

2023–2025

# Access & Inclusion Action Plan



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Cover: Early Birds Autism and Sensory Friendly Morning  
Above: Early Birds Autism and Sensory Friendly Morning  
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## Director & CEO's message

I am delighted to present the Australian Museum's new Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan (AIAP) 2023-2025. As a cultural institution, the Australian Museum (AM) is committed to accessibility and inclusion ensuring that we ignite wonder, inspire debate and drive change for everyone who visits and interacts with the AM's work. In order to do this, we understand the need to address systemic hurdles and shift conversations on accessibility and inclusion—so that everyone, staff and visitors, feel welcome and that the AM is a place for them to belong.

The AM's last AIAP (2018 to 2021) was an ambitious plan which succeeded on all its targets, most notably by amplifying and incorporating the voices of those with a lived disability. This was accomplished through a process of continuous consultation with the AM's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Panel, alongside our Gold Membership with the Australian Network on Disability. This has positively informed the design and delivery of all new builds, including Project Discover, and has enhanced all our exhibitions, programming, and digital and educational content. There are many things to celebrate, including some important building achievements within our heritage site.

Perhaps the most significant achievement is the important change in culture and attitudes to access and inclusion by our team. Workplace attitudes matter because many of the greatest challenges faced by those with a disability are the negative perception of disability and the assumptions that accompany it. In Australia, 20% of the population has a disability, which makes accessibility and inclusion everyone's business – ensuring that we shift the conversation and improve access at every level.

Our next plan continues to address the systemic hurdles faced by people who experience a disability, while also showing leadership on cultural change. This is partly about celebrating the diversity and richness that those with a disability bring to both our workforce and across all aspects of society. The AM's AIAP follows the guidelines set out in the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014. I am proud to be part of a team that ensures Australia's first museum, despite its heritage challenges, is creating a place where everyone can be inspired, explore and understand our natural and cultural world.

**Kim McKay AO, Director & CEO**  
Australian Museum



**Left:** Mark Tonga, previous AM Advisory Panel member and friend. Photo: James Horan

# Our Commitment

The AM will champion the importance of accessibility and inclusion by ensuring that the exploration of nature and culture is accessible to all.

The AM is committed to best practice, and will strive to become a leader in the Australian and international arts communities by implementing the following actions:

- Access solutions will adhere to the principles of social equity, inclusion and dignity.
- Access requirements will be embedded in the planning stage of new initiatives.
- Initiatives will comply with relevant disability and access standards, and aim to go beyond compliance.

- Consultation with individuals with disability will be undertaken for all future key initiatives.
- Access solutions will be addressed while respecting the AM's heritage obligations.

Access is crucial to the Museum and will be championed in front and back-of-house areas, and at all levels of management.

The AM continues to embed the principles of social inclusion and equity throughout its exhibitions, programs, services and venues. The AM recognises that improving access, to facilities and services makes good business sense and welcomes the opportunity to include the wider community in their exploration and understanding of the world.

# Legislative and Policy Framework

Accessibility and inclusion plans involve legislation and guiding policy principles, at state, federal and international levels.

As a NSW Government Agency, we follow the principles of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*, which sets out a commitment to inclusion, consultation with people with disability, and protection of their rights.

### The Act defines disability as:

*'The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'*

This definition reinforces the importance of viewing disability as the result of interaction between people living with disability and their physical and social environment. Disability is no longer about the individual only.

### Under the Act, there are four key goals that an Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan must address:

- Changing community attitudes towards people with disability.
- Increasing community participation.
- Increasing employment opportunities for people with disability.
- Removing barriers to systems and processes.

The AM's AIAP outlines the practical steps taken to break down barriers and promote access to services, information and employment, which promotes the rights of people with disability.

At a federal level, the National Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (NDS) sets out a national plan that identifies the priorities and associated actions to remove barriers and bring about change in all mainstream government services and programs.

### The AM recognises the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

The Australian Museum's new AIAP aligns with the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, as we are committed to building a sustainable future for all by 2030, through the following goals:

The image shows four icons for Sustainable Development Goals. Each icon is in a colored square with the goal number and name at the top, and a white icon below. 
 

- Goal 4: Quality Education (red square, icon of an open book and pencil).
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (maroon square, icon of a bar chart with an upward arrow).
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities (pink square, icon of a circle with an equals sign).
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (orange square, icon of buildings).



Left: Museum walk

## Customer and Staff Profile

### Services

The AM delivers three main services to clients and stakeholders:

- Collections management – the AM maintains and develops the largest natural history and cultural collection in Australia with more than 22 million objects and specimens.
- Scientific research and cultural collaborations – the AM undertakes scientific research on its collection and in the field to expand understanding of the biota and Indigenous cultures of Australia and the Pacific region, through knowledge generation and communication.
- Public programs – the AM presents exhibitions, public and educational programs and events, onsite, offsite and online, to raise community awareness of the biota and Indigenous cultures of Australia and the Pacific region.

### Customer Profile

The AM visitor profile comprises visitors to permanent exhibitions, visitors to temporary exhibitions, children attending holiday programs, school groups visiting the AM, students participating in outreach services, such as science communication, and people attending members' and donor events.

AM customers include people with disability across all ages and backgrounds.

### Staff Profile

The AM has more than 200 full-time equivalent employees and over 1,000 volunteers. The diverse workforce contributes to science and research, exhibitions and creative services, collections management, visitor programming and learning services, library services, communications, partnerships, digital, building services and management of the AM, including corporate services. In 2022, 2.7% of staff identified as having a disability.



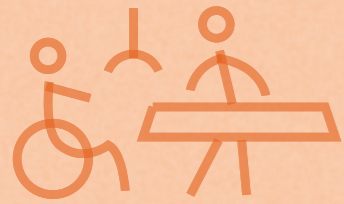
Above: Search & Discover Right: Adorned with Courtney Marsh

## History and Achievements

The AM, founded in 1827, is the nation's first museum, and is an internationally recognised natural science and culture institution focused on Australia and the Pacific. Since the AM's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan in 2010, the Museum has worked to address the heritage constraints of its main site, alongside ensuring our services and programs are inclusive.



# History and Achievements



## New Changing Places bathroom

that can meet the access needs of those with more complex requirements.



## New pick up and drop off

where visitors can stop and disembark safely directly outside the AM.



## Improved flow throughout the AM

with 2 new lifts and a new staircase that addressed bottlenecks.



## Museum Walk and Crystal Hall entrance

developed with an Access Consultant to provide improved traffic flow and greater equity to all visitors.



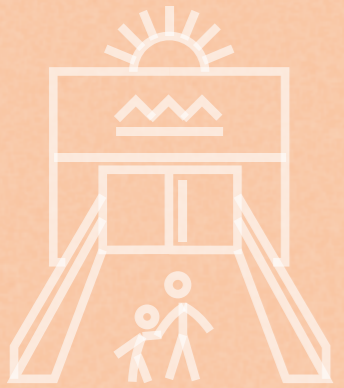
## 2 new Autism Australia members

joined the Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel.



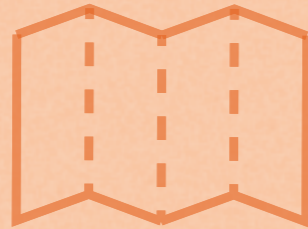
## Accessible education programs and resources

were designed in partnership with the AM's education team and specialised school and community groups.



## Early Birds morning program

offering free entry to those with sensory sensitivities 2 hours before the AM opens.



## Accessible AM map

with sensory markings added to all spaces.



## Hearing loops

have been installed in all new spaces, and available when requested by visitors.



## Free tactile tours

featured a large number of touchable objects on display across the AM.



## Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel established

which includes both carers and those with disability, assists with informing the AM on access and inclusion initiatives.



## Passionate volunteers

assisted with research and digitisation. Many are aging or have a disability but their work is valued and considered essential to the AM's operation.



## Development of new galleries and exhibitions

to incorporate the strengths of those with a disability, such as *Burra Learning Place* on level 2.



## Audio described tours

of (almost) all our permanent galleries.



## Citizen science programs

now counted by Centrelink towards hours of participation.



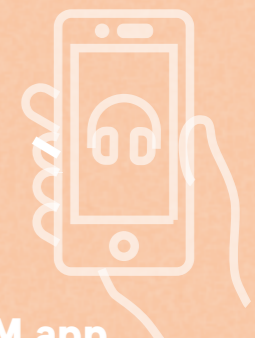
## Free accessible tours

were run and advertised daily on the AM website, with portable hearing loops available when requested by visitors.



## AM website development

in line with W3C web access guidelines, offering free, accessible daily tours run and advertised on the website.



## AM app development

featuring audio descriptive tours of the Museum and audio tours of the galleries.



### Case Study:

## Early Birds Autism and Sensory-Friendly Mornings

In 2021, through a grant from the Australian Museum Foundation, the AM undertook a pilot program to provide people on the autism spectrum or who preferred a reduced sensory environment a unique museum experience. For visitors on the autism spectrum, busy, crowded environments can be difficult, and sudden changes in light and noise levels can cause sensory overload and distress.

Early Birds provides a reduced sensory, relaxed and supportive environment providing access to the Museum prior to it opening to the public. Early Birds is a gateway event where visitors become familiar with the Australian Museum in a safe and supportive environment, encouraging repeat visitation through confidence building.

We welcomed over 650 families over 4 events in 2021 and as result of the success of the program, Early Birds is now a permanent part of the AM's program lineup. Visitors book online and receive a Visual Story with detailed images as to what to expect at their visit.

Staff and volunteers trained in autism awareness and disability welcome visitors to Early Birds, providing a non-judgemental and supportive atmosphere. By augmenting the environment the AM is able to better cater for people on the autism spectrum – providing special quiet spaces to allow visitors a place to reset with sensory toys, weighted lap pads or cushions, and noise cancelling headphones. The lighting is altered and the volume on videos and interactives is adjusted. Specially trained staff are on hand to provide a non-judgemental, supportive atmosphere.

**Further information on Early Birds: Autism and Sensory-Friendly Mornings can be found on the AM's website: [australian.museum/event/Early-Birds-Access-Mornings](https://australian.museum/event/Early-Birds-Access-Mornings)**

Photos: Early Birds and Sensory Friendly Mornings



## Consultation

The AM's AIAP was informed through a process of comprehensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders to ensure it adopts the four key goals of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act*. In addition to this, the AM's new AIAP incorporates action from the Australian Network on Disability Index to ensure the AM is leading the way as both a cultural institution and as a business.

The AIAP Steering Committee includes a representative from each division of the AM, ensuring that all areas of the Museum were included in the consultation process. The AM's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Panel helped guide the development of the AIAP.

**Below:** Australian Museums Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Panel with AM staff

### Case Study:

## Changing Places bathroom

As part of *Project Discover*, the AM's major capital works project in 2020 the AM opened its Changing Places facility that provides a full-sized change table and hoist to meet the needs of people with complex disabilities and their carers.

The bathroom is located next to the lifts on level 2 and complements the new parents room on the same level as well as a range of other access and inclusion features. Changing Places allows people with high support needs to fully participate in the community. This may include people with an acquired brain injury, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, or motor neurone disease, as well as many other people with a disability.

#### The AM Changing Places facility provides:

- A height-adjustable adult-sized change table
- A constant-charging ceiling track hoist system
- A centrally-located peninsula toilet
- Circulation spaces
- Automatic door
- Privacy screen

As a result of the new facility, one of only a handful in the Sydney CBD, the AM has seen a marked increase in people with complex disabilities being able to visit and enjoy all that the AM has to offer.



**Above:** Changing Places bathroom on level 2





# Monitoring and Review

The AIAP Steering Committee will meet every two months and help drive the implementation of the plan. The Steering Committee is responsible for reporting on progress of the AIAP.

The AIAP will be made available on the AM website and included in staff orientation packages. Procedures and updates will be given to staff via the AM intranet and at regular staff meetings. This AIAP and future Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plans will be lodged with the Department of Family and Community Services and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## Implementation & Measurement of Progress

All AM staff are responsible for championing accessibility and inclusion in their department and across the Museum. The Steering Committee and managers are responsible for ensuring that actions relevant to their area are budgeted for and implemented. Key targets will be included in staff personal development plans where applicable. The implementation of these actions will be reported to the AM's Executive Leadership Team.

The AIAP is embedded in the AM's Corporate Strategic Plan, which is reported to the AM Trust bi-annually.

## Review

The AIAP will be completed by December 2025. The AIAP will be reviewed in 2025 to enable a new plan for the following three-year period, 2026-2028. The review will include:

- Benchmarking of the Australian Network on Disability Index
- An audit of all aspects of accessibility at the AM
- External and internal inclusive consultations with people with disability to inform the AM on progress and areas for improvement. The consultation will include people who represent all definitions of disability provided under the *Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

# Access and Inclusion Plan

## Outcome 1: Attitudes and Behaviours

Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1 The Executive Leadership Team champion continues to promote and support access and inclusion including policies and procedures within and outside the AM.	The champion is active in promoting the importance of access and inclusion.	Director, Public Affairs & Development	Ongoing
1.2 Develop an internal and external communication and marketing plan that promotes the AM's commitments, activities and outcomes of the AIAP and the contribution of people with disability to the Museum.	A communication and marketing plan is updated and implemented yearly engaging people with disability featuring access and inclusion stories and case studies. The AM reports to the NSW Government in their annual access audit in relation to marketing to people with disability.	Manager, Communications; Manager, Marketing and Membership	Ongoing updated yearly
1.3 Provide Disability Confidence guidelines for all staff and training for employees in customer, client and service user facing roles to support them in accommodating requests from customers with disability.	Deliver mandatory training for all front of house & security staff and any staff in customer, client and service user facing roles, including the Executive Leadership team and the Management team.	Manager, People and Culture (P&C); Manager, Visitor Experience; Manager, Security	Ongoing
1.4 Provide Disability Confidence Training and information packs to contractors and suppliers in regular public-facing roles to ensure the AM's commitment to access and inclusion.	Contractors and non-AM staff welcome customers with disability and work in line with the AM's commitment to access and inclusion. Welcoming people with disability information is provided as part of onsite inductions, and information packs are provided to any partners delivering general and education programs at the AM.	Manager, P&C; Manager, Commercial Operations; Manager, Security; Manager, Programming; Manager, Education	Ongoing
1.5 Provide training and resources to managers and recruitment panel members to support the recruitment and retention of people with disability.	Resources are available to managers and recruitment panel members on disability confident recruitment and disability confidence training is part of Managers' Personal Development Plans.	Manager, P&C	Ongoing

### Outcome 1: Attitudes and Behaviours

Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.6 Policy and procedures around workplace bullying and harassment that protect the rights of employees with disability and provides options for remedy. This strategy is communicated to all employees.	Training on respectful workplaces is delivered. The grievance policy and code of conduct is in place, and communicated to staff during induction and available on the AM intranet.	Manager, P&C	Dec-23

### Outcome 2: Livable Communities

Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1 All new building works, including the AM future Master Plans, incorporate accessibility requirements and universal design is embedded in the planning and design stage.	New infrastructure meets current standards and provides dignified access for visitors and staff with disability.	Project Manager(s)	2023-2025
2.2 When new infrastructure is confirmed, the AM Advisory Panel will inform access and inclusion considerations in the design, build and fit-out phases.	People with disability are consulted and provide insight on accessibility features during the design, build and fit-out phases to ensure new infrastructure provides dignified access.	Project Manager(s)	2023-2025
2.3 Advocate for the increase of accessible car spaces around the perimeter of the AM.	A full review of accessible parking has been completed and alternative options have been explored and advocated with City of Sydney and NSW Government. Accessible parking and public transport options are available on the AM's website for visitors.	Director, Public Affairs & Development	Dec 2024
2.4 Undertake an audit of AM back of house facilities that includes consultation with people with disability to help inform future master planning.	Future master plans and building maintenance upgrades incorporate the audit outcomes.	Head, Building Infrastructure	Dec 2023
2.5 Continue to review signage to improve wayfinding into and around the AM for people with disability.	Introduce A3 and Braille maps, and additional audio described tours and Auslan interpreted tours for all permanent galleries. Accessibility information is maintained on the AM website and visitors are aware of how to request services.	Head, Digital; Manager, Marketing	2023-2024

### Outcome 2: Livable Communities

Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.6 Continue to improve accessibility services at the AM.	Introduce A3 and Braille maps and, additional audio described tours and Auslan interpreted tours for all permanent galleries. Accessibility information is maintained on the AM website and visitors are aware of how to request services.	Head, Digital; Manager, Marketing	2023-2024
2.7 Create a priority list of upgrades to permanent exhibitions from the Front of House access and inclusion audit completed in 2021.	An implementation plan for the upgrading of exhibitions to meet recommendations from the access and inclusion audit is created.	Manager, Exhibitions	2023
2.8 Exhibition teams reference and use the AM style guide on providing accessible exhibition interpretive information.	The style guide provides an example of best practice for interpretive signage in museums.	Manager, Exhibitions	Ongoing
2.9 Events delivery team and events contractors utilise the AM's Accessible Events checklist to ensure they are delivering accessible events for public and private events.	AM events are accessible and inclusive.	Event Leads with support from Manager, Commercial	Ongoing

### Outcome 3: Employment

Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe
3.1 The AM's workplace adjustment policy and procedure for staff and volunteers is promoted and managers are encouraged to have conversations with their teams around any workplace adjustments that would improve access and inclusion, learning and development.	Employees with disability, illness or injury have workplace adjustment plans in place.	Manager, P&C	ongoing
3.2 Incorporate accessibility, PEEPs (Personalised Emergency Evacuation Plan) and requests for adjustments in managers' training for inducting new staff members and supporting existing staff, casuals and volunteers.	Managers provide an inclusive induction process.	All Managers	Ongoing

Outcome 3: Employment				
Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe	
3.3	Implement the recommendations from the AM's recruitment practices review (2019) and feedback from people with disability on our recruitment and selection processes, to remove any unintended barriers for people with disability to work at the AM.	AM has an accessible recruitment process that encourages people with disability to apply for roles.	Manager, P&C	June 2024
3.4	Develop a Disability Employment Strategy to increase the employment of people with disability at the AM, including internships, work experience and mentoring.	The AM is contributing to the NSW Premier's Priority to meet 5.6% target for employees with disability starting from a base of 1%.	Manager, P&C and AIAP Steering Committee	Dec 2023
3.5	We seek feedback from employees with disability about Learning & Development opportunities within our organisation and use this to inform policies and procedures.	Feedback from staff is incorporated into Learning and Development opportunities within their Personal Development Plans.	Manager, P&C	Ongoing
3.6	Access and inclusion champion reviews all new policies to ensure they consider people with disability and the impacts.	All new policies have considered the impacts on inclusion for people with a disability, and any necessary adjustments to the policy are made.	Director, Public Affairs & Development	Ongoing
3.7	We have a mentoring or work experience program in place to support people with disability who are not employees of our organisation to develop valuable skills and experience.	The AM implements an internship program specifically for people with disability and offers a variety of volunteer programs that actively encourages people with disability.	Manager, P&C	2023 - ongoing
3.8	Access and Inclusion initiatives are regularly reported and part of the executive leadership agenda.	Access & inclusion reports are provided at least twice a year to the AM Trust and at All staff meetings.	Director, Public Affairs & Development	Ongoing
3.9	Compare the level of workplace engagement and satisfaction from employees with and without disability.	Feedback from staff satisfaction and engagement surveys are utilised to improve the workplace for people with disability.	Manager, P&C	June 2024

Outcome 4: Systems and Processes				
Actions	Target	Responsibility	Timeframe	
4.1	The AM's Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory panel informs the AM in the development of significant projects.	Advisory Panel in place and the views and input of people with disability are captured in the design and planning stages of new exhibitions, programs and building works.	Sustainability and Access Projects Coordinator	Ongoing
4.2	Continue to review the AM website against the Worldwide Web Consortium's Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. As these guidelines are updated, the AM will align with the new standard.	All content available via the sites is accessible for people with disability and meets WCAG 2.1 level AA.	Head, Digital	Achieved and ongoing
	Review the AM SharePoint internal portal against the (WCAG) 2.1	The AM SharePoint is accessible and meets WCAG 2.1 level AA.	Associate Director, ICT	Dec 2023
4.3	Include in Procurement Policy the AM's commitment to access and inclusion of people with disability, and outline expectations for the organisations the AM works with to have similar goals.	The AM works with suppliers who are committed to access and inclusion, and their commitment is considered as part of the selection process. All ICT equipment and systems are accessible.	CFO and Manager, Procurement; Associate Director, ICT	2023
4.4	Continue to deliver a procedure for all visitors to be offered a Generic Emergency and Evacuation Plan.	The fire wardens are aware of any access requirements for visitors with disability and visitors with disability are evacuated safely.	Manager, Security	Ongoing
4.5	Visual and audio materials are accessible through captioning, text transcripts and audio description.	Guidelines outlining this commitment are included in the Marketing and Communication work plan.	Manager, Marketing; Manager, Communications	June 2023
4.6	Feedback is sought about ICT adjustment requests and accessibility issues from employees to ensure ICT programs are accessible.	ICT Teams are trained in delivering workplace adjustments for employees with disability. Feedback mechanism created to seek input from staff regarding ICT accessibility issues.	Associate Director, ICT	Ongoing



Above and Left: Burra, AM's new learning and play space on level 2

## Acknowledgements

The AM would like to thank the AIAP Advisory Panel for their hours of dedication, guidance and encouragement to achieve our access and inclusion goals.

- Paul Nunnari – Accessibility consultant
- Sabrina Houssami – Diversity & inclusion advocate
- Mark Tonga – Opportunity guide
- Naomi Malone – Access and inclusion specialist advisor
- Sylvana Mahmic – CEO Plumtree Children's Services Inc.
- Troy King – Inclusion logistics specialist
- Matthew Oastler – Project Officer at Autism Friendly Australia
- Emma Gallagher – Autism consultant, research and practice Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice
- Nohad Ghibely – People and Culture
- Fara Pelarek – Education and Lifelong Learning
- Serafina Froio – Commercial Operations
- Matthew Oakley – Exhibitions
- Megan Lawrence – Digital Experience
- Adam Woods – Digivol and Citizen Science
- Meagan Warwick – AMRI
- Eric Lynch – Facilities

The AM's AIAP internal Steering Committee includes:

- Amanda Farrar – Executive champion – Director, Public Affairs & Development
- Zehra Ahmed – Project Lead, Sustainability and Access Projects Coordinator
- Hannah Burnett – Marketing Coordinator

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