

# Disability Employment Strategy

2023-2025



# Acknowledgement of Country

HealthShare NSW respectfully acknowledges the many Aboriginal tribes of NSW, the traditional custodians of the land we live and work on. Acknowledging Elders past, present and future, we pay our respects to the continuing cultural practices and spiritual connection Aboriginal peoples of NSW have with the land, waters and seas. We hold an appreciation and respect for the sharing of their knowledge across our organisation.

Within the work we undertake through our Reconciliation Action Plan and Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, we will continue to enhance our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures to help build an organisation where Aboriginal cultures and people are valued and respected.



**Franki Pollick,**  
Coordinator Disability, Access  
and Inclusion, People and Culture

Just 8 minutes from my home, is the beautiful Garigal National Park, with stunning walks and gorgeous, calming rock pools. The tracks lead you to the most beautiful water cascading over and around the rocks and there's never a time when I don't discover something new about this peaceful haven. It's particularly at times when I am amongst this natural beauty - that as an immigrant, I am so very grateful to be Australian and so very grateful to the Indigenous people who have loved and taken such great care of the land on which I live today.



**Desideria Vaai,**  
Manager, Diversity and Inclusion,  
People and Culture

A little slice of beauty at my backyard. This river walk along the Georges River is a place that my family and I would go for walks often. You will often spot one odd duck in the water and plenty of birds whistling amongst the trees which the kids thoroughly enjoy.



**Angela Ekert Gazzard,**  
Knowledge, Quality and Training  
Manager - Partnerships and Projects,  
Sponsor of Disability Employee Network

Whibayganba – dual named Nobbys headland – is where the ocean and river meet in Newcastle. As well as being a beautiful place to watch the sunrise, this is a sacred site for the Awabakal peoples. In a dreamtime story, a giant kangaroo lives inside the headland and when it thumps its tail, the ground shakes. This may be an ancient way of understanding the seismic activity in the area.

# Foreword



It is with great pride that I present the HealthShare NSW Disability Employment Strategy 2023-2025. This plan follows on from our previous Disability Employment Strategy and outlines HealthShare NSW's next step in continuing to build an inclusive, safe and accessible organisation for people with disability.

Since 2015, we have made good progress in our commitment to people with disability. We increased our resources to focus on the recruitment of people with a disability and to offer appropriate support, where needed, to our current disability workforce. We built strong relationships with disability employment service (DES) providers to source candidates, and we increased the disability confidence of our organisation through sharing employee stories and celebrating key events such as International Day of People with Disability. As a result, we have seen the representation of HealthShare NSW employees with disability grow from 1.9% in 2015 to 8.4% as of December 2022. We are committed to continuing to improve our efforts to reach our target of people with disability making up 10% of HealthShare NSW's workforce by 2025.

The Disability Employment Strategy 2023-2025 has been developed in alignment with HealthShare NSW's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, the NSW Future Health Strategic Framework and the wider public sector strategic direction. The strategy focuses on three key areas – representation, awareness and accessibility. We aim to increase representation of employees with disability and expand employment pathways, continue to build

an inclusive disability confident workplace where people with disability are valued and respected and to ensure our employees have safe, equitable and dignified access to all aspects of their workplace.

The success of this strategy requires engagement and collaboration across our organisation. We all have a responsibility in making HealthShare NSW an inclusive, safe and accessible organisation for staff, applicants, visitors and customers with disability.

**Paul Gavel**

Director, People & Culture, HealthShare NSW

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# Overview

The HealthShare NSW Disability Employment Strategy 2023-2025 identifies key initiatives that will guide us in achieving our target of people with disability making up 10% of HealthShare NSW's workforce by 2025. The associated Action Plan will ensure we have a set of actions and deliverables that will drive us towards achieving our strategic goals and ensuring accountability for leaders and employees across the organisation.

This strategy and action plan was developed in consultation with representatives from our disability workforce, managers of employees with disability, the Diversity Council and senior leadership across all areas of the business. Feedback was collected through various internal focus groups and surveys.

The strategy outlines HealthShare NSW's commitment to change and to continuous improvement through three focus areas:

- **Representation** - increase representation of employees with disability and expand employment pathways
- **Awareness** - build an inclusive disability confident workplace where people with disability are valued and respected
- **Accessibility** - provide employees with safe, equitable and dignified access to all aspects of their workplace.

## HealthShare NSW Disability Workforce

HealthShare NSW currently employs more than 8,000 staff of which 8.4% (approximately 700 employees) have confidentially shared that they have a disability<sup>11</sup>.

The statistics below provide a breakdown of salary and ages of employees reporting disability compared to employees without disability.

### Salary and ages as at December 2022

		% Employees without disability	% Employees with disability
Salary	≤ \$70,000	80.58	84.95
	Earn > \$70,000	19.42	15.04
Age	<35	24.04	17.55
	35-44	23.34	14.75
	45-54	23.77	22.12
	55-64	23.61	38.5
	65+	5.24	7.08

11. HealthShare NSW December 2022 Diversity Report

# What is disability?

HealthShare NSW's Disability Employment Strategy 2023-2025 has been developed around the definition of disability presented in the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW):

*Disability is a 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.<sup>1</sup>*

This is the 'social model' of disability and is universally recognised as the way to view and address disability by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It sees disability as more than an impairment of the individual, but also a result of the interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers.

People with disability are part of every section of our community: seniors and youth; indigenous and non-indigenous; different cultures and gender identities; employers and employees; customers and citizens. They include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. It's important to note that no two people with the same disability experience their disability in the same way.

True equity is a collective effort achievable when communities work together to break down these barriers enabling people living with impairments the opportunity to participate and succeed in society on an equal basis with others.

## Disability community in Australia

- 4.4 million Australians have a disability, that's 1 in 5 people<sup>2</sup>
- **2.1 million** Australians of working age (15-64yrs) have a disability<sup>2</sup>
- Approximately **80%** of disabilities are not visible<sup>3</sup>
- Labour force participation for people with a disability aged **15-64** years is **53%**, compared to **84%** for people without disability<sup>4</sup>
- Men with disability are more likely to be employed than women with disability with a workforce participation rate of **56%** compared with **51%** for women<sup>4</sup>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability were significantly less likely to be employed - **26%** compared to **49%** for non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability<sup>5</sup>
- **44%** of Australians aged **16-85** years experience a mental health condition during their lifetime<sup>6</sup>
- Graduates with disability take **62%** longer to gain fulltime employment than other graduates<sup>4</sup>
- Arthritis affects **15%** of Australians - **3.6 million** people<sup>4</sup>
- Disability discrimination accounts for the highest volume of complaints across the board to the Australian Human Rights Commission<sup>7</sup>

1. Disability Inclusion Act 2014

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings

3. Australian Network on Disability

4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with a Disability

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020-21) - National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing

7. Australian Human Rights Commission 2018-19 Complaint statistics

## Why is employment of people with disability important?

Providing employment for people with disability is important for the same reasons it is important to provide employment for people without disability. Employment is essential to every individual's economic security and is important to achieving social inclusion. Employment contributes to an individual's physical and mental health, personal wellbeing and a sense of identity and self-worth<sup>8</sup>. Everybody has the right to work in a safe and inclusive workplace and to be given the opportunity to perform their best.

Our organisation is stronger when people with disability are well represented, acknowledged and valued. Employees living with disability are just as valuable as those without disability and can provide our organisation with a broader range of skills, knowledge, experiences and perspectives. Their perspectives enrich the workplace culture and contribute to diverse thinking, increased innovation and productivity. Research has shown that workers with disability have higher rates of retention and attendance and fewer occupational health and safety incidents than those without a disability<sup>9</sup>.

The communities we serve will directly benefit from HealthShare NSW being a diverse and inclusive workplace. In NSW, approximately 17% of people are living with disability<sup>10</sup>. By increasing the representation of employees with disability within our organisation, HealthShare NSW will have a deeper understanding of the diverse disability community, enabling us to provide services that meet their needs now and into the future.

We all have a role to play in building an inclusive, safe and welcoming organisation for people with disability. Inclusion goes beyond physical accessibility and considers the attitudes, behaviours and systems in our workplace which may be inaccessible and discriminatory to the disability community. It challenges us to listen and reflect on how we can improve.



John Ghaly, Food Services Assistant  
- Blacktown hospital

8. Department of Social Services, Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their families in Australia (2012)  
9. J Graffam, A Shinkfield, K Smith, and U Polzin, 'Employer benefits and costs of employing a person with a disability' (2002)  
10. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018)



# Employee story

Angela Hudson, Change Manager – Employee and Financial Shared Services, HealthShare NSW

“Living with my hearing impairment is like living in a tunnel. There are noises bouncing off the walls, there are echoes, some noises are loud, and others are whispers. Mostly I can’t discern which direction sound is coming from. The impairment can make me look confused and feel isolated. It’s exhausting having to always concentrate on what needs to be heard and what I should filter out. I have lived with this impairment all my life, and to this day most people wouldn’t know I can’t hear well.

I describe my hearing loss as an impairment and not a disability, but there have been times when I have felt disabled. To me, an impairment is a barrier that I can find my way around. I use tools and tactics every day to communicate effectively. Feeling disabled, on the other hand, is when I can’t manage the obstacles and my hearing loss prevents me from enjoying my work and life. This makes me feel both isolated and frustrated.

I have worked for HealthShare NSW for 3 years now but all up, I have worked for NSW Health for nearly 30 years. I started as a nurse, became a midwife, was an educator, then an operational manager, a redesign manager and now a change manager.



I have had a broad and diverse career trajectory including lots of fantastic opportunities along the way. I have been privileged to have worked with some exceptional people, brave patients and inclusive progressive communities. Here at HealthShare NSW, I work with a fantastic group of colleagues and have an amazing leadership team. Everyone gets in and helps each other and I love how we recognize each other's strengths and call on each other for guidance when needed.”



*“Ange is an amazing asset for Employee and Financial Shared Services (EFSS) and HealthShare NSW. Prior to Ange coming onboard, EFSS had no consistent change management practices which resulted in unpredictable and inconsistent experiences for our staff and customers. Ange has increased EFSS capabilities within change management, with implementing the change management toolkit and AIM training for our managers and staff. Ange is an exceptional collaborator and has a passion for increasing change capabilities in our staff.”*

Beth Harrison,  
A/Associate Director  
Strategy Implementation, EFSS

# Strategic alignment

The HealthShare NSW Disability Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025 aligns with the strategic direction of the organisation, NSW Health and the wider public sector.

## NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025

Remove systemic and attitudinal barriers so that people with disability have a better opportunity to live a meaningful life and enjoy the full benefits of membership in the community

## Future Health Strategic Framework 2022-2032

Strengthen diversity in our workforce and decision-making

## HealthShare NSW Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Focus on People - Nurture a safe, constructive culture for our people to thrive

## Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy 2021 -2024

We embrace diverse identities and cultures, and our workforce reflects the communities we serve



# Strategic alignment

## NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025

The [NSW Government Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025](#) provides a whole of Government strategy aligned with the principles of the [Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#). It provides the framework through which the NSW Government will work towards achieving an inclusive society. It identifies the key focus areas for NSW to remove systemic and attitudinal barriers so that people with disability have a better opportunity to live a meaningful life and enjoy the full benefits of membership in the community.

The [NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025](#) sets out the actions under the four key focus areas.

## Future Health Strategic Framework 2022-2032

[Future Health](#) provides the roadmap for how NSW Health will deliver services over the next 10 years. The vision is a sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled.

Along with the aforementioned policies, the Disability Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025 is also informed by various state and commonwealth legislation including:

- [NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#)
- [Government Sector Employment Act 2013 \(State\)](#)

## HealthShare NSW Strategic Plan 2020-2024

The overall vision of the [HealthShare NSW Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#) is 'Partnering for patients' - connecting with and understanding the needs of our people, patients, NSW Health staff and the community. A key initiative of the strategic plan is to focus on people through nurturing a safe, constructive culture for HealthShare NSW employees to thrive. To deliver on the vision and enable our people to thrive, HealthShare must continue to promote an environment that understands our shared human needs – that is to be safe, diverse and inclusive.

## HealthShare NSW Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy 2021-2024

The HealthShare NSW [Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy 2021-2024](#) outlines HealthShare NSW's commitment to building and attracting a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. It sets a framework of how HealthShare NSW will build an inclusive, diverse culture that empowers and enables individuals to feel safe, valued and supported within their work environment.

- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [United Nations \(UN\) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(International\)](#)

# Employee story

## Trudy Mitchell, Cleaner - John Hunter Hospital, HealthShare NSW

"I was in my early forties when I started to feel stiffness, swelling and pain in my hands. My condition got worse over time and eventually I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis. Although it didn't come as a surprise, my diagnosis led to a great deal of sadness and worry about my future.

I have worked as part of the cleaning team at John Hunter Hospital for the past 20 years. Working was my life and I looked forward to seeing my patients every day. With my job being quite labour intensive, I was unsure as to how my osteoarthritis would affect my capacity to work but I was determined to stay active and employed.

My managers and supervisors have been extremely supportive. They have accommodated my medical appointments, approved time off when needed, allowed me to adjust my daily routine and have put a few other adjustments in place to make tasks a little easier such as using different trolleys.

I meet patients from all walks of life, often with extreme conditions, and I try to make their hospital stay as pleasant as I can. I know them all by name and give them respect. To me, they feel like family, and I take great pride in making sure that every person in the 30 beds on my ward feels safe, happy and well. I want to give them a pristine environment while they are in hospital, so they feel calm and rested.

I was recently given a 'Staff Appreciation and Recognition (STAR) Award' for exceptional performance and customer satisfaction, which was one of my proudest moments. My work is a special place to spread kindness and I will continue to do that for as long as I can."



*"I love working with Trudy. She's extremely passionate and that rubs off on everyone around her.*

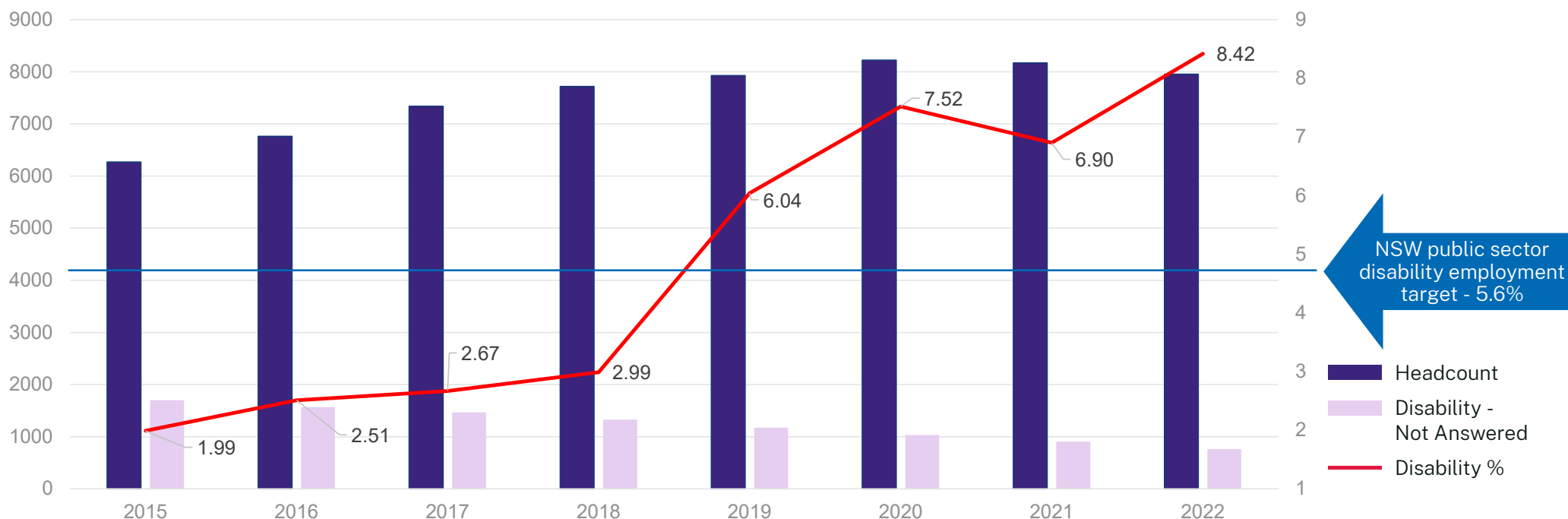
*Her attention to detail and commitment is phenomenal and it's that ownership and passion that makes her such a tremendous asset to the ward, the team and the wider organisation"*

Rick Forrest,  
Operations Manager,  
Food and Patient Support Services



# Our achievements

HSNSW disability representation and sharing Dec 2015 – Dec 2022



## Some of our key achievements over the last seven years include:

- An increase in representation of employees with disability from 1.9% to 8.4%
- sourced candidates through disability employment service (DES) providers
- established targeted disability positions
- achieved an increase of 17.5% in the number of employees sharing their disability status
- partnered with JobFitness to implement workplace modifications
- established a Diversity Council to consult on organisational strategies and policies
- completed an accessibility audit of corporate work sites
- held an annual event for International Day of People with Disability
- increased disability confidence through creating disability workforce toolkits for employees and managers
- improved accessibility of Disability, Access and Inclusion intranet page
- launched the DiscoverAbility Yammer community page
- increased disability awareness through intranet feature stories on employees with disability



# Manager story

## Rick Forrest, Operations Manager - Food and Patient Support Services, HealthShare NSW

“My role as Operations Manager within Food and Patient Support Services involves overseeing all of the cleaning, stores, linen, waste and food service operations across multiple sites.

With close to 400 employees, we have a tremendously diverse workforce and I have a genuine interest and passion in embracing this diversity. I work closely with the Diversity and Inclusion team in getting the right people in the right job and supporting them through their employment with us.

One of the many services the Diversity and Inclusion team provide are site visits to meet with staff one-on-one. These visits provide a confidential space for employees to share challenges and concerns related to support and inclusion and request assistance if required.

I can see the positive impact it has on employee wellbeing knowing that their voice has been heard. It has led to more honest and open conversations within our team, where we can all speak about issues when they arise while still being respectful and mindful of what other factors may be going on in the background.

As a manager, I've got a lot out of the site visits. With employee permission, I often learn things about my team that I wouldn't have known otherwise. This deeper connection and understanding of the individuals within my team has made me a more

compassionate and empathetic leader and has enabled me to provide support for my staff where needed.

With assistance from the Diversity and Inclusion and Job Fitness teams, we have implemented some quick and easy modifications to support staff in fulfilling their roles such as temporary change in shift times, change in type of tasks performed and modified equipment.

I also saw this increase in connection and understanding reflected in our 2022 People Matters Employee Survey results. This year we had 79% of our staff complete the survey compared to just 4% last year. We saw a minimum of 20% improvement on all survey topics, we have a lower rate of burnout than the rest of the sector and we saw excellent results when it comes to confidence in management and leadership. Yes, there are many factors that can be attributed to these results, but it goes without saying that the work done by the Diversity and Inclusion team through those site visits and follow up support, has no doubt had a big impact.

It goes without saying that appropriate job/candidate matching is required for successful outcomes. Hospital work environments can be confronting, and patient care is of utmost importance within often very challenging health circumstances. The most important skill for our employees to have is the ability to connect to all walks of life during their



most vulnerable time of need. Having diversity within a team delivers added perspective and compassion when dealing with our patients and their families.

In my experience as a manager, Diversity and Inclusion has been a significant factor in building a productive, happy, cohesive team - and that's a win-win for everyone.”

# Strategic focus areas

## Representation



### Objective

People with disability are well represented across the organisation. By 2025, we aim to have 10% of our overall workforce made up of employees with disability.

## Awareness



### Objective

We are a disability confident organisation where employees with disability are safe, valued and respected and enjoy equal opportunity to thrive within a supportive and inclusive workplace.

## Accessibility



### Objective

We provide safe, dignified and equitable access to services, facilities, premises and information for all employees, applicants, visitors and customers with disability.



# Representation

## Objective:

People with disability are well represented across the organisation. By 2025, we aim to have 10% of our overall workforce made up of employees with disability.

## Why it is important:

Increasing the representation of people with disability in our workforce will ensure we better understand and reflect the communities we serve. A broader collection of ideas, experience and perspectives will improve our organisation's innovation and productivity and enrich the wellbeing of our workplace.

## Our success:

We collaborate with leaders and managers within the organisation to identify opportunities to secure carved roles, positions created to suit a person's ability, and targeted roles, positions that preferentially recruit a person with disability. We connect and collaborate with disability employment service (DES) providers to source suitable candidates and host recruitment drive initiatives. We have strong pathways into our organisation through innovative programs such as the targeted internship program. We engage managers to create career growth and development opportunities for employees with disability. We promote the benefits of sharing and updating disability status and conduct regular site visits to connect with staff.

## We will measure our success by achieving:

- $\geq 10\%$  representation of people with disability in the workforce by 2025 (8.4% at December 2022)
- $\leq 7\%$  of employees that have not answered disability question (9.5% at December 2022)
- 12% of employees with disability in tier 1-5 leadership roles (8.9% at December 2022)
- 18% of employees with disability with salary above \$70,000 (15% at December 2022)
- Learning and development score for employees with disability in the People Matters Employee Survey (PMES) within 5% of overall HSNSW result (2022 PMES = 10% lower)





# Awareness

**Objective:**

We are a disability confident organisation where employees with disability are safe, valued and respected and enjoy equal opportunity to thrive within a supportive and inclusive workplace.

**Why it is important:**

A disability confident organisation with the knowledge, skills and attitude to understand and embrace people with disability will provide employees with a sense of belonging and wellbeing. A workforce of engaged and happy employees will lead to diverse thinking, improved collaboration and higher retention rates.

**Our success:**

There is increased awareness and understanding of disability throughout the organisation through sharing the stories of employees with disability and celebrating and promoting key disability dates. We have developed and maintained a Disability Employment Network (DEN) to provide consultation and feedback on organisational strategies, policies and projects that may impact employees with disability and to drive disability employment initiatives. We provide a range of disability employment resources for employees and managers and lead the implementation of CE Directive diversity and inclusion training.

**We will measure our success by achieving:**

- Inclusion and diversity score for employees with disability in PMES within 5% of overall HealthShare NSW result (2022 PMES = 10% lower)
- Wellbeing score for employees with disability in PMES within 5% of overall HealthShare NSW result (2022 PMES = 14% lower)
- monthly disability employment stories featured on the intranet
- 50% increase in membership of Yammer disability community (30 members at Dec 2022)
- Implementation of a CE Directive disability training course for all staff
- ≥80% completion rate of 'Employment: People with disability' course for managers (67.1% at November 2022)



# Accessibility

**Objective:**

We provide safe, dignified and equitable access to services, facilities, premises and information for all employees, applicants, visitors and customers with disability.

**Why it is important:**

Providing equitable access to resources removes barriers for our customers, enables us to attract and retain a wider pool of talent and supports greater representation, inclusivity, and respect within the workplace.

**Our success:**

We collaborate with business leads to ensure recruitment systems and business processes are accessible and equitable. We maintain our memberships with national disability bodies to stay up to date with accessibility best practice. We assist in the facilitation of reasonable work site and role adjustments for employees with disability. We provide educational resources on accessibility to the wider business.

**We will measure our success by achieving:**

- An increase of awareness and development of content that meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA standards
- Recruitment score for employees with disability in PMES within 5% of overall HealthShare NSW result (2022 PMES = 10% lower)
- Health & Safety score for employees with disability in PMES on par with overall HealthShare NSW result (2022 PMES = 6% lower)
- Flexible working score for employees with disability in PMES on par with overall HealthShare NSW result (2022 PMES = 6% lower)

# For more information



For additional information on HealthShare NSW disability employment, visit the HealthShare NSW website or contact the Disability, Access and Inclusion team at [HSNSW-diversity@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:HSNSW-diversity@health.nsw.gov.au)





# Disability Employment Strategy

2023-2025

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