:** Our services, programs and facilities are accessible to people with disability

| Action |   | Evaluation measure  | Responsibility  | Timeframe                                    |
|--------|---|---|---|--|
| 1.1    | Ensure processes and policies in relevant facilities and maintenance activities incorporate the National Building standards and disability inclusion standards. | New and revised policies and activities incorporate National Building standards and disability inclusion standards. | Operational Director<br>Facilities and Maintenance    | Ongoing                                      |
| 1.2    | Undertake an accessibility assessment of one area annually and support implementation of its recommendations.   | One accessibility assessment undertaken and improvement plan developed annually.                                    | Executive Director People & Corporate Operations      | October 2026<br>October 2027<br>October 2028 |
| 1.3    | Review Northeast Health’s Communication Guide to ensure accessibility across all communication channels is included.  | Guide reviewed and accessibility considerations are clearly identified.   | Marketing & Media<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | April 2027                                   |
| 1.4    | Progress of Disability Action Plan communicated with Northeast Health’s workforce and community.  | Progress communicated in Annual Report and other media channels.  | Marketing & Media<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | August 2027<br>August 2028                   |
| 1.5    | Develop tool to identify patient communication needs and a bedside identifier to support staff communication with inpatients.                                   | Tool developed and implemented across inpatient wards.  | Director Allied Health                                | June 2028                                    |

| Action |  | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility  | Timeframe                                       |
|--------|--|--|---|---|
| 1.6    | Develop tool for accessible seating considerations and include in business case template.                              | Tool developed and included in business case template.                                 | Executive Director People & Corporate Operations                          | June 2027                                       |
| 1.7    | Review seating in waiting areas and public common areas.   | Review completed.  | Consumer Experience<br>Safety, Health & Wellbeing<br>Manager              | December 2027                                   |
| 1.8    | Staged review of intake processes to identify opportunity for improvement to meet consumer accessibility requirements. | Review completed and improvement plan developed for at least one intake area annually. | Consumer Experience<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor                   | December 2026<br>December 2027<br>December 2028 |
| 1.9    | Conduct staged internal audit of physical access in public thoroughfares.  | Audit completed.   | Safety, Health & Wellbeing<br>Manager<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | December 2028                                   |
| 1.10   | Conduct staged internal audit of physical access in shared meeting spaces.   | Audit completed.   | Safety, Health & Wellbeing<br>Manager<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | December 2028                                   |
| 1.11   | Conduct internal communication access audit of Outpatients and Dental services   | Audit completed and improvement plan developed.  | Operational Director of Sub<br>Acute and Community<br>Services            | March 2027                                      |

| Action |   | Evaluation measure  | Responsibility  | Timeframe     |
|--------|---|---|---|---------------|
| 1.12   | Create site maps showing accessibility features of each campus.   | Site maps created.  | Safety, Health & Wellbeing Manager<br>Consumer Engagement<br>Facilities & Maintenance       | December 2026 |
| 1.13   | Explore opportunities for funding for resourcing for access and inclusion investment.   | Funding opportunities that support access, inclusion and equity initiatives and identified and evaluated.   | Operational Director<br>People & Culture  | Ongoing       |
| 1.14   | Develop staff guide for planning low-stimulation admissions.  | Guide developed.  | Operational Director<br>Specialist Services   | June 2028     |
| 1.15   | Develop transport guide for patients attending key service areas.   | Transport guide developed and published on website.   | Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group   | December 2028 |
| 1.16   | Advocate to Rural City of Wangaratta regarding accessible footpaths around Northeast Health campuses.   | Advocate for safe and accessible footpaths around all facilities.   | Safety, Health & Wellbeing Manager<br>Diversity & Inclusion Advisor                         | Ongoing       |
| 1.17   | Investigate discharge planning pathway/process for participants that reside in Specialist Disability Accommodation and/or are supported by care providers in the community. | Discharge planning pathways for participants in Specialist Disability Accommodation and/or receiving community care support are reviewed, mapped and opportunities for improvement are identified and documented. | Operational Directors of Clinical Services<br>Disability Access and Inclusion Working Group | October 2027  |

## Pillar 2 – Reducing barriers in obtaining and maintaining employment

**Outcome:** Northeast Health is a preferred employer for people with disability

| Action |   | Evaluation measure  | Responsibility  | Timeframe                                    |
|--------|---|---|---|--|
| 2.1    | Review position descriptions for roles that are frequently recruited to, focusing on modifiable requirements.   | Review 1 position description modifiable requirements annually.   | Operational Director<br>Support Services<br>Disability Support Officer                  | October 2026<br>October 2027<br>October 2028 |
| 2.2    | Deliver program to Wangaratta District Specialist School students on employment and volunteer opportunities and what to expect as a consumer at Northeast Health. | A program is delivered to Wangaratta District Specialist School students providing clear information on employment, volunteer opportunities and what to expect as a consumer. | Disability Support Officer<br>Performance Improvement Team<br>Education & Research Unit | December 2027                                |
| 2.3    | Investigate opportunities for identified employment roles for people with disability.   | Opportunities for employment roles are identified and evaluated for potential implementation.   | Disability Support Officer  | Ongoing                                      |
| 2.4    | Promote Disability Support Officer support available when advertising School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship positions.                                      | Support is clearly promoted and included in communications when advertising School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship positions.  | Disability Support Officer<br>Education & Research Unit                                 | Ongoing                                      |
| 2.5    | Build a resource library for inclusive employment practices on staff intranet.  | Comprehensive resource library for inclusive employment practices developed, maintained and accessible on the intranet.   | Disability Support Officer<br>Diversity & Inclusion Advisor                             | December 2026                                |

| Action |  | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility   | Timeframe    |
|--------|--|--|--|--------------|
| 2.6    | Promote points of contact for applicants and existing staff to request reasonable adjustments.   | Points of contact for requesting reasonable adjustments are clearly promoted and accessible to both applicants and existing staff. | People & Culture   | March 2027   |
| 2.7    | Provide inclusive employment practice training for hiring managers.  | Inclusive employment training is delivered to hiring managers.   | Disability Support Officer<br>Diversity & Inclusion Advisor        | June 2027    |
| 2.8    | Investigate alternative delivery options for mandatory training modules.   | Alternative delivery options to improve accessibility and engagement are explored, assessed and documented.                        | Education & Research Unit<br>Disability Support Officer            | October 2028 |
| 2.9    | Review employee lifecycle for key points for Disability Support Officer referral.  | Key stages within employee lifecycle are reviewed to identify appropriate points for referral.                                     | People & Culture   | June 2027    |
| 2.10   | Develop plain language resource for workforce on “What is a reasonable adjustment?”  | Resource developed, accessible and effectively communicated to workforce.  | Safety, Health and Wellbeing Manager<br>Disability Support Officer | March 2027   |
| 2.11   | Review Northeast Health careers webpage to ensure it is clearly stated that Northeast Health supports diversity and people with diverse needs. | Careers webpage reviewed and updated to clearly communicate support for diversity and inclusion of people with diverse needs.      | People & Culture   | March 2027   |

| Action |   | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility                      | Timeframe |
|--------|---|--|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2.12   | Group style recruitment campaigns to be considered where appropriate. | Opportunities for group style campaigns are implemented where appropriate to enhance inclusion and efficiency. | Hiring managers<br>Recruitment team | Ongoing   |

## Pillar 3 – Inclusion and participation in the community

**Outcome:** We support and promote inclusion and participation of people with disability

| Action |   | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility   | Timeframe     |
|--------|---|--|--|---------------|
| 3.1    | Share opportunities for people with disability to participate in Northeast Health’s shared decision-making forums.        | Opportunities for people with disability to participate in shared decision-making forums shared publicly and through relevant disability networks. | Consumer Engagement  | June 2028     |
| 3.2    | Work with Wangaratta District Specialist School to use lived experience of students as an education tool for health care  | Collaboration with Wangaratta District Specialist School uses students’ lived-experience as an educational tool for learning.                      | Consumer Engagement<br>Disability Support Officer                  | December 2028 |
| 3.3    | Develop 2 “What to expect....” online resources to prepare consumers for presentations or procedures at Northeast Health. | Online resourced are developed and available to prepare consumers for presentations or procedures at Northeast Health                              | Operational Director<br>Specialist Services<br>Consumer Engagement | June 2028     |
| 3.4    | Use Auslan interpreters at all public corporate events.   | Auslan interpreters are provided at public corporate events when available.  | Projects & Engagement<br>Officer<br>Executive Assistants           | Ongoing       |
| 3.5    | New service design and service redesign are informed by lived-experience of people with disability and/or carers.         | New or redesigned services incorporate input from people with disability and/or their carers to inform planning and delivery.                      | Consumer Engagement  | Ongoing       |

| Action |   | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility   | Timeframe                                       |
|--------|---|--|--|---|
| 3.6    | Offer face to face disability awareness training for workforce. | Face to face disability awareness training is offered and delivered to the workforce twice yearly to enhance understanding and inclusive practice. | Education & Research<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | December 2026<br>December 2027<br>December 2028 |

## Pillar 4 – Changing attitudes and discriminative practices

**Outcome:** Northeast Health workforce demonstrates attitudes and practices that are inclusive of people with disability

| Action |   | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility   | Timeframe     |
|--------|---|--|--|---------------|
| 4.1    | Investigate establishing Disability Champions across Northeast Health.  | Opportunities to establish Disability Champions across organization are investigated and a framework for implementation is documented. | Education & Research<br>Disability Support Officer                             | May 2028      |
| 4.2    | Build online resource library to support inclusive patient care.  | Online resource library is built to support inclusive patient care and is accessible to all staff.                                     | Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor   | June 2027     |
| 4.3    | Investigate disability flag to identify patients on Miya*.  | Feasibility of disability flag to identify patients is investigated and recommendations documented.                                    | Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor   | June 2028     |
| 4.4    | Investigate standardising practice for handover/transfer of care for patients with disability to external care providers. | Standardised practices for handover/transfer of care for patients with disability to external providers are investigated and proposed. | Operational Directors<br>Clinical Services<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor | December 2028 |
| 4.5    | Investigate building disability awareness into existing mandatory training modules.                                       | Opportunities to incorporate disability awareness into existing mandatory training modules are investigated.                           | Education & Research<br>Diversity & Inclusion<br>Advisor                       | Ongoing       |

| Action |  | Evaluation measure   | Responsibility   | Timeframe |
|--------|--|--|--|-----------|
| 4.6    | Identify opportunities for engagement of people with lived-experience in improvement activities. | Opportunities to engage people with lived experience in improvement activities are identified and implemented.                 | Performance Improvement Team   | Ongoing   |
| 4.7    | Develop policy for remuneration of lived-experience participation in improvement activities.     | A policy for remuneration of lived-experience participation in improvement activities is developed and implemented.            | Quality & Safety team<br>Diversity & Inclusion Advisor                                       | June 2027 |
| 4.8    | Celebrate International Day of People with Disability.   | International Day of People with Disability is celebrated and promoted across Northeast Health.                                | Disability Support Officer<br>Diversity & Inclusion Advisor<br>Projects & Engagement Officer | Annually  |
| 4.9    | Share profiles of employees with disability through internal and public media channels.          | Profiles of employees with disability are shared through internal and public media channels to raise awareness and visibility. | Disability Support Officer<br>Marketing & Media  | Ongoing   |

# Definitions and acronyms

## Carer

An individual who:

- a) provides personal care, support and assistance to another individual who needs it because that other individual is a person with disability; and
- b) Does not provide the care, support and assistance:
  - i. Under a contract of service or a contract for the provision of services; or
  - ii. In the course of doing voluntary work for a charitable, welfare or community organisation; or
  - iii. As part of the requirements of a course of education or training.

## Consumer

Refers to past, present and potential users of Northeast Health's services and may include patients, clients, residents, carers, relatives, kin, guardians, advocates and community partners.

## Developmental delay

A delay in in the development of a child under 6 years of age that:

- a) Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments; and
- b) Results in substantial reduction in functional capacity in one or more of the following areas of major life activity:
  - i. Self-care;
  - ii. Receptive and expressive language;
  - iii. Cognitive development;
  - iv. Motor development; and
- c) Results in the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are of extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

## Disability

In relation to a person means –

- a) A sensory, physical, or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combinations thereof which –
  - i. Is, or is likely to be, permanent; and
  - ii. Causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication; and
  - iii. Requires significant ongoing or long term episodic support; and
  - iv. Is not related to ageing; or
- b) An intellectual disability; or
- c) A developmental delay

## Disability Service

A service specifically for the support of persons with a disability which is provided by a disability service provider

## **Intellectual Disability**

In relation to a person over the age of 5 years, means the concurrent existence of –

- a) Significant sub-average general intellectual functioning
- b) Significant deficits in adaptive behavior-

Each of which became manifest before the age of 18 years.

## **Miya**

Digital patient journey board system used to track patient access and flow across the Emergency Department and hospital wards.

## **Participant**

A person who applies and meets the eligibility criteria for the NDIS<sup>xv</sup>.

## **Workforce**

Northeast Health Workforce is inclusive of employees, contractors, VMOs, volunteers, students, locum and agency staff and Board Directors.

## **ABS**

Australian Bureau of Statistics

## **LGBTQIA+**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, members of other communities, including allies.

## **NDIS**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

## **SDA**

Specialist Disability Accommodation

# Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release> accessed 17/03/2026
- <sup>ii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics – Region Summaries
- <sup>iii</sup> [Understanding intersectionality and its origins | Intro to... | Fiveable](#) accessed 23/03/2026
- <sup>iv</sup> [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) accessed 17/03/2026
- <sup>v</sup> [Sexual violence, 2021-22 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) accessed 17/03/2026
- <sup>vi</sup> [Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2022 - People with Disability Australia](#) accessed 17/03/2026
- <sup>vii</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020, People with disability Australia, Australian Government, Canberra
- <sup>viii</sup> [Outcome 11: Employment | vic.gov.au](#) accessed 17/03/2026
- <sup>ix</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings, Australian Government, Canberra
- <sup>x</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020, People with disability Australia, Australian Government, Canberra
- <sup>xi</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020, People with disability Australia, Australian Government, Canberra.
- <sup>xii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings, Australian Government, Canberra
- <sup>xiii</sup> LGBTIQ+ Health Australia 2021, Snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTIQ+ people, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Pyrmont
- <sup>xiv</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings, Australian Government, Canberra
- <sup>xv</sup> [Glossary | NDIS](#) accessed 19/03/2026



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