

# AccessAbility

**ACTION PLAN | 2015–2020**



# Acknowledgement of Country

## *Wominjeka* – Welcome

'Wominjeka' means 'Welcome' in the Woiwurrung Language of the Wurundjeri People.

The Australian campuses of Swinburne University of Technology are located in Melbourne's east and outer east. The Wurundjeri People are the traditional custodians of these lands, and we respectfully acknowledge them and their Elders, past and present.

We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of lands throughout Australia where we conduct business, and their Elders, Ancestors, cultures and heritage.

## Message from the First Peoples Disability Network Australia

FPDN is the peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability and carers throughout Australia. We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, their Elders past and present, other traditional custodians and their Elders throughout Australia.

We would also like to acknowledge and congratulate Swinburne University of Technology on the vision and commitments expressed throughout the *AccessAbility Action Plan 2020*. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience high rates of disability with 50% having a disability or long-term health condition, and a very high number of carers.

Our relationship with Swinburne commenced in 2007 when many of the current FPDN leadership and Elders throughout Australia worked with the University on the landmark report *Building Culturally Secure Services for Indigenous Australians with Disability (2007)*. This report led to the establishment of our peak body alongside other key information and advice to government, including about education and employment.

We look forward to working with Swinburne and other education providers to make a real and positive difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability, and carers throughout Australia.

**Gayle Rankin**  
Chairperson

**Damian Griffis**  
CEO

# Message from the Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to introduce Swinburne's *AccessAbility* Action Plan 2015–2020.

At Swinburne we celebrate and respect the strength that difference creates. Our aspiration is to create an environment where all of our staff and students can reach their full potential.

Swinburne's *AccessAbility* Action Plan details our strategy to create a supportive, diverse and inclusive university and to be *disability confident*.

The actions described in the plan will help ensure we are a provider of choice for students and an employer of choice for staff living with disability – as well as those with carer responsibilities.

To become *disability confident* means that we:

- understand how disability affects every aspect of our University – our staff, students and visitors;
- provide support for our students and staff who are living with disability and carers;
- create an inclusive and diverse culture that provides opportunity for people living with disability; and
- make reasonable adjustments to enable individuals living with disability to access, participate and contribute on an equal basis.

I look forward to working together to make a real difference to the lives of those who are living with disability.



Professor Linda Kristjanson  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

# AccessAbility Action Plan

## Vision

Swinburne is a recognised leader in quality, accessible and inclusive education and employment for people living with disability, and carers.

## Case Studies

### **Inclusion Melbourne**

Inclusion Melbourne is a disability charity and Victoria's oldest day service for people with an intellectual disability. This project involved developing business plans for Inclusion Melbourne, a cooperative which houses a number of microbusinesses, as well as developing options of potential sharing of the range of fundraising tools and techniques across programs in order to maximise savings.

### **Interchange Inner East**

Interchange Inner East is a not for profit community organisation that provides a range of programs and services to meet the respite needs of families of children and young adults with a disability. Teams of consulting students developed an effective and cost efficient means of recruiting, supporting and retaining a community of casual respite support workers, using social media/electronic communication.

## Swinburne's AccessAbility Action Plan 2020

Swinburne's AccessAbility Action Plan (AAP) has a clear vision; with goals, actions and responsibilities to complement its realisation. Implementing our AAP in Swinburne's Australian campuses will assist us to identify and change any practices that could be discriminatory, and that might prevent staff and students living with disability, carers, and visitors to our university from learning and working with us.

Importantly, the AAP places an emphasis on developing and harnessing the ability of people living with disability and carers. The AAP respects the diversity, individual strengths and natural talent that people living with disability and carers bring to Swinburne as students, employees and visitors.

The AAP is a road map for action. Successful implementation of AAP strategies will support our commitment to being 'disability confident' – a University that provides a supportive, positive and inclusive environment for people living with disability and carers.

The AAP also provides a mechanism under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) to produce the change required to eliminate disability discrimination, direct or unintentional and indirect. Governance of the AAP will sit with a Steering Group comprising Senior Leaders within the University.



## What is disability?

The definition of disability under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* includes people experiencing physical, intellectual, medical, psychiatric, sensory, neurological, and learning disabilities, and these can be temporary or permanent, fluctuating or constant.

At Swinburne we recognise that students and staff living with disability may require adjustments in the teaching, learning and research environment and workplace that will assist in their access to and participation in education or employment. We know that we have students and staff in all areas of the University who are living, working and studying with disability.

## What is meant by the term 'carer'?

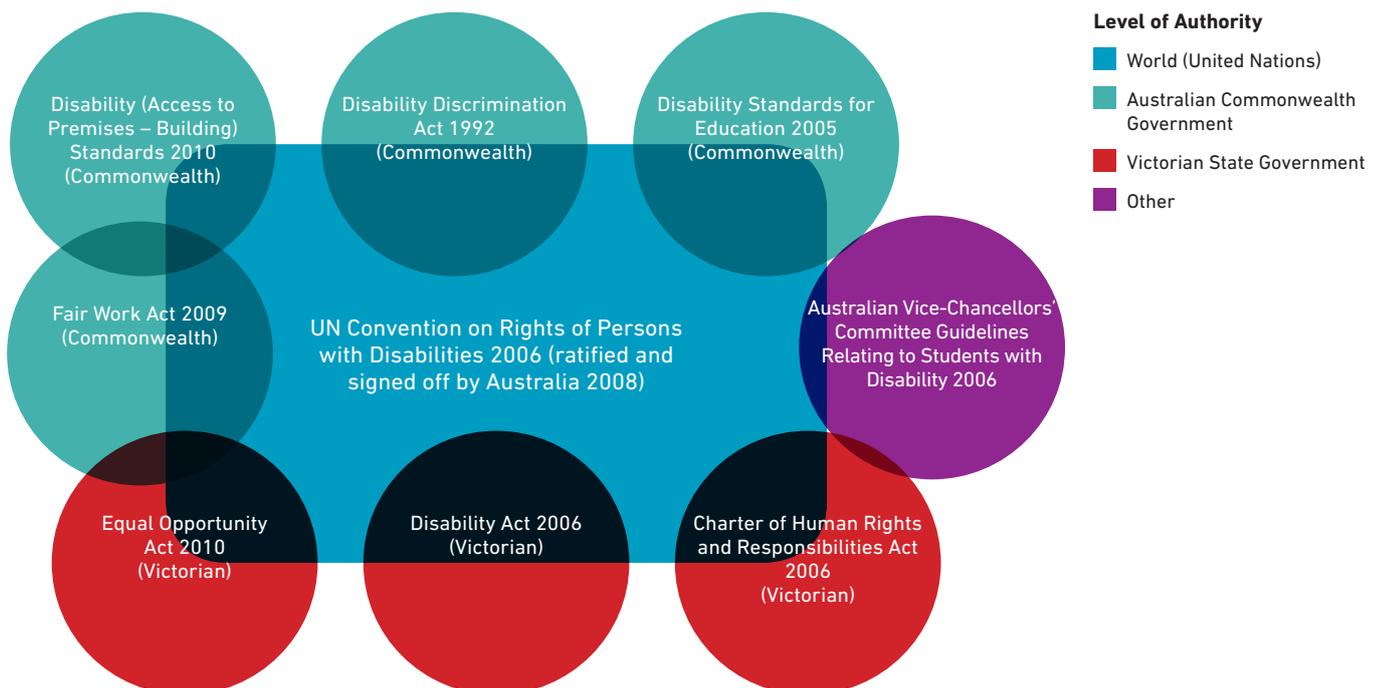
The Australian Government *Carer Recognition Act 2010* defines carers as 'people who provide personal care, support and assistance to another individual in need of support due to disability, medical condition, including terminal or chronic illness, mental illness or is frail and aged'.

## Why do we need an AccessAbility Action Plan?

At Swinburne we value the diversity of our student and staff community, including people living with disability. The development of our AAP occurred not only to ensure compliance but to encourage action to improve access to post-secondary education and employment for people living with disability and for carers. The AAP underpins the University's commitment to an accessible, inclusive and diverse study and work environment for all.

## What legislation underpins the AccessAbility Action Plan?

Specific international (United Nations), Commonwealth and Victorian legislation informs our AccessAbility Action Plan. The Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the accompanying *Disability Standards for Education 2005* require organisations to address discrimination and provide access to people living with disability. Below is a diagram of the relevant legislation with a summary of the legislation at page 14.



# Guiding Pillars

Swinburne has identified six key pillars for action in the *AccessAbility* Action Plan.

**Pillar One: Culture** – We support a positive and inclusive environment for all, including people living with disability and carers. We will actively seek contributions from students and staff living with disability when developing and implementing policy and practice guidelines. We will at all times embrace diversity and pride ourselves on providing high quality, accessible and inclusive education and employment.

**Pillar Two: Student Support and Engagement** – We will ensure that our student engagement and support services are inclusive and meet the needs of people living with disability, and carers. We will provide a range of services to Swinburne students from enrolment through to career counselling and post-qualification transition support.

**Pillar Three: Education** – We will provide inclusive and accessible educational environments, making reasonable adjustments to meet the specific needs of our students living with disability, and carers. We will promote inclusive and accessible practice across the University and actively identify and address barriers to ensure that everyone has access to education and research opportunities across our vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate program areas.

**Pillar Four: Employment and Staff Support** – We will build an inclusive and supportive culture and human resource management strategies that include best practice in the recruitment, employment and support of people living with disability, and carers. We are also committed to increasing opportunity for the employment and development of people living with disability and carers within Swinburne.

**Pillar Five: Communication and Administration** – We value diversity and will ensure that our policies, systems and processes are inclusive of people living with a disability, and carers. Our communications and administrative practices will at all times consider the needs of our students, staff and visitors living with disability, and carers.

**Pillar Six: Facilities** – We will ensure that our built environment is safe and accessible for our staff, students and visitors who live with disability.



## Pillar One: Culture

We support a positive and inclusive environment for all, including people living with disability and carers. We will actively seek contributions from students and staff living with disability when developing and implementing policy and practice guidelines. We will at all times embrace diversity and pride ourselves on providing high quality, accessible and inclusive education and employment.

Goal: Establish strong leadership and governance

| Actions   | Timeframe | Responsibility  |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1.1 Establish an AAP Steering Group as a committee of the Vice-Chancellor, to advise on all matters of relevant policy including directions for monitoring the AAP, an annual review and reporting of outcomes.   | June 2015 | Vice President, International and Students  |
| 1.2 Establish effective communication channels, including key points and champions within each academic unit or department, for cascading information relevant to the AAP throughout Swinburne.   | June 2016 | Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost with Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services, Deans, Executive Director, Pathways and Vocational Education, Director, Educational Leadership and Student Experience, Director of Learning, Swinburne Online, Head of Corporate and Government Services, and Registrar |
| 1.3 Implement an annual AAP forum that provides an opportunity for consultation and input from stakeholders, including students, staff, and representatives from Indigenous, disability and carers peak bodies, on AAP progress and other relevant information. | June 2016 | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services with Director, Human Resources  |
| 1.4 Relevant student bodies and student representatives will actively engage, support and encourage students living with a disability, and carers, including engagement in leadership and volunteering roles in the Swinburne community.                        | Ongoing   | Student Representative Council (SRC) and Swinburne Student Union (SSU)  |
| 1.5 Partner with government, industry and philanthropic stakeholders to support initiatives including research and community-based programs aimed at improving outcomes for people living with disability, and carers.  | Ongoing   | Vice President, Engagement with Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research  |
| 1.6 Swinburne's Behaviour Risk Assessment and Management Committee will lead awareness raising about the personal safety needs of students and staff living with disability, and encourage use of the Safer Communities website.                                | Dec 2015  | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services   |
| 1.7 Develop an award program to recognise outstanding achievement for students registered with Disability Services and for staff who exemplify accessible practice.   | Dec 2015  | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services   |



## Pillar Two: Student Support and Engagement

We will ensure that our student engagement and support services are inclusive and meet the needs of people living with disability, and carers. We will provide a range of services to Swinburne students from enrolment through to careers counselling and post-qualification transition support.

Goal: Provide comprehensive and inclusive support services for students living with disability and carers

| Actions   | Timeframe | Responsibility   |
|---|-----------|--|
| 2.1 Ensure that a comprehensive range of accessible student services is offered to meet the needs of students living with disability, and carers, including for employment readiness and post-qualification transition.                                     | Ongoing   | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services, and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Advancement          |
| 2.2 Develop strategies, guidelines and resources to establish paid internships and other flexible industry based learning opportunities for students living with disability, and carers, through collaboration with Swinburne Alumni and industry partners. | Dec 2016  | Vice President, Engagement with Executive Deans, Executive Director and Director, Advancement          |
| 2.3 Encourage students to access mentoring programs that can specifically match students living with disability, and carers, with mentors in fields of interest.  | Ongoing   | Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Advancement with Executive Chair, Swinburne Student Amenities Association |
| 2.4 Monitor and improve as required standards, procedures and equipment to support the inclusion of people living with disability in sports and recreation, and in the broader social life of the University across all campuses.                           | Dec 2016  | Executive Chair, Swinburne Student Amenities Association   |
| 2.5 Develop partnerships with Indigenous community led disability focused organisations and peak bodies to promote the access and inclusion of Indigenous students living with disability, and carers in education.   | Dec 2015  | Professor/Associate Professor of Indigenous Education  |
| 2.6 Develop an assessment and referral protocol for Swinburne Connect to identify and respond to the support needs of students at risk who are living with disability or with significant responsibilities as a carer.                                      | Dec 2015  | Vice President, International and Students and Director, International and Future Student Operations   |
| 2.7 Develop materials to enhance awareness of the feedback and complaints mechanisms available to students with a disability, and carers.   | Dec 2016  | University Secretariat and General Counsel   |

## Pillar Three: Education

We will provide inclusive and accessible educational environments, making reasonable adjustments to meet the specific needs of our students living with disability, and carers. We will promote inclusive and accessible practice across the University and actively identify and address barriers to ensure that everyone has access to education and research opportunities across our vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate program areas.

Goal: Provide University-wide accessible and inclusive learning, education and research practice

| Actions  | Timeframe | Responsibility   |
|--|-----------|--|
| 3.1 Ensure that eligible students living with disability, and carers, are able to negotiate and obtain reasonable adjustments when required for examination and assessment processes, and ensure that these processes are fair, valid, reliable and robust in terms of academic standards.         | Ongoing   | Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost with Executive Deans and Associate Deans, Learning Innovation (HEd), Executive Director, Pathways and Vocational Education, Director, Educational Leadership and Student Experience, Director of Learning, Swinburne Online, and Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services   |
| 3.2 Create opportunities in educational curriculum and extra-curricular activities to enhance student understanding and awareness of issues related to living with a disability, and caring.   | Ongoing   | Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost with Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Advancement, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Digital Frontiers, Executive Deans and Associate Deans, Learning Innovation (HEd), Executive Director, Pathways and Vocational Education, Director, Educational Leadership and Student Experience, Director of Learning, Swinburne Online, and Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services |
| 3.3 Develop and disseminate resources to assist academic/teaching staff in making reasonable adjustments as required.  | Ongoing   | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services  |
| 3.4 Maintain awareness of latest technological accessibility aides and showcase these, through partnership with Digital Aquarium, to students and staff living with disability.  | Ongoing   | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services with Pro Vice-Chancellor, Digital Frontiers and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Transformations  |
| 3.5 Monitor and improve as required, equipment and software for Library services and information resources for people living with disability.  | Ongoing   | Director, Information Resources and Director, Information Technology Services  |
| 3.6 Develop Accessibility Guidelines for curriculum, research and learning materials, including online and other digital learning technologies that support increased access for people living with disability, and carers, including Indigenous and other students in rural and remote locations. | Ongoing   | Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost with Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Transformations, Director, Information Resources and Director, Information Technology Services  |
| 3.7 Maintain awareness of research projects and encourage consideration of disability issues where appropriate.  | Ongoing   | Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research with Pro Vice-Chancellor, Digital Frontiers   |



## Pillar Four: Employment and Staff Support

We will build an inclusive and supportive culture and human resource management strategies that include best practice in the recruitment, employment and support of people living with disability, and carers. We are also committed to increasing opportunity for the employment and development of people living with disability and carers within Swinburne.

Goal: Be an employer of choice for people living with disability, and carers

| Actions   | Timeframe | Responsibility            |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| 4.1 Develop and implement a Swinburne AccessAbility Employment Strategy that includes innovative recruitment strategies and targets to boost the number of employees living with disability.  | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |
| 4.2 As part of the AccessAbility Employment Strategy review and adjust the existing Employee Engagement Survey tools and processes to include information about staff living with disability, and carers.   | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |
| 4.3 To ensure that we actively support people (current and future) living with disability, review current recruitment and selection processes to identify and remove any unintended barriers to recruiting potential or existing staff living with disability, and carers, including rolling out Unconscious Bias training for those engaged in these activities. | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |
| 4.4 As part of the AccessAbility Employment Strategy review staff support programs and mechanisms such as the Employee Assistance Program, to ensure that the specific needs of people living with disability, and carers, are satisfied.   | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |
| 4.5 Develop a Staff Reasonable Adjustments Procedure and support kit to assist with modifications that may be required for staff living with disability, and carers.  | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |
| 4.6 Ensure that induction programs for new staff include a general Disability Awareness module as part of equity training.  | Dec 2015  | Director, Human Resources |

## Pillar Five: Communications and Administration

We value diversity and will ensure that our policies, systems and processes are inclusive of people living with a disability, and carers. Our communications and administrative practices will at all times consider the needs of our students, staff and visitors living with disability, and carers.

Goal: Ensure University-wide inclusive and effective communications and administrative process

| Actions  | Timeframe           | Responsibility   |
|--|---------------------|--|
| 5.1 Ensure that information about the range of courses available is published in formats accessible to students living with disability.  | Dec 2015            | Head of Corporate and Government Affairs with Director, Information Resources, Associate Director, Web Services and Vice President, International and Students with Director, Marketing and Future Students  |
| 5.2 Review processes for Applications for Special Consideration, Remission of Debt, Extensions, and others that require medical documentation - to ensure that they are characterised by streamlined communications and support.   | Dec 2016            | Registrar  |
| 5.3 Undertake an interim audit of one section of the Swinburne website against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA, and thereafter undertake an Accessibility Audit of the whole Swinburne website to assess its compliance with these guidelines.                            | Dec 2014 / Dec 2016 | Director, Information Resources with Associate Director, Web Services and Registrar  |
| 5.4 Identify and meet training needs for Swinburne web editors and other relevant staff to ensure web accessibility for people living with disability.   | Dec 2015            | Director, Information Resources with Associate Director, Web Services  |
| 5.5 Establish comprehensive web/intranet content that contains all relevant information for people living with disability and carers working and/or studying with Swinburne.   | June 2016           | Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services with Director, Human Resources, Director, Information Resources and Associate Director, Web Services   |
| 5.6 Incorporate an Access and Inclusion Checklist into the Swinburne Guide to Organising Events and OH&S Risk Assessment templates for all Swinburne events, on- and off-campus, with events and marketing staff educated in regard to the needs of people living with disability, and carers. | Dec 2015            | Vice-President International and Students with Director, International and Future Students Operations and Director, Marketing and Future Students, and Vice President, Engagement, Director, Facilities and Services, and Head of Corporate and Government Affairs |
| 5.7 Ensure that people living with disability, and carers, have a regular presence in media, marketing and communications, including websites and future student materials.  | Ongoing             | Vice-President International and Students and Director, Marketing and Future Students, with Vice President, Engagement, Director, Information Resources, Associate Director, Web Services, and Head of Corporate and Government Affairs                            |
| 5.8 Review and modify Swinburne's admission and enrolment processes to ensure that they are accessible, welcoming and encouraging of people living with disability, and carers.  | Dec 2015            | Vice President, International and Students with Director, International and Future Students Operations and Registrar   |



## Pillar Six: Facilities

We will ensure that our built environment is safe and accessible for our staff, students and visitors who live with disability.

Goal: Provide accessible and safe built environments, facilities and grounds.

| Actions  | Timeframe | Responsibility                    |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 6.1 Ensure that all new building works comply with relevant legislation, ensuring access for people living with disability.  | Ongoing   | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.2 Develop a major projects work plan, subject to campus Master Plans, which will ensure that ultimately, all Swinburne buildings are physically accessible by students living with disability.   | Dec 2016  | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.3 Ensure that there are classrooms located on each campus that and have capacity to accommodate multiple staff, students and visitors using wheelchairs.   | Dec 2016  | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.4 Ensure that all refurbishments and affected areas with a Development Application or Complying Development Certificate meet the National Construction Code and accessibility requirements.  | Dec 2015  | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.5 Ensure that there is an opportunity for input from students, employees and visitors living with disability in regard to access barriers and options for them in the conduct of campus access audits, including for upgrades and refurbishments.                            | Ongoing   | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.6 Update campus accessibility information maps annually, or as changes demand, to support the needs of people living with disability, and that the maps provide clear information about wheelchair access, locations of accessible toilets, gradient and parking facilities. | Annual    | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.7 Ensure that adequate signage is in place to assist students living with disability to navigate Swinburne campuses with ease, and ensure access to security escort arrangements on request.   | Ongoing   | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.8 Collaborate with relevant stakeholders within the University and externally (including local Government authorities) to ensure that reasonable parking space and transport access is available to people living with disability across all campuses.                       | Ongoing   | Director, Facilities and Services |
| 6.9 Ensure that all Emergency Evacuation Procedures include responses to the needs of people living with disability such as those using wheelchairs, those with vision or hearing impairment, and those with intellectual disability.  | June 2015 | Director, Facilities and Services |



## Summary of relevant legislation

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is a federal law that aims to:

- Eliminate discrimination against people living with disability
- Promote community acceptance of the principle that people living with disability have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community
- Ensure, as far as practicable, that people living with disability have the same rights to equality before the law as other people in the community

The DDA prohibits unlawful discrimination against people living with disability and promotes inclusive approaches, rather than the provision of separate or 'parallel' access and services whenever possible.

### **United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006)**

Countries that have signed the Convention commit to developing and carrying out policies, laws and administrative measures for securing the rights of persons with disabilities as recognised in the Convention, and to abolish laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination (Article 4). The Convention also notes the importance of combating stereotypes and prejudices, and promoting awareness of the capabilities (the ability) of people living with disability (Article 8).

**Note:** Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability on July 17 2008. Australia was one of the first Western countries to do so.

### **Equal Opportunity Act 2010 Victoria**

The objectives of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 are to encourage the identification and elimination of discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation and their causes, and to promote and facilitate the progressive realisation of equality.

This Act includes directions to employers to make reasonable adjustments for an employee with a disability, or an individual who is offered employment.

**Australian Government's Disability Standards for Education (2005)** states the obligations of education and training providers to ensure students living with disability are able to access and participate in education and training free from discrimination, and on the same basis as other students.

**Australian Government's Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010** stipulates set performance requirements for technical specifications to ensure dignified access to, and use of, buildings for people living with disability.

**Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee Guidelines Relating to Students with Disability (2006)** provides guidelines for the university sector that can be used as benchmarks for good practice.

**Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)** governs the employment of all workers. It includes the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees and employee organisations. It also includes rights and responsibilities pertaining to employees who have a physical or mental disability, and individuals who are carers of a person under 18 years of age who has a disability.

**Acronyms**

**AAP:** Accessibility Action Plan

**Cth:** Commonwealth of Australia

**WCAG:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

**Project led by:**

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CEO, Swinburne Student Amenities Association

Anthony Gartner, Manager, Student Equity and Disability Services

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