



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022–2026

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Commissioner for Children and Young People acknowledges the unique contribution of Aboriginal people's culture and heritage to Western Australian society. For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises those of Torres Strait Islander descent. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.

Alternative formats

This Disability Access and Inclusion Plan has been developed to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunity to access the services and facilities of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. On request, large print or alternative formats can be obtained from:

Commissioner for Children and Young People
Level 1, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street, Perth WA 6000
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About this Plan

The *Disability Services Act 1993* outlines the ways in which people with disability should have equal access to facilities and services. The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA is not a public authority required to develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan under the Act. However, the Commissioner has developed this plan to demonstrate best practice and ensure children and young people with disability have equitable access. Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the WA *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

This is the Commissioner's third Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and includes a number of revisions from the inaugural plan released in 2012. This edition has been reviewed by the Youth Disability Advocacy Network of WA (YDAN). The Commissioner will continue to work with YDAN to ensure the needs of children and young people with disability are well-reflected in the Commissioner's work.

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Background

The Commissioner's work is underpinned by the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* (the Act). The Act outlines the guiding principles, powers and functions of the office. In accordance with statutory obligations, the Commissioner:

- advocates for children and young people
- promotes the participation of children and young people in decision making that affects their lives
- promotes and monitors the wellbeing of children and young people in the community
- monitors the way in which government agencies investigate or otherwise deal with complaints from children and young people
- monitors trends in complaints made by children and young people to government agencies
- initiates and conducts inquiries into any matter affecting the wellbeing of children and young people
- monitors, reviews and makes recommendations on laws, policies, programs and services affecting the wellbeing of children and young people
- promotes public awareness and understanding of matters relating to the wellbeing of children and young people
- conducts, coordinates and sponsors research into matters relating to the wellbeing of children and young people
- consults with children and young people from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and age groups throughout Western Australia each year.

The Act requires the Commissioner to give priority to, and have a special regard for, the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

Children and young people with disability are also given special regard and their wellbeing is considered within the framework of the Commissioner's functions. As outlined in the [Strategic Directions 2021–2026](#), the Commissioner's work will align with three key platforms:

1. Promoting the rights, voices and contributions of children and young people
2. Monitoring and advocacy to strengthen the wellbeing of all WA children and young people
3. Promoting, monitoring and prioritising the needs of children and young people with disability.

Our vision

That all children and young people are heard, are healthy and safe, reach their potential and are welcomed as valued members of the community and in doing so we build a brighter future for the whole community.

Our values

Respect, Honesty, Inclusivity, Creativity, Positivity, Determination, Independence, and Integrity.

Our guiding principles

Our work has regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is informed by the views and opinions of children and young people, and the best available knowledge and evidence of what works well.

As outlined in the Act:

- children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment, protected from harm and exploitation
- the contributions made by children and young people to the community should be recognised for their value and merit
- the views of children and young people on all matters affecting them should be given serious consideration and taken into account
- parents, guardians, families and communities have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of their children and young people and should be supported in carrying out this role.

Commitment to the safety of children and young people

The Commissioner prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in all work of the office and in our work with other organisations. Children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment and to be protected from harm and exploitation. Children and young people should be safe, feel safe and be respected wherever they are.

Promoting participation

Children and young people have differing needs, experiences and perspectives and they should be empowered to share their views and to participate in society. Empowering children and young people means they are well-supported and able to have their say.

Participation involves informing children and young people of their right to be heard, supporting them to make a contribution, giving careful consideration to their views and including them in decisions that affect their lives. It also involves building children and young people's confidence and skills to enable and support their participation. This includes children who are very young, not verbal or are not easily able to communicate, who speak a language other than English or have had challenging experiences.

In any decision-making process, adults, organisations and the wider community have a responsibility to listen, respond to and collaborate with children to ensure they are protected and supported to participate.¹

Children and young people with disability

Children with disability have unique needs and experiences, and some can experience vulnerabilities and barriers to engagement. It is vital for children and young people with disability to be appropriately supported so they are able participate in and contribute to the community in positive and meaningful ways.

The Commissioner's [Profile of Children and Young People in WA](#) (2022) and [Indicators of Wellbeing](#) data provides the following demographic data on children and young people with disability:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that in 2018, 43,600 WA children and young people aged 0 to 17 years had a reported disability. This represented 7.5 per cent of the total population of 0 to 17 year-olds in WA in 2018.
- More than one-in-10 (11.5%) children aged between six and 11 years had a reported disability.
- Across Australia, 70 per cent of 0 to five year-olds with disability have a sensory and speech disability (including loss of sight or hearing).
- In the six to 11 year-old age group, the most common disability types are intellectual (67.8%) and psychosocial (39.3%).²

More information regarding definitions and types of disability, as well as the principles applicable to people with disabilities can be found on the Department of Communities Disability Services [website](#).

Aboriginal children and young people with disability

Research on disability in children and young people has repeatedly highlighted the lack of good quality data about the Aboriginal population. This is principally due to a lack of adequate sample sizes for Aboriginal populations in general surveys. In addition, surveys are often not tailored to incorporate Aboriginal cultures and perspectives on health and wellbeing. There is limited robust data on the prevalence of disability in Aboriginal children and young people in WA.

The most recent data from the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers reports that Aboriginal children and young people across Australia are more likely to experience disability than non-Aboriginal children and young people. It also showed the disability rate

¹ Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2021, *Participation Guidelines*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth

² Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2022, *Profile of Children and Young People in WA - 2022*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys aged 0 to 14 (21.1%) was 2.5 times as high as the comparable rate for girls (8.5%).³

Access to the Commissioner

Current facilities

Building access

An important consideration when choosing the location for the Commissioner's office is that the building is accessible and well-connected to public rail and bus transport.

The Commissioner's office is located at Albert Facey House, which has easy access for children and young people with disability. If any special assistance is required, this can be arranged by phoning the Commissioner's Corporate Services Officer on (08) 6213 2297.

Website

The Commissioner's website is designed to be compliant to the [Western Australian Government Accessibility and Inclusivity Standard](#)⁴ and the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#)⁵

The website allows people to provide feedback and to make complaints directly to the Commissioner via email and provides telephone and physical address details.

Social media accounts

Online platforms enable stakeholders to access information and engage with the Commissioner. The Commissioner has accounts on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram as well as a YouTube channel [youtube.com/user/WACCYP](https://www.youtube.com/user/WACCYP)

Access and inclusion policy statement

The Commissioner acknowledges the Government of Western Australia's seven desired outcomes for people with disability. These have been tailored to suit the Commissioner's role and are incorporated in all operations of the office.

The Commissioner's six commitments to children and young people with disability are:

1. Services, projects and any events identify children and young people with disability as a priority group and they are consulted and encouraged to participate.
2. The office and other facilities utilised by the Commissioner are accessible and suited to meet the unique needs of children and young people with disability.

³ Commissioner for Children and Young People 2021, [Indicators of Wellbeing](#)

⁴ Department of Premier and Cabinet 2018, *Access and inclusivity Standard*, Government of Western Australia

⁵ World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) 2008, *Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)*, Web Accessibility Initiative

3. Information is provided to children and young people with disability in a suitable format.
4. Children and young people with disability receive equal services provided by staff to children and young people with disabilities equal to those provided to other children and young people.
5. Children and young people with disability have equal opportunity to make complaints to the Commissioner.
6. Children and young people with disability have equal opportunity to participate in any public consultation by the Commissioner.

Responsibilities

Review process

The Director Policy, Monitoring and Research and the Manager Corporate Services are responsible for the review and the coordination of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. The plan is endorsed by the Commissioner's Corporate Executive.

Continued implementation

Leadership for achieving outcomes of the plan is the responsibility of the Corporate Executive, with all members of staff being expected to demonstrate a sound understanding of the desired outcomes. All staff members will be expected to include consideration of the desired outcomes when planning and delivering their work.

Communicating the Plan

The plan is published on the Commissioner's website, with alternative formats available on request. The Manager Engagement and Communication is responsible for all website publications, including the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

Further review and evaluation of our efforts

Our plan will be reviewed at least every five years, or as required, to reflect progress and any access and inclusion issues which may arise. Whenever the plan is amended, a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Department of Communities Disability Services. The next scheduled review of the plan is in 2025. Feedback is welcome from any members of the community about the plan or its implementation.

Reporting

Status updates will be provided in the Commissioner's Annual Report and on request to the Department of Communities Disability Services. This report will outline progress made towards the six desired outcomes of our plan.

Actions to improve access and inclusion

The following overarching actions will guide the office from 2022–2026.

A number of activities are listed as ongoing and reflect the requirement that improving access and inclusion for children and young people with disability demands a process of continuous improvement and learning.

Outcome 1: The Commissioner for Children and Young People will identify children and young people with disability as a priority group, consult with them and seek their active and full participation where appropriate in all services, projects and events.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Actions to improve access and inclusion are undertaken through the office’s strategic and operational plans.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring
Place Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026 on the Commissioner’s website and provide link to website feedback page.	2022	Manager Engagement and Communication
Events are organised to ensure that children and young people with disability can participate actively and fully where appropriate for them. Accessibility considerations might include braille transcriptions, hiring of AUSLAN interpreters or selecting venues with hearing loop systems fitted.	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
Disability access and inclusion issues are considered in our strategic business planning, budgeting processes, and procedures and policies.	Ongoing	Corporate Executive
Seek the involvement and/or participation of relevant government agencies in projects and initiatives undertaken by the Commissioner with specific relevance to children and young people with disability or those with parents/carers with disability.	Ongoing	Corporate Executive

Outcome 2: Access to the buildings and other facilities of the Commissioner for Children and Young People accommodate the unique needs of children and young people with disability.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Publicise and invite comment on access arrangements for relevant events and activities to ensure that people with disability are aware of the ease of access.	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
Ensure that all signage is clear, universal and easy to understand.	Ongoing	Manager Corporate Services
Ensure that office premises continue to meet accessibility requirements as outlined in this plan.	Ongoing	Manager Corporate Services

Outcome 3: Children and young people with disability have access to information from Commissioner for Children and Young People in a suitable format upon request.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
The Commissioner’s website conforms with the Public Sector Commission’s Website Accessibility Policy, specifically that all websites are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) Version 2.0 Level A (minimum) or Level AA (preferred).	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
The Commissioner’s <i>Accessible Word documents</i> guidelines ensure CCYP documents are accessible to people with visual impairments. They apply to all Word documents to be published as Word or PDFs on the CCYP website.	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
All of the Commissioner’s publications are available in alternative formats on request.	On request	Manager Engagement and Communication

Outcome 4: Children and young people with disability receive a level and quality of service from the staff of the Commissioner for Children and Young People equal to that of all children and young people.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
The Commissioner’s projects and policies consider and outline any specific requirements of children and young people with disability.	Monthly	Corporate Executive
Continue to use the induction process to ensure the Commissioner’s staff and contractors are aware of our DAIP and supporting policies and strategies.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring
Update of the Wellbeing Monitoring Framework to incorporate most recent Census data about WA children and young people with disability when available.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring
Scheduled review of the Customer Service Charter considers any specific requirements relevant to people with disability.	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
Scheduled review of the Child Safe Policy considers any specific requirements relevant to children and young people with disability.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring

Outcome 5: Children and young people with disability have equal opportunity to make complaints to the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that the complaints management process and outcome satisfaction survey forms are available in alternative formats on request to meet the needs of people with disability.	Ongoing	Manager Engagement and Communication
Scheduled review of the Commissioner’s complaints handling policies (internal and external) incorporate requirements of children and young people with disability.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring

Outcome 6: Children and young people with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in public consultation by the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure consultation strategies consider the needs of children and young people with disability and any requirements to support their participation.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring,
Scheduled review of the Commissioner’s Participation Policy, and other relevant policies, continues to consider the requirements of children and young people with disability.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring, Manager Engagement and Communication
Scheduled review of the Commissioner’s Communications Visual Style Guide incorporates current Department of Communities Disability Services standards for disability access.	Ongoing	Director Policy, Research and Monitoring

Appendix

Achievements since the previous Plan

- The Commissioner's website was redesigned to meet the Government of Western Australia's standard established for web accessibility and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. This includes instructions for re-sizing text, skip links and a logical tab order to navigate using assistive technologies, printer-friendly pages and links to free software plug-ins.
- Commencing in 2021, the Commissioner administered a modified version of the Speaking Out Survey to include children and young people with disability in education support settings. The office worked with U.K. software company Wigit to symbolise the modified survey in order to improve accessibility for children and young people with disability and low literacy.
- The Commissioner's updated Participation Guidelines were released in May 2021.
- The Commissioner continued to seek to represent the diversity of children and young people in WA, including children and young people with disability. In 2019 and 2020 the office conducted professional photo shoots of children and young people with disability. These photos are used in the Commissioner's newsletters, publications and social media platforms and many are on display in the Commissioner's office.
- In 2020 a consultation was held with children and young people with autism. Twelve children and young people aged between eight and 25 years were consulted about their views on belonging, their level of participation in making decisions in education and employment, and within agencies that support them.
- The Commissioner made a submission to the national Senate Select Committee on Autism on the issues of autism diagnosis, intervention and support, and the associated need for a National Autism Strategy. The submission is publicly available on the Commissioner's [website](#).
- The Commissioner made a submission to the Disability Strategy Taskforce for the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education. This was informed by the views of a diverse range of children and people with disability who participated in several consultations and surveys. The Commissioner strongly advocated for improving current educational standards to enhance the rights of children and young people with disability in educational settings and to create valuable and fulfilling opportunities for them.
- The Commissioner's staff presented at YDAN's Youth Taking Charge: Disability Summit 2020. The webinar focused on the importance of listening to children and

young people with disabilities and included an outline of methodologies used in consultations with children and young people with disability, findings and lessons learned, and ways to create inclusive opportunities for ongoing participation.

- In 2019, the Commissioner engaged the Youth Disability Advocacy Network to review the previous Disability Access Inclusion Plan 2016–2020 and deliver Disability 101 training to the Commissioner’s staff.
- The 2016 School and Learning Consultation conducted by the office included a survey and a group discussion component. Students in Education Support Centres participated in the research project to ensure the experiences of children and young people with special learning needs were included. The survey component of the project was specifically designed in a pictorial format for accessibility.