Telstra's Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan

FY23-FY25 inclusive

Contents

Acknowledgement

We recognise and acknowledge the existing, original, and ancient connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to the lands and waterways across the Australian continent. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

At Telstra we are enriched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' contribution to our organisation, and we commit to working with you to build a prosperous and inclusive Australia.

Message from Vicki Brady – our Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

These days, being connected is something that is often taken for granted. For many of us the day begins with a smartphone alarm and ends with a last look through the same device.

Throughout the day we are constantly online, through multiple devices and on multiple platforms. We are also connected in every part of our lives — at work, at school, socially, financially. And yet, even as connectivity continues to play an increasingly central role in our lives, there remains incredible challenges for people with disability to participate fully.

Telstra's Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan FY23-25 is part of our commitment to address that critical issue. It details how we continue to build inclusion and equitable access to overcome barriers that prevent full social and economic participation for people with disability.

There are still too many barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Stripping out those barriers and offering people with disability more independence, choice and control is the ultimate goal of our plan. It details how we intend to build accessibility in our workplaces, with our products and services, and in ensuring the experiences we offer are equitable and inclusive for people with disability.

Our commitment also includes reaffirming our participation in The Valuable 500 global campaign which is bringing together hundreds of business leaders and ensuring disability inclusion and accessibility on the agenda at some of the world's largest companies.

I am proud that Telstra continues to take great strides in building accessibility and inclusion. In 2022 both the My Telstra app and Telstra.com website were awarded certifications for the 'International Web Content Accessibility Guideline' standards up to level AA. We were also awarded best-in-class recognition for innovation at the Australian Network on Disability's 2022 Inaugural Disability Confidence Awards, in addition to releasing our 5G Touch and Track prototype for vision impaired Australians to experience live AFL.

But while these are all achievements to be proud of, we have much more to do. The actions in this plan build on the work we have already done and detail what more we can do to create and support a more inclusive society.

I look forward to sharing our progress with you in the future.

Vicki Brady
Chief Executive Officer, Telstra

Our aspiration at Telstra is to build a connected future that is accessible to all Australians so that everyone can thrive

This plan presents a collection of actions that we are doing as a business to encourage, recognise, and promote an active commitment to eliminating disability discrimination.

In today's world digital technologies play a central and empowering role. Being connected is not just an added extra, but an increasingly integral part of our daily lives. While the digital economy is generating social, cultural, and economic benefits for many Australians, we know these benefits are not always equally shared with those in the disability community. Technology and connectivity have potential to empower and enrich the lives of people with disability and benefit all.

Almost 1 in 5 people in Australia — or about 4.4 million — have disability[1] and over one third of Australian households include a person with disability[2]. Australians with disability are less digitally included than the national average (9.1 points below the national score)[3]. 1 in 6 people with disability live in conditions of poverty, compared with just over 1 in 10 Australians without disability. And, there are 2.65 million carers assisting people with disability in Australia[4].

Telstra's Purpose is to build a connected future so that everyone can thrive. For people with disability, this means that we must design products and services that are inclusive. Accessible telecommunications are a necessity for all. As are the digital literacy skills needed to make full use of technologies and the benefits they bring. As Australia's largest telecommunications company that serves millions of diverse Australians, we can be leaders in this space.

Our Accessibility Action Plan supports inclusion and equitable access to overcome barriers that prevent full social and economic participation for people with disability.
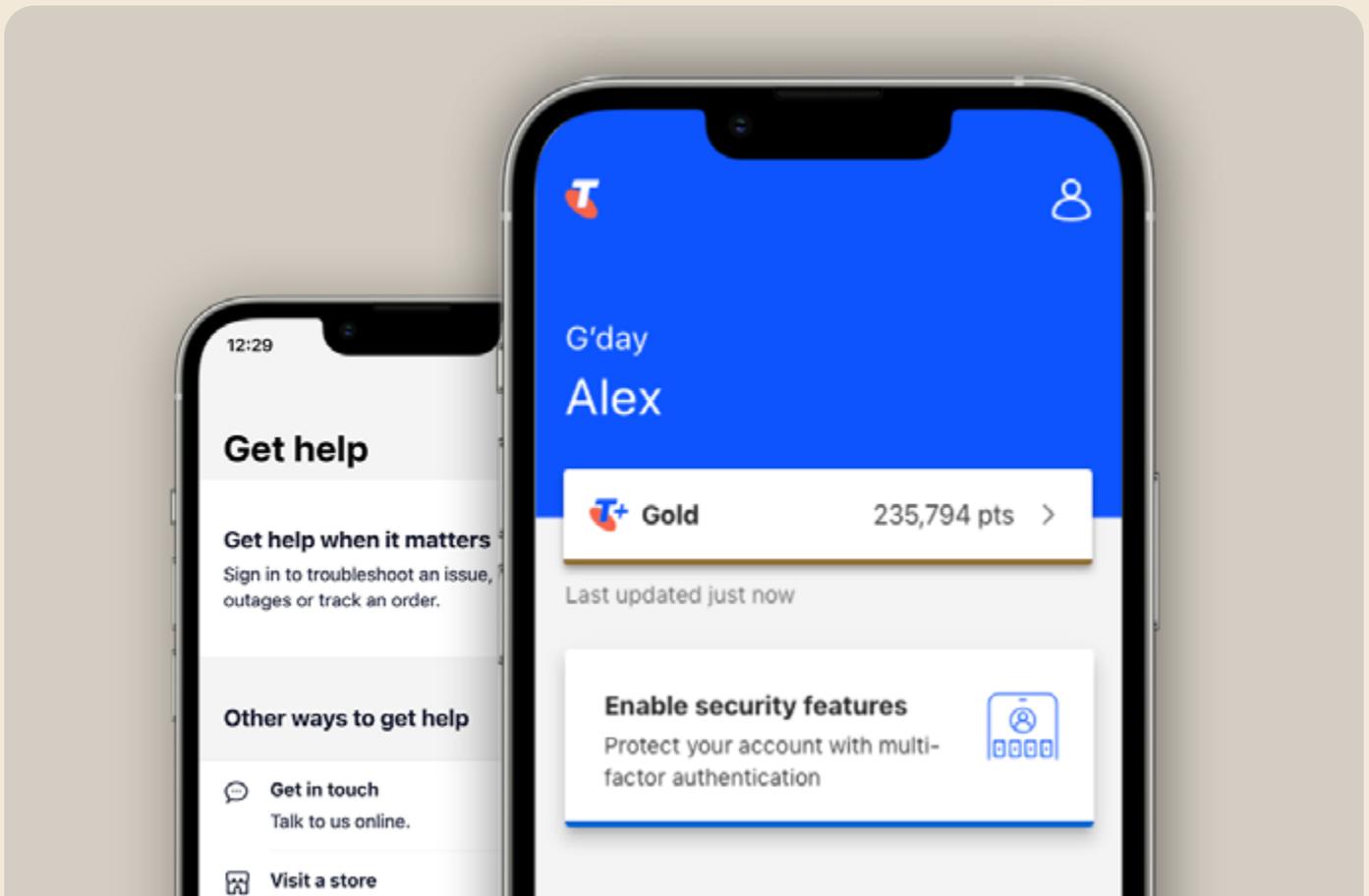
We recognise the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities definition of disability, the Social Model's approach to disability, and the role our business plays in being an enabler for driving meaningful and sustainable change. We have consulted people with disability in the creation of this plan.

1 https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018
2 https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018
3 https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/dashboard/Total.aspx
4 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/people-with-disability/prevalence-of-disability

Case study 1
Telstra.com and MyTelstra App certified at WCAG 2.1 A/AA

Never have we seen such a reliance on Digital experience to complete tasks online and from the comfort of our homes or while commuting. For some this is a convenience, for others it can mean so much more of those experiences are not accessible. At Telstra, we understand the criticality of accessibility and in ensuring we as service providers find solutions, rather than expecting our customers to find a work-around.

Over the past three years, the appointment of a dedicated Accessibility team has changed the mindset to ensure our core digital assets and ways-of-working requirements are accessible from day one. This environment, where Accessibility is a non-negotiable has resulted in both the My Telstra app, web experiences and Telstra.com website awarded certifications for the international WCAG standards at both the level A and AA. Thousands of digital pages and documents have been improved to better enable customers to engage and self-serve online.

This year's external annual audit of key assets has also seen a signification reduction in defects by an average of 75 per cent, indicating that accessibility requirements are being incorporated by our designers and developers who design and build Telstra products.

We've also worked hard to ensure that the over 5 million documents we send out to our customers via email each month incorporate key accessibility requirements. This means the one in ten Australians that rely on assistive technologies[5] can better access their bills, invoices, credit adjustments and debt letters for Telstra, Boost and Telstra Energy.

5   https://atsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AT_IN_Australia.pdf

Case study 2
Telstra 5G Touch and Track

Nearly half a million Australians are blind or have low vision[6], and it's estimated that more than half the population has some form of vision disorder[7]. Having low vision shouldn't stop you loving or playing sport — or being a die-hard fan of a club, like Western Bulldogs supporter Shaun — but it can change how you experience it as a fan.

As a person who is blind, Shaun's experience of AFL games is mostly through sound, using headphones to listen to commentary and game sounds to visualise what's happening on the field.

We want all fans to have access to the technology they need to bring a live AFL match to life. To do this we wanted to explore how technology underpinned by the speed and responsiveness of our 5G mobile network could add a new element to the AFL game day and help people with low vision experience more of the game than they already do.

We've been working with the team from Field of Vision and our Telstra Labs to create a new experience for vision impaired AFL fans, using innovative technology that translates the movement of a ball on-field to a physical device. Using magnetic technology that moves inside the body of the device, as the Sherrin is kicked and handballed around the oval, a steel ring on the surface moves precisely to where the ball is on the playing field.

With 5G's near real-time responsiveness, the movement of the ball now matches the roar of the crowd in the background. The physical tablet device is 3D printed with the layout of the field debossed into it — that's the opposite of embossing, which creates the raised bumps of the Braille alphabet you might be familiar with, or the raised letters on a bank card.

The combination of a debossed playing field and tactile steel ring helps a vision impaired person 'see' the action on-field through their sense of touch. As the ball is run and passed around the field, the ring tracks its every motion. As it's kicked, the fast movement of the ring will match the intensity of noise from the field and the fans — especially if that kick turns into a goal.

Read more at Telstra-unveils-5g-touch-and-track-prototype-a-new-way-for-vision-impaired-australians-to-experience-live-afl

6 https://www.vision2020australia.org.au/resources/a-snapshot-of-blindness-and-low-vision-services-in-australia

7 https://www.optometry.org.au/medicare_private_billing/13-million-australians-have-a-vision-disorder-and-females-have-higher-prevalence

Supporting the Australian Disability community

For many years, Telstra has been a leader in addressing disability matters and ensuring our products, services, and information are accessible to our customers and our employees. We work with community groups and disability advocates to understand the needs of our customers with disability.

40 years of action

1980-1989

- Specialised products introduced to assist people with a disability to use the standard telephone service
- Telstra Disabilities Program Unit established

1990-1999

- First Disability Action Plan (1996)
- Telstra Disability Forum established
- Telstra Disability Enquiry Hotline established
- Telstra Staff Disability Awareness Program established
- Braille Bill option introduced for Telstra customers

2000-2009

- Third and Fourth Disability Action Plans
- Telstra was principal sponsor of the 20th Deaflympic Games, held in Melbourne

2010-2019

- Fifth and Sixth Disability Action Plans
- Telstra's first Access and Inclusion Action Plan (2017)
- TelstrAbility employee representative group (ERG) founded, comprising employees with disability and allies
- Consumer round table forums established

The Telstra Foundation is Telstra's registered, philanthropic charity in Australia with a vision for all Australians to be empowered through technology. Through the Foundation we focus on improving digital inclusion and enabling community action on climate change, in particular within diverse, vulnerable, and disadvantaged communities. In the past year, two disability focused initiatives have been accelerated through the Telstra Foundation's Tech4Good challenge.

Case study 3
Tech4Good MyWay Employability Program

For disadvantaged communities, in terms of work opportunities, doors may be more frequently closed than open. The statistics tell us this is likely the case for those on the autism spectrum. Unemployment and underemployment rates for this cohort reveal an uncomfortable truth: there are barriers to autistic young people finding work.

In the Tech4Good Challenge, Autism CRC (the world's first national, cooperative effort researching autism across the lifespan of an individual) designed a digital solution to help school leavers on the spectrum identify their strengths and interests, set goals and track progress on their path to a successful career.

"Almost two-thirds of people on the spectrum are unemployed. Reaching young people with a tailored program while they are still in school is critical because receiving the right support to plan and prepare early can set them up for success," says project co-leader, Cheryl Mangan.

Autism CRC sees a need and opportunity for their digital platform, MyWay Employability, and have engaged over 230 young people, parents, professionals, and educators to co-design the service.

The premise of myWAY Employability is to enable self-determination in young people as they prepare to step into their working life. It does this by matching an individual's profile to career, training and education pathways. It helps them see possibilities, encourages them to dream and gives them the confidence to make it happen.

Read more at Helping-autistic-young-people-take-control-of-their-own-futures

Case study 4
Tech4Good
Auslan Anywhere

Almost 20,000 people use Auslan to communicate daily, and yet the language is a mystery to most of Australia. This communication gap is especially apparent for hearing people and their close Deaf connections such as their family and friends.

Auslan Anywhere is a unique and innovative platform led by its creators who are from the Deaf community. It is a centralised space for those creators to share Auslan that is current and available to learn on demand,

with engaging, bite-sized educational content created and curated by the Deaf community. This incredible app puts Auslan in the hands of anyone who has an interest in learning it.

Supported by coaches and funding from Telstra Foundation, Expression Australia facilitated the development of the app in collaboration with community members.

The approach to Auslan Anywhere set a new benchmark — it was built around a co-design approach that meaningfully factored in community participation, and truly empowered creators to bring forth their ideas.

Read more at The-app-putting-auslan-in-the-hands-of-anyone-who-wants-to-learn

Case study 5

Say G'day – your Telstra calls are being answered in Australia and your in-store experience will be consistent, as all retail stores join the Telstra family

Over the past months, we've hired around 2,000 new team members across the country so we can answer consumer and small business calls in Australia. It's another of many changes we've made to create a better customer experience.

Our team are your neighbours. They're located in cities and towns across Australia, including regional hubs like Maryborough, Bunbury and Bathurst. Thanks to hybrid working, this means the person helping you could be in your state, suburb, town or – who knows – even your street. On any given day, nine out of ten people from our consumer and small business teams choose to work at home.

Answering your calls locally

We regularly ask you what you want to see from us. What we heard loud and clear was that you wanted a change in the way we answered our calls, so we did it. It's a change that also deepens our local expertise.

During the Queensland floods earlier this year, we had customers in Brisbane speaking to local team members who understood first-hand the challenges they were facing. Being there – locals helping locals – this motivates our team every day.

Our Disability Enquiry Hotline now located in Ballarat

Our Disability Enquiry Hotline agents who work exclusively on disability equipment enquiries are now located in Ballarat, Victoria.

Our team reflects our community

Since early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we have understood our employee's flexibility arrangements and ensured they have the tools to work from home.

Now when you call, you will speak to locals from all over Australia – people who reflect our community and customer base including many who have accents representing our diversity.

2,000km from Melbourne to Longreach to help small businesses

When Daniel's partner Belinda landed her dream job in Longreach, it was a no brainer the couple would make the 2,000km journey north from Melbourne with their baby George in tow. But what he didn't expect was being able to work remotely and expand his call team in the remote heritage town.

Daniel, who supports Telstra's small business customers, has even been able to help out Longreach locals. "It's the little things where we can make a difference. For example, I took my car into the local smash repair shop and they told me their voicemail wasn't working. I got that fixed for them, while they fixed my car! Small businesses rely on Telstra to keep them connected, and I love my job helping them do that."

Back to the future at 60, with 15 years of customer service over her pub's public bar

You might chat to 60-year-old Kaylee from Hervey Bay, a former beloved country publican and prolific community volunteer. Kaylee works from home and has a passion for helping our older customers.

As the owner-operator of a small country pub in Tasmania's central highlands for 15 years, Kaylee learnt a thing or two about what it means to really listen, and understanding people's problems with kindness and care. Those are the skills she now brings to Telstra's customer call team, working from her new home in Hervey Bay.

It's a little bit back-to-the-future for Kaylee, who worked for Telstra in the '90s as part of the directory assistance team in Hobart.

Liz is answering your calls when she's not playing for our national rugby team!

Or perhaps you'll speak to Liz — that's if she's not touring with the Australian Women's Wallaroos rugby union team. Like many of our team, Liz works flexibly to fit with her national rugby duties — and recently celebrated her 25th cap with the Wallaroos. She's been with us for two years, and loves helping fellow Maroons' supporters (and all rugby fanatics).

When Telstra customers call and speak to Liz in Brisbane, what they might not realise is they are talking to Australia's most capped female rugby player. Liz Patu, 32, earnt her 25th Test cap this year when the Wallaroos took on Japan in May, and is currently training with the national rugby union team for the World Cup in New Zealand later this year. She's able to do all this with the flexibility of her full-time job in Telstra's small business call team. Liz joined Telstra two years ago and works her schedule around training and Wallaroos tours.

Making the right changes for you

Transforming our retail store network, by buying back all stores to Telstra ownership, was the other key milestone of our customer experience strategy.

Having full control of our store network means we can offer a more consistent customer experience across our retail business. It also provides a foundation for us to maintain our focus on responsible business, and make sure we do the best by our customers.

Kevin Hemlall joined the Telstra family after working as a licensee store manager

"When me and my team at the Robina, Qld store first heard Telstra Licensee Stores were being transitioned back to Telstra, we were a bit apprehensive about the change ahead.

Much to my delight, the actual experience of moving across has meant I've been trusted to deliver, while also having increased access to real-time systems and support. This is one of the best parts about being in-house — the real-time support we get is quite different to when I was in a licensee store. We're now able to reach out to subject matter experts and senior managers for assistance and guidance in the moment.

Being part of a retail group that has rapidly expanded in a short period of time is creating a lot of change, but also a lot of opportunity. I'm excited to see what the future holds as the channel continues to grow and develop."

These changes were all part of our T22 strategy, designed to make life better for our customers. Now that we have completed T22, our new T25 strategy will build on the work we've already done and continue to improve the way we serve you.

Outcomes achieved 2020-2021

Telstra's FY21 Accessibility Action Plan

In 2020, we launched our FY21 Accessibility Action Plan, covering the period 2020-2021, in which we undertook commitments grouped into three strategic pillars:

- **Our customers**
- **Our candidates**
- **Our colleagues**

We are proud to have achieved 24 of our 27 commitments from our FY21 Accessibility Action Plan.

We know there's more work to be done from our FY21 plan. We will continue to progress our work on the below incomplete actions:

1. Develop internal processes for delivering key customer communications in AUSLAN. This was paused in 2020 during the pandemic and we are working towards delivering accessible communications in the actions in this plan.

2. Deliver Governance and ICT Accessibility Framework. This is actively in progress, and we expect to finalise the framework in FY23.

3. Develop product compliance guidelines for sourcing of software and hardware. We have addressed this gap with internal accessible procurement goals as part of this Action Plan.

Case study 6
Disability stakeholder forum re-established

Telstra has had a long tradition of engaging directly with disability sector stakeholders in Australia. The Telstra Disability Forum was established in 1999 and continued until 2013. A renewed commitment to the stakeholder forum was published in Telstra's FY21 Accessibility Action Plan and the forum was revived to beheld bi-annually.

The 2022 forum was used to consult on the creation of this Action plan. We would like to thank the organisations for their feedback and continued engagement on matters of importance to the sector.

For customers
Our aim was to improve digital accessibility, improve product accessibility, and provide a more inclusive customer experience.

Case study 7
User testing program

Telstra Digital's hands-on user testing program for people with disability involves 'live testing' of various aspects of the My Telstra app on a multitude of platforms and devices.

Diversity of experiences is key and involves people who are blind or have low vision, participants with mobility and dexterity challenges, and others with a variety of neurodiverse conditions. There are people who spend little time online, and others who connect every hour, using a variety of assistive technologies. And there are people of all ages, genders, jobs and backgrounds.

The program has continued on since its pilot in 2021, and demonstrated a step towards inclusive design principles and incorporating real customer experiences into the product development journey.

For candidates
Our aim was to uphold an accessible and inclusive recruitment process and increase the diversity of skills and experience amongst our candidates.

Case study 8
Neurodiverse hiring program

Our FY21 Action Plan committed to the delivery of a neurodiversity recruitment pilot program in partnership with Specialisterne, an international agency that supports inclusive recruitment and workplace practices. We recruited six employees through non-traditional approaches suited to autistic and other neurodiverse peoples.

When our Network and Service Orchestration team was looking for a new software developer, 34-year-old Dave Morrissey was the perfect fit. As well as being a highly-qualified programmer with a deep knowledge of APIs, operating systems, and all manner of code, he came with a list of 'passion projects' that really impressed the recruiters. Thes included developing remote access protocols for a multitude of apps, maintaining a diagramming system with a programmer in South Korea, even teaching himself to speak Japanese and Chinese through his own handwriting-recognition software.

The only challenge? Dave had done all these tasks on his home PC, because he'd never been able to secure a full-time job.

Twenty years ago, Dave might have been stuck at home, his ingenious mind never shared beyond family and close friends. But today, thanks to progressive recruitment practices that specifically target neurodiverse recruits, companies are increasingly connecting with people like Dave, and creating the conditions to provide work that is suitable, comfortable, and incredibly fruitful.

"In the year that Dave's worked for us, he's done everything from reviewing and cleaning code, to documenting processes, creating dashboards, and building a retrieval tool that's revolutionised transcript searches in our contact centres," says Sharon Kavanagh, a chapter lead in the Network and Service Orchestration team. "Dave's easy to get along with, his attention to detail is amazing, and his knowledge of technology blows my mind. It's really astonishing that he's never worked before."

More information on the program can be found at Brilliant minds find room to thrive through a new approach to hiring - Telstra Exchange

For colleagues
Our aim was for a more accessible and inclusive employee experience, to provide tools to support greater accessibility in the workplace, and to leverage accessibility best practice.

Case study 9
Work from home toolkit

During the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic we were forced to adapt our ways of working to a more hybrid approach. Now and moving forward, what matters most is flexibility, paired with the right technology, tools and property plans, to support the way we work.

In the past two years we refined our hybrid working habits, ensuring that our employees can work in the ways that are best for them. This means flexible, safe, geographically dispersed work with digital or physical tools and spaces that are tailored to roles, technology needs, and preferences of the individual.

In a landmark report *Busting the productivity myth: Hybrid working in Australia*[8], we found that working hybrid boosts the economy, and benefits businesses and employees. Further, working hybrid can deliver gains to people with disability, people in remote or regional communities, and people with carer responsibilities by opening up employment opportunities for people regardless of their personal circumstances.

However, working remotely may also be a barrier to people with disability who may not have the tools to support communicating remotely. To help ease the transition, employees with workplace adjustments were offered work from home toolkits early during the pandemic. Additionally, our workplace adjustments accommodate assistive technologies used to communicate remotely and provide a comfortable work from home setup.

We also refreshed our flexible work policy, to support 'location agnostic' and 'hybrid' working models which we have continued post pandemic. This has shown to remove some of the barriers to the workforce for not just people with disability, but also those with carer obligations, from regional or remote locations, or even those who are older.

Read more at Telstra-Hybrid-Working-Report

8   https://www.telstra.com.au/exchange/hybrid-working-busting-the-productivity-myth

Benchmarking with the Australian Network on Disability

As part of our FY21 Accessibility Action Plan we committed to complete the Australian Network on Disability's Access and Inclusion Index to establish baseline metrics against which we can measure progress. It is important to understand how our policies, procedures and practices are accessible and inclusive, or where we have room to grow.

The Access and Inclusion Index scored 10 key areas with each section weighted based on the importance and impact of progressing access and inclusion for people with disability.

We are proud to have placed within the top 10 organisations who completed the Index.

We achieved our highest scores in the areas of Commitment, Innovation, Recruitment and Selection, Communications and Marketing, and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Our lowest scoring areas were premises, suppliers and partners. The Australian Network on Disability provided a comprehensive assessment and recommendations for us to review as an organisation. These recommendations, especially those in our lowest scoring areas, are addressed in this Action Plan.

Case study 10
best in class for innovation – Australian Network on Disability Awards

We are proud to have taken away the best-in-class award for the area of innovation at the Australian Network on Disability's 2022 Inaugural Disability Confidence Awards. The awards recognise an organisation's dedication in disability inclusion and celebrates the impacts that we are making towards a more equitable future.

The innovation award relates to how we continuously seek ways to influence and shape organisational policy and practice to increase the employment of people with disability. Innovative practices not only benefit your organisation but contribute to a ripple effect in achieving our vision of a disability confident Australia.

The Australian Network on Disability acknowledged our neurodiversity recruitment program, flexible working practices, mental health support services, and the disability stakeholder forum, as contributing to the award.

Message from Corene Strauss – Chief Executive Officer at the Australian Network on Disability

A big congratulations to Telstra for finalising their eighth (8th) Accessibility Action Plan FY23 — FY25. As Gold members of the Australian Network on Disability, we are proud of the long-term commitment that Telstra continues to make to ensure their organisation is accessible and inclusive for people with disability. The Australian Network on Disability is a not-for-profit organisation focused on advancing the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business. We support our members and clients to welcome people with disability as employees, customers, and suppliers.

This year we were delighted to welcome Telstra into our inaugural Access and Inclusion Plan Master Class to support the team with the knowledge, skills and resources to develop an Access and Inclusion Plan. Telstra are no strangers to developing Access and Inclusion Plans and joined our classes to ensure that they remain aligned to best practice in the development of Access and Inclusion Plans and hear from other organisations on the journey. We thank Telstra for presenting their final Accessibility Action Plan FY23-25 at the celebration event to inspire other organisations to follow suit.

Telstra have a powerful role to play in ensuring that people with disability are welcomed in their day-to-day operations and empowered to be social and economic contributors to society.

To monitor progress, Telstra participated in the 2021 Access and Inclusion Index and scored in the Top 10 of those participating organisations as well as receiving the award of Best in Class for Innovation.

I applaud the success of Telstra as a recognised Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR) as well as their commitment of ensuring that people with disability were consulted as part of the development of the Accessibility Action Plan, living and breathing the ethos of 'nothing about us, without us'. Australian Network on Disability looks forward to supporting the implementation of this Accessibility Action Plan.

Corene Strauss
CEO, Australian Network on Disability

Message of support from TelstrAbility

TelstrAbility is Telstra's employee representative group (ERG) for our employees with disability and their allies. TelstrAbility are a team of passionate Telstra employees supporting a culture and workplace where accessibility and disability is normalised, and everyone feels they belong.

TelstrAbility have been involved in the consultation process of this accessibility and inclusion action plan, and support the initiatives presented.

"Nothing about us without us"
We have consulted people with disability in the creation of this plan.

"Accessibility is about equal access for all people. Through increasing awareness and engagement, I strive to make this the norm, not the nice to have"

Brady March
TelstrAbility co-lead, Accessibility Engagement Senior Specialist

"I believe that technology should be available to everyone equally and it is all our responsibility to create accessible experiences, not for those with a disability to find a work around. When we get this right it removes barriers to communication and interaction and empowers social participation and independence."

Ben Pintos-Oliver
TelstrAbility co-lead, Digital Systems Management Principal

Case study 11
Our Employee Representative Group

Supporting and including all employees in the workplace is important for our employees, our customers and the community. We want to create an environment for everyone where we celebrate diversity and inclusion, and where acceptance is the norm, not the exception.

We have many Employee Representative Groups (ERGs) at Telstra, one of which is TelstrAbility. TelstrAbility are a team of passionate Telstra employees supporting a culture and workplace where accessibility and disability is normalised, and everyone feels they belong.

Over the past two years, the membership of TelstrAbility has nearly tripled as more employees have experienced the benefits of openly discussing their disabilities with managers and colleagues. Now at 130 members, the community continues to grow.

The cultural change has been supported from the top, with Group Executive Michael Ackland stepping up as sponsor of the ERG and several other executives loudly championing the need for greater accessibility across both the company's workforce and operations.

One of these is Alex Badenoch, Group Executive for Communications and People, whose own hearing impairment has amplified her empathy for people who live and work with a disability. In November, Alex spoke to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, where she publicly committed Telstra to greater efforts in recruiting and supporting people with disability.

"It's always been important for companies like ours to provide a safe place where people with a disability can raise issues and feel connected, and I'm sure this has become more important during COVID, when many of us have been feeling more isolated or disconnected," says Alex. "It's critical that at Telstra we have communities that people can feel connected to and reach out to for support.

"Employee representative groups like TelstrAbility help to ensure that people who have lived experiences or are passionate can actively get involved and lead change at Telstra."

TelstrAbility share their experiences to advocate for greater accessibility across the business. They support recruitment programs for employees and graduates with disabilities, helped to promote accessibility awareness campaigns, advised staff on WCAG guidelines, established user testing with people with disability, and run immersive experience labs with colleagues.

Each year on International Day for People with Disabilities, members share their stories. This year the format was answering a series of interesting and confronting questions about some of the challenges and biases they face each day.

TelstrAbility were consulted in the creation of this Action plan. We thank them for taking the time to engage with the process.

You can read more and watch the video at Including-people-with-disability-benefits-everyone.

Case study 12
Accessible Tech Experience Lab

Accessibility has become a specialised subject at conferences and diversity events around the world, but for thousands of Australians who live with a disability, it's simply common sense. — you cannot design accessible products and services without the advice of those who will use them.

For members of TelstrAbility, the opening of a pop-up 'Accessible Tech Experience Lab' on May 19th, Global Accessibility Awareness Day, marked a vital acknowledgement of the importance of 'asking the person' in any process that aims to promote truly inclusive design.

"We never assume how people take their coffee, but always ask them how they want it," says Brady March, the ERG's co-lead, who guided the group's contribution to Telstra's first accessibility lab. "Yet when it comes to the type of support that people with disabilities

may need — which varies hugely between people and situations — we often assume that we know exactly how to support them."

"We do training on inclusive writing, documentation, recruitment and workplace adaptations, but we're yet to help our people know what it's like to be a person with a particular disability trying to use our services," points out Telstra's GM of Digital Systems and Accessibility, Ben Pintos-Oliver. "The Experience Lab is a way of providing this kind of facility in-house, so you'll always be able to ask an expert if you want to know how accessible your product or service really is."

Ben is confident that providing a simulated experience could make a significant difference in how deeply a developer or designer thinks about accessibility. "If you tell someone about your disability, they might have a 40 per cent chance of retaining that knowledge. If you show them, it might be 60 per cent. But if you get them to actually do it, to touch it and live it, even if only for a short time, that experience will hopefully stay with them."

The Accessible Tech Experience Lab is one of the most positive changes at Telstra in recent years, designed as it is to put the owners and developers of accessible products and technology directly into the lives of those who will be using them.

Since the beginning of the year, six ERG members worked alongside Telstra's technicians to develop a pop-up version of the lab, with 4 to 5 'experience spaces' offering online tasks that simulate the challenges facing people with specific disabilities, the roadblocks they encounter, and the assistive technology they might use. Designers and developers were able to experience these challenges and frustrations firsthand, before chatting with experts — the ERG specialists — about the best ways of overcoming them.

"The simulations are very specific, representing a particular challenge that someone with a specific disability, say glaucoma or macular degeneration, has navigating a web page or a mobile app," explains Brady March. "It's very much an introduction to these disabilities but serves as a foundation on which a tech professional can ask questions about specific features, to help make them more accessible to that audience.

"This is not a sideshow or a one-off experience — it's the beginning of a long journey that will help people with a genuine desire to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges that specific users have using their technologies."

Read full article at Hands-on-lab-helps-digital-creators-get-advice-from-accessibility-experts

Our actions

Our FY23-FY25 Accessibility Action plan is a three-year strategy to inclusion and equitable access to overcome barriers that prevent full social and economic participation for people with disability. It aligns with our T25 strategic objectives and contributes to our responsible business goals. Our aspiration for accessibility at Telstra is to enable all Australians to enjoy a more connected and accessible future so that everyone can be included and thrive.

Lyndall Stoyles endorsement

For Telstra, doing business responsibly means doing the right thing — for our customers, our people and the communities in which we operate.

It is vital that we deliver the right outcomes that our customers with disability want and need, along with ensuring that accessibility is included in our strategic objectives.

Being inclusive means embracing people with disability and creating the right environment which values the diverse perspective they bring.

I'm proud that this action plan includes a strong suite of actions that reflect the role Telstra plays in creating a more sustainable and inclusive world.

Our customers

The first pillar of our T25 strategy is to deliver an exceptional customer experience you can count on.

Commitment	Action	Delivery Year	Business Unit
Provide a seamless inclusive customer experience for ALL	Ensure our identification requirements are inclusive for people with disability	FY23	C&SB
	Review and improve the service model for customers with accessibility needs	FY23-FY25	C&SB
Enhance frontline team member capability to improve our ability to serve customers with disability	Review customer facing staff training with disability sector organisations, with added focus on customers with accessibility needs	FY23	C&SB
	Develop a webpage that provides all disability services information, processes, and contacts, in one hub	FY23	C&SB, SEAL

Our customers (continued)

Support people with disability to connect and live independently with accessible telecommunications and assistive technology	Align our Disability Equipment Program, Disability Enquiry Hotline, and Digital Skills program, under our accessible telecommunications program	FY23-FY25	P&T, C&SB, GBS, SEAL
	Review the current product catalogue of the Disability Equipment Program and identify opportunities for new and emerging assistive technology	FY23	P&T, SEAL
Produce and promote a training module to build digital skills and literacy on accessible telecommunications features	Deliver workshops of the module through our Tech Savvy Senior's program	FY23	SEAL
	Make the module publicly available to be delivered by disability and community service providers	FY23	SEAL

Our products and services

We want to be digital leaders, and our T25 strategy works towards this.

Commitment	Action	Delivery Year	Business Unit
Develop a consistent approach to addressing accessibility requirements in procurement practices in line with AS EN 301 549	Embed evidence-based accessibility questions into our procurement tools and documents	FY23	GBS
	Develop a procurement accessibility compliance process flow	FY23	GBS, SEAL
	Develop partnerships with critical vendors to improve the Accessibility of their products for our customers and employees	FY23-FY25	GBS, C&SB
Experience test our products and services with people with disability and share this back to the business	Expand our inclusive research and user testing program to more stages of our products and services development lifecycle	FY24	C&SB
	Deliver TelstrAbility's immersive pop-up Accessible Tech Experience Labs to frontline staff	FY23-FY25	C&SB
	Scale Telstra's Inclusive Tech lab to build awareness and skills back into company and beyond	FY23-FY25	C&SB
Deliver accessible communications that include and can be experienced by ALL	All TC&P internal and investor relations communications are accessible	FY23	TC&P

Embed accessibility in our marketing approach and assets	All digital marketing communications are accessible	FY23-FY24	C&SB
	All retail signage and wayfinding are accessible in stores	FY23-FY24	C&SB
Deliver an accessible brand that includes and can be experienced by ALL	Develop our brand guidelines with accessibility best practice	FY23	C&SB
	Deliver brand guides and assets to empower our content creators to develop accessible artefacts	FY24	C&SB

Our digital products and services

Commitment	Action	Delivery Year	Business Unit
Ensure our core assets are accessible so our customers can engage and thrive in our digital experiences	Ensure our core digital assets maintain a heightened level of accessibility in line with the latest WCAG standards	FY23-FY25	C&SB
	All new critical customer facing documents are accessible	FY23	C&SB
	Inherit the latest international standards into our accessibility policies and ways of working	FY23-FY25	C&SB
Increase digital accessibility awareness, competence, and tools, to build a skilled community	Develop a baseline of disability confidence for Telstra employees and upskill key practitioners to create best practices for accessibility	FY23-FY25	C&SB
	All new reusable patterns and components are accessible to WCAG AA standard	FY23	C&SB

Our employees

Pillar four of our T25 strategy is to be the place you want to work.

Commitment	Action	Delivery Year	Business Unit
Employee workspace refurbishment and new design will be accessible and inclusive, in consultation with employees with disability and external consultants	Engagement with people with disability and our TelstrAbility ERG from the design phase for all new workspace builds	FY23-FY25	GBS
	Deliver a roadmap to embedding the features of Design for Dignity guidelines for all new workspace builds	FY23	GBS
	Refresh accessibility training so that the skills are maintained by the premises team	FY24	GBS
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Disability recruitment	Increase our representation of Telstra's graduate cohort to include people who identify as living with disability from 10% to 12% by commencement in 2025	FY23-FY25	TCP / GBS

Our employees (continued)

	Accelerate people living with disability through the recruitment process by progressing 100% of all shortlisted candidates who disclose a disability to an interview with the hiring manager (Interview guarantee for people with disability)	FY23-FY25	TCP
	Provide employment opportunities for people with disability through our Supported Workforce Program	FY23-FY25	GBS
	Advertise job vacancies effectively, to reach candidates with disability by partnering with disability recruitment agencies	FY24	TCP/GBS
	Promote reasonable adjustments to ALL candidates throughout the different stages of their recruitment process, including adjustments from the application phase	FY23 -25	GBS
	Retain Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR) status through the Australian Network on Disability	FY23-FY25	TCP / GBS
	Ensure the Telstra Careers website meets WCAG to the latest accessibility standards of the day	FY23-FY25	GBS
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Disability retention and professional development	Refresh career conversation practices and processes to include flexibility and adjustment conversations in performance managing and reviews for people with disability	FY25	TCP, SEAL
	Gather richer data in relation to representation of people with disability across the employment lifecycle and monitoring employee experience using our employee surveying platforms	FY23	TCP
	Remove accessibility barriers in our internal 'ways of working' tools and systems	FY23-FY25	TCP / GBS
Develop a company wide accessibility champion network	Develop an accessibility council to drive a strategic approach to accessibility across the business	FY23	C&SB, SEAL
	Launch our new governance tool (the Telstra Accessibility Maturity Model (TAMM) to measure Accessibility as a companywide program	FY23-FY25	C&SB, SEAL
	Appoint accessibility champions at the executive level across all relevant business areas	FY25	C&SB, SEAL

Alex Badenoch Accessibility Champion endorsement

Alex Badenoch is our Group Executive for Transformation, Communications, and People at Telstra. She leads our T25 pillar "be the place you want to work" and delivers on its key priorities with a focus on transforming the way employees work.

I am passionate about inclusion because there is no doubt that any community, business, or team, is only stronger when all members are represented and importantly have a voice. Divergence of views and experience help us find the best answers and help us innovate.

More broadly, as a company, we want to ensure that our people are not only representative of the customers we serve, but that we actively strive to create opportunities for all members of our community to participate in our workplace. It is a joy to be able to have a voice to advocate for this within Telstra and beyond.

As Telstra's Disability Champion I commit to advocating for the inclusion of people with disability in our workplace, products, services, and experiences. I will elevate the voices of our employees, listen to, and support them. I will speak publicly on our accessibility journey and progress, along with supporting the execution of this action plan.

Accessibility at Belong

Message from Jana our Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

We've always been serious about giving more Australians the tools to belong in today's digital world, and our inclusive attitude has attracted talented, likeminded people to our business. Our approach to continuous improvement includes lifting accessibility standards as new innovations become available. So not only do we consider inclusion in our products, we build it into the way we take those products to market. For Belong, considering diverse needs is hard-baked into the way we show up.

At Belong, we aim to make our world a more inclusive place. That's why we're dedicated to making our websites, apps and products accessible, so that our internet and mobile services can be used by as many people as possible.

Our commitment

- Accessibility is a key part of what Belong is all about.
- From our web designers to our support teams, everyone at Belong is responsible for creating accessible solutions.
- Accessibility requirements are central to the way we create our products.

- When we're deciding which companies to partner with, accessibility is a key consideration.
- We regularly check our products to make sure they're meeting accessibility standards.
- We give regular accessibility training to our people.
- We design with the needs of people with disability in mind.
- We include audio descriptions on all our video content.

The standard we stand by

Across all our digital products, we're working to meet level AA of the updated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2, which is scheduled to be released in December of 2022. These guidelines are the international standard for making the web accessible to people using assistive technology, such as screen readers. And while we're aiming to meet level AA, we're reaching higher wherever we can. We've invested in creating our own testing frameworks, to make sure we're constantly picking up issues and being as accessible as possible.

At Belong, we are constantly improving the accessibility of our website by adding, updating and improving features. You can read about our plans on the Accessibility and Inclusion page on the Belong website.

Governance and reporting

We have embedded these commitments in our Agile planning processes and aligned the achievements to our T25 strategy.

Progress on actions within this plan are monitored by Telstra's Sustainability Centre of Excellence along with a steering committee comprised of representatives for each of our strategic pillars. Updates on the plan will be provided up to Board level during the Diversity and Inclusion Council meetings and CEO customer forum.

We have implemented internal progress checks and Cross-Company Accessibility Council meetings using the Telstra Accessibility Maturity Model (TAMM). These meetings have executive level representation to ensure that accessibility receives the appropriate level of attention in leadership discussions. These forums occur quarterly.

We report publicly on progress in our annual Telstra Sustainability Report and in subsequent Accessibility Action Plans. This Action plan has been lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

We commit to completing the Access and Index at the end of FY25 to further measure our improvement as an organisation.

More information

We encourage organisations and individuals to provide feedback on this Plan and other Telstra accessibility matters by emailing us at AccessibilityAndInclusion@team.telstra.com

For information on our Disability Products and Services please visit telstra.com.au/aboutus/community-environment/community-programs/disability