



Australian Government

Department of Defence

Defence Disability Action Plan





Defence Disability Action Plan

The aim of the Disability Action Plan is to develop within Defence an inclusive work environment that enables staff with disability to contribute to Defence's goals. It forms Defence's response to eight recommendations for promoting employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service made by the Australian Public Service Commission's Management Advisory Committee (MAC) in 2006.

The Commonwealth Government has a policy agenda to increase the inclusion of people with disability in Australian society by encouraging employers to undertake measures to recruit, retain and develop people with disability. Defence is uniquely placed to contribute to this agenda due to its extensive presence in communities across Australia.

As part of the Government's initiatives, in July 2008, Australia was one of the first nations to ratify the new *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. In so doing, Australia joined 29 other countries around the world in promoting a global community which recognises people with a disability as equal and active citizens. Defence acknowledges that people with disability have a right to work and participate in employment like all other Australians.

The MAC6 Report *Employment of People with Disability in the APS* was launched in August 2006. It set eight key objectives for promoting the employment of people with disability in the APS, focusing on improving workplace cultures and policies. It also identified a range of better-practice strategies for meeting those objectives.

Following the release of the MAC6 Report, the APSC evaluated Government Agencies' approaches to disability management and Defence was involved in this evaluation. The results were used to identify elements of good practice across the public sector and informed the development of a toolkit for APS agencies. This publication, *Ability at Work: Tapping the talent of people with disability* was launched in June 2007.

The Defence Disability Action Plan was developed in line with the recommendations of the *MAC6 Report* and the *Ability at Work Toolkit* to devise more effective strategies to recruit, retain and develop people with disability within the department.

Fairness and Resolution Branch will manage the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.

The Disability Action Plan will be publicly available through the Defence internet site at www.defence.gov.au/fr, as well as in hard-copy as posters and brochures.

OBJECTIVE 1: A culture that values diversity and actively promotes the employment of people with disability (PWD).

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Develop a business case for the employment of PWD.	July 2009.	Business case is agreed at senior committee level.
Facilitate and encourage attendance at disability-focused seminars and training courses.	Ongoing from 2008.	All interested employees, particularly managers/supervisors attend disability-focused seminars and training courses.
Publicise examples of PWD working successfully in Defence.	Ongoing from 2008.	Articles appear regularly in Defence media.
Review the Disability website for content and accessibility.	Ongoing from 2009.	Disability website is up-to-date for content and accessibility.
Establish an online Defence Disability Network.	June 2009.	The Defence Disability Network is established by June 2009.
Increase the rate of voluntary disclosure of PWD on PMKeyS.	June 2009.	The level of disclosure on PMKeyS continues to increase up to the APS average by June 2009.

Australia joined 29 other countries around the world in promoting a global community which recognises people with a disability as equal and active citizens.



OBJECTIVE 2: Flexible recruitment strategies that are accessible to applicants with disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Review recruitment and selection practices to identify any unintended barriers to PWD.	Ongoing.	Defence recruitment (internal and external) is 'disability friendly'.
Develop a disability statement for all recruitment advertising.	Ongoing.	All recruitment advertising includes a diversity/disability statement.
Raise awareness of all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process, including panel members, about issues associated with recruiting PWD.	Ongoing from 2009.	Selection material contains guidelines and information for panels and applicants. Sample interview questions are developed.
Review training for selection panels to ensure currency of information.	Ongoing from 2009.	Selection module contains scenarios of recruiting of PWD.
Establish links with Disability Employment Network providers.	Ongoing from 2009.	An increased number of PWD register on the Defence temporary employment register.
Establish links with jobseekers, students and the talent pipeline.	Ongoing from 2009.	Links are made with disability-support units in tertiary institutions and with specialist support groups.
Provide work experience and mentoring opportunities for tertiary students with disability.	Ongoing from 2008.	Defence participates in the <i>Stepping Into</i> programs organised by AEND through a number of tertiary institutions.
Review the statement of requirement and contracts with recruitment agencies to ensure that they include provision for alternative testing processes when running bulk recruitment exercises and assessment centres.	Ongoing 2009.	Fairness and Resolution Branch maintains links with Defence civilian recruitment to ensure that the provision of alternative testing procedures is included.
Develop a toolkit of alternative testing processes and reasonable adjustment in selection processes.	Ongoing from 2009.	The www.jobaccess.gov.au link is publicised and toolkits are distributed to all Group and Service HR units.

OBJECTIVE 3: Accessible training, cadetship and mentoring opportunities for people with disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Explore ways of linking work-experience programs with graduate programs.	Ongoing from 2009.	Links are established, through AEND, with relevant tertiary institutions promoting the operation of work-experience programs for PWD and availability of graduate programs in Defence.
Review accessibility of internal training.	Ongoing from 2009.	A report addressing national access to internal training issues for PWD is presented by Dec 2010.
Investigate the feasibility of placing at least one PWD on each Defence entry-level program.	Ongoing from 2010.	One PWD is placed on each traineeship, apprenticeship, cadetship and Graduate program offered by Defence in 2010.
Work with the <i>Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG)</i> to identify Service families with a family member with disability to participate in work experience.	Ongoing from 2009.	Service family members with disability who would like to gain suitable employment are identified.
Investigate the feasibility of networking with other AEND members to provide employment opportunities nationally for Service families with a family member with disability.	Ongoing from 2009.	Opportunities are provided for Service family members with disability to undertake work experience with several large national employers. A paper addressing the issues involved and recommending a way ahead is presented in 2009.

To devise more effective strategies to recruit, retain and develop people with disability within the department.



OBJECTIVE 4: Special employment measures to employ people with an intellectual disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Work with Koomarri to transition shop-front staff to open employment where this is feasible.	Ongoing.	Three PWID transition to open employment in Defence in 2010.
Publicise the Public Service Commissioner's Direction facilitating the employment of PWID.	Ongoing.	Relevant recruitment material makes reference to clause 4.2(6)(b)(ii) of the Direction.
Provide support to managers and workplaces employing PWID.	Ongoing.	Sources of support are publicised and made known to Group and Service HR units.

OBJECTIVE 5: Accessible premises, workplaces and supportive work environments for people with disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Develop and implement a reasonable adjustment policy and procedures.	July 2009.	Policy on reasonable adjustment is published.
Review <i>DPI 2/2002 Department of Defence Access and Disability Policy</i> .	Dec 2009.	Updated policy is published.
Manage complaints made about building access by PWD appropriately and sensitively.	Ongoing.	Reports of complaints are made annually as part of the equity and diversity reporting process.
Take into account the needs of PWD when developing and implementing service delivery projects.	Ongoing.	Reported as part of the annual equity and diversity reporting process.
Develop scripts for IT help desk.	Ongoing.	Requests for assistance are handled sensitively and in a timely manner, with a minimum of escalation.
Test IT platforms for compatibility with equipment and software for people with vision impairment.	Ongoing.	Platform and software compatibility is improved.
Review <i>DPI 6/2004 Defence Assistive Technology Policy</i> .	July 2009.	Policy is cleared by stakeholders and promulgated.

OBJECTIVE 6: Reduced complexity, cost and risk for managers employing people with disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Provide support to managers and workplaces employing PWD, including PWID.	Ongoing.	Relevant support services are publicised and made known to Group and Service HR units.
Develop a checklist and guidelines to enable managers to work effectively with DEN support services.	Ongoing from 2009.	A checklist and guidelines are developed.
Organise seminars and training courses for supervisors/managers about various aspects of disability.	Ongoing.	Managers/supervisors attend disability-focused seminars and training courses.
Develop scripts for IT help desk to assist operators dealing with requests for DATP-funded assistive technology requests.	Ongoing from 2009.	Requests for assistance are handled with a minimum of escalation.

OBJECTIVE 7: Consistent conceptual framework for defining disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Investigate the feasibility of adapting PMKeyS to simplify the collection of diversity data.	2009.	PMKeyS Self-service Module is revised to make it more user-friendly.
Adopt a standard approach to the collection of disability data.	Ongoing from 2009.	All Defence surveys and data collection avenues have a standard approach to the collection of disability data.

OBJECTIVE 8: Continuous improvement in recruiting and retaining people with disability.

Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Benchmark Defence performance against that of other organisations.	Annually.	Recruitment and participation rates for PWD in Defence continues to increase.
Include specific questions in all departmental personnel surveys to determine satisfaction with Defence's approach to recruiting, retaining and developing PWD.	Ongoing from 2009.	Satisfaction indices are developed and relevant questions are included in Defence-wide surveys.



Existing Defence achievements

Commitment

- The DEPSEC PSP has accepted the role of Disability Champion.
- The Director, Rights & Responsibilities, is one of the inaugural Koomarri Disability Champions (ACT) and a Board member of the Australian Employer's Network on Disability (AEND).
- Defence is a member of the APS Diversity Network, AEND and GLADNET – a clearing house of international information about disability and employment issues.
- Defence annually celebrates the *International Day of People with Disability*.

Awareness

- Diversity policy instructions are in place and are being reviewed.
- A standard definition of disability has been adopted.
- There is a dedicated disability section in the Fairness & Resolution website.
- An online Disability Discussion Group has been established.
- *Ability at Work* Toolkits and *Managers' Guides* on disability in the workplace have been distributed to senior HR staff.
- Acknowledgement of disability requirements is included in all training courses.

Recruitment

- Internet recruitment sites have been assessed for accessibility.
- Work experience in Defence for tertiary students with disability has been provided through the *Stepping Into* program, organised in conjunction with AEND.
- A contract with Koomarri (ACT) exists to provide shop-front services in Canberra. This initiative employs up to 15 PWID and their two supervisors.
- Recruitment of PWID for designated APS 1 positions was conducted in July 2008.

Support and Training

- A central source of funding for assistive technology is available under the Defence Assistive Technology Program (DATP).
- Training programs have been organised for supervisors and managers of people with intellectual disability (PWID).
- Vision Australia has provided accessibility training to Defence webmasters.
- A supportive OHS culture includes well-developed return-to-work practices.
- Linkages between disability, rehabilitation and performance management have been established.
- There is a well-established Wellbeing Program that has links with organisations such as Beyondblue.

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