

# Universal Design Policy

## CEO's foreword

The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006)* defines universal design as "the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible". In health infrastructure, universal design means creating spaces that are functional for everyone and that address physical, sensory and cognitive needs.

All of our capital projects embed universal design principles as an underlying requirement. However, we've made a commitment to exceed compliance and minimal standards to ensure universal design principles underpin all of our projects – from planning, design, and delivery.

Our universal design policy is a first for any government authority in Australia. It recognises that human ability is enabled, supported and encouraged by universally designed environments that provide everyone with the opportunity to participate unassisted or with minimal support.

The policy also includes a Universal Design Charter, part of a Victorian Government strategy to increase awareness and knowledge about universal design in the community.

It will apply to all projects delivered by VHBA, ensuring that we continue to deliver innovative and equitable social infrastructure for all Victorians.

**Robert Fiske**  
**CEO, Victorian Health Building Authority**

*"Let's face it, as designers, we often generate and evaluate ideas based on what we know. We strive to make experiences that solve needs, work well with the human body, and improve lives.*

*But here's the problem: If we use our own abilities as a baseline, we make things that are easy for some people to use, but difficult for everyone else.*

*There are 7.4 billion people in the world. Our ambition is to create health environments that are physically, cognitively, and emotionally appropriate for each of them. It starts with seeing human diversity as a resource for better designs."*

**Stefano Scalzo**  
**Executive General Manager, Planning and Development**

# 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to build the capacity of the Victorian Health Building Authority by enabling the coherent use of universal design to deliver innovative and equitable solutions in a wide range of health infrastructure.

# 2. Vision

Our vision is to:

- reinforce social equity in the health environment through the incorporation of universal design principles into all future health infrastructure and program developments in Victoria, and
- to embed universal design policy as a code of practice as opposed to a set of considerations.

# 3. Scope

The policy applies to all Department of Health employees and health service providers in the management of publicly funded health sector assets.

Health service providers comprise corporate bodies established under the following Victorian legislation:








- Secretary to the Department of Health established under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- Public entities established under the *Health Services Act 1988*
- Ambulance Victoria established under the *Ambulance Services Act*.

# 4. Policy statement

The Victorian Health Building Authority, on behalf of the Department of Health, is committed to:

- providing equitable access to health sector infrastructure for Victorian people of all abilities
- exceeding minimum standards to ensure universal design provisions be included and applied to planning schemes and delivery of health infrastructure.
- developing the capabilities of the VHBA workforce through best practice
- guidance/leadership promoting a culture of inclusion by integrating universal design principles into compliance commitments/requirements.
- delivering innovative solutions to anticipate and the needs of all end users through design and implementation of development initiatives.

## 5. Principles

	<b>Equitable use</b> The building/ process is usable by anyone. It does not disadvantage, stigmatize or privilege any group of users.
	<b>Flexibility in use</b> The building accommodates not only a wide range of individual user preferences but also users' varying functional abilities
	<b>Simple and intuitive</b> How to use the building/process is easy to understand regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or concentration level.
	<b>Perceptible information</b> The building/process communicates all necessary information effectively to all users regardless of ambient conditions or the users' varying intellectual or sensory abilities.
	<b>Tolerance for error</b> The building/ process minimises hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions by all users.
	<b>Low physical effort</b> Everyone can use the building/process efficiently, comfortably and with minimal fatigue.
	<b>Size and space appropriate for use</b> Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

## 6. Regulatory context

- *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*
- *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*
- *Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020*
- *Victorian Disability Act 2006*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy 2017-2037*
- *Statewide design, service and infrastructure plan 2017-2037*

## 7. Supporting and related content

- *Designing for Diversity (Department of Health).*

## 8. Universal design charter

This charter is the result of a collaborative effort among a group of Victorian Government professionals with experience and expertise from working theoretically and practically in the field of universal design in all departments. The charter is an initiative to be seen as part of a Victorian Government strategy to implement and gain a greater awareness and knowledge about universal design in society.

*The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006)* defines universal design as "the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible", combining a human rights perspective and a perspective for sustainable development. This charter refers to the convention in the rationales below.

The Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA) is based on a shared goal to encourage strong social cohesion. In an increasingly globalised world, both the Victorian Government and the Australian Government face the same challenges; empowerment of the elderly, increased employment, longer participation in work life, quality on health services, and inclusion of neglected structurally discriminated groups.

### Equity

Universal design builds on the concept of accessible design, going further than meeting minimum legislative standards by accommodating not just some people, but all people, to the greatest extent possible, all of the time.

### Respect

People are diverse and everybody has the same rights to access and participation in society. All people regardless of ability should have equal opportunities to take part in society. This should be taken into account by private and public entities which provide goods and services to the public.

### Participation

Universal design principles into all future infrastructure and program developments in Victoria reinforces social equity in the built environment, to achieve participation and empowerment for all. Universal design fosters societal capacity to support the development of its members, as well as resources to support interaction. To achieve participation and empowerment for all through universal design.

### Sustainability

Designs are sustainable when all users are acknowledged and recognises a range of human capabilities. Cross-sectorial and interdisciplinary work to ensures the most environmentally and economically sustainable solutions through universal design. To ensure sustainable solutions through universal design.

### Responsibility

To ensure that government takes responsibility and stimulate the development of universal design policies and strategies. Universal design is an important strategy for all kind of organisations striving to operate in a socially responsible manner.

## **Awareness**

To increase understanding of the benefits of universal design within the population. Diversity comprises acceptance and respect. It means understanding and acknowledging that everyone is unique, and that this is beneficial for the development of humanity. To raise the importance of diversity in society through universal design.

## **Collaboration**

Universal design accounts for the needs of all intended users, encouraging cross-sectorial and interdisciplinary work to ensure the most environmentally and economically sustainable solutions. User representatives should be involved in planning, design and evaluation to ensure equitable usability in the solutions developed.

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