

# Access & Inclusion Action Plan

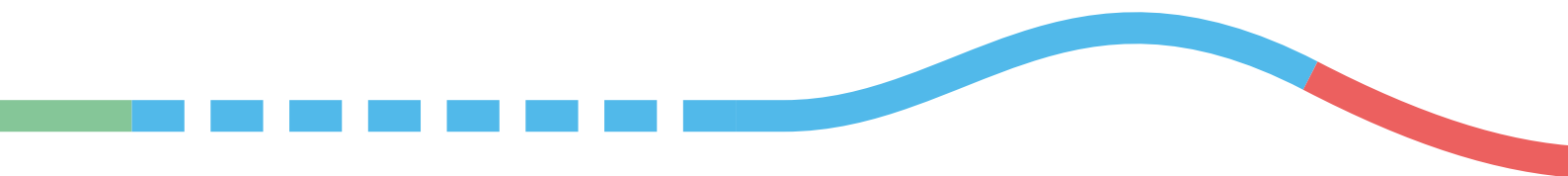
2024 - 2026



In the spirit of reconciliation, are-able acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reading this publication.



are-able welcomes people of any age, culture, religion, sex, gender, sexuality and ability.



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# Message from our CEO

**I am thrilled to introduce are-able's Access & Inclusion Action Plan (AIAP) – a comprehensive strategy designed to underscore our commitment to fostering an environment where every individual feels valued, empowered, and included.**

At are-able, we recognise that diversity is a fundamental asset that drives innovation, creativity, and growth. Our AIAP is more than a set of guidelines; it's a blueprint for building a more equitable and accessible workplace where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

This plan goes beyond merely meeting legal requirements; it's about exceeding them. It's about going beyond the bare minimum to create a workplace culture that celebrates differences and embraces the unique perspectives and talents of each team member.

By prioritising accessibility and inclusion, we not only enhance the experience of our employees but also strengthen our ability to connect with our community stakeholders. This is not just a moral imperative; it's a strategic advantage in today's diverse marketplace.

I urge each and every one of you to familiarise yourselves with the AIAP and actively participate in its implementation. Together, we can create a more inclusive workplace where everyone can contribute their best work and feel a sense of belonging.

Thank you for your dedication to making are-able a champion of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

# Introduction

**Welcome to are-able's Access & Inclusion Action Plan (AIAP), a testament to our commitment to fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of disability, can thrive. As an organisation dedicated to empowering individuals through employment and community participation, we recognise the imperative of ensuring accessibility and inclusion for all.**

**In alignment with the principles outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, we have developed this action plan to proactively address barriers and promote equal opportunities within our organisation and the communities we serve.**

## What do we mean by disability?

The definition of disability encompasses a wide spectrum of conditions and impairments that may affect individuals physically, mentally, intellectually, sensory, or neurologically. Disabilities can be visible or non-visible, temporary or permanent, and may manifest in various forms, including mobility limitations, sensory impairments, cognitive differences, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, and developmental disabilities.

are-able recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) definition of disability as an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society. In alignment with the Social Model of Disability, are-able supports the approach that disability is not caused by the individual's condition but by the social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that society imposes.

We are committed to addressing and dismantling these barriers to foster a more inclusive environment where everyone's unique abilities are valued and accommodated.

## Why do we need an AIAP?

are-able recognises the critical importance of fostering accessibility and inclusivity in all aspects of our operations. An AIAP serves as a roadmap to ensure that our organisation actively identifies and removes barriers that may hinder the full participation of people with disabilities. By implementing this plan, we not only adhere to legal requirements such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 but also uphold our values of integrity, respect, empathy and innovation.

Furthermore, an action plan demonstrates our commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for employees, clients, and the broader community. Through proactive measures such as accessibility improvements, inclusive policies and practices, and awareness initiatives, we aim to enhance participation, engagement, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. By investing in accessibility and inclusivity, we not only enrich the experiences of those directly impacted but also contribute to a more equitable and vibrant society for all.





## Flexible work arrangement policy

are-able's flexible work arrangement policy supports our people with adaptive systems and processes. By offering remote work, flexible hours, and compressed work weeks, we enhance work-life balance, job satisfaction, and productivity.

Our policy accommodates diverse workforce needs, promoting well-being and engagement. With robust infrastructure and clear communication, we ensure seamless collaboration and accountability, regardless of work location or hours. This dedication creates a dynamic, supportive environment, empowering our people to thrive personally and professionally.



# Our commitment to accessibility and inclusion

At are-able, our commitment to accessibility and inclusion is not just a mission; it's a promise we live by every day. We believe that every individual, regardless of their disability status, should have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of life.

Our dedication to this vision is embodied in our four pillars: our people, our systems and processes, our environment and service delivery, and our community and partnerships.



**Pillar 1:** Our people



**Pillar 2:** Our systems and processes



**Pillar 3:** Our environment and service delivery



**Pillar 4:** Our community and partnerships

## Our people

Our people are at the heart of are-able. We strive to create a workplace culture where diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels valued and included. This means actively recruiting and supporting employees with disabilities, providing continuous training on disability awareness and inclusion, and fostering an environment where all team members can thrive. We ensure that our staff are equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to advocate for and implement inclusive practices across all areas of our operations.

## Our systems and processes

At are-able, we are committed to embedding accessibility into our systems and processes. This means developing and maintaining policies that prioritise inclusivity, ensuring our digital platforms are accessible to all, and continually assessing and improving our internal procedures to eliminate barriers. Our goal is to make accessibility a fundamental aspect of our organisational infrastructure, enabling us to serve our clients effectively and equitably.

## Our environment and service delivery

Creating accessible environments is essential to our mission. are-able is dedicated to ensuring that all our physical spaces are welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities. This includes providing accessible entrances, restrooms, and meeting spaces, as well as using assistive technologies to support our clients' diverse needs. Our service delivery is designed to be flexible and responsive, offering personalised solutions that empower individuals to achieve their goals and participate fully in their communities.

## Our community and partnerships

are-able recognises the power of collaboration in driving change. We actively seek partnerships with organisations, community groups, and stakeholders who share our commitment to accessibility and inclusion. By working together, we can amplify our impact, share best practices, and advocate for policies that support people with disabilities. Our community engagement efforts are focused on raising awareness, promoting inclusion, and creating opportunities for all individuals to contribute to and benefit from a diverse and inclusive society.

## Our four pillars

are-able's role in accessibility and inclusion is grounded in these four pillars. By focusing on our people, our systems and processes, our environment and service delivery, and our community and partnerships, we are building an environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate, succeed, and thrive. Together, we can create a place that is truly inclusive, where accessibility is not just an afterthought, but a fundamental value. Join us in our journey towards a more inclusive future for all.





# Pillar 1: Our people

## Our ambition

To ensure that all of our employees, regardless of disability, feel a sense of belonging and are provided with the opportunity to build a career with are-able.

## AIAP actions

| Aim/objective   | Action   | Timing      | Accountability                                | Success measures   |
|---|--|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Establishment of are-able's Disability Employee Network</b>  | Develop operating model of the DEN, captured within a Terms of Reference.  | 30 Aug 2024 | Senior Disability Champion & People & Culture | Calendar of DEN meetings established for each financial year. Terms of Reference Developed.  |
| <b>are-able will participate in International Day of People with Disability</b>                                       | Promote awareness, understanding and support for people with disabilities via marketing campaigns and training sessions, in the lead up to the celebration of International Day of People with Disability. | Annually    | P&C/Marketing                                 | Evidence of all sites within are-able actively supporting the positive contributions that people with disability make to our workforce, featuring as Good News Stories on Connect. |
| <b>Continue to promote and build a culture of inclusivity, support and accessibility amongst are-able's workforce</b> | Foster an inclusive workforce with open communication and feedback channels, led by are-able's leadership group.   | Ongoing     | Leadership                                    | Identify employee sentiment towards access and inclusion within engagement and exit surveys to ensure feelings of belonging and inclusion.   |



## are-able recognised for excellence in inclusion and workplace diversity

**In 2022, are-able proudly achieved national accreditation as an Employer of Choice at the Australian Business Awards, a testament to our inclusive and diverse culture.**

**This prestigious award recognises organisations that create leading workplaces, demonstrating effective practices in employee recruitment, engagement, and retention.**

Read more at [areable.org.au/2022/09/Are-able-a-winner-for-employer-of-choice-in-the-australian-business-awards-2022](https://areable.org.au/2022/09/Are-able-a-winner-for-employer-of-choice-in-the-australian-business-awards-2022)

Scan the QR code to read the full story.





# Pillar 2: Our systems and processes

## Our ambition

We aim to refine our systems and processes to embed inclusivity, accessibility and equitable practices throughout all organisational operations and interactions.



## AIAP actions

| Aim/objective  | Action   | Timing  | Accountability    | Success measures  |
|--|--|---|-------------------|---|
| <b>Implement Personal Evacuation Emergency Plan (PEEP)</b>   | Implement annual survey to determine individual evacuation requirements.   | 30 September 2024                                   | OH&S/P&C          | Process in place and employees and HSR's are aware of PEEP's.                                     |
| <b>Develop a Workplace Adjustment Policy</b>   | Design Workplace Adjustment Policy. Develop a procedure for requesting a workplace adjustment. Managers to incorporate Workplace Adjustments into one-on-ones quarterly. | 30 Aug 2024   | P&C               | Policy in place and available on Connect.   |
| <b>Incorporate accessibility, PEEP's and request for Workplace Adjustments into recruitment process and new starter induction training</b> | Embed process within Onboarding for all employees and discuss during Induction.  | 30 Aug 2024   | P&C/OH&S          | PEEPs in place.   |
| <b>Ensure the accessibility of our technology and online environment</b>   | Continue to review and improve the accessibility of our website to comply with the latest standards of the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).              | Annual audit of compliance in October of each year. | Marketing & Comms | Compliance with WCAG 2.2, achieve Level AA compliance as a minimum, and Level AAA where feasible. |



# Pillar 3: Our environment and service delivery

## Our ambition

Optimising our physical spaces and service delivery to ensure equitable access for all individuals.

## AIAP actions

| Aim/objective   | Action  | Timing  | Accountability | Success measures   |
|---|---|---------|----------------|--|
| <b>Communicate the guidelines surrounding lighting in general work areas to all staff</b>   | Provide resources/references for staff to consult if they have questions or concerns about lighting in their workspace.<br><br>Reference lighting in Workplace Adjustment Policy.                                   | Ongoing | P&C/Facilities | Feedback system in place.  |
| <b>Seek guidance in relation to creating neurodiverse workplaces to promote more diverse and inclusive environments for all employees</b> | Incorporate discussion into DEN. Conduct employee surveys to identify understanding of neurodiverse requirements. Incorporate into workplace adjustment policy.   | Ongoing | P&C            | Neurodiverse employees have the resources they need to thrive in their roles. Participation of all employees in neurodiverse training. |
| <b>Communicate current process regarding the assessment of new premises to all staff</b>  | During Town Hall meetings, address the process regarding the assessment of new premises, including external recommendations, audits and check lists in place to consider accessibility before any site is approved. | Ongoing | Facilities/P&C | Greater awareness of the process in place and improved understanding of are-able's commitment to accessibility.                        |





## Enhancing inclusivity through comprehensive employee engagement surveys

are-able's employee engagement surveys are crafted to thoroughly assess individual needs, promoting an inclusive culture within the organisation. By integrating diverse questions that explore employees' experiences, sense of belonging, and recommendations for enhancement, these surveys provide a detailed understanding of the workplace environment.

The insights collected enable are-able to pinpoint specific areas for improving inclusivity, such as customised training programs, diversity initiatives, and policy modifications. This proactive strategy ensures that every employee feels valued and supported, fostering a more cohesive and dynamic organisational culture.



## Major sponsorship of South Warrnambool Roosters All-Abilities team

**are-able announces its major sponsorship of the South Warrnambool Roosters' All-Abilities Team, highlighting its commitment to promoting equal opportunities in sports. "We are delighted to partner with the South Warrnambool Roosters," said Tom Scarborough, CEO of are-able. This sponsorship provides financial support to enhance the All-Abilities Team, ensuring a rewarding experience for players, coaches, and volunteers.**

Read more at [areable.org.au/2024/05/are-able-announces-major-sponsorship-of-south-warrnambool-roosters-all-abilities-team](https://areable.org.au/2024/05/are-able-announces-major-sponsorship-of-south-warrnambool-roosters-all-abilities-team)

Scan the QR code to read the full story.





# Pillar 4:

## Our community and partnerships

### Our ambition

We aim to foster collaborative partnerships within our community to promote awareness, education and engagement around accessibility and inclusion initiatives.

### AIAP actions

| Aim/objective   | Action   | Timing          | Accountability | Success measures   |
|---|--|-----------------|----------------|--|
| <b>Embed accessibility and inclusion into our procurement practices through the implementation of formal processes</b>  | Integrate accessibility and inclusion considerations in the evaluation process for vendor selection.   | 30 October 2024 | Finance        | Increased number of suppliers who prioritise accessibility into their organisational practices.  |
| <b>Promote good news stories across our community in relation to are-able's support of the communities in which we live</b>                                       | Consistent input from employees regarding the positive impact are-able is having within the community. | Ongoing         | Marketing      | Increased awareness of the support are-able provides within the communities in which we operate by posting a minimum of 30 good news stories per year. |
| <b>Continue promoting are-able Foundation to demonstrate the support provided to community activities to assist people living with disability or disadvantage</b> | Offering up to \$5,000 in community grants to assist community organisations.                          | Annual          | Marketing      | \$100,000 in community grants awarded per year.  |

# Governance and reporting

**At are-able, transparency and accountability are key components of our commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Our Access & Inclusion Action Plan (AIAP) outlines the strategic initiatives we are implementing to enhance accessibility and promote inclusivity within our organisation and the broader community. To ensure that we are making meaningful progress, we have established a robust reporting framework.**

Here's how we will report on the AIAP:

## Regular progress updates

We are committed to providing regular updates on our progress towards achieving the goals outlined in the AIAP. These updates will be shared on a quarterly basis and will include:

**Milestone Achievements:** Highlighting key milestones and accomplishments in our journey towards greater accessibility and inclusion.

**Challenges and solutions:** Identifying any challenges we have encountered and the solutions we have implemented to overcome them.

**Data and metrics:** Presenting quantitative data to track our progress, such as the number of accessible facilities, training sessions conducted, and community engagement activities.

## Annual reports

Each year, we will publish a comprehensive Annual Report on the AIAP. This report will provide an in-depth review of our efforts and achievements over the past year, including:

**Detailed outcomes:** A thorough analysis of the outcomes of our initiatives, supported by data and case studies.

**Impact assessment:** Evaluating the impact of our actions on our employees, clients, and the community, with testimonials and feedback from stakeholders.

**Future goals:** Setting out our goals for the upcoming year and any adjustments to the AIAP based on our experiences and stakeholder input.

## Stakeholder engagement

Engaging with our stakeholders is crucial to the success of the AIAP. We will ensure continuous dialogue through:

**Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing channels for stakeholders to provide feedback on our progress and suggest improvements.

**Consultation Sessions:** Hosting regular consultation sessions with employees, clients, and community partners to discuss our efforts and gather insights.

## Internal audits

To maintain the integrity of our reporting, we will conduct internal audits of our AIAP initiatives. These audits will include:

**Compliance Checks:** Ensuring that our actions comply with relevant accessibility standards and regulations.

**Effectiveness Reviews:** Assessing the effectiveness of our initiatives in achieving their intended outcomes.

**Continuous Improvement:** Identifying areas for improvement and implementing corrective actions where necessary.

## Transparency and accountability

We are dedicated to maintaining transparency and accountability throughout the reporting process. This includes:

**Public Access:** Making all progress updates, annual reports, and audit results publicly accessible on our website.

**Open Communication:** Encouraging open communication with our stakeholders and being responsive to their inquiries and concerns.

**Independent Reviews:** Inviting independent reviews of our reports to provide an objective assessment of our efforts.

## Comprehensive reporting

Reporting on the Access & Inclusion Action Plan (AIAP) is a vital aspect of are-able's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all. Through regular updates, comprehensive reports, active stakeholder engagement, thorough internal audits, and a steadfast commitment to transparency and accountability, we aim to demonstrate our dedication to making a positive and lasting impact. Together, we can build a more inclusive future where people with a disability have the opportunity to thrive.

# Do you have feedback?

We want to make sure you are heard and valued.

## How to submit your feedback

### In person

Discuss your feedback with an are-able Employee at your local office.

### By phone or in writing

If you would prefer you can lodge your feedback formally by telephone on **1800 566 066** (ask for a member of the People & Culture team), or in writing by using either our External Formal Feedback Form, or by letter or email.

*All feedback recieved is confidential.*

#### Mail to:

Quality Management  
are-able  
52 Fairy Street,  
Warrnambool VIC 3280

#### Email:

[feedback@areable.org.au](mailto:feedback@areable.org.au)

# Access and Inclusion Action Plan supporting statement for are-able



## Message from Corene Strauss Chief Executive Officer Australian Disability Network

Australian Disability Network congratulates are-able on the development and launch of their first Access and Inclusion Action Plan. All significant change needs a plan to succeed and becoming an accessible workplace is no exception. are-able's Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2026 recognises the important role organisations have in building an inclusive environment for employees, clients, and the diverse communities they serve.

This Access and Inclusion Action Plan sets out clear commitments to deliver impactful change and are-able's

commitment to advancing the inclusion of people with disability and their carers. The plan's commitments and priorities build on are-able's existing inclusion journey, the organisation's role as a Disability Employment Services provider, and the community engagement provided by the are-able foundation.

We wish are-able every success with the launch of this foundational Access and Inclusion Action Plan and look forward to supporting the organisation in the implementation journey.



1800 566 066  
areable.org.au

