



2009-12
ZOOS VICTORIA
ACCESSIBILITY
ACTION PLAN



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1 Message from CEO

Zoos Victoria strives to be the world's leading zoo-based conservation organisation. We have set a course for the organisation that will see conservation as fundamental to the function of our three properties – Healesville Sanctuary, Melbourne Zoo and Werribee Open Range Zoo. We have worked with our staff to identify five areas where we will focus our efforts so that we can deliver our conservation commitment. These are: conservation, animals, visitors, people and financial sustainability.

We see the development of our Accessibility Action Plan 2009-2012 as a critical part of delivering superior, inspiring, meaningful and layered experiences for all our visitors, as well as fostering inclusiveness and wellbeing among our staff.

In this time of climate change, increasing populations and shifting demographics, we believe it is important that all people regardless of their ability, background or circumstances, have the opportunity to be part of conservation. Whether it is making a public stand on a global issue such as deforestation or adopting more environmentally sustainable behaviours, Zoos Victoria is dedicated to creating these opportunities.

We have three unique Zoos that are the pride of Victoria and we acknowledge how important it is to maintain accessibility and high standards of care, so that all our visitors can connect with our animals, understand their conservation struggles in the wild and act to protect them. This is at the heart of our Accessibility Action Plan. This plan sets out some of our actions over the next three years to provide our staff and our visitors with a universally accessible experience.

I look forward to sharing our progress with you each year through our annual report.

Jenny Gray
Chief Executive Officer
Zoos Victoria

2 Introduction

Zoos Victoria comprises three great zoos: - Werribee Open Range Zoo, Melbourne Zoo and Healesville Sanctuary. These zoos are constantly evolving, developing new exhibits, attractions and precincts. These impressive exhibits have been developed to better connect people with wildlife and further Zoos Victoria's commitment to community engagement, research, animal care, field conservation and sustainability.

Zoos Victoria is committed to providing a universally accessible experience. Through the development of Accessibility Action Plan 2009-2012 (AAP), Zoos Victoria has reinforced its commitment to people of all abilities, including people with disabilities, to be able to gain equitable, independent and functional access to all attractions through its infrastructure, policies, programs and services.

2.1 Need for a Accessibility Action Plan (AAP)

Zoos Victoria also acknowledges that the key principle of our AAP is the concept of "universal accessibility".

Universal accessibility reinforces the requirement that the changing nature of Australia's population, particularly with the ageing population and baby boom, requires a cultural acceptance, a positive demonstration and critical review that Zoos Victoria allows all people of all abilities, which includes employees, business associates, zoo visitors, volunteers, vendors and artists/exhibitors to be part of the Zoos Victoria's experience.

3 Disability Discrimination

While it should be acknowledged that access, accessible or accessibility are the key principles of the approach Zoos Victoria is taking to the AAP, the fundamental reason for the Zoos Victoria's AAP is the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) which brings in access-based rights and regulation specific to people with a disabilities.

3.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Federal)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) was established in 1992, and enacted in 1993, by the Federal Attorney General's department, it is administered by Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), now called Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), and judicially enforceable by the Federal Court.

The DDA is Federal legislation which applies to everyone in Australia. It proposes to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people with disabilities in a range of areas, including employment, education, access to premises, access to clubs and sport and the provision of goods, facilities and services. Any discrimination actions are initiated by a person, carer, companion, family member or organisation placing a complaint with AHRC claiming that "they" have been treated unfavourably, unfairly or inequitably, as would someone without a disability.

3.2 Disability Act 2006 (Victoria)

The Victorian Disability Act 2006 provides the framework for a whole-of-government approach to enable people with a disability to actively participate in community life.

Section 38 (1) of the Act, specifies that a Disability Action Plan is prepared for the purpose of –

- (a) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- (b) Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- (c) Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability
- (d) Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

These aims have been addressed in the AAP and Zoos Victoria will report annually on the implementation through the annual report.

4 Accessibility Defined

Zoos Victoria refer to “Accessibility” as a general term to describe the ability for all people to access and enjoy our services, programs and facilities with ease including ease of functionality. One meaning of accessibility specifically focuses on people with disabilities. While disability may be difficult to define, formal definitions such as are written in legislation at state, for the purposes of this plan, Zoos Victoria refers to the definition of disability as contained in the DDA. This covers disabilities, which are physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory and neurological. This definition also covers physical disfigurement and the presence of disease causing organisms, such as HIV. It is important to note that this definition covers a disability that currently exists, may exist in the future or is imputed to a person.

4.1 Accessibility in Context

The principles of accessibility as they apply to all exhibits, attractions and services do not change over time even though there may be changes to technical and structural regulatory requirements eg. the provision of subtitles on a video screen are a functional requirement even though the type of presentation may vary. Establishing and implementing the principles of accessibility across all sections of the Zoos Victoria’s operations will allow all people including those with accessibility needs, to travel, move, rest, view or simply enjoy the Zoos Victoria’s properties with safety and functionality.

Applying the concept of “seamless accessibility” is a key responsibility of all departments whether it is for visitors, staff, volunteers or contractors. This necessitates that all work areas within Zoos Victoria have considered accessibility. To further support the Accessibility Action Plan, Zoos Victoria aim to develop proactive accessibility and employment, training and programs policies.

The outcomes of the Zoo Victoria’s Accessibility Action Plan, is that all three properties are able to minimize the risk of discrimination and accessibility complaints, and maximize people visiting, working and enjoying all that Zoos Victoria have to offer.

There are many lifestyles, health, family or environmental causes that can create impairments for people. The cause of these impairments is not important. What is important is that the infrastructure and services of Zoos Victoria can accommodate their accessibility needs.

The following outlines differing accessibility needs that in excess of 20% of Australia's population of different demographic may experience and what Zoos Victoria takes into consideration within this Accessibility Action Plan.

Mobility

- People who are elderly
- People who use wheelchair
- People with temporary injuries
- People who use crutches, canes or walking frames
- People with heart or medical issues
- People pushing strollers
- Breastfeeding mothers
- People with short stature within a crowd

Hearing

- People who have their hearing limited to one ear
- People who wear hearing aids or cochlear implants
- People who have little or no residual hearing
- People using radio or mobile phone links

Vision

- People who are colour blind
- People who are long or short sighted
- People who use a guide dog or cane
- People who are night blind
- People who cannot see or have minimal residual vision
- People with temporary eye injuries

Communication

- People of cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)
- People who have learning difficulties
- People with dementia or Alzheimer's
- People with short-term memory issues
- People with mental illness

4.2 Zoos Victoria's Strategic / Corporate Plan

The Accessibility Action Plan is part of the organisations 20-year strategic plan that will transform Zoos Victoria to a zoo-based conservation organisation. It falls with the two key action areas of Our Visitors and Our People set out within the organisation's strategic plan and corporate plan. Specifically the Accessibility Action Plan relates to:

- Visitor Objective 1: To offer superior and inspiring animal based experiences that connect people with wildlife and conservation action and to use the unique habitats and landscapes in our care to inspire environmental action.
- Visitor Objective 2: To offer every visitor a layered, meaningful, and fun learning experience using a variety of interpretive approaches to engage all our various audiences.
- Visitor Objective 3: To ensure visitors experience memorable moments and have opportunities to actively participate in conservation action.
- People Objective 3: To enable our staff to demonstrate a high level of capability and wellbeing as a result of the right investment in their professional and personal development.

5 Key Principles

The key principles of Zoos Victoria's Accessibility Action Plan are:

Accessible Infrastructure

The physical environment of the properties allows accessibility, independence, functionality and equality for visitors, staff and volunteers with a disability.

Accessible Visitor Experience / Operations

Visitor Experience provides trained staff and volunteers who can present information to people with disabilities on the zoos' operations and infrastructure that will allow efficient movement and enjoyment of the exhibits or attractions as would someone without a disability.

Accessible Culture

Development of a positive culture through proactive employment practises, positive internal and external leadership and communication to show that accessibility is positively encompassed by all departments within Zoos Victoria.

Accessible Communications

Anyone with a disability is able to gain information and or come to Zoos Victoria and are able to do so with certainty and security of movement.

Accessible Human Resources

All people including those with disabilities or who represent people with disabilities are encouraged to apply for vacancies at Zoos Victoria. This promotes diversity, brings a new network of staff and volunteers and also creates a new base of people who have unique and complimentary experiences.

Vendors / External providers

Vendors and external providers are knowledgeable of Zoos Victoria's DDA requirements in the delivery of goods and services.

6 Action Plan

This section outlines some of Zoos Victoria's key actions under each key principle. A full list of actions including a listing of responsible personnel for each action, is also being maintained at property levels where actions are updated, reviewed and monitored. At each of our unique properties, an Accessibility Action Plan Reference Group (AAPRG) as been formed to drive and monitor the actions.

6.1 Accessible Infrastructure

Objective: Within the next three years, Zoos Victoria will strive to achieve better accessibility of infrastructure at all three properties. Where upgrades have not been possible, plans will be in place to achieve this in the future.

Measure: Accessibility standards are built into planning processes. Number of infrastructure upgrades relating to infrastructure

Key Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate accessibility principles and best practices standards into property planning documents to ensure accessibility standards are met consistently across ZV.• Ensure future works of installing or upgrading of viewing areas at exhibits, displays and/or infrastructure incorporate principles of universal accessibility.• Ensure future works of installing or upgrading office space incorporates universal accessibility.• Develop and implement an accessible way-finding strategy incorporating:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- International symbols for access.- Seamless pathways linking accessible car parking, entries/exits, toilets, events, exhibits and emergency exits.

6.2 Accessible Communications

Objective: Within the next three years Zoos Victoria will have developed an accessible communications strategy and implemented communications initiatives to ensure better access to DDA-related information for guests, volunteers and employees.

Measure: Track “hits” on accessibility webpage, requests for alternate formats. Monitor and report the number of communications initiatives.

Key Highlights

- Ensure use of images of people with disabilities are portrayed positively within ZV’s publications.
- Develop an Accessibility page that can be accessed via a link on the front page of the Zoos Victoria Web page and each of the zoos’ home page.
- Consult with disability service organisations bodies and representatives for people with disabilities to provide cross-promotional materials, advice and resources.
- Develop principles/standards to provide consistent development of information materials for visitors on-site and on-line.
- Develop processes to manage public and internal request materials in alternative medium, for example Large Print, Audio CD (Vision Australia can produce this for free) to be mailed out. Example publications request include employment materials, learning experiences materials.

6.3 Accessible Visitor Experiences / Operations

Objective: Within the next three years, Zoos Victoria will have developed and implemented key accessibility initiatives to enhance the visitor experience for guests of all abilities.

Measure: Number of accessibility initiatives implemented for visitors.

Key Highlights

- Explore, identify and implement initiatives to deliver visitor experience services to be inclusive, responsive and flexible to the needs of people with a disability.
- To be proactive and to develop strong internal processes in addressing accessibility needs.
- Adapt program delivery ensuring students and teachers are receiving a high quality service, and accessibility accommodations are met.
- Document the process for handling accessibility and other complaints to ensure all complaints are responded to immediately and the progress of the complaint is reported back to the person/s.

6.4 Accessible Vendors / External providers

Objective: Within three years, Zoos Victoria will develop protocols for vendors and external providers to ensure they operate in a DDA-compliant way and in line with Zoos Victoria's commitment to universal access.

Measure: Compliance linked with contracts/purchasing templates.

Key Highlights

- Ensure vendors are aware of ZV commitment to accessibility.
- Ensure vendors and external providers are aware of the requirements to service all patrons, including those with access needs into Zoos Victoria's contracts and policies.
- Staff of the vendor or external provider are, where possible, be trained to assist and deliver high level customer service to people with disabilities.
- Ensure vendors and external providers consider the accessible components in delivering their service, this includes pathway widths are maintained as a thoroughfare for the passing traffic.

6.5 Accessible Culture

Objective: Within three years, Zoos Victoria will have developed and implemented initiatives to ensure accessibility is a part of the organisational culture.

Measure: Actions within the action plan are carried out and reported on. Principles of accessibility are incorporated into everyday decision making.

Key Highlights

- The accessibility action plan reference group at each property will meet to discuss progress of the actions.
- Actions of the AAP is reported to Zoos Victoria Board highlighting the immediate and ongoing actions that are/ have being/ been commenced/ completed.
- Explore opportunities to seek grants/funding for accessibility programs as appropriate.
- Ensure the allocation of annual budget line for accessibility equipment and modifications as identified.
- Include Accessibility into regular meetings to create a forum for discussion of any issues that arise. Read and discuss any complaints to build possible solutions.

6.6 Accessible Human Resources

Objective: Within three years, Zoos Victoria will ensure that accessibility is a key part of the organisation's Human Resources function.

Measure: HR policies & procedures incorporate accessible principles, All front line staff are trained in diversity awareness, Increased awareness/understanding measured through surveys.

Key Highlights

- Work with providers to deliver disability awareness training to frontline staff and managers including how to listen to, speak with and offer assistance to people with a disability.
- Develop and conduct staff survey to gauge staff attitudes to accessibility and understanding of disability.
- Zoos Victoria's AAP is accessible and available to all staff including in the induction program for new staff.
- Review and update HR policies to consider the inclusiveness of people with a disability and policies are compliant with AHRC and DDA guidelines.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

This plan will be reviewed annually or as required, to obtain updates on each of the action items, and report progress annually. The AAPRG will meet regularly throughout the year to review the Accessibility Action Plan, monitor its performance, and review, update and amend as required.

8 Conclusion

Zoos Victoria commissioned Morris Goding Accessibility Consultants (MGAC) to assist in the development of this Accessibility Action Plan (AAP). Whilst MGAC has structured the Accessibility Action Plan it is the Zoos Victoria's senior staff that have been the driving force in the conception and completion of the plan.

MGAC have reviewed policies, procedures and infrastructure and we are pleased to acknowledge that Zoos Victoria has a positive proactive approach to universal accessibility and people with a disability. The main aim of this AAP is to ensure as time progresses, and as the staff and management change and the economy ebbs and flows, that Zoos Victoria is maintaining the principles of the AAP. This will require monitoring, leadership by management, direction and budget allocation and above all constant AAP implementation.

Ultimately this will reflect in Zoos Victoria continuing to be a proactive and dynamic organisation where ALL people are welcome as employees, visitors, volunteers, or contractors and partners.

This AAP is accessible via our website www.zoo.org.au/accessibility and we welcome feedback and/or comments on our access initiatives from interested groups or individuals in the community. Requests for alternative formats of this document can be made via access@zoo.org.au or by calling 03 9285 9363.

Appendix

AAP	Accessibility Action Plan
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission, previously called Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)
CALD	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
AAPRG	Accessible Action Plan Reference Group
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
GM	General Manager
HS	Healesville Sanctuary
MZ	Melbourne Zoo
LE	Learning Experiences
VE	Visitor Experience
WZ	Werribee Open Range Zoo
ZV	Zoos Victoria