



Identifying accessible and inclusive employers

1. Overview

This guide provides information on how to search for and identify accessible and inclusive employers.

2. Introduction

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) prohibits unlawful discrimination against people with disability at **all** stages of the employment process. However, some people with disability may still encounter challenges in finding accessible and inclusive workplaces.

An increasing number of employers are embracing the principles of diversity and inclusion, and understand the business case for employing people with disability.

They appreciate that people with disability who work for accessible and inclusive employers are more likely to:

- have higher job satisfaction
- maximise their productivity
- remain with their employer.¹

Diversity is also a key driver of innovation, and ensures a rich range of perspectives can be drawn on when addressing problems.²

Looking for a job can be overwhelming at the best of times. The desire for a job that matches your interests, passions, skills and capabilities is universally shared. Finding that job with an accessible and inclusive employer can add another layer of complexity.



Case study

“I was perfect for the job, but I couldn’t even get into the building. Here’s why.”³

The ABC recently profiled the experiences of Australians with disability and the very real barriers they face when seeking employment. Journalist, Emma Myers, reflects on her experience here:

“Imagine you’re on your way to a job interview. You’ve already been told by your potential employer that your resumé is the best they have ever seen. The employer has every intention of giving you the job. The interview is just a formality.

But, when you arrive for the interview, you find yourself unable to enter the building. Because of this, no matter how perfect you are for the position, you won’t get the job. This is exactly what happened to me last month. All because I use a wheelchair.”⁴



3. Identifying accessible and inclusive employers

It can be difficult to know where to start when looking for an employer that is both accessible and inclusive. Spending some time researching employers when you begin your job search can be helpful. There are a number of indicators that an employer provides an accessible and inclusive workplace.

These include:

- the physical accessibility and location of the organisation
- their organisational values
- the employment of other people with disability
- whether they have a Disability Action Plan or other form of Accessibility and Inclusion Plan
- the nature of the recruitment process
- the presence of a Disability Employee Network.

3.1 Physical accessibility and location of the organisation

Most of us have a general expectation that buildings and offices will be physically accessible to wheelchair users or people with low-mobility. However, for a number of reasons, this is still not the case.

If you are interested in working for a particular business or organisation, it can be useful to use a search function like the street-view tool in Google Maps to see whether the building entrance looks accessible and whether it is close to public transport or parking facilities.

This kind of research does have its limits. It is unlikely during your initial research phase that you will be able to ascertain whether the internal layout of an office is accessible or includes features like lifts and an accessible bathroom. However, the following indicators can give you a further idea as to the level of commitment an organisation has towards being accessible and inclusive.

If you are assessing accessibility in the context of an advertised role, you could also clarify the accessibility of the location with the contact person.

3.2 Organisational values

An employer's website will often include an 'About Us' page outlining the organisation's values. An organisation that articulates a commitment to values such as inclusion, diversity, equality, accessibility and fairness is likely to provide an accessible and inclusive workplace.

A supportive workplace culture underpinned by these kinds of values is as important as physical or technological workplace accommodations.



Values in action

It is one thing for an employer to list its values on its website, and another for it to demonstrate that these values are put into action throughout the organisation.

Two ways in which an individual can quickly make an assessment of the degree to which an organisation lives its values is looking at the language and the images used in the organisation's communications.

1. Language

An organisation that is committed to diversity and inclusion will use language that is:

- inclusive
- respectful
- person-centred.

2. Images

An organisation that is committed to diversity and inclusion will use images that reflect the diversity of their community, customers and workforce.

3.3 Employment of other people with disability

Another helpful indicator to consider when identifying an accessible and inclusive employer, is whether the organisation employs other people with disability. This can be one of the strongest indicators that an organisation has established accessible and inclusive practices.

When considering this indicator it can be helpful to seek out information about relationships the organisation has with disability organisations in the community. These may include, disabled people's organisations, disability employment services or other community organisations.

3.4 Disability Action Plans and Accessibility and Inclusion Plans

While not compulsory, many organisations choose to develop Disability Action Plans⁵ or Accessibility and Inclusion Plans, which outline future action, as well as the support and resources provided to make their workplace more accessible and inclusive, and to prevent unlawful discrimination.

These Plans may be available on the organisation's website, or may be listed on the Register of Disability Action Plans which is available on the Australian Human Rights Commission website here: humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/register-disability-discrimination-act-action-plans.

Sometimes a Disability Action Plan or Accessibility and Inclusion Plan will be incorporated into an organisation's plan concerning diversity and inclusion.

3.5 Welcoming and inclusive recruitment processes

Some **job advertisements** will explain that a position is open to people of all abilities and will ask applicants to note if they require reasonable workplace adjustments during the recruitment process. This demonstrates an awareness that people with disability may require support at the application stage, and a genuine desire to ensure that all people can participate equitably in the recruitment process.

Recruitment processes that are accessible for people with disability – from the position description and design, through to the means of advertisement and interview processes – demonstrate a commitment to access and inclusion. The appointment of a contact person specifically for reasonable workplace adjustments further supports this commitment.

At the **interview stage** you can also ask questions about whether the organisation has supported an employee with disability before, or facilitated any reasonable workplace adjustments in the nature of those that you may require. This can help you assess if the organisation has experience providing the necessary supports.

If an employer asks inappropriate personal questions about your disability during the recruitment process, or refuses to make reasonable workplace adjustments, this may be a sign that they are not committed to an accessible and inclusive workplace.

3.6 Disability Employee Networks

Disability Employee Networks are voluntary groups within an organisation, led by employees with disability. These networks can act as an important source of advice for organisations regarding disability-related workplace matters, as well as being a forum for peer support.

Some organisations include information about their Disability Employee Networks on their website.

Endnotes

- 1 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Employ Outside the Box: The Business Case for Employing People with Disability* (Report, November 2014) 7 <https://www.australianchamber.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/eotb_-_disability.pdf>.
- 2 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability* (Report, 2016) 50 <<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/publications/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination>>.
- 3 Emma Myers, 'I was perfect for the job, but I couldn't even get into the building. Here's why,' *ABC News* (Web page, 17 March 2021) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-17/disability-access-building-designs-workplace-employment/13245762?utm_source=abc_news_web&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_content=twitter&utm_campaign=abc_news_web>.
- 4 Emma Myers, 'I was perfect for the job, but I couldn't even get into the building. Here's why,' *ABC News* (Web page, 17 March 2021) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-17/disability-access-building-designs-workplace-employment/13245762?utm_source=abc_news_web&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_content=twitter&utm_campaign=abc_news_web>.
- 5 See Part 3 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) for the requirements for disability action plans.

© Australian Human Rights Commission 2021.

The Australian Human Rights Commission encourages the dissemination and exchange of information presented in this publication.



All material presented in this publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence, with the exception of:

- photographs and images;
- the Commission's logo, any branding or trademarks;
- content or material provided by third parties; and
- where otherwise indicated.

To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

In essence, you are free to copy, communicate and adapt the publication, as long as you attribute the Australian Human Rights Commission and abide by the other licence terms.

Please give attribution to: © Australian Human Rights Commission 2021.

Guide—Identifying accessible and inclusive employers

ISBN 978-1-925917-46-8

This publication can be found in electronic format on the Australian Human Rights Commission's IncludeAbility website at <https://www.includeability.gov.au>.

For further information about the Australian Human Rights Commission or copyright in this publication, please contact:

Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Telephone: (02) 9284 9600
Email: communications@humanrights.gov.au



This guide is part of a suite of resources developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission as part of IncludeAbility to assist:

- employers provide meaningful job opportunities to people with disability
- people with disability navigate barriers to employment.

Further resources are available at www.IncludeAbility.gov.au.