



**The Brotherhood
of St. Laurence**

Disability Action Plan

2022–2023

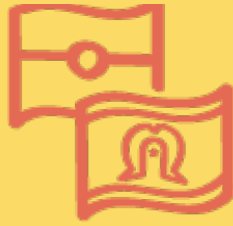


Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Acknowledgement of Country	3
Message from BSL’s Executive Director	4
Co-Author of BSL’s Disability Action Plan	5
Our Aim.....	6
Introduction and Background.....	7
Our Strategic Plan.....	8
Definitions	8
Brotherhood of St. Laurence’s Disability Action Plan.....	10
Context	10
Consultation	10
The Pillars of BSL’s Plan	11
Our People	12
Our Systems and Processes	13
Our Environment	15
Our Culture	17
Governance and Reporting	19
Contact Us.....	20
Acknowledgements.....	21
Bibliography	22



Acknowledgement of Country

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the many lands on which our employees and volunteers live and work.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to the many diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who live, work and contribute to the culture of their communities.

Message from BSL's Executive Director

I am delighted to write this message in support of the inaugural Disability Action Plan (DAP) for the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL). Our DAP sets out BSL's long-term commitment to access and inclusion, and our proposed actions for people with disability in 2022-2023.

Our DAP is a foundational document that aims to develop policies, procedures and structures that will set BSL on a trajectory towards becoming a leader in access and inclusion. As an organisation dedicated to upholding the universality of human rights and the inherent dignity of the individual, pursuing the values of access and inclusion is central to what we do. Doing this well is essential to achieving our vision of an Australia free of poverty.

As BSL's new Executive Director, I want to stress my commitment to diversity, access and inclusion. I am conscious of the need to uphold these values in my leadership of BSL. Embedding social justice values like equity, access, participation and diversity will underpin our DAP's success. Just as importantly, they will help BSL to realise our ambitions as a social justice organisation and provide greater support and advocacy for those in our community who face disadvantage.

I believe becoming a truly innovative, collaborative, dynamic and impactful organisation depends on our ability to become a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Our workforce needs to reflect the beautiful diversity of our community. This diversity needs to be evident and celebrated at all levels of BSL, including representation within BSL's leadership.

The inaugural DAP is intended to be a living document that evolves over time as we achieve its goals and grow BSL's impact. By following the DAP, we can show BSL living our values and growing our capability to achieve lasting change. I look forward to watching the DAP in action and want to thank Joshua Morgan, Louise Beaumont and Susan Hall for their leadership in making it happen.



Travers McLeod
Executive Director, BSL

Co-Author of BSL's Disability Action Plan

I have been working at BSL for over three years. My first role at BSL was as a NDIS Local Area Coordinator and I enjoyed working with participants. My current role as the Diversity and Inclusion Lead is aimed at creating organisation wide change within BSL. My focus is on identifying what BSL is doing well, what we can do better and how we can lead in this space.

I am a blind person who has experienced significant barriers throughout my life owing to discriminatory attitudes and inaccessible systems and structures. I bring to my role this lived experience and expertise in access and inclusion. This gives me an extensive breadth of knowledge that cannot be learned in university degrees or employment experience.

Coming to BSL, I found my team both inclusive and welcoming. This was important for me as this is not always the response I have faced in new jobs. This does not mean that everyone in my team was an expert in access and inclusion. However, they were always wanting to learn and assist when systems or processes were inaccessible with my use of a screen reader.

I have found some individuals have not been as inclusive or accommodating. There has been some pushback and hesitancy in examining their work practices and culture. However, I have found that the support I have had from BSL leadership, with both advocacy and accessibility, has shown a real and demonstrative effort to make BSL a diverse and inclusive organisation.



Joshua Morgan

BSL's Diversity and Inclusion Lead

Our Aim

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence must live the ideals of social justice. We must not exclude any person from BSL while humbly serving our community's needs. We aim to embody the values of modern Australia within everything we do.

Our Purpose and Mission

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence's purpose as a social justice organisation is to work alongside people experiencing disadvantage to address the fundamental causes of poverty in Australia. We believe no one should live in poverty, and our mission is to pursue lasting change, to create a more compassionate and just society where everyone can thrive.

Our Values

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence holds the values of diversity and inclusion as non-negotiable and are strongly committed to building a diverse and inclusive organisation. The development of a Disability Action Plan is at the forefront of this commitment. This action plan is aimed at embedding an attitudinal change in how we value access and inclusion, with the adoption of these key principles:

- BSL practices the principle of universal design in the development of all projects.
- BSL aims to be an employer of choice for people with disability and believes that a diverse and inclusive workforce is beneficial for all.
- BSL holds that digital and physical accessibility is a Human Right.
- BSL aims to have inclusive practices and attitudes ingrained throughout our culture.
- BSL provides leadership to our community to build a more inclusive and accessible society.

Introduction and Background

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence’s (BSL) commitment is to become a world-class leader in the social, civic and economic participation of people with disability throughout our organisation. Whether that be our employees, volunteers, business partners or the people we serve in the community, our commitment is unwavering. In our approach we utilise an intersectional lens, recognising that people are complex with varied backgrounds, experiences, and identities. When we understand that these aspects intersect and can compound to create further disadvantage, we understand the necessity of prioritising groups experiencing multiple marginalisation.

By addressing issues that affect these groups, we can ultimately elicit greater inclusion and diversity within our workforce. Working to address root causes of marginalisation benefits those already experiencing disadvantage, while endeavouring to prevent more people from experiencing exclusion or discrimination.

BSL aims to build upon the standards outlined in the Australia’s Disability Strategy. “The Strategy’s vision is for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community”.¹ To fulfil this vision, we commit to supporting our community to drive societal change towards a more accessible and inclusive Australia.

1 in 5 Australians have a disability and most people will develop a disability at some stage in their lives.² The value and knowledge that people with disability bring to our community is boundless and it is the goal of BSL to promote, develop and learn from their experiences. The perspectives and lived experience of people with disability have historically been undervalued and changing this will be a foundational aspect of BSL’s approach to access and inclusion. It has been shown that implementing access and inclusion principles not only assists people with disability, but everyone in our society. Through challenging previous assumptions regarding disability, we can ensure that we use best practice in our organisation’s work, culture, policy, and environment. This allows for a greater diversity in our organisation as we become more inclusive. BSL holds it as true that access and inclusion is everyone’s responsibility, and that this societal transformation will require courage, strength and commitment.

¹ Department of Social Services, *Australia’s Disability Strategy*, (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, December 2021), p.5, <<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11/1786-australias-disability.pdf>>.

² “Disability statistics,” Australian Network on Disability, retrieved 17th May 2022, <<https://www.and.org.au/resources/disability-statistics/>>.

Our Strategic Plan

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence launched our Strategic Plan in 2019. This plan was designed to focus BSL's approach to eliminating poverty in Australia.

"Poverty is not just about a lack of money: it is also about social exclusion, a lack of wellbeing, disempowerment and a loss of dignity."³

As part of the Strategic Plan, it has been acknowledged that people with disabilities, amongst other disadvantaged communities, are at greater risk of poverty. This disadvantage has a basis in direct, indirect and systemic discrimination. Changing historic structures to facilitate a more diverse and inclusive organisation is at the centre of the BSL Strategic Plan.

To meet the goals set out in the Strategic Plan we will need to address issues of access and inclusion at BSL. Therefore, this Disability Action Plan will support BSL in reviewing and updating policy, procedure, culture and intent. This DAP will build a foundation of action that will facilitate change to a more accessible and inclusive organisation.

The DAP embodies the overall direction of the Strategic Plan, but is specifically focused on these goals:

- Goal one - Inclusive services and communities for everyone.
- Goal three - Economic security for all.
- Goal four - A trusted voice nationally on poverty and disadvantage.
- Goal five - An inclusive, effective, efficient and agile organisation.

Definitions

Definition of disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines disability as:

- a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or

³ Brotherhood of St. Laurence, *2019-2023 Strategic Plan and FY20 Priority Initiatives*, (Brotherhood of St. Laurence, 2019), p.7.

g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour.⁴

And includes disability that:

- presently exists
- previously existed but no longer exists
- may exist in the future
- is imputed to a person (meaning it is thought or implied that the person has disability but does not).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) offers the following statement:

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."⁵

Social model of disability

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence recognises a definition of disability based on the UNCRPD, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Partner agreement,⁶ and Australian State and Federal legislation.⁷ The UNCRPD defines disability within the context of the social model of disability. This model of disability posits that discriminative attitudes and environmental barriers diminish the capacity of people with disability to equitably contribute and engage within social and economic life. The person's individual agency and human rights are at the centre of the Convention, which recognises that it is not the person who is disabled, but society that disables the person through social and environmental structures that lead to direct, indirect, or systemic discrimination.

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence also acknowledges and values the social model of disability, and as such, our Disability Action Plan is framed by this model. BSL's goal is to remove all cultural, physical, attitudinal and digital barriers to our organisation. This aim is aligned with our values and strategic plan.

⁴ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.) <<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339>>

⁵ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2006, United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 330, No. 4739, p.3 <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>>

⁶ "Disability: Glossary," Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, retrieved 13 June 2022, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/disability/glossary>>

⁷ *Disability Act 2006* (Vic.) <<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/06-23aa044%20authorised.pdf>>

Brotherhood of St. Laurence's Disability Action Plan

Context

BSL has been working with the Australian Network on Disability (AND) as a Gold Member since 2018, in which time we have worked on increasing our competence in the space of access and inclusion. Through this work we have participated in both a recruitment review and the AND Access and Inclusion Index, which comprehensively reviewed our competence in access and inclusion. BSL's access and inclusion status was ranked compared to other similar organisations within Australia. BSL received an overall score of 35 out of 100 and a ranking of 13 out of 24 organisations. This score falls above the typical range in comparison to other organisations that have completed their first Index, however, is still low in comparison to other organisations of our size. BSL acknowledges that key organisations in Australia are increasingly moving towards a more accessible and inclusive culture and environment. This change is motivated by the growing evidence of commercial and ethical advantage gained through adopting diversity and inclusion policies. The evidence is clear that an accessible and inclusive structure promotes good governance, efficiency, and financial growth for organisations across all sector

Consultation

BSL adopts the principle voiced by the disability community of 'nothing about us without us'. Therefore, we have utilised both internal and external consultation approaches to build the basis for this DAP. These approaches include:

- Discussions and workshopping with the Australian Network on Disability (AND) in their Access and Inclusion Master Class.
- Analysis of relevant data within our Diversity and Inclusion Survey.
- Consultation with people with disabilities through our DAP Reference Group.
- Workshops with BSL's senior management in Human Resources, Procurement, Information and Communication Technology, Facilities and Assets, and Internal Communications.

This consultation process, in combination with our Australian Network on Disability recruitment review and Access and Inclusion Index, has outlined a clear set of actions that we can deliver upon over the duration of the plan.

The Pillars of BSL's Plan

Based on the context and our consultations, this Disability Action Plan will be built upon four pillars:

Our People

This pillar refers to actions which will ensure the correct resource allocation and support structures are implemented for disability access and inclusion within the organisation.

Our Systems and Policies

This pillar refers to the actions that will codify access and inclusion into our practice within our organisational policies and procedures.

Our Environment

This pillar refers to the actions that commit to making all facilities, assets, and systems accessible and inclusive.

Our Culture

This pillar refers to actions that are aimed at creating a culturally safe, inclusive and attractive organisation for people with disability.

Our People

Aim/Objective	Action	Timing	Accountability	Success Measures
To have a trusted and engaged Disability Employee Network (DEN).	<p>Create a DEN at BSL through the process of clearly communicating with the BSL workforce about the importance and benefits of having a DEN.</p> <p>Secure an atmosphere of trust so that people with disabilities, carers, and allies feel safe to join the DEN.</p>	Launch the DEN on International Day for People with a Disability on December 3 rd , 2022.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead. Will report to the DAP Steering Committee on the progress of this action.	<p>A strong support structure for people with disability, involving sharing experiences and ongoing peer support.</p> <p>Utilising this group as an advisory and consultative network, providing insight on disability related topics and influencing projects at BSL.</p>
Formalising the Senior Disability Champion role in order to have clear and understood responsibilities for the role.	Create a position description of the Senior Disability Champion Role with clear expectations and responsibilities.	PD, role expectations and responsibilities endorsed by the ELT by the end of October and have the position filled by 3 rd of December 2022.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead. Will report to the DAP Steering Committee on the progress of this action.	A senior leader from BSL promoting, driving and maintaining the momentum of this important work from the top down.
The creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion unit.	Employ a Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to establish and oversee the	November 2022	Head of People and Culture and Director of Shared Services. The DAP Steering Committee will	A well-resourced and structured unit coordinating the work across all Diversity, Equity and

	<p>Diversity and Inclusion Unit.</p> <p>Bring the current Diversity and Inclusion Lead into the Diversity and Inclusion Unit to work on the four key diversity and inclusion portfolios: disability, First Nations, LGBTQIA+, and Multicultural communities.</p>	<p>monitor the progress of this action.</p>	<p>Inclusion portfolio areas.</p> <p>The successful implementation of all actions identified in this DAP.</p>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Our Systems and Processes

Aim/Objective	Action	Timing	Accountability	Success Measures
<p>To have a current best practice disability recruitment policy.</p>	<p>Review BSL’s Recruitment Policy to advance the employment of people with disability. This recruitment review will include our onboarding process with a focus on assistance for senior and line managers to support employees with disability. This review will be supported by the AND recruitment review.</p>	<p>21st December 2022</p>	<p>Head of People and Culture</p>	<p>Increased recruitment of people with disability at BSL.</p> <p>The prioritisation of lived experience of disability, actively ensuring anti-discriminatory hiring practices.</p> <p>Greater disability awareness and confidence within BSL, leading to greater trust in the disability community regarding BSL’s commitment to and competence</p>

				in diversity and inclusion.
To have a current best practice Workplace Adjustment Policy and procedure.	Review and update the Workplace Adjustment Policy to ensure an equitable and fair employment experience for people with disability.	21 st December 2022	Head of People and Culture	A safe and inclusive working environment for people with disability. Increased job satisfaction and job retention of employees with disability.
Aim to have all internal and external communications accessible and inclusive.	Develop an Access and Inclusion communication policy and begin to implement the policy at BSL.	To have the policy completed by 1 st February 2023 and start the implementation of the policy to ensure enough time in preparation for the following DAP.	Head of Communications	People with disability are able to access all internal and external communications from BSL.
Aim to ensure all products and services procured by BSL are accessible and inclusive.	Review and update accessibility legislative requirements in the Procurement and Contract Management Policy. Review and update Procurement and Contract Management Framework to provide accessibility guidance to	1 st February 2023. This Action is dependent on the BSL accessibility standard being developed by the digital accessibility officer.	Senior Procurement and Contract Lead	People with disability are able to access all products and services procured by BSL.

operations when purchasing goods and services.

Update BSL's tender documentation to include BSL's minimum accessibility requirements and capture provider's response.

Our Environment

Aim/Objective	Action	Timing	Accountability	Success Measures
Aim to have all ICT systems accessible and inclusive.	<p>Develop an access and inclusion implementation plan to outline what changes are required under the 'Accessibility and Usability' principle outlined in the Information and Communication Technology Strategy.</p> <p>Determine a clear ICT systems accessibility standard to be used throughout BSL.</p>	<p>To have the accessibility standard finalised by end of 2022 and the implementation plan finalised by 1st February 2023. The work outlined in the implementation plan will continue throughout the duration of the DAP and will be assessed for possible inclusion in the following DAP.</p>	Senior Manager ICT	<p>People with disability are able to access all ICT systems at BSL.</p> <p>A clear BSL standard for digital accessibility is followed, promoting accountability for digital accessibility across the organisation.</p> <p>BSL-wide digital accessibility responsibilities are followed when developing ICT systems.</p>

<p>To have a digital accessibility officer support the accessibility work at BSL.</p>	<p>Employ a digital accessibility expert to oversee and support the accessibility work at BSL.</p>	<p>To have the role filled by 30th September 2022.</p>	<p>Senior Manager ICT</p>	<p>Appropriately resourcing accessibility work within BSL, supporting the actualisation of accessible digital content and systems.</p>
<p>Aim to have all BSL facilities and assets accessible and inclusive.</p>	<p>Consult with a DDA consultant on best practice requirements for accessible facilities so that BSL has a clear understanding of its current access condition.</p>	<p>To be completed by end of September 2022.</p>	<p>Senior Manager Facilities and Assets</p>	<p>People with disability are able to access all facilities and assets at BSL.</p>
<p>To have a BSL website accessibility statement on status of current digital accessibility.</p>	<p>Identify the digital accessibility rating of the current website and communicate this on the website in an accessibility statement.</p>	<p>To be completed by 3rd December 2022.</p>	<p>Director of Marketing and Engagement</p>	<p>Our staff, volunteers, and members of the public are informed of BSL's awareness of and commitment to improving accessibility.</p> <p>Those who access the website have clear expectations about the accessibility of the website and their level of ability to use it.</p>

Our Culture

Aim/Objective	Action	Timing	Accountability	Success Measures
<p>A commitment statement on disability access and inclusion to be promoted and marketed on BSL website, recruitment and onboarding documentation.</p>	<p>Develop an access and inclusion commitment statement and communicate this on BSL's internal and external websites, promotional advertisement and on recruitment and onboarding documentation.</p>	<p>Starting in August 2022 and completed by 3rd December 2022.</p>	<p>Head of Communications</p>	<p>Effective support of BSL's goal of being a leader in access and inclusion.</p> <p>Promoting access and inclusion and building more awareness for the community.</p> <p>Normalising the idea that access and inclusion is a Human Right as we should not exclude members of our community due to disability.</p>
<p>To determine BSL's current access and inclusion competency and ranking in comparison to similar organisations.</p>	<p>BSL to complete AND's Access and Inclusion Comprehensive Index.</p>	<p>Start in March 2023, finishing at the end of June 2023.</p>	<p>Manager Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</p>	<p>Strengthening our evidence base to determine our priorities for BSL's Disability Action Plan (2023-26).</p> <p>Increased ability to track our work objectively in access and inclusion.</p> <p>A strong culture of accountability and innovation</p>

To identify and outline the key priorities for access and inclusion at BSL, in order to build the organisation's access and inclusion competence.

To develop the 2023-2026 Disability Action Plan.

To begin the process in early June 2023 with the launch on 3rd December 2023.

Manager Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

through external auditing of our access and inclusion work.

Identified priorities for ongoing and future access and inclusion work at BSL, furthering the work of this Disability Action Plan.

Governance and Reporting

The Disability Action Plan Steering Committee will oversee the implementation of the BSL Disability Action Plan 2022–2023. This includes the following responsibilities:

- Meet every 6 weeks to ensure consistent monitoring of the implementation of the actions.
- Report on a quarterly basis to the ELT on the progress of the DAP actions and measures of success. This will build a culture of accountability, engagement and continued momentum.
- Create a Terms of Reference that will outline the committee’s responsibilities to ensure accountability to the ELT.
- Accountability for overseeing and ensuring the progression and completion of all actions in the DAP.
- Support and advise the responsible managers on their progress and prompt where necessary for actions to be completed.
- Lodge BSL’s DAP with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Contact Us

Visit our website: www.bsl.org.au

Contact Joshua Morgan, Diversity and Inclusion Lead

- Phone: 0491156184
- Email: Joshua.Morgan@bsl.org.au

Acknowledgements

We firstly recognise the historical roots of the disability civil rights movement and how we advance the work of accessibility and inclusion on the foundations of their invaluable contributions.

We would also like to acknowledge the indispensable guidance provided by the Australian Network on Disability (AND) in developing this Disability Action Plan. We express our gratitude to the BSL participants of AND's Disability Action Plan Masterclass: Jason Atkinson, Kellie Alford, and Joshua Morgan. We further express our great appreciation to the Disability Action Plan Reference Group for their input and support in the development of this document.

Finally, we extend our thanks to the BSL Board and Executive Leadership Team for their full endorsement and unwavering support for this Disability Action Plan.

Bibliography

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "Disability: Glossary." Accessed 13 June 2022.

<<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/disability/glossary>>

Australian Network on Disability. "Disability statistics." Accessed 17 May 2022.

<<https://www.and.org.au/resources/disability-statistics/>>

Brotherhood of St. Laurence. *2019–2023 Strategic Plan and FY20 Priority Initiatives*. Brotherhood of St. Laurence, 2019.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006(Vic.)

<<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-06/06-43aa015%20authorised.pdf>>

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, New York, 13 December 2006, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 330, No. 4739, p.3. <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>>

Department of Social Services. *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2021. <<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11/1786-australias-disability.pdf>>

Disability Act 2006(Vic.)<<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/06-23aa044%20authorised.pdf>>

Disability Discrimination Act 1992(Cth.)<<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763>>

Equal Opportunity Act 2010(Vic.)<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/29c43705-c5ac-3ef7-9ca2-366392ee6f7e_10-16aa020%20authorised.pdf>

Fair Work Act 2009(Cth.)<<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00323>>