

WaterAble 

DAY OF ACTION

Report and Industry resources



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September 2022

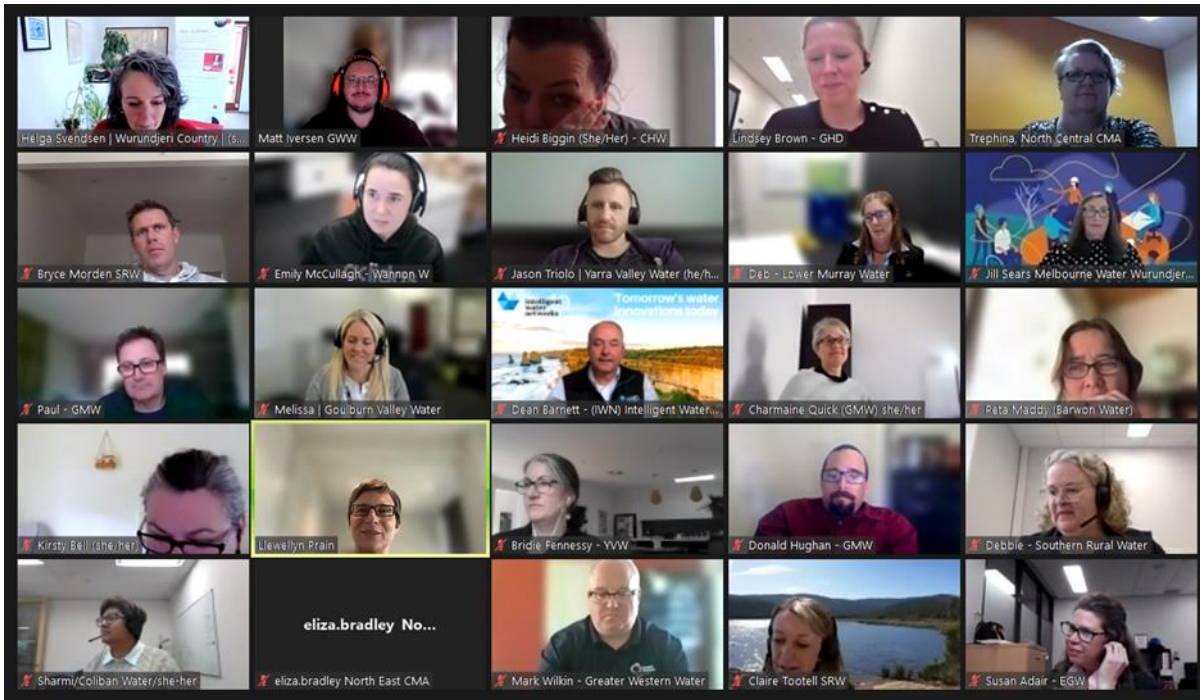


**A network
for people
with disability
and their
allies in the
Victorian
water
industry.**

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1. About this report



This report captures the process and all the great ideas that were generated at WaterAble’s Day of Action workshop. It is designed to be a resource for anyone in our industry interested in doing more to make our industry disability inclusive. Some organisations are well advanced, and some are just starting on their disability inclusion journey. Regardless, this report is designed to share ideas generated by our industry for our industry to improve disability inclusion.

2. About the workshop

Around 45 people from across the Victorian water industry participated in the workshop on 9 September 2022. The workshop had three aims:

- To bring our industry together to share disability inclusion successes and failures
- To learn from each other and build momentum for change
- To agree some simple actions the industry can take to improve disability inclusion and challenge the industry to implement these actions by the International Day of People with Disability – 3 December 2022.

Workshop attendees included: senior leaders, people with disability and WaterAble members, and people from our industry keen to attend. WaterAble was particularly pleased that at around 15 percent of participants identified as people with disability.

The workshop was tasked with coming up with ideas to improve disability inclusion in our industry. The aim was to come up with ideas that were reasonably easy to implement over a few months. The criteria for the actions were: do-ability and impact.

The workshop was structured around three themes: accessibility, recruitment and retention, and attitudes.



Participants were encouraged to have fun, make connections, learn from each other and from past failures, and get immersed in how we make our industry more disability inclusive.

There were many conversations as participants discussed different ideas and added them to the virtual whiteboard on Mural.

Then we went through a process to vote on the top three ideas. The workshop voted for:

- Develop fact sheets on reasonable adjustments
- Create an industry standard text for job advertisements that encourage people with disability to apply. Include assistance for people with disability who may need it to apply.
- Create quiet or chill out rooms for neurodiverse employees.

The following provides further background information about the workshop ground rules, industry case studies that were presented, and all the ideas the workshop came up with to make the Victorian water industry more disability inclusive.

3. Workshop & ground rules

Workshop participants got into groups and agreed the following ground rules:

- Say your name before you speak
- Minimise use of chat
- Let me know if you need captioner
- Be curious - curiosity leads to learning
- Giving attention to the workshop - focussed and not distracted
- Having an open mind and listening to different perspectives
- Be brave, vulnerable
- Spell out terminology and acronyms
- Be on mute if not speaking - it helps to not speak over each other
- Have fun
- Don't be overwhelmed
- Be respectful - let people with lived experience speak
- Leave assumptions at the door
- Try to make sure actions are achievable
- Present AND at home that might need to accommodate for things at home
- Make space to others to speak



4. Case Studies

The workshop heard three case studies to help get everyone thinking

4.1 Case Study 1 – Central Highlands Water (CHWE)

Central Highlands Water produced a video for the workshop showcasing their great work in disability inclusion. See video: [1 file Central Highlands Water Accessibility Design Story](#)

4.2 Case Study 2 - Dean Barnett Intelligent Water Networks (IWN)

Dean spoke about recruiting different people with disability in different roles and ensuring environments where people with disability can thrive and grow in your organisation.

4.3 Case Study 3 – Brett Mathieson Yarra Valley Water (YVW)

Brett shared Yarra Valley Water's process to engage with the community on its price submission. In particular, customers who are deaf and customers who have low vision were part of the YVW citizens jury. This included having Auslan interpreters present, and enabling people to participate from home via laptops, which were carried around the room during consultation processes to enable the person at home to fully participate. These processes were based on the customers' preferences for participation.

5. Implementation of workshop actions

We surveyed all Victorian water corporations to find out how they went implementing the three ideas agreed to by the workshop. The deadline was the International day of People with Disability - 3 December 2022 or approximately three months to get the actions done. WaterAble provided all workshop participants with an implementation kit to support this work.

Eleven water corporations responded to our survey. The following are the results.

1. Develop fact sheet on reasonable adjustments:
 - 6 Implemented
 - 5 partially implemented
 - 0 not implemented
2. Develop information on job adds to encourage people with disability to apply. Provide help for people who might need it to apply:
 - 8 Implemented
 - 3 partially implemented
 - 0 not implemented
3. Create chill out rooms for neurodivergent people:
 - 4 implemented
 - 5 partially implemented
 - 2 not implemented

Free text comments on progress

- In relation to the third action - we have started by putting the call out to employees to provide any ideas or feedback they would like us to take into consideration for this project. We had a handful of neurodivergent employees get into contact and share their thoughts and ideas about the project which has been really useful. We are currently working with our facilities team to scope out potential meeting rooms to convert into quiet individual workspaces and a chill out room (based on the staff feedback). Once we have a costed proposal, we will be taking it to our Exec team for approval. We are aiming to start small by converting 2 meeting rooms into workspaces and 1 into a chill out room but will monitor interest and utilisation to see if this needs to be broadened in future.
- CHWE are committed to providing a safe and accessible workplace for all employees and we are really proud to be a part of the great work that WaterAble are doing for the industry.
- Combining resources and working together with fixed targets was a great way to work. No.3 was impacted by the Incident Management Team response to the floods for us and is being factored into a larger office refurbishment.
- The materials were fabulous. Implementation is in progress - fact sheet/ad words have been developed and are now being finalised via consultation - short delay due to floods
- South Gippsland Water (SGW) is currently developing a facilities strategy that will enable accessible workplaces, and more inclusive design and functioning. Action 3 will be considered in this planning work.
- Takes time to move from partially implemented too fully. My view on fully is that they are will embedded. I am happy that we have progressed all actions.
- "Fantastic work by WaterAble to encourage consistency and increase greater inclusion across the water industry. Thank you "

6. Ideas generated by the workshop

Accessibility

- Normalise fidgets for people with ADHD
- Designated chill out rooms or quiet space for neurodivergent people
- Making all documentation & digital materials available/ accessible/readable by all people
- Available disability parking at all locations
- Having space for a dog toilet
- Multi use accessibility in the front area of the building
- Provide hearing loop systems
- Hearing loop availability at reception desks & meeting rooms and portable
- Consider technology solutions to ensure they provide all accessibility options
- Accessible websites for example visual description of images on website
- Accessibility audit of corporate facilities to assess how accessible they are and what changes might be needed
- Proactive scan of our workplaces, being inclusive before it's required
- Consider accessibility to support customers with a disability to access the business
- Be compliant with accessibility legislation
- Accessibility training and awareness including facilitator awareness
- Lead with engagement make people feel safe to speak up, don't make assumptions
- Mentoring program matching people with a disability with other staff to support greater awareness and acceptance

Recruitment and Retention

- Promote reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process including training for recruiters (not just HR)
- Gaining deeper understanding of current workforce needs to support employees with disability – and share data across industry
- Provide opportunities for entry level / early career e.g. through partnerships and internships
- Participation in free govt programs that support disability employment
- Encourage people into the organization/ application. Attraction to the sector through promotion (ie. sector wide video), participation and partnerships with local community groups/ disability employment agencies/ pipeline from schools/ work placement/ work experience.
- Education for the manager/ people leaders, appreciation around differences and ongoing support. Understanding of people differences and how people work. Unconscious Bias Training.
- Standard questions in the interviews and prior to the interviews/ application process. But removing unconscious bias in the selection process
- Different Support and Education Networks for People: Internal with manager, teams and the broader org, bringing families along, collaborative across the sector. External networks. Post placement support
- Ongoing training, learning and development. Succession pathways etc
- More enabling return to work and flexibility
- Produce factsheet on what are reasonable adjustments
- Produce sector-wide video (like CHW video)

- Promote 101 module produced by Melbourne Water on disability inclusion across the sector
- Reserve a place on interview shortlists for people with disability (policy change, education of managers)
- Include on job ads how to request reasonable adjustments to support (industry standard words for job ads)
- Promoting in recruitment materials/ websites disability inclusion to support pathways to employment

Attitudes

- Invite people with lived experience into our workplaces to help us educate and shift our attitude
- executive sponsorship of D&I within organisations – authorizing environment
- changing views on judgements about disabilities – redefining what a disability is and reasonable adjustments
- hearing from people’s lived experience – finding ways to do this
- adjust what we do to be inclusive – e.g catering order a broader variety, always use accessible meeting facility
- attitude on identifying as actually having a disability- increasing disability pride!
- Raising awareness of visible and invisible disability to enable safe and inclusive workplace
- Water Industry Partnership with WaterAble to promote attendance at the event
- Hold an event/webinar/meeting to hear from a customer with a disability about their lived experience
- Respectful Inclusive Safe Workshops Information session collaboration – shared lived experience Training Create a safe place to share and disclose disability
- Include disability stories or information in your regular safety moment or similar
- Survey of employee attitudes around disability to uncover what might be holding back progress
- Normalising disabilities - i.e. 1 in 2 people over 70 have disability & many disabilities are hidden i.e. mental health, learning disability
- Create Screen background to raise awareness
- Share D&I stats from Engagement Survey to create a safe environment & promote sharing
- Physical & Mental health considerations reasonable requirements
- Videos etc to signal and celebrate what we are doing to promote D&I
- Making available information around different abilities. Help people better understand (share links, podcasts, TV shows)
- Information Sharing Lived Experience
- Celebrate our diversity with the images of our workforce – if you can see it, you can be it
- Host an awareness activity – speaker, sharing stories, morning tea, etc
- Start the conversations
- Local suppliers to support diverse groups. Partnerships with Procurement
- Acceptance of adapting how we interact
- When ordering catering – set the standard that is needed i.e. halal as standard, not free as standard

7. Thank you!

A number of people and organisations made the workshop and this report possible. WaterAble would like to thank:

Helga Svendsen

Tara Daniel

Lynne Duncan

Claire Tootell

Heidi Biggin

Heath Baker

Brett Mathieson

Dean Barnett

Lee Smith

Elisa Bourke

Coliban Water

VicWater

The WaterAble team:

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