

**PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARKS  
ACCESSIBILTY ACTION PLAN 2021-2025**

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# **1. MESSAGE FROM CEO, Catherine Basterfield**

Phillip Island Nature Parks is committed to being an inclusive organisation that values equity, diversity, and fairness for our staff, volunteers, visitors, partners, and our community.

Our Accessibility Vision is to provide a range of accessible and inclusive ecotourism experiences and employment opportunities, and support the growth of accessible tourism and our community, believing that diversity brings strength to our outcomes.

The comprehensive and integrated actions in the Accessibility Action Plan 2021-2025 (AAP) lay a solid foundation for the Nature Parks as we engage our staff, our volunteers, and members of our local community to support and challenge us as we strive to build and embed accessibility and inclusion into all aspects of our organisation.

We are committed to the implementation of the AAP and its associated actions including: incorporating recruitment, and personal and professional development initiatives to provide dignified and accessible workplaces; conducting accessibility audits of our reserves, beaches and attractions with recommendations and actions to implement; further developing our social procurement practices; providing accessible information and promoting inclusion through our communications channels; reviewing and designing products to ensure accessibility and inclusion for our visitors; creation of a steering committee to actively support, review and report on our actions.

We believe that through the development of effective policies, infrastructure, services and products, Phillip Island Nature Parks will be recognised as an attractive workplace, an inclusive destination, and an advocate for accessible and inclusive tourism for people of all abilities.

## **2.INTRODUCTION**

Phillip Island Nature Parks (the Nature Parks) is a unique conservation organisation that provides ecotourism experiences on Phillip Island (*Milowl*). We acknowledge that the Crown Land we are privileged to manage forms part of the traditional lands of the Bunurong People who know the Island as *Milowl*. We also recognise that the Land, Waters and Sea are of spiritual, cultural, and

economic importance to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We are an organisation committed to recognition and reconciliation.

The Nature Parks was created by the State Government in 1996 for the conservation of areas of natural interest, beauty, of scientific, historic or archaeological interest. Since this time Phillip Island's (*Millowl's*) wildlife and environment have flourished.

We manage an important iconic attraction for Victoria and Australia. The visitor experience across our Island home offers unique opportunities to interact with nature, culture, and wildlife. This experience includes four main visitor attractions: the world-renowned Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Reserve, Churchill Island, and the Antarctic Journey at the Nobbies Centre. Each allows memorable experiences that bring our visitors closer to the natural and cultural environment and the Island's unique wildlife and to inspire action for conservation.

Linking our attractions is a network of reserves and beaches where visitors can wander along spectacular trails, boardwalks and viewing platforms to encounter wildlife and enjoy stunning views and wild, wide-open spaces.

Our model of funding conservation through quality tourism and education experiences is the key to our success, enabling us to invest in programs to ensure Phillip Island's (*Millowl's*) landscape,

habitats and wildlife are protected for future generations.

These sites, experiences, and opportunities continue to be developed, and have been established to foster a connection between people and the natural environment to further the Nature Parks vision of *protecting nature for wildlife and inspiring people to act*.

This Accessibility Action Plan 2021-25 shares our commitment and strategy for providing functional, and equitable access to all our attractions, reserves, beaches, and workspaces through the development of effective policies, infrastructure, services, and visitor experiences inclusive of all people.

### **3. WHAT IS DISABILTY**

Under Victorian law disability is:

- the total or partial loss of a body part or a body function (such as mobility, sight, or hearing)
- disfigurement
- mental health disorders
- learning difficulties.’ (*Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission*)

Many people may have a disability at some point in their life, this can be temporary for some, and for others it may be for their lifetime. Disability is not always visible. Mental illness and mental health problems are one of the greatest causes of disability, reduced quality of life and productivity. Disability may also be seen as any restriction, limitation, or impairment which limits everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last for at least six months.

Currently it is estimated that 4.4 million people in Australia have a disability, this is 1 in 6 people. (*Australian Bureau of Statistics: Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018*)

Of people with disability:

- 1 in 4 (23%) have a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition, including:
  - 6.5% with intellectual and developmental disorders (including autism)
  - 3.8% with mood affective disorders, such as depression
  - 2.7% with dementia or Alzheimer disease
- 1 in 3 (32%) have severe or profound disability
- 1 in 3 (30%) need help with health care

‘How people with disability participate in society is influenced by factors such as the level of their disability, the availability of services and the accessibility of their environment, and by

community attitudes and discrimination.’ (*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: People with disability in Australia 2020*)

## **4. THE NEED FOR ACCESSIBLE ECO-TOURISM**

People living with disability are a significant part of the tourism industry and our community. As a major contributor to the Victorian tourism industry, it is our responsibility as an organisation to provide a dignified experience for all visitors and employees at the Nature Parks.

As part of the Victorian Public Sector (VPS) it is a legislative requirement that the Nature Parks has an Accessibility Action Plan (AAP). Under Section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, it has been established for the purpose of:

- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services, and facilities
- Reducing barriers to persons with disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminates against a person with disability.

The Nature Parks will report on the AAP in their annual report, providing evidence of activities and outcomes.

## **5. A SNAPSHOT OF THE NATURE PARKS**

The AAP is a living strategy that will continue to evolve as the organisation grows with its understanding, opportunity, and infrastructure. This is the first of many plans, with each plan identifying suitable actions to provide and enhance dignified access to all elements of the Nature Parks.

Continuous improvement of the AAP will be strategized and developed with the guidance from the AAP steering committee.

To date, the Nature Parks has:

- Developed the Penguin Parade Visitor Centre building to exceed the needs of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), including a changing places facility with a height-adjustable adult-sized change table, a constant-charging ceiling track hoist system, a centrally located peninsula toilet, circulation spaces, an automatic door with a clear opening of 950 mm, and a privacy screen.

- Supported all paid staff and visitor experience volunteers with Disability Awareness and Sensory Training. As of 4 November 2021, 79% of staff had completed Sensory Training with KultureCity and 83% had completed Disability Awareness Training with William Angliss.
- Created and shared an online Access Key at Churchill Island and the Nobbies Centre, which undergoes annual review.
- Used Alt Text in imagery, captions on videos, and Capital Case for hashtags on our social media platforms.
- Churchill Island Playground conceptual development has considered accessibility and designed appropriately.
- Track mapping with GIS tools has begun, identifying width, surface, and condition of Nature Parks tracks and trails.
- The Nobbies Centre provides hearing impairment devices to support visitors, found at the information desk.
- We offer flexible working arrangements to all staff.

## **6. OUR ACCESSIBILITY VISION**

To provide a range of accessible eco-tourism experiences and employment opportunities, supporting the growth of accessible tourism and our local community.

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

For this proposed AAP to be finalised, the identified actions and strategies found below need to be developed further with an authorised accessibility consultant in collaboration with people with a disability, endorsed by the Human Rights Commission, and supported by an ongoing review and monitoring process of a dedicated steering committee.

## **8. OUR PEOPLE**

### **8.1 Our Commitment**

Aim: We commit to align ourselves to access and inclusion best practise

**Reference:** 8.1A  
**Action:** We are committed to creating a designated steering committee. This committee will be active and influential at all levels, and is responsible for supporting, monitoring, and reporting on the implementation of the AAP.  
**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations  
**Timeframe:** August 2022

**Reference:** 8.1B  
**Action:** We commit to integrating the AAP into our business planning and reporting frameworks.  
**Accountability:** Executive Managers  
**Timeframe:** June 2022

**Reference:** 8.1C  
**Action:** We commit to sharing all AAP reports with the CEO, Board and Employees.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee  
**Timeframe:** June 2022

**Reference:** 8.1D  
**Action:** We commit to publishing our AAP on our website in accessible formats.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee  
**Timeframe:** October 2022

**Reference:** 8.1E  
**Action:** We commit to reviewing the AAP annually so that it remains relevant to the business and visitor needs, and appropriate to current legislation.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee  
**Timeframe:** June 2022 – ongoing

**Reference:** 8.1F  
**Action:** We commit to undertaking an audit and to seek funding opportunities to deliver recommended modifications.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee, Executive Managers  
**Timeframe:** June 2024

**Reference:** 8.1G  
**Action:** We will continue to investigate opportunities to receive grants/ funding to support the enhancement of accessibility within the Nature Parks, and Gippsland Tourism industry.  
**Accountability:** Grant Specialist  
**Timeframe:** September 2024

## **8.2 Professional and business development**

**Aim:** To enhance our professional knowledge, business understanding and confidence in accessible tourism

**Reference:** 8.2A  
**Action:** We have aligned ourselves to the DDA and AHRC guidelines in all appropriate policies and procedures and meet disability and inclusivity requirements. These guidelines are clearly reflected in our decision-making processes and standard operating procedures.  
Steering committee to support the identification of the appropriate policies.

**Accountability:** Steering Committee

**Timeframe:** June 2024

**Reference:** 8.2B

**Action:** We commit to 100% completion of Disability Awareness and Sensory Training across the Tourism Operations workforce.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, General Manager Tourism Operations

**Timeframe:** June 2022

**Reference:** 8.2C

**Action:** We commit to 100% staff completion of Disability Awareness and Sensory Training across the remainder of the organisation.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team

**Timeframe:** December 2023

**Reference:** 8.2D

**Action:** We have joined the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership Group (GATPG) + other suitable organisations e.g., BCSC  
**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations  
**Timeframe:** June 2022

**Reference:** 8.2E  
**Action:** All visitor facing and leadership staff are confident in the use of and can access all supportive resources available at each attraction, reserve, and beach.  
**Accountability:** Commercial Manager, Visitor Experience Manager  
**Timeframe:** March 2022

**Reference:** 8.2F  
**Action:** We regularly include accessibility in our department meetings to discuss opportunities and challenges.  
**Accountability:** All people leaders  
**Timeframe:** June 2022

### **8.3 Recruitment, onboarding, and workplace adjustments**

Aim: We commit to enhancing and providing a dignified, accessible workplace for all staff

**Reference:** 8.3A

**Action:** We have consulted with a disability employment specialist to enhance the Nature Parks ability to employ people with a disability.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, Steering Committee

**Timeframe:** June 2023

**Reference:** 8.3B

**Action:** We have created and shared the diversity and inclusion framework/ policy.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team

**Timeframe:** June 2023

**Reference:** 8.3C  
**Action:** We have developed and implemented a special measures procedure, found within the Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This will help the Nature Parks make the necessary adjustments to work environments and procedures to ensure equal access.  
**Accountability:** People & Culture Team  
**Timeframe:** December 2023

**Reference:** 8.3D  
**Action:** We have created and implemented a special measures procedure. This procedure will help the Nature Parks take action to address genuine equality for disadvantaged groups by treating people differently in specific situations.  
**Accountability:** People & Culture Team  
**Timeframe:** December 2023

**Reference:** 8.3E  
**Action:** We commit to encouraging people with a disability to apply for positions using identified inclusion and targeted recruiting.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, Recruiting Team Leaders

**Timeframe:** December 2023

**Reference:** 8.3F

**Action:** We provide all job advertisements and related materials in accessible formats.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, Digital Marketing Executive

**Timeframe:** December 2023

**Reference:** 8.3G

**Action:** We commit to actively considering flexible working arrangements, and make every effort to accommodate achievable changes within staff roles.

**Accountability:** People Leaders

**Timeframe:** In Progress

**Reference:** 8.3H

**Action:** We have developed a dignified onboarding process for staff and volunteers, including people with a disability.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, Volunteers Coordinator, All Executive Managers

**Timeframe:** March 2023 (Volunteers)  
December 2023 (Staff)

**Reference:** 8.3I

**Action:** We commit to increasing organisational disability confidence by providing Disability Awareness Training (DAT) and Sensory Training to all staff through our induction process.

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team, All Executive Managers

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Reference:** 8.3J

**Action:** We conduct surveys, collect feedback, review data to gauge attitudes and employee experience related to disability for both staff and volunteers E.g., People matters, exit interview

**Accountability:** People & Culture Team

**Timeframe:** Completed 2021, occurs every two years, ongoing

## 8.4 Contractors and procurement

Aim: To share our commitment to accessibility and inclusion through our procurement practices.

**Reference:** 8.4A

**Action:** We will commit to complying with our Social Procurement Framework which will actively seek opportunities to partner and align with organisations that actively support or promote to provide opportunities to those disadvantaged, this would include those with accessibility limitations.

**Accountability:** Major Projects & Planning Manager, General Manager Tourism Operations, Chief Financial Officer, Conservation Manager

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Reference:** 8.4B

**Action:** Our contractor induction program is amended to highlight the Nature Parks ongoing commitment to accessibility.

**Accountability:** Facilities Manager

**Timeframe:** March 2023

## 9. OUR VISITORS

### 9.1 Premises – Attractions, reserves and beaches

Aim: We commit to enhancing all our premises to be inclusive and accessible

**Reference:** 9.1A

**Action:** We ensure new buildings and design upgrades, and modifications are in line with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements and reflect universal design.

**Accountability:** Facilities Manager, Major Projects & Planning Manager, Visitor Experience Manager

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Reference:** 9.1B

**Action:** We systematically review all our site (attractions, reserves, and beaches) buildings and inventory to ensure ongoing compliance with accessibility guidelines and legislation.

**Accountability:** Facilities Manager, Conservation Manager, Commercial Manager

**Timeframe:** June 2025 initial, ongoing every two years

**Reference:** 9.1C  
**Action:** We have undertaken a review of all Nature Parks beach access and have identified areas of improvement with suitable actions to implement.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee, Conservation Manager  
**Timeframe:** June 2024

**Reference:** 9.1D  
**Action:** We have conducted an audit of all trails/ tracks on Nature Parks land, accessing the width, condition, and surface type of each. From this we will review the learnings and propose suitable actions.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee, GIS Mapping Project Lead  
**Timeframe:** June 2023

**Reference:** 9.1E  
**Action:** We commit to creating clearly signed quiet zone and sensory packs at each of our sites. These have been identified on our digital platforms.  
**Accountability:** Steering Committee, General Manager Tourism Operations  
**Timeframe:** March 2022

**Reference:** 9.1F  
**Action:** We have created and shared our Access Keys to our attractions.

- Nobbies (N)
- Churchill Island (CI)
- Penguin Parade (PP)
- Koala Conservation Reserve (KCR)

**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations

**Timeframe:** Currently under review.

- N- March 2022
- CI- March 2022
- PP- September 2022
- KCR- To be confirmed

**Reference:** 9.1G

**Action:** We have created/reviewed/enhanced our sensory map for each of our attractions

**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations

**Timeframe:** September 2022

**Reference:** 9.1H

**Action:** We have created an Accessibility Statement for all our attractions, beaches, and reserves.

**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations, Conservation Manager

**Timeframe:** November 2022

**Reference:** 9.1I

**Action:** We have a minimum of two, easily identified, designated accessible parking areas at each of our sites with a suitable path to the entrance.

**Accountability:** Facilities Manager

**Timeframe:** March 2022

**Reference:** 9.1J

**Action:** Our cafés, restaurants, and retail area layout meet accessibility guidelines.

**Accountability:** Hospitality Operations Manager

**Timeframe:** June 2023

- Reference:** 9.1K
- Action:** All our toilets have clear identification signs including raised tactile and Braille information. There is a unisex accessible toilet close to other toilets and have been identified on our website.
- Accountability:** Facilities Manager
- Timeframe:** March 2024
- 
- Reference:** 9.1L
- Action:** We commit to reviewing our emergency evacuation procedure to ensure we meet the needs of people with a disability.
- Accountability:** OH&S Coordinator
- Timeframe:** Underway, complete by March 2022

## 9.2 Media and Communications

Aim: We commit to providing accessible information and promoting accessibility across all communication channels.

**Reference:** 9.2A  
**Action:** We have reviewed and recommended actions/ modifications to our organisations style guide in line with the accessible communication guidelines and brand story.  
**Accountability:** Marketing & Communications Manager  
**Timeframe:** June 2023

**Reference:** 9.2B  
**Action:** All new, and existing information is available in accessible formats.  
**Accountability:** Marketing & Communications Manager  
**Timeframe:** June 2023

**Reference:** 9.2C  
**Action:** Our website is accessible, and meets the AA standards of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)  
**Accountability:** Senior Information Technology (IT) Lead, Digital Marketing Executive  
**Timeframe:** June 2023

- Reference:** 9.2D  
**Action:** We have created an accessibility tab on our website, offering easily change text size, zoom feature, font style, and colour contrast. Like seen here: <https://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/>  
**Accountability:** Senior Information Technology (IT) Lead, Digital Marketing Executive  
**Timeframe:** June 2023
- Reference:** 9.2E  
**Action:** We have the booking functionality to identify accessibility requirements when booking a visit to our sites.  
**Accountability:** Commercial Manager, Senior Information Technology (IT) Lead  
**Timeframe:** September 2022
- Reference:** 9.2F  
**Action:** We use inclusive imagery and video footage to promote the Nature Parks experiences and destinations.  
**Accountability:** Marketing & Communications Manager  
**Timeframe:** June 2023

- Reference:** 9.2G
- Action:** We provide audio options (such as adobe reader) for main bodies of text, use Alt Text features on our social media platforms, and footage that has captions or script.
- Accountability:** Senior Information Technology (IT) Lead, Digital Marketing Executive
- Timeframe:** Alt text, and captions are active- ongoing
- 
- Reference:** 9.2H
- Action:** We will include accessibility information in our brochures, website, and keep the local Visitor Information Centre up to date.
- Accountability:** Marketing & Communications Manager
- Timeframe:** June 2022
- 
- Reference:** 9.2I
- Action:** We will promote our contact number on our website and printed materials.
- Accountability:** Digital Marketing Executive
- Timeframe:** June 2023
- 
- Reference:** 9.2J

**Action:** We will explore technology that offers captions, audio guide and sign language for our stand talks and tours at the Penguin Parade.

**Accountability:** Visitor Experience Manager

**Timeframe:** June 2025

## 9.3 Products, events, and experiences

Aim: To provide accessible products, services, and a dignified customer experience.

**Reference:** 9.3A

**Action:** We will review our current products and experiences (general viewing and premium) and identify accessibility opportunities and gaps against the Disability Discrimination Act.

**Accountability:** Visitor Experience Manager

**Timeframe:** March 2023

**Reference:** 9.3B

**Action:** Our product proposal development template includes consideration to accessibility.

**Accountability:** General Manager Tourism Operations

**Timeframe:** September 2023

**Reference:** 9.3C

**Action:** We have developed a procedure for individuals and groups (schools and public) that have identified accessibility requirements when visiting.

**Accountability:** Visitor Experience Manager

**Timeframe:** September 2023

**Reference:** 9.3D

**Action:** All public and sponsored events are accessible, inclusive, and reflect the Accessible Event Guidelines.

**Accountability:** Events Coordinator

**Timeframe:** September 2022

**Reference:** 9.3E

**Action:** We promote feedback in different ways: including email, survey monkey, social media, face to face, and TripAdvisor. We review this data frequently and make appropriate changes.

**Accountability:** Visitor Experience Manager

**Timeframe:** March 2022

## **10. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, FRAMEWORK, AND REFERENCE MATERIAL**

### **Accessible Events Guidelines**

<https://www.and.org.au/pages/event-checklist.html>

### **Advocacy Consultants**

<http://www.daru.org.au/organisations>

### **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare- People with Disability in Australia**

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia-2020-in-brief/contents/about-people-with-disability-in-australia-2020-in-brief>

## **Cowes Mobility Map**

<https://d2n3eh1td3vwdm.cloudfront.net/general-downloads/Social-and-Community-Planning/Cowes-Mobility-Map-June-2020.pdf>

## **Disability (Access to Premises- Buildings) Standards 2010**

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2010L00668>

## **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)**

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/brief-guide-disability-discrimination-act>

## **Equal Opportunity Act**

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/equal-opportunity-act-2010/021>

## **Mobility Mapping**

<https://www.disabilityaccessconsultants.com.au/mobility-maps/>

## **National Disability Strategy**

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/national-disability-strategy-2010-2020>

## **National Public Toilet Map**

<https://toiletmap.gov.au/6456#>

## **Social Procurement Framework**

<https://djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/overview/tenders-quotes-contracts/social-procurement-framework#:~:text=Social%20procurement%20is%20when%20organisations,are%20achieved%2C%20through%20procurement%20activities>

## **The Centre for Universal Design**

<https://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/>

## **The Tourism Victoria Accessible Tourism Resource Kit**

<https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/tourism-industry-resources/accessible-tourism>

## **Tourism Victoria's Accessible Tourism Plan**

<https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/tourism-industry-resources/accessible-tourism>

## **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**

<https://humanrights.vic.gov.au/>

## **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>