



South  
Metropolitan

*We're working for  
Western Australia.*

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# Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2022 – 2026



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## Acknowledgement to Country

We acknowledge the Whadjuk and Gnaala Karla peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands that South Metropolitan TAFE's campuses are situated upon.

We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders past and present and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today. We recognise the rich and diverse culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the valuable contribution this diversity brings to our college and country.



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## Message from the Managing Director

I am proud to present South Metropolitan TAFE's (SM TAFE) 2022 to 2026 Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP).

SM TAFE is committed to nurturing an environment where all students have equal access to the same quality of training and education outcomes. Our previous DAIP saw the college implement a number of best practice, sector leading initiatives and I look forward to seeing the efforts of the last five years strengthened through further promotion, innovative practice and a continued, proactive focus on access and equity.

I would like to thank our dedicated staff and stakeholders who have contributed to the development of our new DAIP, and who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to upholding an inclusive college culture. We all look forward to the positive outcomes of this new DAIP over the next five years.

**Terry Durant**  
Managing Director  
South Metropolitan TAFE

## Introduction

South Metropolitan TAFE's (SM TAFE) Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) for the period 2022-2026 builds on the strong foundation of access and inclusion strategies introduced and completed in the 2017-2021 five year plan. The plan is shaped by Vocational Education and Training (VET) policy within the context of the provision of quality training services in an adult education environment.

The 2017-2021 DAIP successfully accomplished some best practice firsts in the provision of support and reasonable adjustment in the Western Australian VET sector and SM TAFE was complimented by the Department of Communities for the diverse range of initiatives implemented. The Plan was also successful in promoting awareness amongst staff and students of the influence and critical nature of appropriate support provision in helping all students to be able to participate equitably.

The nature of vocational education and training is that it is focused on the development of skills and knowledge that are based on business and industry needs. In general VET is practical in nature and the aim of courses is to get students job ready. What is changing, however, is that increasingly the nature of access and inclusion in the VET sector, as in the tertiary sector in general, is evolving and opportunities are emerging for organisations to conceptualise and deliver reasonable adjustment in more creative and niched ways commensurate with business needs. The Department of Communities have recognised this evolution and adjusted their DAIP guidelines accordingly. The result has been a welcome move towards greater flexibility for agencies to create plans that better reflect their organisational priorities and more closely align with their strategic and operational objectives.

SM TAFE's Disability and Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026 reflects our commitment to building on past achievements for our students, staff and the community. This new Plan demonstrates a proactive approach to the implementation of contemporary and innovative reasonable adjustment that is reflective of our experience in observing and managing the evolving disability trends that have become evident within the vocational training environment. Specifically, the approach is student and staff-centred with a focus on driving access and inclusion for all levels of ability and removing barriers to access and inclusion.



**Student Support Services office entrance.**



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## About South Metropolitan TAFE

South Metropolitan TAFE is the primary provider of vocational education and training across the southern metropolitan region of Perth. We train thousands of students every year and engage with hundreds of businesses, playing a vital role in the economic prosperity of the state by responding to, and anticipating, changes in the needs of industry. As a government organisation, we are committed to working collaboratively to achieve the Western Australian Government's 'Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity' goal.

As one of Western Australia's most diverse training provider, SM TAFE has 12 campuses across the southern metropolitan corridor providing access and choice to students, employers and industry. We are focused on providing students with skills to enable employment and career development.

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## Student Disability Profile

In 2020, SM TAFE delivered training to 1,826 students who identified with a disability and supported 1,042 of the students with individualised Student Support Services Access Plans. The most common categories of disability reported by students were mental health (40%) followed by neurological conditions including autism and ADHD (22%). These categories have continued their upward trajectory as indicated by preliminary data for 2021.

A significant evolving trend is the co-morbidity of mental health presentations. In 2020, 54% of all registrations with Student Support Services involved co-morbidity with mental health conditions.

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## Summary of the approach, outcomes, and achievements of the 2017-2021 DAIP

The 2017-2021 DAIP was co-designed with input from staff, students with disability, SM TAFE disability contractors and affiliated agencies. A survey was developed and feedback from this informed the strategies that were included in the Plan. In addition, community members were invited to provide comment and suggestions. Significant progress was made across a range of outcomes during the period 2017-2021 particularly in quality of customer service, implementation of best practice teaching and learning strategies and the introduction of innovative programs such as the TAFE Specialist Employment program (TSEP) – the first of its kind in the WA VET sector.

The achievements of the 2017-2021 DAIP include the five key initiatives listed below. These initiatives have now become embedded in our practice and form part of SM TAFE's suite of reasonable adjustment measures which are implemented if appropriate for a student with disability.

### Introduction of support arrangements for students who are primary carers

SM TAFE's Student Support Services introduced support arrangements for students with carer responsibilities. The strategy is aligned to the recommendations outlined in the Carer Recognition Act 2010 and the associated guidelines to assist Australian Public Service agencies and Commonwealth funded providers meet their responsibilities under the Act. The recommendations include increasing recognition and awareness for the role carers play in providing daily care and support to people with disability, medical conditions, mental illness and the frail aged.

## **Introduction of the TAFE Specialist Employment Program (TSEP) – pilot program**

The TSEP pilot program was launched in February 2020 and is successfully entering its third year of operation. It continues to be run in conjunction with our partners, the National Disability Co-Ordination Officer (NDCO) Program and Disability Employment Service provider and BIZLINK. The pilot program is a free employment service based on campus at South Metropolitan TAFE and its purpose is to support students and Jobs and Skills Centre (JSC) clients with a disability or medical condition to prepare for and find employment. The program also offers on the job support if required.

## **Introduction of MS Dictate speech to text technology to assist deaf students**

With WA experiencing a significant and ongoing shortage of AUSLAN interpreters, it is increasingly challenging to secure interpreters for our deaf students. SM TAFE started utilising speech to text technology with lecturers and deaf students to ensure that students are not disadvantaged when an interpreter is not available and that they can continue to participate in the classroom. When an interpreter is not able to be present, the college continues to provide a notetaker for the student and the lecturer wears a Bluetooth headset which converts their speech to text via Microsoft Dictate. The Microsoft Dictate program was selected because students and lecturers are familiar with the Microsoft suite of products and Dictate provides a high level of transcription accuracy.

## **Introduction of web conferencing to study support**

Virtual study support sessions via web conferencing were implemented, including the capacity to link Auslan interpreters and notetakers into sessions where necessary. This strategy proved to be particularly important during with the commencement of blended delivery when students moved off campus during the 2020 COVID period. The delivery of support sessions via web conferencing worked extremely well and positive feedback was received from both students and Support Assistants. The College has continued to offer and promote web conferencing as an option for students alongside our more traditional in-person delivery. Uptake of virtual sessions is slowly increasing with some students preferring a more flexible mode of delivery.

## **Participation in cross sector VET accessibility project**

South Metropolitan TAFE staff participated in a highly successful cross sector VET accessibility project along with TAFE South Australia, TAFE Queensland, the National Disability Co-ordination Officer (NDCO) Program and the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) in late 2020. This is the College's second cross sector accessibility project and follows on from the significant success of the first project which saw the introduction of an innovative staff and lecturer resource. There has been wide uptake of this resource across the sector, and it has helped lecturers to build on existing underpinning knowledge, competencies and confidence around understanding and supporting students with a disability to participate successfully in Vocational Education and Training. This project culminated in the creation of a non-accredited professional development resource for educators to assist them in understanding their roles and responsibilities when implementing Student Support Services access plans. This resource is now included in SM TAFE's Academic Induction Program for new lecturers.



**Student Support Services Assistant supporting a student with her study on her laptop in the library.**



**Student receiving support from a Study Support Services Assistant in the classroom.**



## Challenges and learning

The starting point for the creation of the new 2022-2026 DAIP was an analysis of the challenges, learning and success achieved by the 2017-2021 DAIP. The challenges experienced with the implementation of strategies under the 2017-2021 DAIP included aging infrastructure of some campuses and the need to address access to facilities. This remains an ongoing issue. Other challenges included the need to ensure wider promotion of the DAIP and the need to accelerate transitions to easily available electronic resources across all courses and programs.

The covid-19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021 also presented challenges for the delivery of support and an opportunity to rethink best practice in this critical area. Up until then the primary mode of support delivery at SM TAFE to students had been face to face in small group settings. The need to rapidly transition to a widely accessible remote support delivery platform was an essential priority. SM TAFE staff managed this transition, although it wasn't without its trials. On reflection, overcoming this challenge has been positive on many levels and remote support availability is now a standard support options offered to students.

The pandemic also resulted in an acceleration in disclosures of mental health concerns amongst students and the challenge for SM TAFE was to find ways of supporting students particularly during lockdowns and the periods when the College was closed. These evolving situations provided opportunities for learning for SM TAFE and Student Support Services took the lead in ensuring that communications to students highlighted available support for mental health concerns.

Finally, the state-wide shortage of AUSLAN interpreters has intensified over the last 18 months and SM TAFE often struggled to obtain satisfactory service delivery for deaf students. To mitigate this situation Student Support Services researched and introduced speech to text technology to assist students and are not disadvantaged when an AUSLAN interpreter is not available. The technology has proved to be highly successful in addition to being very accessible and will continue to remain part of the menu of support options available, particularly since the shortage of experienced AUSLAN interpreters appears to be ongoing.



**Student and Student Support Services Advisor sitting at a table in a meeting.**

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# Development of our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

## Statement of intent

SM TAFE recognises that quality vocational training is for all customers and is committed to providing accessible and equitable participation opportunities for all students. We also recognise an inclusive and accessible work environment and equitable opportunities for people with disability to obtain and maintain employment as a priority.

The purpose of our new DAIP is to chart comprehensive strategies to address the seven legislated outcome areas. The planning and implementation of these strategies will be the focus of our endeavours during the forthcoming 5-year period and provide SM TAFE with a roadmap to enhance opportunities for participation in an adult training environment, systematically removing barriers to participation in study and work (for staff) over time. The chosen strategies are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and demonstrate SM TAFE's commitment to a continuous improvement strategy in terms of service delivery to students with a disability or medical condition to ensure that they have the same opportunities as other students to access information, facilities, and services.

Further, SM TAFE's commitment to the DAIP is underscored both strategically and operationally. Our strategic objectives are grounded in our strategic plan. This strategic plan 2021-2023 entitled "Skilling Western Australia for a Smart Future" outlines our obligations in terms of access to vocational education and training to vulnerable and underserved community groups. Operationally, our approach is that the application of reasonable adjustment and support is underpinned by universal design principles which extend to teaching and learning activities, resources for study and upgrades to classrooms and campuses. SMT's strategic plan reflects our commitment to "maximise access to vocational education and training for vulnerable and underserved groups." We believe that this is a key objective relating specifically to students with a disability.

## Consultation with stakeholders

In designing the 2021-2026 DAIP students, staff, family members, SM TAFE disability contractors, affiliated disability agencies and the wider community were consulted through a web-based survey. This was done in collaboration with SM TAFE's Marketing and Planning and Evaluation teams. In total 53 students, 90 staff members, 44 interested members of the public, 6 disability contractors and 9 family members contributed to the consultation.

Careful consideration was given to the questions, asking stakeholders to respond to a number of factors including access to facilities, access to information and any barriers experienced. In addition, suggestions for improvement were sought as a focus on for development of the DAIP.

To maximise reach, the survey was emailed to all students, staff, disability contractors and affiliated disability agencies. Additionally, the survey was posted on SM TAFE's Facebook page to reach the wider community. Paper based surveys were also available to cater for personal preferences and to increase accessibility.



The key findings, suggestions and actions from this consultation are summarised below:

### **Student findings:**

- 78% of students were aware the College has a DAIP.
- 75% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with Student Support Services facilitating access and inclusion.
- 68% of students reported access to buildings and facilities being good or very good. Lack of parking, elevators and inaccessible toilets were the most common concerns.
- 70% of students reported access to information being good or very good. Difficulties with navigating the website and unclear enrolment information were the most common concerns.
- 78% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with the customer service provided by administration staff.
- 80% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with the lecturing staff.
- 44% of students reported not experiencing any barriers on campus.
- 36% of Students identified 'lack of staff awareness' as the biggest barrier.
- 46% of students were not aware of the College's feedback system.
- 69% of students reported overall accessibility and inclusivity as good or very good.

### **Staff findings:**

- 73% of staff were aware the College has a DAIP.
- 52% of staff reported access to buildings and facilities being good or very good. Lack of parking, elevators and inaccessible toilets were also the most common concerns.
- 55% of staff reported access to information being good or very good. Difficulties with navigating the intranet, website and inaccessible documents were the most common concerns.
- 69% of staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the customer service received from administration staff.
- 68% of staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the lecturing staff.
- 43% of staff reported not experiencing any barriers on campus.
- Staff also identified 'lack of staff awareness' as the biggest barrier.
- 11% of staff were not aware of the College's feedback system.
- 40% of staff were not aware of the Inclusive Employment Program.
- 49% of staff reported overall accessibility and inclusivity as good or very good.

All the feedback received in this consultation has been incorporated into our strategies for the new DAIP

## Communication and promotion of SM TAFE's 2022-2026 DAIP

The 2022-2026 DAIP will be uploaded to SM TAFE's website once endorsement has been received from the College's Corporate Executive and the Department of Communities. It will also be emailed to key SM TAFE disability contractors as there is an expectation that they act in accordance with SM TAFE values and commitments. Should there be a need for any changes to be made to the Plan during the 5-year period of its term, the Department of Communities will be advised, and the changes will be noted on the website.

The plan will be communicated to students, staff, the community, key disability contractors and affiliated disability agencies in the following ways:

- A copy sent to the Department of Communities
- Available on the SM TAFE website and intranet
- Available through the staff orientation and induction program
- A link to the DAIP will be included in the information about Support Services sent to enrolled students by Marketing at the commencement of each semester as part of the "Student Journey" information.
- Link to the DAIP to be sent to all staff for their information
- Social media posts to be organised once per semester to promote the DAIP
- Hard copies/ alternative format copies to be made available upon request at Customer Service Centres.
- Email copies of the DAIP be circulated to relevant stakeholders including contractors, SM TAFE's Aboriginal Education and Employment Training Committee members and Governing Council members
- Available in the SM TAFE disability contractor induction program
- Formation of a DAIP steering committee. Committee to meet quarterly, promote the DAIP across the College and raise concerns and reduce barriers to access and inclusion as they arise.

## Governance, accountability, and reporting

SM TAFE's Managing Director has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the strategies of the DAIP are implemented. However, it is the responsibility of all staff to be informed of their responsibilities under the DAIP.

Monitoring and reporting on progress regarding implementation of the planned DAIP strategies will continue to occur by means of submission of the annual reports required by the Department of Communities. Progress also to be reported annually in SM TAFE's Annual General Report. In addition, the DAIP steering committee will meet quarterly to evaluate both the progress and the efficacy of implementation.

Feedback and suggestions for improvement are welcome at any time. The SM TAFE customer feedback process will be available for student or staff comment at any time via the website. Additionally, students will be able to provide feedback to Student Support Services or Customer Service staff at any time.

## Feedback

**Feedback can be provided by contacting Student Support Services.**

Email: [student.access@smtafe.wa.edu.au](mailto:student.access@smtafe.wa.edu.au)

Phone: 1800 001 001

Anonymous feedback can be provided online at [www.southmetrotafe.wa.edu.au/feedback](http://www.southmetrotafe.wa.edu.au/feedback)

# DAIP outcomes and strategies

## OUTCOME 1

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, South Metropolitan TAFE.

Aligned to strategic objective: Maximise access to vocational education and training for vulnerable and underserved groups.

Area(s) responsible: Student Support Services.

### Strategies for outcome 1:

1. Implement a graduated introduction of Hearing Loops at Customer Service Centres and large meeting rooms.
2. Increase DAIP promotion to students and staff.
3. Work collaboratively with and provide information and presentations to NDIS agency staff to promote knowledge and awareness of the study environment at SMTAFE and the types of support that can be provided.
4. Work collaboratively with the Portfolio Areas and Jobs and Skills Centres, as far as possible, to ensure that prospective students are aware of core skills and inherent requirements before making final course selections.
5. Conduct an audit to ensure that SMTAFE's policies and practices are inclusive of people with disability.

## OUTCOME 2

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of South Metropolitan TAFE.

Aligned to strategic objective: Maximise access to vocational education and training for vulnerable and underserved groups.

Area(s) responsible: Facilities.

### Strategies for outcome 2:

1. Implement a graduated introduction to include Braille on toilet signs.
2. Conduct an audit of safe spaces across all campuses and identify gaps where these are needed.
3. Audit the accessibility of elevators and toilets across all campuses and investigate remediation measures.
4. Audit ACROD parking compliance across all campuses.
5. Upgrade facilities (including doors, ramp access to classroom and pathways across campuses) if required should a student with a disability enrol in a course at a campus where it is found that there may be a barrier to access.



## **OUTCOME 3**

People with disability receive information from South Metropolitan TAFE in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

Aligned to strategic objective: Maximise access to vocational education and training for vulnerable and underserved groups.

Area(s) responsible: Student Support Services, Marketing, Training Services.

### **Strategies for outcome 3:**

1. Implement measures to improve digital accessibility across website, intranet, and documents on Blackboard.
2. Continue to design and create digital learning materials that meets the needs of all students and staff.
3. Improve the menu of self-service support options, particularly with regard to mental health available on the website for students.
4. Continue to work towards SMTAFE's website meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0.

## **OUTCOME 4**

People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of South Metropolitan TAFE as other people receive from the staff of South Metropolitan TAFE.

Aligned to strategic objective: Provide a seamless student experience and a contemporary learning environment.

Area(s) responsible: Learning and Development, Student Support Services, Training Services.

### **Strategies for outcome 4:**

1. Continue to provide professional development on a range of disability -related topics to upskill staff and promote awareness throughout the college.
2. Work collaboratively with the Portfolio Areas and support lecturers to understand and manage disability related matters and dynamics in the classroom.
3. Establish a DAIP Steering Committee to assist with driving the new strategies.
4. Introduction of a Wellbeing strategy to assist students adopt and maintain optimum health and wellbeing so that they can get the most out of their chosen field of study.
5. Continue to provide mental health awareness and strategies sessions for students.
6. Continue the TAFE Specialist Employment Partnership (TSEP) program.
7. Proposed introduction of a Fit for Study policy as a Duty of Care measure to support students who may be temporarily unfit for study.
8. Ensure universal design principles are adopted across the delivery of teaching and learning.
9. We will ensure SMTAFE provides an inclusive environment free from harassment and discrimination.

## **OUTCOME 5**

**People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to South Metropolitan TAFE.**

**Aligned to strategic objective: Support healthy and vibrant communities by engaging with and meeting the skilling needs of the southern metropolitan and Peel region.**

**Area(s) responsible: Planning and Evaluation, Student Support Services.**

### **Strategies for outcome 5:**

1. Improve awareness of the feedback system to students.
2. Ensure information on complaints and procedures are available in flexible accessibility formats upon request.
3. Provide support for people with disability making complaints if requested.
4. Provide support for people with a disability throughout the complaint management process.

## **OUTCOME 6**

**People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by South Metropolitan TAFE.**

**Aligned to strategic objective: Support healthy and vibrant communities by engaging with and meeting the skilling needs of the southern metropolitan and Peel region.**

**Area(s) responsible: Planning and Evaluation.**

### **Strategies for outcome 6:**

1. Ensure public consultations are accessible and inclusive.
2. Ensure SMTAFE's surveys continue to be available in different accessible formats.

## **OUTCOME 7**

**People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with South Metropolitan TAFE.**

**Aligned to strategic objective: Nurture a unified, supportive, and collaborative culture that promotes our values of innovation, agility, integrity and excellence.**

**Area responsible: Human Resources.**

### **Strategies for outcome 7:**

1. Increase awareness of the Inclusive Employment Program with staff.
2. Ensure recruitment practices are inclusive and accessible.
3. Implement flexible employment practices.
4. Seek to expand the Inclusive Employment Program to recruit additional eligible employees.
5. Seek to place more Inclusive Employment Program participants into mainstream employment roles across the organisation.

# Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 – 2026



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