



Accessibility Action Plan  
2017-2020

## About Arts Project Australia

Arts Project Australia is a centre of excellence that supports over 120 artists with intellectual disabilities, promoting their work and advocating for inclusion within contemporary art practice.

About the artists:

### Image 1 (2015) Artist: Anne Lynch

Anne Lynch has been fiercely committed to her art making practice in the Arts Project Australia studio since the early nineties. In her pastel works, lone figures are suspended over gentle fields of colour, summoning a sense of isolation and melancholy. Where her works often seem to represent fleeting moments in time, they also carry an air of nostalgia and memoir.

### Image 2 (2015) Artist: Kate Knight

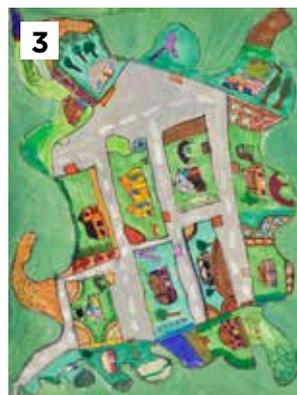
Kate Knight is a painter, ceramicist and print-maker whose work shows a keen eye for the ornate, with a focus on repeated surface motifs. Knight is inspired by the natural world and architectural elements, using a collection of diverse images to form the basis of her art work.

### Image 3 (2015) Artist: Erica Berechree

Erica Berechree is a painter and photographer who also works in digital media. Her paintings frequently adopt an elevated standpoint, presenting an aerial view of Earth. These works reveal urban landscapes and the joys of domestic life through a rich technicolour lens. Berechree refers to these paintings as her 'Google Earth' pictures. Her digital artworks and photographs often compliment this exploration yet signal a degree of departure. Berechree hones in on specific elements, such as roads and trees represented in her Google Earth paintings, which she playfully isolates, abstracts and then reconstructs into a digital artwork.

### Image 4 (2016) Artist: George Aristovoulou

George Aristovoulou is an emerging artist who works predominantly with pencil on paper. His style exemplifies figurative abstraction, carefully segmenting the picture plane by creating broad linear stripes that often incorporate a figurative image.



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## Message from the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman provides a free, fair and independent service for people who have a complaint about a state or local government agency in Victoria.

My vision for the office is to see a timely and fair system that is accessible to and understood by all.

Yet many Victorians are not aware of the Ombudsman's services, and do not know how to access them or what to expect if they do.

This is particularly apparent among the most vulnerable groups in our society — all too often, those with the greatest need for Ombudsman services are the least likely to use them. Addressing this and making the office much more accessible is a central aspect of my vision.

In addition, in order to give effect to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights, and in particular the rights of individuals with disability to recognition and equality before the law, access to essential public services is crucial. This includes access to an independent Ombudsman.

Through this plan, we set out our vision for an office that has less barriers for people with a disability, that supports people with a disability in the workplace, and promotes engagement with people with a disability. It is a journey, and our goal is ambitious, but it's time to take the steps.

Deborah Glass  
Victorian Ombudsman



## Our office

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament. The purpose of our office is to ensure fairness for all Victorians in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration. We do not advocate for members of the public or authorities. We form opinions based on evidence and operate in accordance with the *Ombudsman Act 1973*.

Our day-to-day work involves:

- taking complaints from the public about administrative action by state government departments, bodies established by legislation (e.g. WorkSafe, VicRoads) and local councils (and some private organisations acting on behalf of those bodies)
- making enquiries and resolving complaints informally where possible
- investigating when needed and making recommendations for change
- examining systemic problems in public administration.

## Our vision

### Our purpose

Ensure fairness for Victorians in their dealings with the public sector and improve public administration.

### Our intent

Ensure fairness:

- independent and impartial complaint resolution
- encourage fair and reasonable decision making within the public sector.

Enhance accountability:

- independently investigate serious matters
- report on misconduct and poor administration.

Support continuous improvement:

- assist agencies to learn from complaints and investigations
- investigate systemic issues and identify solutions.

Protect human rights:

- investigate whether an action or decision is incompatible with human rights
- make it easier for vulnerable people to complain.

### Our commitment

To provide accessible and responsive services that are:

- free, independent and impartial
- open, transparent and evidence based
- focused on practical and meaningful outcomes to address injustice
- sensitive to the circumstances of individuals and communities with specific needs
- delivered by skilled and committed professionals
- consistent with the same standards we expect of others.

To educate Victorians on the role of the Ombudsman, how to complain and what they should expect from their dealings with the public sector.

To be courageous in challenging poor public administration.

To constructively assist the public sector to continuously improve its standards and practices.

To provide authoritative and informative reports to the Victorian Parliament.





## Legal framework and guiding principles

Our Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) is guided by:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106 - United Nations
- *Absolutely everyone: State Disability Plan Victoria 2017-2020*

Our plan is consistent with the legislative requirements outlined in section 38 of the *Disability Act 2006* that a public sector body must ensure that a Disability Action Plan is prepared for the purposes of:

- a. reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;
- b. reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;
- c. promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;
- d. achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

## Defining accessibility needs

For the purposes of our AAP, people may have accessibility needs if they have a disability.

There are many definitions of disability used in both international and domestic law. For the purposes of our AAP, we are using the Victorian definition contained in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*:

*disability* means:

- a. total or partial loss of a bodily function; or
- b. the presence in the body of organisms that may cause disease; or
- c. total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- d. malfunction of a part of the body, including:
  - i. mental or psychological disease or disorder;
  - ii. a condition or disorder that results in a person learning more slowly than people who do not have that condition or disorder; or
- e. malformation or disfigurement of a part of the body — and includes a disability that may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability) and, to avoid doubt, behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of a disability.

## Accessibility and the Ombudsman

We are committed to creating an inclusive and accessible:

- workplace for our staff, and
- service to the public.

People with accessibility needs may be employed by our office.

People with accessibility needs may approach our office to request information or to make a complaint.

People with accessibility needs may participate in our education programs, hear the Ombudsman speak at a public event, or attend a community engagement session.

People with accessibility needs may be involved in our investigations. Recent investigations by our office that have explicitly involved or affected persons with a disability include:

- *Investigation into the management of complex workers compensation claims and WorkSafe oversight* - September 2016
- *Investigation into public transport fare evasion enforcement* - May 2016
- *Reporting and investigation of allegations of abuse in the disability sector Phases 1 & 2* - June and December 2105
- *Investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria* - September 2015.

## Our goals

The three goals of our AAP are to:

1. build an accessible Ombudsman's office by reducing barriers for people with a disability
2. provide opportunities for people with a disability to obtain employment at our office and to support our staff with a disability to maintain employment at our office
3. provide opportunities for people with a disability to engage with our office.

In meeting our goals we strive to create change in attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with a disability.





## Accessibility Action Plan Working Group

The Accessibility Action Plan Working Group (AWG) was established to develop, implement and monitor our progress against the AAP.

The AWG is chaired by a Senior Investigation Officer and consists of 10 staff from different units in the office. Three AWG members identified having a disability.

## Monitoring our Accessibility Action Plan

The AWG will be responsible for monitoring the plan and reporting on implementation.

As this is a three year plan, it will review the plan annually to reconsider actions and timeframes for the next financial year.

The AWG plan to meet regularly and to report on progress to the Senior Leadership Committee.

The Ombudsman will report on our progress in implementing the AAP in her annual report to Parliament.

## Actions to achieve our goals

### Goal: Build an accessible Ombudsman's office

Action	Deliverable	Action by	Responsibility
1. Identify the different ways people interact with our office, in relation to both our statutory functions and other services we provide to the public.	Form a review group to identify the different ways people interact with our office.	June 2018	Chair, AWG Assistant Ombudsman, Early Resolution
	Consult each of our business units to identify entry points (both physical and digital access) to our office.		
	Document the different ways people interact with our office.		
2. Identify barriers to accessing our office.	Engage a consultant with expertise in communication accessibility to audit our office.	June 2018	Chair, AWG
	Complete communication accessibility audit.		Chair, AWG Consultant
3. Develop a schedule of activities to reduce and remove barriers identified in the audit.	Consider the results of the audit and develop a budgeted plan and timeline to implement accessibility improvements in consultation with the AWG.	July 2018- June 2020	AWG
4. Implement the activities.	Reduce and remove identified barriers wherever possible.	July 2018- June 2020	AWG
5. Make other improvements.	Ensure VO's website meets and maintains AA accessibility standards. <sup>1</sup>	Ongoing	Chief Information Officer
	Develop a procedure for service users to be able to request adjustments to the way we deliver our services.	June 2018	Head of the Executive Office Assistant Ombudsman, Early Resolution
	Provide training to staff on dealing with people with disabilities.	June 2018	Head of People and Development

<sup>1</sup> Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>.

Action	Deliverable	Action by	Responsibility
5. Make other improvements.	Identify publications that need to be available in accessible formats.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
	Create a timeline for transferring publications into accessible formats.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
	Implement timeline to ensure publications are available in Easy English and alternative formats where possible.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
	Work towards obtaining the Communication Access Symbol. <sup>2</sup>	July 2018 – June 2020	AWG
6. Capture data to guide ongoing process improvement.	Consider ways to capture data on the number of people who have contact with our office that have a disability.	June 2018	Principal Program Manager, Data Head of the Executive Office
	Implement changes to the way we capture data, if appropriate.	July 2018 – June 2020	Principal Program Manager, Data Head of the Executive Office



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scopeaust.org.au/service/communication-access/Contents>

**Goal: Obtain and maintain a diverse workforce by having:**

- human resource and business practices that reduce barriers for people in obtaining and maintaining employment
- an accessible recruitment process

Action	Deliverable	Action by	Responsibility
<b>Human Resource and Business Practices</b>			
1. Develop a reasonable adjustments procedure.	Develop and implement a reasonable adjustments procedure.	June 2018	Head of People and Development
	Educate all staff on the procedure.		
2. Capture and report on the number of staff with a disability.	Consider the benefits and risks to capturing the number of staff with a disability in an anonymous way.	June 2018	Head of People and Development
	Provide this assessment to the Working Group with a recommendation on how to proceed.		
3. Ensure all internal VO policies on our website are available in alternative formats.	Review the internal policies available on our website.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
	Create a timeline for transferring publications into accessible formats.		
	Translate these policies into alternative formats as per the timeline.		



Action	Deliverable	Action by	Responsibility
<b>Recruitment</b>			
4. Clearly document our current recruitment practices.	Document our current recruitment practices and procedures.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of People and Development
5. Review our recruitment practices.	Consider seeking external advice to review/audit our recruitment practices to ensure any barriers for people with a disability are removed, where possible.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of People and Development
6. Implement improvements to our recruitment practices.	Implement identified improvements to our recruitment practices to reduce barriers for people with a disability identified by the review/audit, where possible.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of People and Development
	Engage with the disability sector to ensure our positions are advertised widely and in forums commonly accessed by people with a disability such as the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit.	July 2018 – June 2020	
	Ensure all advertisements for positions at our office contain a statement encouraging people with a disability to apply.		



## Goal: Provide opportunities for people with a disability to engage with our office

Action	Deliverable	Action by	Responsibility
1. Consider the viability of forming a Disability Action Group (DAG) to review the selected policy, procedure or practices and offer advice in relation to the sector for the purposes of engagement and/or investigations.	Develop a business case for a DAG.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
2. Engage with businesses that support people with a disability.	Adopt and implement the Victorian Government’s Social Procurement Framework.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of Finance and Procurement
3. Increase the awareness of our office in the disability community.	Develop a community engagement strategy for targeting the disability sector and people with a disability.	July 2018 – June 2020	Head of the Executive Office
	Create clear targets for engaging with the disability sector.		
	Undertake community and sector engagement.		

### Contact:

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