

disability • action plan



Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE (GippsTAFE)

2005-2008

5 January 2006

message from the ceo



I have much pleasure in endorsing the GippsTAFE 2005 – 2008 Disability Action Plan.

The growth in demand for services by people with a disability has highlighted the need

to move beyond a reactive method of dealing with access issues and to develop a Strategic Disability Action Plan to address potential barriers to entry for persons with a disability.

The Disability Action Plan provides the foundation for forward planning and progressive policy development. GippsTAFE recognises "access" as more than a physical/structural issue. This includes staff attitudes, dissemination of information, inclusiveness in class structure and activities, organisational operations and the development of policies and procedures.

GippsTAFE acknowledges its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and Disability Standards for Education (2004) in relation to its role as an educator and employer and embraces diversity within its staff and student populations. The Disability Action Plan will ensure that educational opportunities at GippsTAFE are inclusive for everyone by identifying discriminatory practices or barriers and providing realistic strategies and processes that will ensure staff and students enjoy the benefits of education and training in an educationally supportive environment.

Peter Whitley
Chief Executive Officer

introduction

GippsTAFE comprises five campuses across regional and metropolitan areas, involving 16,000 students and a total of 268 full-time effective staff members.

GippsTAFE aims to provide a broad balanced and relevant range of high quality training programs and support services, as evidenced in the Vision Statement "To be the best quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) provider of flexible learning solutions in Australia".

One of the functions of support services is to address the needs and diversity of persons with disability currently under-represented in vocational education and training.

In 2001 the Disability Support Service was established as an across campus service for students with disabilities and a Disability Liaison Officer was appointed.

In March 1993, the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 came into effect, subsequently making discrimination, based upon disability, unlawful in a wide range of situations. In the education environment, this Act prohibits discrimination associated with enrolment in, or admission to, courses.

The Disability Standards for Education have been formulated under paragraph 31 (1) (b) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and cover government and non-government providers in all sectors.

A full copy of the standards and the accompanying guidance notes and regulation impact statement are available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/research/publications/disability_standards/default.htm

The recommendations outlined within this plan are specifically linked to the strategies identified in the GippsTAFE Strategic Plan – Flexible Solutions 2005 - 2008 – flexible learning, partnerships, business excellence and enterprise. The Disability Action Plan is therefore integral to the way GippsTAFE provides a learning environment and distributes its services.

consultation process

Informal meetings were held with a variety of focus groups both internal and external to the organisation in order to receive quality feedback on issues of importance. Stakeholders involved in this process included staff, students, persons with a disability and external community groups. Surveys of a variety of relevant groups were also conducted.

Trend data gathered from meeting with focus groups/surveys identified a number of areas that required consideration.

- Staff awareness and professional development
- Buildings and Facilities
- Teaching and Learning
- Publications and Events
- Information and Technology
- Student Operations and Services
- Disability Services

aim

The GippsTAFE Disability Action Plan aims to remove barriers to access for students, potential students and staff.

commitment

GippsTAFE is committed to providing pathways for persons with disability in order for them to successfully participate in vocational education and training through:

- Improvement of facilities and resources for equity of access
 - Fostering and strengthening relationships with secondary education providers and employers in order for persons with a disability to increase their participation in educational life and employment opportunities
 - Participation of persons with disabilities in decision making in relation to policies, procedures and services designed to meet their collective and individual needs
 - Provision of training and support services that ensure equity and diversity in an environment free from harassment
 - Provision of customer service and teaching and learning delivery to include a learner centred focus that incorporates the principle of reasonable adjustment
 - Creation of an environment that encourages persons with a disability to disclose any barriers to their learning, to enable GippsTAFE to provide support in assisting them to reach their greatest potential, with dignity, while respecting their right of privacy and confidentiality
- Development of a strategic plan, supported by financial resources, to improve access and equity on the basis of real and credible measured outcomes, including progress reporting
 - Regular evaluation and revision of policies, procedures and associated practices through consultative processes, in order to improve services and facilities provided.

responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer will fulfil the Institute's legal obligations and the commitment to support people with disability in the learning and working environment by ensuring that;

- All staff understand the requirements of the Legislation, GippsTAFE policy in relation to Merit and Equity principles, the Disability Action Plan and their particular responsibilities contained within.
- All staff are provided with appropriate information, training and supports related to people with disability / impairments
- All staff/students are provided with information about disability support networks and resources associated
- Formal complaints of discrimination/harassment are treated seriously, promptly, impartially and in a confidential manner
- All GippsTAFE institute policies, practices and procedures including teaching materials, are non-discriminatory
- The implementation and effectiveness of this Action Plan is regularly monitored and evaluated.

OBJECTIVE 1

Raise awareness of all staff in relation to responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and associated Legislation

TACTIC/S	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1.1 Foster a culture of inclusiveness within the GippsTAFE staff community	Include Disability awareness in the Staff Induction Program	Manager Human Resources	December 2006
1.2 Establish a Professional Development Program to support the objectives of this plan	Ensure all staff are conversant with the services and associated processes for gaining access to the Disability Liaison Officer	Disability Liaison Officer	December 2006
	Provide training to ensure all staff have an awareness of disability and are conversant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Education Standards	Manager Organisational Development and Innovation	December 2006 December 2007 December 2008
	Ensure all teachers/trainers are skilled in regard to provision of "reasonable adjustment" for students with disabilities	Manager Organisational Development and Innovation/ Disability Liaison Officer	December 2007
	Ensure HR practices including recruitment comply with the Disability Discrimination Act	Manager Human Resources	December 2006

OBJECTIVE 2

FACILITIES

Ensure that access, usage and availability of the Institute's physical resources comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act

TACTIC/S	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
2.1 Ensure appropriate access to the Institute facilities for persons with a disability	Undertake a self assessment/audit of all access requirements. In the event that structural changes are required establish a minor works program and budget.	Manager Facilities	December 2006
	Engage a consultant to conduct a full audit of Institute Facilities to identify issues/gaps in relation to major work requirements.	Manager Facilities	December 2006
	Develop a list of priorities and associated costings in order to access funding opportunities	Manager Facilities	December 2006
2.2 Conduct an annual audit of the Institute's physical resources to ensure ongoing compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act	Review and amend the Facilities Audit process to incorporate requirements	Manager Facilities	June 2007 June 2008

OBJECTIVE 3

Provide inclusive, accessible and responsive services, programs and products to meet client's expectations

TACTIC/S	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
3.1 Ensure adequate Disability Liaison Officer services are provided to all campuses	Regularly review the resources provided to the Disability Liaison Officer to service the client base.	Manager Operational Services	Ongoing
	Ensure Client Service Officers are fully aware of the Disability Liaison Service available	Disability Liaison Officer	Ongoing
3.2 Establish a Disability Action Plan Review Working Party	Develop terms of reference and convene meeting of this Working Party	Manager Operational Services/ Disability Liaison Officer	September 2006
3.3 Ensure Institute materials e.g. profomas, learning resources, promotional materials are in compliant formats	Develop website, promotional materials, publications and resources in a variety of formats to meet the requirements of the Educational Standards to assist students with Disabilities	Manager Operational Services Disability Liaison Officer/ Media Production Unit	Ongoing
3.4 Provide access for staff and students with disabilities to ICT (Information Communication Technology) platforms that enhance teaching and learning	Ensure ICT policies incorporate the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act	Manager ICT	September 2006
	Research and identify appropriate software packages to support specific needs of students.	Manager ICT /Disability Liaison Officer/Teaching Staff/Resources Committee	September 2006
3.5 Provide appropriate academic support services to students with learning difficulties	Develop an appropriate model for delivery of these services	Disability Liaison Staff/Learning Resource Centre	September 2007

evaluation process

The Disability Action Plan will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis.

Indicators of success will include:

- (a) greater accessibility of campus premises and facilities
- (b) development of a culture within GippsTAFE whereby persons with a disability are totally integrated into the student cohort from a teaching and learning perspective
- (c) an increase in the utilisation of student services by people with disabilities
- (d) an increased number of staff receiving professional development in relation to disability awareness and specific teaching strategies to enable improved student outcomes to be achieved
- (e) an overall improvement in the level of academic achievement for students with disabilities
- (f) a reduction in the number of official complaints from students with disabilities.

references**LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS**

- Equal Opportunity Act 1995
- Disability Education Standards 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Act 1976
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and amendments

definitions

DISABILITY

Section 4 (1) of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) defines disability in relation to a person as:

- (a) total or partial loss of the persons bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness, or
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- (e) the malfunction, or disfigurement of a part of a persons body; or
- (f) a disorder, illness, or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:
- (g) presently exists; or
- (h) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- (i) may exist in the future; or
- (j) is imputed to a person

DISCRIMINATION

Treating a person less favourably (on the basis of a disability that person has, may have, used to have or may have in the future) that you would treat a person without that disability in the same circumstances, or circumstances which are not materially different.

Discrimination may be either:

- Direct discrimination – treating a person less favourably because of their disability, such as a policy that people with infectious diseases may not enrol at a particular institution; or
- Indirect discrimination – imposing a requirement or condition where that requirement or condition is one with which people with disabilities are disproportionately unable to comply; which is not reasonable having regard to all the circumstances. For example a student with a mobility disability which affects his/her capacity to write, may argue that an institution requirement that all students write their responses to exam questions unassisted is indirect discrimination.

ADJUSTMENT

An **adjustment** is a measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by an education provider that has the effect of assisting a student with a disability on the same basis as a student without a disability, and includes an aid, a facility, or a service that the student requires because of his or her disability.

A **reasonable** adjustment is an action in relation to a student with a disability that balances the interests of all parties affected.



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