

**Deakin University**  
**Disability**  
**Discrimination**  
**Act (1992)**  
**Action Plan**  
**2000–2001**

**Project Team**  
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# Foreword

From the Vice Chancellor.....

The Deakin University DDA Action Plan seeks to develop the services and support for people who have a disability in the university community, whether they are students, workers (staff) or visitors.

The action plan outlines current actions that can be undertaken to position us strategically towards full and meaningful establishment as an inclusive community.

I am pleased to endorse this plan as a reflection of Deakin's commitment to Equity in Teaching and Learning for all members of the university community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Wilson', is written above a solid horizontal line.

GEOFF WILSON  
VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT

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# Executive summary

The Deakin University Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan Project was undertaken in 1999. An Action Plan details current and future objectives and actions with timelines and assigned responsibility to assist an organisation to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (DDA).

A Project Team was appointed to develop the Deakin plan to:

- give direction and provide ongoing support to the development and maintenance of an inclusive environment at Deakin University for all members of the community, and particularly people who have a disability;
- give staff and students an opportunity to identify discriminatory barriers and contribute to actions/strategies to overcome these barriers; and
- demonstrate to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) the commitment of Deakin University to providing a non-discriminatory and inclusive community for people who have a disability consistent with the aims of the DDA (see next page).

An inclusive environment is one which is free of discrimination both in its facilities and practices and is an environment flexible enough to accommodate the different needs and potential of people. For example, the provision of course materials in an inclusive manner means that course materials can be made available with equal amenity in print, online, in audio or braille format etc., according to the needs of the community.

The Project Team reported to the Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee (EOAC) of the University, and the process involved an extensive period of consultation, with input from many groups and individuals within the University. The Project Team thanks all participants for their input. Many inclusive and best practices were identified, as were barriers to access.

The Action Plan, which is also available online has identified objectives, actions, and assigned responsibility and timelines in three main areas:

- the general university community;
- education; and
- employment.

The plan has been designed to be a dynamic process, which will become a part of the ongoing management framework of the University. It will be reviewed annually, and continue to respond to the changing needs of students who have a disability.

Once endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor and noted by the Deakin University Council, the plan will be lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission where it becomes a public record of Deakin's commitment to a non-discriminatory or inclusive environment.

## List of acronyms

AASD	Academic Administrative Services Division
B&G	Buildings and Grounds Division
C&SS	Campus and Student Services
CDEU	Career Development Education Unit CDEU
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DRC	Disability Resource Centre
EEO	Equity and Equal Opportunity
HEEP	Higher Education Equity Program
HODs	Heads of Divisions
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
HRSD	Human Resources Services Division
ITS	Information Technology Services
LS	Learning Services
PPRs	Performance Planning Reviews
SS	Student Services
VP (Admin)	Vice-President (Administration)

# About the Disability Discrimination Act

## What is the Disability Discrimination Act (1992)?

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The Disability Discrimination Act (1992), or DDA, is Commonwealth legislation that makes discrimination on the grounds of disability unlawful in a wide range of situations.

The DDA requires that people who have a disability be given equal opportunity to participate in the full range of economic, social, cultural and political activities that occur across society.

## Object of the DDA

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The objects of the Act are to:

- eliminate as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability in the areas of employment, accommodation, education, or access to public premises, clubs and sport; provision of goods, facilities, services and land; existing laws and administration of Commonwealth laws and programs;
- ensure that those persons who have a disability have the same rights before the law as the rest of the community; and
- promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with a disability have the same human rights as the rest of the community.

## Inclusive practices

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The DDA prescribes ‘inclusive practices’ in mainstream services rather than ‘special’ or parallel services to meet the needs of people who have a disability. This approach reflects the potential we all have to be affected by disability at some stage in our lives, and the recognition that there are many ways to enable all people to be included in their chosen activities.

Achieving a truly inclusive environment, where the needs of all people are met with no distinction, is sometimes a staged process. For example, initially a service provider may set aside a budget allocation and a procedure for meeting the needs of people who have a disability. As the mainstream service adapts to become flexible enough to cater to all needs, interim measures become unnecessary.

Planning for inclusive and flexible services can benefit everyone and, most likely, saves major expenses in the longer term. Examples of this include the accessible design of buildings, which will not only assist those using wheelchairs, but will also assist people pushing prams and trolleys. Modifications to existing facilities to allow access for people who have a

disability are generally much more expensive than building an accessible environment in the first place.

Another very topical example is the design of webpages and online materials. If we ensure that these materials are designed accessibly (e.g. with text alternatives to graphics which can then be read by text synthesisers for people who cannot read the screen) they will also assist people who use their mobile phone online and those who turn off the graphics while doing searches to speed up the process.

Sometimes a task will require some specialist input, such as consultation with Disability Resource Centre (DRC) staff, or specialist modification so that it will 'include' a person. However, it remains the responsibility of the service provider to provide a service which is inclusive of a person who has a disability.

## **What is disability discrimination?**

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Discrimination on the basis of disability means being treated less favourably and unfairly because of a disability, or being treated equally when that leads to unequal outcomes. Disability discrimination includes:

- imposing unfair terms or conditions on an activity;
- denying access to a place, activity or service;
- giving others preferential treatment;
- terminating an activity;
- discriminatory questions; and
- harassment.

Discrimination can be direct and intentional, or indirect and unintentional.

## **What does the DDA cover at Deakin University?**

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The following areas are covered:

- employment (e.g. getting a job, equal pay, training, promotion);
- education (e.g. enrolling in a school, participation in and access to a course);
- access to premises used by the public (e.g. libraries, restaurants, shops, offices);
- provision of goods, services and facilities (e.g. shops, cafes, banks, administrative services);
- accommodation (e.g. student residences);
- clubs (e.g. membership, access to facilities); and
- sport (e.g. when wanting to play or when playing a sport).

## **Exemptions to the DDA**

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Discrimination in employment-related areas is unlawful except where:

- the person cannot do the inherent requirements of the work; and/or
- the person needs adjustments/modifications that would be an unjustifiable hardship for the employer.

Discrimination in education is unlawful except where:

- the person needs adjustments that would be an unjustifiable hardship for the education provider.

## **Who does the DDA cover?**

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The DDA prohibits discrimination against a person who has a disability, and also against a person who is an associate of a person who has a disability (e.g. a spouse, relative, carer, or a person in a business, sporting or recreational relationship with a person who has a disability).

The DDA also covers being discriminated against because an assistant, interpreter, reader or a trained animal accompanies a person who has a disability, or because they use a palliative or therapeutic device or an auxiliary aid (e.g. a wheelchair or hearing aid).

Complaints of disability discrimination can be made to HREOC.

## **What is disability?**

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The definition of 'disability' used in the DDA is very broad. It includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. Disability can be permanent or temporary. It includes some conditions not usually thought of as disabilities.

Disability includes:

- Loss of physical or mental functions ( e.g. a person who has quadriplegia, a broken leg, epilepsy, brain injury or a vision or hearing impairment).
- Loss of part of the body (e.g. a person with an amputation or a woman who has had a hysterectomy).
- Infectious and non-infectious diseases and illnesses (e.g. a person with AIDS, hepatitis or a person with allergies).
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body ( e.g. a person with diabetes or asthma, or a person with a birthmark or scar).
- A condition, which means a person learns differently from other people (e.g. a person with autism, dyslexia, or an intellectual disability).
- Any condition which affects a person's thought processes, understanding of reality, emotions or judgment or which results in disturbed behaviour (e.g. a person with a mental illness, neurosis, or personality disorder).

The definition covers conditions that exist now, have existed in the past, or may exist in the future, or which are assumed of a person, for example that a man who is gay is also HIV positive.

## About Deakin University

Deakin University has approximately 70 000 students attending its various campuses, studying in the workplace, or at home. The University was awarded University of the Year for the second time in 1999 for its 'innovative and flexible approach to teaching and learning'. It follows then that Deakin should have a strong focus on providing a teaching and learning environment flexible enough to be inclusive of the needs of people who have a disability.

Established in 1974, Deakin University has six campuses: three in Melbourne, two in Geelong, and one in Warrnambool.

In addition to being a major employer itself, Deakin is the largest provider of industry and business-related education in Australia. Industry partnerships stretch through Australia, Asia, Europe and North America. Similarly, Deakin International facilitates a large number of overseas students who study at Deakin and require familiarisation with university and community facilities and processes.

Deakin University is also a community facility accessed by members of the public as visitors, conference and event participants etc.

## People who have a disability at Deakin University

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1998 established that 19 per cent of the population identify as having a disability. Most people will experience disability at some stage in their lives. The definition of disability under the DDA (as above) is broader than that used in the ABS, so it is probable that by using the DDA definition the percentage is even higher.

Deakin University is an employer of people who have a disability, an education provider to people who have a disability, and a venue and service provider for people who have a disability. Accurate statistics of staff and students who have a disability at Deakin University are currently not complete. However, it is likely that the number is significant, as it is known that the number of potential students and staff who have a disability is also significant.

At the time of writing the DDA Action Plan there are over 700 students registered with the DRC for support. There are also many more students who would be classified as having a disability under the DDA, but who choose not to register for support for a range of reasons. For many staff and students the environment may be already inclusive of their needs, others may be fearful of discrimination or have concerns regarding privacy, while others may be unaware of the supports available to them.

Staff and students are not required to disclose their disability unless they are seeking specific assistance, accommodations or workplace adjustments.

## **Why do we need a DDA Action Plan?**

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The DDA states that organisations may develop Action Plans to describe policies and strategies to ensure the active development of a non-discriminatory environment for people who have a disability. These may be lodged with HREOC.

The development of a DDA Action Plan must meet the objects of the DDA, and in so doing will benefit an organisation by:

- eliminating discrimination in an active way;
- improving services to all existing customers and attracting new customers through increased flexibility and a more accessible or inclusive environment;
- reducing the likelihood of discrimination complaints being lodged with HREOC and thus avoiding costly litigation and protecting the image of the organisation;
- increasing the likelihood of being able to successfully defend any complaints made, because an Action Plan, when lodged, can be used as a defence against discrimination complaints; and
- allowing for a planned and cost effective approach to the development of inclusive facilities and programs.

Our reasons for developing the DDA Action Plan are threefold:

- 1 to produce a plan which will give direction and provide ongoing support to the development and maintenance of an inclusive environment for all members of the community, and particularly people who have a disability, at Deakin University;
- 2 to give staff and students an opportunity to identify discriminatory barriers and contribute to identifying actions/strategies to overcome these barriers; and
- 3 to demonstrate to HREOC the University's commitment to providing a non-discriminatory and inclusive community for people who have a disability.

## **What to do if you have a concern about the treatment you receive at Deakin University**

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If you are concerned about an aspect of your involvement (as a person who has a disability, a carer, or a service provider) with Deakin University that you think may come under the DDA, there are a number of things you can do:

- contact the staff at the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) for advice;
- contact the staff of the University's Equal Opportunity Office; and/or
- contact HREOC for advice.

# Developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the DDA Action Plan

## Developing the plan

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The University appointed the Project Team to work on the Action Plan during 1999. The initial stage included a review of current literature before commencing an extensive period of consultation with the university community. The initial steps and consultation included:

- Endorsement of the project by the Vice-Chancellor.
- Establishment of reporting lines to EOAC and Access Working Group of the Building and Grounds Division (B and G).
- Establishment of day-to-day support through Student Services (SS).
- Distribution of consultation packages, including background information and questions, to prompt input.
- Consulting focus groups with executive and management teams of all faculties and divisions.
- Further consultation sessions with other staff groups.
- Consulting focus groups with students who have a disability at all campuses.
- Consulting focus groups with staff who have a disability at all campuses.
- Arranging individual meetings with students and staff who have a disability at all campuses.
- Written and email communication from distance education and other students of the University.
- Compilation of information from all meetings and focus groups, and from written submissions received from individuals and groups of the University.

Objectives were developed in three main areas: the university community, education and employment. Actions were developed for each objective as a response to input from the consultations. The objectives are broad, and it is anticipated that further actions will be identified as the university environment changes.

A draft Action Plan was developed and a further period of consultation was undertaken to refine the plan before seeking endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor, and lodgment with HREOC.

## Implementing and monitoring the Action Plan

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The DDA Action Plan forms part of the management framework of the University and, as such, it is expected that the actions identified in the plan will be carried out as noted in the plan. When it is lodged with HREOC it will become a public document and form part of our defence if a case of disability

discrimination is lodged against the University. It is vital then that the actions identified in the plan are acted upon in line with the plan. If this is not the case, the Action Plan will not be effective as a defence, and the University is at greater risk of being found to be discriminating. The individual service provider and the University as a whole can be found liable under the DDA.

Features of the DDA Action Plan:

- Each objective has a number of actions with people identified as responsible for carrying them out in a particular timeframe.
- In the online version available from the DRC web site, each Faculty or Division will be able to draw out the relevant actions for their own area from the document.
- These objectives should become a part of the Annual Plan in each Faculty or Division.
- Some actions are 'stand alone', while others will require further development at the Faculty and Division level to identify more detail for implementation at that level (e.g. developing performance indicators).
- The Heads of Divisions (HODs) and Deans will be responsible for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of actions in their own area.
- The Equity and Equal Opportunity Link Program, where link staff are identified in each area, will play a role in reporting on progress of the actions in the plan from each Faculty and Division to the Vice-Chancellor through the EOAC.

## **Reviewing and evaluating the Action Plan**

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This first DDA Action Plan forms a framework, which will be used into the future for evaluation and updating of the Action Plan for the University.

- The DDA Action Plan will be reviewed annually by a working party of the EOAC.
- The membership of this working party will include the Chair of the EOAC, representation from the Equity and Equal Opportunity Link Program, an Equal Opportunity staff member, an Access Working Group member, a DRC staff member, and other members as required.
- It will consult each year with staff and students who have a disability by using focus groups at each campus, and inviting individual submissions.
- The working party, in conjunction with staff and students who have a disability, will review the objectives of the Action Plan and identify any new barriers or barriers that still exist to an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment.
- The DDA Action Plan will sit alongside other equity plans including the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Management Plan and the Student Equity Plan.

## SECTION 1

## Providing an inclusive university community

This section looks at areas that are common to staff, students and visitors to the university. The objectives are about:

- how we are perceived as an equal opportunity provider;
- the messages we give about how inclusive we are;
- our policies and commitment to including people who have a disability; and
- the way we continue to plan for improvement.

The recently launched Institute of Disability Studies is an example of Deakin University's commitment to developing an inclusive community both within the university and in the broader community. The Institute will play a vital role in amplifying the development of inclusive practices at Deakin and elsewhere (including this Action Plan), and contributing to research and professional development relating to disability.

### Policy

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#### Objective 1: To integrate policy relating to people who have a disability into all aspects of the university

##### The current situation

Deakin University has had an Equal Opportunity policy since 1987. The Equal Opportunity policy covers discrimination in all areas and is an inclusive policy, which covers the requirements of the DDA in addition to equity requirements for other disadvantaged groups. The University monitors compliance with the Equal Opportunity policy and relevant legislative requirements through the Equity and Equal Opportunity (EEO) Unit which provides reports to EOAC and to the Vice-Chancellor. Each Faculty and Division has a 'link' member on the EOAC who facilitates the development of equity initiatives and represents their faculty or division at the EOAC. This system can be improved for people who have a disability by clearly linking the DDA Action Plan and the objectives and actions it contains into this system.

All managers at the University have a responsibility for ensuring relevant legislative requirements are met. The DDA has not commonly been as recognised or understood as other legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1985).

A Student Charter addresses equity issues for students at the university.

##### Actions

- To link relevant DDA Action Plan strategies to the Deakin University Strategic Plan including Faculty and Division annual plans.  
(*Deans and HODs—July 2000*)

- To establish a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on relevant Action Plan initiatives through the EOAC, utilising the Link People and aligning with other equity reporting requirements.  
*(Deans and HODs—July 2000)*
- To review managers' position descriptions and address issues through the Performance Planning Reviews (PPRs), as appropriate, to ensure they refer to meeting responsibilities under the DDA in addition to other human rights legislation.  
*(Deans and HODs—July 2000)*
- To contribute to a review of the Student Charter to include information on the rights and responsibilities for students in accessing and contributing to an inclusive university environment.  
*(Student Affairs Committee and EOAC representative/s—July 2000)*

## Representation

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### **Objective 2: To establish processes for ensuring the views of people who have a disability are represented in planning and decision making**

#### **The current situation**

At present there are no formal processes for seeking advice in decision making from people who have a disability. At times where the decision may have a direct impact for students or staff who have a disability, their views are sought either directly or through the staff of the DRC. The staff of the DRC will, at times, actively advocate for students who have a disability when they are aware of a decision which may impact on these students.

#### **Actions**

- Faculties and Divisions to consider and develop mechanisms for seeking input from people who have a disability in their own decision-making processes.  
*(Deans and HODs by September 2000)*
- Promotion of the role of the staff of the DRC as consultants on issues relating to students who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—continuing)*
- Development of systems within the DRC (e.g. on DRC homepage) for seeking input from students who have a disability on relevant issues.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—continuing)*

## Funding

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### **Objective 3: To clarify funding responsibilities and establish flexible funding to meet the individual needs of students**

#### **The current situation**

During the consultation stage of developing the DDA Action Plan, one of the most common requests was for clarification on the funding issues relating to providing access to people who have a disability. Under the DDA it is the responsibility of all services, and therefore budget areas, to be inclusive. At Deakin, where budgets are devolved, it is the responsibility of each area to meet the needs of students who have a disability in delivering their core services. There are many examples at Deakin University where students' needs are already being met from within the budget with no distinction being made for students who have a disability (such as the flexible customer service which Library Services provide to all students including those who have a disability). There are other examples where there is a particular allocation in the budget, such as when Academic Administrative Services Division facilitates accessible examination arrangements for students who have a disability and others in special circumstances (such as overseas students, or those in prisons). Other examples include Information Technology Services (ITS) accepting responsibility for providing adaptive technology in computer laboratories, and Learning Services (LS) taking funding responsibility for the conversion of academic materials into accessible formats.

Ideally a completely inclusive approach would mean that separate funding for students who have a disability would not exist. It is likely, however, that regardless of how inclusive and accessible our practices become, there will be individuals whose needs are so specialised they require individual modifications and support which may be difficult for one area to provide.

Major costs for students who have a disability usually fall in two areas: provision of academic support staff (such as sign interpreters and notetakers) and modifications to the physical environment.

Deakin University currently allocates a budget to the DRC for allocation to students whose academic support needs are not currently met by other areas of the university (e.g. interpreters, note-takers). Some of this is a recurrent allocation from the Office of the Vice-President (Administration), while a significant amount continues to be allocated from Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) funding.

Minor works funding (located with the Buildings and Grounds Division) has been accessed for modifications to the physical environment.

Deakin International manages a Disability Trust Fund which may be accessed to provide support for international students who have a disability.

## Actions

- Continue to maintain a central allocation of strategic funds to meet a person's assessed needs for academic access when they cannot be met under current mainstream or devolved arrangements.  
*(Office of VP (Admin) and DRC—continuing)*
- Develop procedures and guidelines for specific funding to be available to Faculties and Divisions for individual students on assessment and recommendation from DRC staff, when the cost of support falls outside the responsibility of their budget area.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- Develop procedures for annual reporting on the use of specific funds by the DRC.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit and HOD Student Life—December 2000)*
- Investigate and recommend on alternative sources of funding to replace HEEP allocation.  
*(VP (Admin) and Manager SS Access Unit—July 2000 for implementation 2001)*
- Develop a procedure for allocating funding for timely modifications to the physical environment at the commencement of the year to meet individual needs of new students.  
*(HOD B&G and Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- Develop a procedure for reporting on the use of the Disability Trust Fund for International Students who have a disability.  
*(Manager Communications Deakin International and Manager SS Access Unit—June 2000)*

## Targeting and promotion to people who have a disability

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### **Objective 4: To encourage and identify people who have a disability studying and working at Deakin University, and to ensure that those who do are aware of the inclusive policies and services available to them**

#### **The current situation**

Information on Deakin University is included in the *VTAC Guide* for students who have a disability. Information on support for students who have a disability is included in handbooks and enrolment packages and the DRC is represented at all open days and enrolment days. International students often are not able to attend general University open days and enrolments and sometimes receive separate information.

General students who have a disability are encouraged to apply for consideration of disadvantage in a special admissions scheme.

The number of Deakin University students who have a disability is published in the DETYA equity enrolment statistics. Significant discrepancies exist between these numbers, the numbers of students who are registered with the DRC for support, and population statistics which suggest that the numbers should be higher.

There are no statistics collected relating to staff who have a disability.

During the consultations for the Action Plan it was apparent that there was some confusion over the definition of disability, and many people who have a disability as defined in the DDA did not necessarily regard themselves as having a disability. Likewise, they did not see themselves as being eligible for support to meet their needs, even though they experienced hardships relating to their conditions. People who have 'hidden' disabilities, such as psychological or medical conditions, felt that supports were there mainly for staff and students with physical disabilities and were unsure about supports that could assist themselves.

### **Actions**

- To consider and develop ways of more accurately identifying numbers of students and staff at Deakin University under the definition of the DDA.  
*(EO Unit with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- To consider and develop ways of promoting the supports available at Deakin to the broader population of people who have a disability as defined under the DDA.  
*(HODs and Deans in conjunction with Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- To develop and include direct and indirect information about the inclusive environment at Deakin University in all promotional material, such as including photographs of people who have a disability in general promotional publications.  
*(HOD Marketing with Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- To develop and include direct and indirect information about the inclusive environment at Deakin University in all international student guides.  
*(Manager Communications Deakin International with Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- To identify major publications (such as handbooks and enrolment packages) to be produced and readily available in accessible formats.  
*(HOD AASD and Director Learning Services—September 2000)*
- All promotional or non-course specific material to be available in accessible formats (e.g. large print, disk, electronic, audio, braille) on request.  
*(Deans and HODs with LS by December 2000)*

- The DRC to review information and promotion to target people who are eligible for support more effectively, particularly those with hidden disabilities.  
(*Manager SS Access Unit—August 2000*)

## Physical access

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### **Objective 5: To ensure that people can get into, move around and use the facilities they need to access with equal amenity and dignity**

#### **The current situation**

Physical access to the University environment is often the first and most obvious area that needs to be addressed in developing an inclusive environment. If a person cannot get in the door, everything else we do may be wasted. Physical environment is much broader than doorways and stairs. It includes signage, furniture design and placement, lighting, access to sporting areas, hearing loops, etc.

An audit of the physical environment has been completed by the Buildings and Grounds Division at each campus and has identified actions required. The Division has also developed (in 1995) the Facilities Access Management Plan that aimed to set guidelines for addressing access for tertiary institutions under the DDA. A proactive procedure has been developed in B & G Division for checking that access requirements and universal design initiatives are incorporated in all new and refurbishment project planning.

The physical environment at each campus at Deakin has its own challenges. For example, the hills at the Melbourne Campus continue to make access one of the most difficult barriers for people who have a disability.

#### **Actions**

- Develop mechanisms for ensuring that staff working in and involved with the area of environmental design and construction are adequately trained and supported in inclusive/universal access designs and principles.  
(*HOD B & G Division—December 2000*)
- Promote the B & G Division to the University community as experts in universal and inclusive design.  
(*Marketing and HOD B & G Division—December 2000*)
- Develop an annual planning mechanism to address priorities identified in access audits, linked to funding programs.  
(*HOD B & G Division—August 2000*)
- Revise the Facilities Management Action Plan.  
(*HOD B & G Division—June 2001*)

- Develop a mechanism for compliance with the revised Facilities Action Management Plan for all works.  
*(HOD B & G Division—June 2001)*
- Develop a priority procedure for carrying out timely modifications to the physical environment at the commencement of the year to meet the individual needs of new students.  
*(HOD B & G Division and Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- Review, and revise as required, occupational health and safety policy and procedures, including evacuation procedures, considering the needs of people who have a disability. Conduct regular training on the procedures for staff.  
*(HOD Human Resources (HR) Division—September 2000)*
- All Faculties and Divisions to develop mechanisms for checking that activities (such as classes, interviews, meetings etc) are held in accessible venues where required.  
*(Deans and HODs by September 2000)*
- Develop procedures for the relocation of any classes or activities that are found to be inaccessible.  
*(HOD B&G with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- All staff responsible for room and venue bookings to develop a mechanism for advising clients of access of venues for all bookings.  
*(HOD B&G by September 2000)*
- Develop plans for the establishment of adequately sheltered disabled parking, and public transport alighting and disembarking areas at all campuses.  
*(HOD B&G by March 2001)*
- Develop procedures for ensuring that graduation ceremonies are held in accessible venues.  
*(HOD AASD—July 2000)*
- Develop plans for the provision of accessible transport by internal and external transport providers.  
*(HOD Division of Student Life—June 2000)*

## Disability awareness

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### **Objective 6: For staff and students to have a high level of awareness and confidence in working in and contributing to a university community which is inclusive of the needs and potential of people who have a disability**

#### **The current situation**

A key criterion which emerged from the focus groups was interest in and the need for ongoing information and development in disability awareness and inclusive practices. Staff expressed an interest and a wish to provide more inclusive practices, but felt they needed more information to know what that really meant. At the same time students and staff who have a disability (particularly those with 'hidden' disabilities such as psychological or medical conditions) expressed concern that their needs were not understood, to the detriment of their education or employment.

The process of consultation for the DDA Action Plan was the beginning of a very important element of this plan in developing a systematic and ongoing flow of information and collaboration throughout the University community on the challenges, rewards, and developments in providing inclusive programs and facilities.

#### **Actions**

- Further development and implementation of a training program on 'inclusive practices' to be offered as staff development program.  
(*HOD HRSD and Director LS in conjunction with Manager SS Access Unit—July 2000* )
- To promote the staff of the DRC as consultants in inclusive practices to Faculty and Division staff .  
(*Manager SS Access Unit—July 2000 and continuing*)
- To develop information about 'inclusive practices' to be included in all staff and student induction programs.  
(*HOD HRSD in conjunction with Deans and HODs and Manager SS Access Unit—August 2000*)
- Development of 'inclusive practices' resources, information exchange and support in Staff Resource Room on First Class Conference site.  
(*Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000*)

## Associated services

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### **Objective 7: All associated services to embrace the actions of the Deakin University DDA Action Plan and the DDA, or develop their own DDA Action Plan**

#### **The current situation**

Affiliated or associated organisations (e.g. contractors, consultants) are not currently required by Deakin to explicitly indicate their intentions to meet the Objects of the DDA. As with other legislation (e.g. Crimes Act) it is expected that all such organisations comply with relevant laws.

Considering Deakin University's commitment to developing inclusive practices it would be beneficial to explicitly include expectations of compliance with anti-discrimination legislation in contracts and affiliations with other organizations where relevant. For example, if Deakin was to enter into a contract with an outside organization to provide internal or inter-campus public transport it would be vital that this service was required to be accessible.

#### **Actions**

- To liaise with all associated organisations in developing responses to the DDA.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- To investigate and implement where relevant procedures to ensure that all relevant contracts entered into with organisations will comply with the requirements of the DDA.  
*(Manager University Solicitor's Office—December 2000)*

## Corporate citizenship

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### **Objective 8: Incorporate Inclusive Practices into Deakin University's Corporate Citizenship planning and profile**

#### **The current situation**

Deakin University has adopted a number of values in its strategic plan on social responsibility, corporate citizenship and workplace conditions, that are innovative and ground breaking. To that end the Vice-Chancellor has established the Corporate Citizenship Research Unit, Faculty of Arts, which will advise the senior management of the University on future directions and best practice in issues of social and environmental responsibility as a means of ensuring that the core value of corporate citizenship as expressed in the University's strategic plan is implemented.

The University is clearly committed to best practice in issues of responsibility and the DDA Action Plan is potentially a tangible example of this commitment being put into practice. Inclusive practices as outlined in the Action Plan will

also assist Deakin to be recognized as a preferred employer and tertiary education provider across Australia and around the world.

### Actions

- Further develop Corporate Citizenship policy and practice to explicitly utilise and market Deakin's commitment to Inclusive Practices.  
(*Director Corporate Citizenship Unit with Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000*)

## SECTION 2

# Providing inclusive practices in teaching and learning

This section will look at the way we provide our core service of education to students of the University. It is the responsibility of all staff of Faculties and Divisions to provide a teaching and learning environment that is inclusive of students who have a disability. Many staff in Faculties and Divisions have developed excellent examples of best and inclusive practice. Here we look at implementing these practices across all areas of the University and providing a forum where these initiatives can be discussed and developed into the future.

The staff of the DRC, in the Access Unit of Student Services, provide assessment, advice and support to students who have a disability, and liaise with academic staff in relation to the needs of students who have a disability.

Since the enactment of the DDA, the DRC role has become more focussed on assessment, and consultation to Faculties and Divisions who deliver education and services.

## Policy

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### **Objective 1: To develop policy so that issues related to the development of flexible delivery and inclusive teaching and learning practices are systematically identified and addressed**

#### **The current situation**

There are no specific policies for the development of inclusive teaching and learning practices. Many staff have skills and interests in this area. Advice from the DRC is sought occasionally by academic staff in developing new courses. In the design of the course, consideration needs to be given to course materials, course delivery, content, teaching strategies, fieldwork and practicums, registration board requirements, laboratory work, and assessment.

## Actions

- Develop and regularly review policy and guidelines for inclusive practices in teaching to ensure they consider the needs of people who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit and Joint Committee on Teaching and Learning—November 2000)*
- Develop and regularly review policy and guidelines for online course and web site design to ensure they consider the needs of people who have a disability.  
*(Director LS, Head of ITS, with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- Develop and regularly review policy and guidelines for the production of course materials in accessible formats (e.g. audio or large print) to ensure they address the needs of students who have a disability with equal amenity.  
*(Director LS, Deans, HOD Student Life, with Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*
- EOAC in consultation with Academic Board and other appropriate committees and personnel to oversee the development and implementation of the above Guidelines across the University.  
*(EOAC—November 2000)*

## Preparing for entry: Open days, admission and enrolment

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### **Objective 2: To ensure that students who have a disability have equal access to information, support and programs prior to commencing at university.**

#### **The current situation**

Open Days are held at all campuses and are attended by staff of Student Services who have information relating to students who have a disability.

Prospective students who have a disability are admitted to courses subject to meeting the entry requirements that apply to all students. Students may also apply for admission under the Consideration of Disadvantage, Special Admissions Scheme. This scheme allows students to be considered for admission when their situation (in this case disability) has influenced their ability to meet the usual requirements for entry. As stated earlier, many international students are not in the country for Open Day and Faculty information seminars. International students need equal access to information prior to arrival. The acceptance or offer process could include a clear statement detailing specific individual support that can be offered.

#### **Actions**

- Promotion of outreach, Open Day, and enrolment and activities to include information for students who may need support in accessing the activities

on the day, including a statement to offer specific individual support as requested.

*(HOD AASD and Open Day Committees—July 2000)*

- Enrolment and specific course information to be available upon request in accessible formats such as electronic, large print, audio.  
*(Producers of the information, HOD AASD—July 2000)*
- Implement procedures to ensure staff who provide information and advisory services (such as course advisers, enrolment officers and information officers) participate in annual staff development relating to people who have a disability and inclusive practices.  
*(Deans and HODs—March 2001)*
- Develop a procedure for liaison between Deakin International and DRC when an enquiry or application is received from an international student who has a disability and ongoing liaison between International Student Advisers and DRC after the student's arrival.  
*(Manager Deakin International with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*

## **Transition and first-year experience**

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### **Objective 3: To improve access and support to the academic program for new students who have a disability**

#### **The current situation**

Once accepted into University, all students are informed in their enrolment packages of the supports available through the DRC and are encouraged to make early contact to ensure supports are in place for them at the commencement of the year. This does not always happen, and students and staff are sometimes starting the year without supports in place. During the consultation period there was a common request from academic staff to have early notification of students who have a disability with specific needs in order for them to plan for their inclusion.

During the consultation process, many students who have a disability identified the first weeks and semester of study as a very difficult time.

Orientation programs are available to all students, and the staff of the DRC provide input into these programs.

#### **Actions**

- Develop guidelines for staff and students organising and designing orientation programs to include the needs of people who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit with HODs, Deans and Student Associations—December 2000)*

- Students who have a disability, with the staff of the DRC, will collaborate with Unit Chairs as early as possible regarding individual access requirements. (*Manager SS Access Unit—February 2001*)
- Introduce a procedure for lecturers and tutors, in a supportive and confidential manner, to encourage students who have a disability to discuss particular needs or concerns relating to a disability or medical condition with appropriate Faculty staff, or the staff of the DRC at the beginning of each semester.  
(*Deans, Heads of Schools with Manager SS Access Unit—February 2001*)
- Student Residences staff to identify a procedure for early referral to the DRC for assessment of needs of students who have a disability and who apply for residences. This may also need to be in collaboration with other relevant groups such as Deakin International or Deakin Australia.  
(*Manager Student Residences with Manager SS Access Unit—February 2001*)
- Student Services (including the DRC) to review the programs and supports it provides to students during orientation and transition.  
(*Manager SS with Manager SS Access Unit—January 2001*)

## **Delivery of teaching and learning (including online teaching and learning)**

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### **Objective 4: To continue to improve procedures to ensure that students who have a disability have equal access to the teaching and learning environment**

#### **The current situation**

Teaching staff at Deakin University have developed a great many skills in meeting the individual needs of students who have a disability, as well as recognising that inclusive practices meet the needs of all students. Staff of the DRC provide assessment and recommendations for students who register for support, and provide a range of supports including academic access workers (such as notetakers and sign interpreters), and liaison with academic staff for accommodations such as assessment needs and teaching requirements.

During the consultation for the development of the plan there were a few areas identified where further improvements need to be made:

- Many staff felt they could plan better for students who have a disability if they had earlier notification of the needs of these students.
- The development of online teaching techniques has the potential for meeting the access needs of many students better, but also raises new accessibility issues to address.

- The provision of study materials such as study guides, textbooks and extra materials in alternative formats (such as audio and large print) in a timely manner continues to be difficult to achieve and results in indirect discrimination for students who have a print disability. This aspect of support involves Faculty, Library, LS, Bookshop, and DRC staff and is coordinated through the Print Disability Service in the DRC.
- Access to accurate notes of lectures is not only dependent on the skills of note-takers, but could be significantly improved with the provision of overheads and lecturers' notes.

### Actions

- Explore and develop a method of providing relevant information from the DRC to faculty staff on the assessed needs of students in their courses where appropriate (such as a report from the database to enrolment officers).  
*(Manager SS Access Unit with Deans, Heads of Schools, Faculty Admin Managers—March 2001)*
- Develop guidelines to ensure essential course materials are available on time to enable the production of accessible formats (e.g. audio or large print).  
*(Director LS, Deans, HODs, Library, with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- To develop guidelines for academic staff to make available lecture and tutorial notes (including overheads) in a range of formats prior to lectures to all students.  
*(Joint Committee on Teaching and Learning—November 2000)*
- Develop the role of Academic Access staff (e.g. note-takers and interpreters) to include collaboration with university staff regarding their work in supporting students who have a disability, for example to arrange for overheads to be available, or to introduce a sign interpreter to class.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—February 2001)*

## Assessment

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### **Objective 5: To ensure that assessment practices are flexible and responsive to the needs of students who have a disability**

#### **The current situation**

Accessible assessment arrangements should ensure that a student is not disadvantaged in assessment by their disability, however the integrity of assessment must be maintained. Students who need accessible arrangements for assessment register with the DRC. Staff of the DRC assess the needs of the students using their expertise and information from relevant professionals in making recommendations. Arrangements may include accommodations such as

extra time, use of a scribe, rest breaks, use of adaptive equipment, variations to the mode of assessment (such as essay instead of exam or written paper instead of oral presentation). Where there may be concern that the accessible arrangements may compromise the assessment (such as when a different mode of assessment is required), arrangements are made with academic staff, and academic staff are encouraged to discuss any queries with DRC staff.

All end of semester examinations are administered by AASD. Currently Faculties are responsible for the conduct of mid-semester and other incidental assessments. Some confusion exists for meeting the needs of students who have a disability in mid-semester examinations.

### **Actions**

Academic staff responsible for setting mid-semester tests facilitate and implement the necessary accessible arrangements for a student on advice from the staff of the DRC.

*(Heads of Schools and Deans—March 2001)*

Staff of the DRC to notify academic staff of accessible examination arrangements recommended for students and discuss these arrangements where appropriate. *(Manager SS Access Unit—March 2001)*

## **Academic support services (Library, ITS, LS, and Student Services)**

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### **Objective 6: To ensure that academic support services provide direct support to students who have a disability as well as indirect support to academic staff in developing inclusive practices**

#### **The current situation**

Academic support services and other related services have an independent role in providing an inclusive experience for students at Deakin, in addition to providing support to Faculties and Divisions.

The Library provides a range of accessible services to students who have a disability, including off-campus library services for some on-campus students, extended library loans, and individual customer support.

Information Technology Services coordinates and facilitates the maintenance and development of software and hardware systems throughout the University, and supports students and staff in training. It is vital that accessibility is a key element in planning and evaluating computer and communication systems. As well as planning to design accessible systems, ITS allocates a budget each year for including adaptive technology to accommodate access requirements.

Learning Services provides support and guidelines to academic staff in the development and production (including publishing and online development) of academic materials, and provision of staff development programs. LS supports

the Print Disability Service in the production of accessible study materials by funding the conversion of materials to audio etc., and producing electronic materials where possible. They have expertise in the development of accessible and inclusive online teaching and learning developments.

Student Services provides a range of direct supports to students (including the DRC) as well as indirect support, through faculties, as consultants on the needs of students. Academic support staff such as notetakers and sign interpreters are trained and coordinated through the DRC. A major area of concern for students who are deaf is the shortage of trained sign interpreters.

### **Actions**

- Develop a strategy to enable Library materials to be available in a range of formats on request (e.g. online, audio).  
*(University Librarian—January 2001)*
- Develop systems for ITS to provide flexible training and support to students who have particular needs related to disability, on referral from the DRC.  
*(HOD ITS and Manager SS Access Unit—January 2001)*
- Develop the necessary expertise and staff role within ITS to monitor and implement accessibility requirements in computer hardware and software planning and installation.  
*(HOD ITS with Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*
- Develop and implement strategies to improve access to skilled sign interpreters. *(Manager SS Access Unit—December 2000)*

## **Graduate outcomes**

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### **Objective 7: To monitor and improve the graduate outcomes for students who have a disability**

#### **The current situation**

Deakin University has recently achieved five star rating for the fourth successive year in the Graduate Careers Council study of student satisfaction. With many partnerships with industry and a proactive Career Development Education Unit (CDEU) within Student Services Deakin prides itself on its efforts to improve graduate outcomes.

The CDEU operates many group and individual programs to assist students make the transition from study to work and facilitates recruitment interviews by numerous top Corporations for final year students. The CDEU has also run specific work experience programs for students who have a disability.

#### **Actions**

- Develop the Graduate Destinations Survey and other graduate outcome measures to facilitate gathering graduate outcome information of students

who have a disability.

*(Director Planning and Profiles with Manager CDEU and Manager SS Access Unit—September 2000)*

- Assess graduate outcome policies and practices to ensure they are inclusive of all students particularly students who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS CDEU—September 2000)*
- Investigate and develop opportunities for proactive programs to improve graduate outcomes for students who have a disability to assist in reducing the common negative perception of the skills of graduates who have a disability and resultant discrimination in employment.  
*(Manager SS CDEU in collaboration with Manager SS Access Unit—November 2000)*

## SECTION 3

# Providing inclusive employment

This section will examine our responsibilities as employers to people who have a disability. Many people who have a disability will gain employment at the University and, from time to time, people in current positions will experience some form of disability that may require accommodations. Again, best and inclusive practices exist in some areas of the university and here we look at implementing them throughout the university.

## Policy

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### **Objective 1: To develop clear policy on the employment and support of staff who have a disability at Deakin University**

#### **The current situation**

University Equal Opportunity policy is inclusive of people who have a disability. While the consultation process identified a good level of understanding and commitment to supporting students who have a disability, it identified some concern and confusion about the supports and rights of staff who have a disability. There were many anecdotes of considerable support offered by individual managers and co-workers to staff who have a disability. There were, though, a number of concerns expressed which indicated a lack of awareness, particularly of the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees, and for people who have hidden disabilities such as psychological and medical conditions.

#### **Actions**

- Further develop an 'inclusive employment' policy which may include recommendations on staff recruitment practices, workplace support and adjustments, targeted positions for people who have a disability,

Occupational Health and Safety, flexible work conditions.

*(EOAC, EEO Unit and HOD HRSD—December 2000)*

- Implement and promote the ‘inclusive employment’ policy to ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities at Deakin University.  
*(EOAC, EEO Unit, HOD HRSD and all managers—February 2001)*

## **Recruitment and employment**

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### **Objective 2: To ensure that the procedures for recruiting and employing new staff meet the needs of people who have a disability**

#### **The current situation**

Deakin University follows accepted practices as an Equal Opportunity Employer. Training is provided and guidelines exist for staff involved in recruiting new staff.

#### **Actions**

- Include information in all job application packages about Deakin’s ‘inclusive employment’ policy.  
*(HOD HRSD—February 2001)*
- Develop processes to ensure that all recruitment and selection processes (such as advertising, job design, interviewing venues and practices, and medical assessments) are explicitly flexible and inclusive so as not to disadvantage people who have a disability.  
*(HOD HRSD and Manager SS Access Unit—January 2001)*

## **Support**

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### **Objective 3: To ensure that the needs of staff who have a disability are met in an inclusive manner which ensures their full participation**

#### **The current situation**

Support for employees who have a disability occurs at a local management level, in many cases resulting in very supportive and flexible working environments. In other situations there is a lack of awareness by staff and managers as to the rights of employees to gain support to carry out their employment.

The Employee Assistance Program has provided some support for staff who have a disability. There is no central funding identified specifically for the support of staff who have a disability where the costs would be difficult to

absorb in an individual budget area. If not addressed, staff working with disability may not declare their needs and may compound their condition or negative feelings and discrimination may arise.

### **Actions**

- Investigate a source of funding, such as further development of the Employee Assistance Program, for assessment and support (including workplace modifications) for staff who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit and HOD HRSD—January 2001)*
- Develop and promote Student Services (including the DRC) to provide assessment, support and advice to staff who have a disability.  
*(Manager SS Access Unit—January 2001)*