
Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2028



Economic Regulation Authority



Acknowledgement of Country

At the ERA we value our cultural diversity and respect the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which we live and work.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to culture and community, their traditions and stories. We commit to listening, continuously improving our performance and building a brighter future together.

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Accessing the Access and Inclusion Plan

The Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2028 is available on the ERA website: www.erawa.com.au.

This PDF document is accessible and includes alternative text descriptions for all images. This report can be made available in alternative formats on request.

National Relay Service TTY: 13 36 77

All images in this document have been produced using an AI image generator.

Message from the CEO

I am delighted to present the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2028. This plan recognises that we all have a role in promoting access and inclusion at work, in recreational activities and in the wider community. Making sure access and inclusion is widely considered and appropriate actions are taken benefit everyone.

We recognise that the experiences and access and inclusion needs of every person with disability are unique and valid. Many people with disability report barriers to participation in employment, education, recreation and community activities. This plan sets out what actions the ERA will take to support people with disability to fully participate in all aspects of our business activities.

The commitments set out in this plan will be embedded across all our organisational strategic and business activities.

We will review our progress against this plan regularly and report on our progress. Where we identify something that isn't working we will make changes. All stakeholders are invited to contribute to the ongoing implementation and improvement of this plan.

Jenness Gardner
Chief Executive Officer



Economic Regulation Authority

The ERA is Western Australia's independent economic regulator. We regulate electricity, gas, water and rail industries. Our monitoring, compliance and enforcement work aims to give businesses and consumers confidence that utilities markets run efficiently and effectively. We recognise that some consumers need extra support to make sure they have equal access to goods and services and opportunities to participate.

Purpose

Our purpose is to benefit all Western Australians by promoting strong economic outcomes through effective regulation and decision making. We strive to make sure current and future consumers pay no more than necessary for safe and reliable utilities.

Values

Our people have **integrity**: they make decisions and provide advice based on transparent, unbiased and rigorous analysis, and in a way that is professional, ethical and accountable.

They strive for **excellence**: our people are experts, and passionate about delivering high quality outcomes. We take pride in what we do and how we contribute to the economy and to the community.

And we build **trust**: we want industry and consumers to trust us to be impartial, treat others in an equitable, respectful and inclusive manner, and to be fair and even-handed when making decisions.



Strategic Objectives

Embrace change

- Proactively explore solutions to the challenges facing regulated markets.
- Be open and curious about new ways of achieving the best possible outcomes.

Support well-functioning markets

- Provide robust, evidence based regulatory decisions and advice.
- Consider the context of our decisions, both today and in the future.
- Enable markets to innovate and adopt new technologies.

Openly engage and communicate

- Remain informed and aware of stakeholder views through meaningful consultation.
- Communicate our decisions clearly and appropriately for the audience.
- Be transparent, unbiased and inclusive.

Strengthen organisational culture

- Cultivate a culture of innovation and regulatory excellence.
- Enhance our people's capacity to be highly competent, adaptable and resilient.

Access and Inclusion in WA

People can experience access and inclusion difficulties for a range of reasons including disability, socio-economic status, living in an isolated or underserviced location, low education level, age and gender, and race or culture-based discrimination.

Access and inclusion barriers impact people's ability to fully participate in the economy and community. For example, people with disability have lower participation levels across all areas including education, employment and social and recreation activities. Statistics available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that a much lower percentage of people with disability are employed, compared to people without disability. In addition, people with disability are less likely to be in labour force, compared to people without disability. This reduced participation leads to a large income gap, with the median gross income of people with disability being less than half that of people without disability¹.

Increasing participation benefits everyone. Organisations with a diverse workforce benefit from a broader range of skills and perspectives, are viewed more favourably by prospective employees and the wider community, have better employee engagement and retention and may have greater productivity and opportunity for innovation.

The ERA has removed the word "disability" from the title of this plan. The intent of this change is not to diminish our role in making sure people with disability are able to receive the supports they need. The new plan's development is an opportunity to promote access and inclusion as the default rather than the exception and that all people benefit from measures that enhance access and inclusion².

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, ABS Website, accessed 11 October 2023.

²The State Disability Strategy states on page 15 "*Inclusion is as valuable to our broader community as it is for people with disability. Inclusion makes us resilient, happier and economically and socially stronger*".

Plan Development

The Corporate Services area of the ERA Secretariat is responsible for this plan. ERA staff and stakeholders helped to write this plan and review progress against the previous plan was considered. The plan, and progress reporting against the plan, is a requirement of *Disability Services Act 1983*.

Consultation Process

ERA Staff

All ERA were invited to participate in the development of this plan. Removing the word 'disability' from the title of the plan resulted in increased staff engagement in plan development which may suggest this helped more staff to see how the plan applied to them.

Staff were invited to complete a brief survey to explore their views on what access and inclusion means to them. Their responses have shaped the development of this plan, where appropriate. A sample of staff responses are provided on the following two pages.

Public consultation

The draft plan was published on the ERA website for public consultation on 27 October 2023. The consultation period was open for four weeks, closing 24 November 2023. The consultation was advertised via a notice in the West Australian newspaper, through ERA social media channels and via emails to ERA's email subscription list. Submissions could be received via an online form, email, post or by making arrangements to speak to an ERA officer in person.

No submissions were received during the consultation period.

“I feel included at work when...”

“... my work allows (and trusts) me to work remotely for periods of time to spend time with / care for family. I can choose what workspace works best for me on a given day.”

“... my manager asks me how I work at my greatest potential and how I would like to be managed, and we can agree on a method that works for both of us and other team members.”

“...I'm trusted with valuable work and the work I produce is valued.”

“... everyone respects each other without prejudgments.”

“... I'm included in team meetings and can attend events with my ERA colleagues.”

“... I like it when people in other teams explain their (complex) work in a way I can understand.”

“What could the ERA do to show that we value access and inclusion?”

“Allowing flexibility in job design to allow people to do a portion of the work that is relevant for their skill set and which allows for changes in skills over time.”

“No great culture is created by one person, every one of us needs to make our efforts to be kind and helpful to people who are physically unable to do what others thought to be easy.”

“Actively promote inclusion from within.”

“Working from home has been an important positive development in recent times, supported by proactive acceptance and use of MS Teams / chat as accepted and effective comms within teams.”

“Continue to be kind when people need an accommodation at work.”

Plan Development

ERA Consumer Consultative Committee

The ERA sought feedback on the draft plan from the ERA Consumer Consultative Committee (ERACCC) in June 2023.

ERACCC membership includes representatives from:

- Community and social services
- Consumer and consumer protection
- Business interest groups
- Regional WA
- Local government.

ERACC members discussed the removal of the word ‘disability’ from the title of the plan and that doing so must not diminish the plan’s role in ensuring people with disability are able to receive the supports they need. Members also queried what audit mechanism is in place to monitor if objectives are achieved. These mechanisms are outlined on the following page.

Members suggested ways to improve the accessibility of the document, including use of plain English, and other ways to promote the ERA’s inclusiveness such as uploading relevant policies with job advertisements.

The feedback from ERACCC members has been integrated into this plan or ERA internal processes, where appropriate.

Implementation, monitoring and reporting



All staff have a role in implementing this plan by actively taking part in initiatives.

To support staff, the ERA will make the necessary resources and training available. Staff will also be invited to participate in the design of strategies to implement this plan.

The Corporate Services division will monitor this plan's implementation and success.

The ERA's Annual Report will include progress updates and the ERA will submit progress reports to the Department of Communities as required by the *Disability Services Act 1983*.

Outcome 1: Services and events

All people have the same opportunities to access the services of, and any events organised by, the ERA.

ERA Context

The services the ERA provides to the general public are largely limited to opportunities to participate in consultation processes. The ERA holds a small number of events each year. These events are generally targeted at specific stakeholder groups e.g. energy market participants.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Incorporate Access and Inclusion Plan outcomes across strategic and operational planning processes.	Staff will continue to be made aware of the Access and Inclusion Plan and their responsibilities through inductions, regular reminders and training opportunities.	Corporate Services
Ensure all ERA hosted events are accessible.	Create an accessible event checklist for staff to follow when organising events, which includes ensuring any venue hired is accessible and adding accessibility information to promotional materials.	Office of the CEO

Outcome 2: Buildings and facilities

All people have the same opportunities to access the building and other facilities of the ERA.

ERA Context

The ERA does not own any offices or facilities. Our offices are currently located on Level 4 of Albert Facey House which is owned by the Department of Finance and managed by an external property management company.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Ensure all ERA facilities are accessible and inclusive.	Review signage to make sure it is accessible and inclusive.	Office of the CEO
	Where appropriate, advocate for improved accessibility at facilities used by ERA.	Corporate Services
	Make sure future refurbishment of ERA offices and facilities consider universal accessibility standards.	Corporate Services
Ensure that ERA health and safety procedures meet the needs of people with disability and/or mobility requirements.	Fire Wardens continued to be trained in evacuation and safety procedures for people who require additional assistance during an emergency.	Corporate Services

Outcome 3: Information and communication

All people receive information from the ERA in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

ERA Context

The ERA conducts a large part of its business using digital means. All decisions, notices and documents are published on the ERA website. The ERA also uses targeted social media strategies to engage stakeholders.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Ensure the ERA website is compliant with relevant standards and guides.	Design the new ERA website to be compliant with the Western Australian Government Website Accessibility Policy and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, level AA or greater.	Office of the CEO
Ensure the ERA intranet is compliant with relevant standards and guides.	Review the ERA intranet against the Western Australian Government Website Accessibility Policy.	Office of the CEO
Ensure all ERA publications are available in alternative formats on request.	Create an accessible publications guide to follow when creating publications and documents and update templates to meet accessibility requirements. Provide guidance to staff on how to provide information in other formats.	Office of the CEO Corporate Services with Office of the CEO

Outcome 4: Quality of service

All people receive the same level and quality of service from ERA staff.

ERA Context

As outlined under Outcome 1, the services the ERA provides to the general public are largely limited to opportunities to participate in consultation processes. Other services are provided direct to the industries and organisations we regulate and other regulatory bodies.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Maintain and promote policies and codes of conduct that promote access and inclusion and prohibit discrimination, harassment and victimisation of employees and visitors.	Continue to include access and inclusion information in the induction process.	Corporate Services
	Continue to include information on policies and codes of conduct in the induction process including consequences of not meeting conduct expectations.	Corporate Services
	Provide regular reminders to staff on access and inclusion matters and conduct expectations.	Office of the CEO

Outcome 5: Complaints

All people have the same opportunities to make complaints and provide feedback to the ERA.

ERA Context

The ERA handles complaints about the services it provides in accordance with our complaints handling policy. The ERA does not handle complaints about the industries or businesses we license; these complainants are referred to agencies such as the Energy and Water Ombudsman.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Ensure that complaint and feedback mechanisms are easily accessible.	Review current mechanisms for complaints and feedback handling, making sure they are accessible and inclusive.	Corporate Services

Outcome 6: Consultation and engagement

All people have the same opportunities as others to take part in any public consultation by the ERA.

ERA Context

The ERA primarily uses digital platforms to publicise consultations and to receive feedback. Submissions are encouraged through an online form or via email. Submissions can also be received via post.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Ensure ERA consultation processes are accessible.	Review consultation mechanisms for accessibility. Investigate approaches to encourage diverse participation, including people with disability, in ERA consultations.	Office of the CEO Office of the CEO

Outcome 7: Employment and Culture

All people have the same opportunities as others to obtain and maintain employment with the ERA.

ERA Context

The ERA undertakes all recruitment and employment activities in line with public sector standards and guidelines. In addition, staff are supported to access flexible working arrangements.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Ensure advertising and recruitment activities are inclusive and accessible in design.	Consider the Public Sector Commission People with Disability Action Plan as part of the next review of the ERA Workforce Plan.	Corporate Services
	Continue to ensure advertising, recruitment and selection practices are in accordance with the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i> .	Corporate Services
	Provide guidance to staff involved in recruitment on accessible recruitment practices.	Corporate Services
	Where possible, investigate opportunities for recruitment strategies to recruit and keep people with disability.	Corporate Services

Outcome 7: Employment and Culture

All people have the same opportunities as others to obtain and maintain employment with the ERA.

Strategies	Actions	Responsible (Lead)
Support employees to perform their best at work.	Continue existing flexible working arrangements and allowing reasonable workplace adjustments that enable all staff to work effectively. Provide training to managers to make sure they can support employees to perform their best at work.	CEO Corporate Services

