SAGE Athena Swan

Griffith University Cygnet Award 5: Staff with Disabilities

Acknowledgement of Country

Griffith University acknowledges the people who are the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to the Elders, past and present, and extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Griffith University's campuses are based on the lands of the Yugarabul, Yuggera, Jagera, Turrbal, Yugambeh and Kombumerri peoples.

Artwork by **Sid Domic**

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

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Date of Application	October 2025
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SAGE Cygnet Award Details

Griffith University: SAGE CYGNET # 5

Word limit – 2500 words (excluding the institutional context and excluding the action plan)

	Current Cygnet	Barrier · List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet · List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted
Institution–wide barrier	√	Staff with Disabilities
Sub-group barrier		Workplace flexibility and career breaks
Sub-group barrier		Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ staff and students
Sub-group barrier		Attraction and recruitment of women in the Sciences group
Institution–wide/Sub–group barrier		First Peoples Employment

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1 Key Barrier

This Cygnet Award recognises the experiences of staff with disabilities at Griffith University and affirms the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible workplace (see Figure 1 for overview).

Griffith University aligns with the social model of disability as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This model understands disability as arising from the interaction between individuals with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments and attitudinal or environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Rather than viewing disability as a personal limitation, the social model reframes it as a consequence of inaccessible or non-inclusive communities, services, and environments. As articulated in Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026[1], it is society, not the individual's impairment, that imposes restrictions on participation.

In line with this perspective, Griffith University acknowledges that while physical accessibility is often the most visible consideration, true inclusion requires a broader and more holistic approach. This means ensuring that all staff with a diversity of disabilities, have equitable access to the workplace and can fully and authentically participate in their professional roles. Through this commitment, Griffith ultimately aims to be recognised as an employer of choice for people with disabilities.

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[1] https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-03/Inclusive-Victoria-state-disability-plan-2022-2026.pdf, p. 9.

Figure 1

Summary Diagram of Cygnet Award on Staff with Disability

Overall effect

- Attraction of people with disabilities
- Retention of people with disabilities

Barriers

- Staff with disability experience lower engagement
- Less support for staff with disabilities
- Limited recruitment and HR system data for staff with disabilites
- Phycial and digital intrastructure accessibility barriers

Actions and Outputs

- Developed a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
- Established the Disability Scholars Research Scholarship (PhD Pathway)
- Established Inclusive Futures Research Beacon
- Developed a workplace adjustments process for staff with disabilities and ARO principle
- Created training and resources on disability inclusion in the workplace

Outcomes

- Increase in number of staff identifying as living with a disability
- Closing of the gap of engagement related to direct management of staff with disabilities
- No difference in shortlisting and hiring rates/outcomes between people with a disability and people who do not have a disability

Impact

- Staff with disabilties experience of feeling supported is dependant on their leader/work area
- Staff with hidden/fluctuating disabilities experience higher barriers to support
- Staff feel Griffith's support for staff with disabilities is improving but could be better
- Digital and physical infastructure still pose barriers to accessibility
- Staff with disabilities more likely to succeed if workplace adjustments are provided

Gaps and future work

- Provide education and resources for staff and people leaders that support staff with disabilities or disability-related conditions.
- Enhanced communication to staff about existing policies and procedures that support staff with disabilities or disability-related conditions.
- Reviewing current policies, procedures, resources, and communication channels to ensure they effectively support staff with disabilities or disability-related conditions.

2 Evidence of Barrier

Griffith University's ongoing commitment to understanding and improving the experiences of staff with disabilities has highlighted several critical areas for development.

Insights gathered during the University's 2017 Athena Swan self-assessment revealed notable disparities in perceptions of equitable treatment and engagement among staff with disabilities. In addition to these attitudinal gaps, systemic barriers were identified, particularly in the accessibility of Griffith's physical and digital environments.

The analysis also uncovered shortcomings in policy, procedures, and data collection related to this cohort. These included limited inclusive practices in talent acquisition and a lack of comprehensive understanding of the employee lifecycle through the lens of disability inclusion.

2.1 Equitable treatment and engagement among staff with disabilities

In the 2017 Griffith Athena SWAN survey, staff with a disability had the lowest level of agreement (59.2%) with the statement "In my Element I am treated equitably regardless of gender, race, age, sexuality or other characteristics" (2017 Griffith Athena SWAN Survey).

In 2021 Griffith commenced annual employee engagement surveys. These surveys had the capacity for staff to indicate their 'diversity characteristics' – enabling Griffith to conduct analyses (including intersectional analyses). In these employee engagement surveys, staff living with a disability had lower levels of engagement than those who did not identify as living with a disability.

2.2 Data collection and understanding the employee lifecycle from a disability inclusion perspective

In alignment with our Bronze submission commitment to review the employee lifecycle, an audit was conducted using the Australian Network on Disability Index structure as a guide.

The audit identified that the collection of data on staff with disabilities was limited and existing disability categories in our human resources system did not align with accepted

disability categories. This also made it difficult to gauge the number of staff who identify as living with a disability and understanding their experiences.

2.3 Accessibility of Griffith's physical and digital environment

The audit also highlighted a lack of transparency and readily available information regarding the accessibility of campus premises. Additionally, the audit highlighted the absence of a formal feedback mechanism to proactively identify, and address accessibility challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Furthermore, accessibility within Griffith University's digital infrastructure had been identified as an area requiring significant improvement. An audit of our digital infrastructure found that several components of the digital environment presented barriers to access and were not compliant with the 2018 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), underscoring the need for enhanced digital inclusion practices.

2.4 Workplace adjustments

Prior to 2021, Griffith did not have a stand–alone procedure in place to guide and support staff with disabilities in the workplace. In addition, funding for reasonable adjustments was inconsistent, and there was limited awareness across the organisation regarding the importance, process, and structure of workplace adjustments.

2.5 Candidate attraction, recruitment, selection and on-boarding

Finally, the audit also identified opportunities to strengthen inclusive practices within Griffith University's talent acquisition processes. These findings pointed to the need for more intentional and structured approaches to embedding accessibility and inclusion throughout recruitment, selection, and onboarding to ensure equitable experiences for candidates with disabilities.

3 Progress (Actions and Outputs)

During Griffith University's Athena SWAN Bronze self-assessment (2018), several opportunities were identified to strengthen inclusion and support for staff with disabilities including a review of the employee lifecycle from a disability inclusion perspective, and the need for a stand-alone, disability policy with a reasonable adjustment procedure. In response, Griffith has taken steps to address these items and embed disability inclusion as a strategic priority. This commitment has been reflected in the University's Strategic Plans for 2020-2025 and 2025-2030 and driven through other initiatives across the university as detailed below.

3.1 Addressing barrier 2.1 - equitable treatment and engagement among staff with disabilities

Table 1

Actions Designed to Enhance Equitable Treatment and Engagement Among Staff with Disabilities

Action Item	Implementation Notes
The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Progress: Established/Ongoing	The Disability Access & Inclusion Action Plan was established in 2024, and the four key goals are based around four key pillars - people, supportive environments, learning and teaching and research. The goals are supported by the enablers of digital environments, strategic partnerships and effective processes
Established dedicated network for staff with disability Progress: Established/Ongoing	The Griffith Staff with Disability Network was formed in 2024 as result of an action from the Griffith Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan. This network currently has 25 members and meets bi-monthly. The Chair of the Network also has a position on the University's Disability Advisory Committee which reports to the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee.
Achievement Relative to Opportunity Principles Progress: Established/Ongoing	The Achievement Relative to Opportunity policy was established in 2020. In 2025 it was embedded in the University's • Academic Employment Handbook • as a principle in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. These principles can be considered whenever performance is assessed including, but not limited to, recruitment and selection, professional development and confirmation. In applying Achievement Relative to Opportunity, the following is considered: • the level and conditions of appointment (including the nature of the work profile and employment type) • the quality and impact of the person's work outcomes given the time and/or resources available to the person

Action Item	Implementation Notes
	• any ongoing impact on achievement related to the person's circumstances.
Established the GU Disability Scholars Research Scholarship (PhD pathway) Progress: Established/Ongoing	The Griffith University Disability Scholars Research Scholarship was established to support a commencing candidate of exceptional research potential, who has a permanent disability and who may have experienced educational disadvantage, through the provision of a stipend while they undertake a higher degree research program at Griffith University. The scholarship offers an annual stipend as well as an additional research support allowance of up to $6000 to support research related costs associated with a disability. This has been awarded to 8 people since its establishment in 2024. Five recipients are domestic and three are international.
Established Griffith's research beacon *Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability* Progress: Established/Ongoing	Griffith has established *Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability*, an interdisciplinary alliance of people with disability, researchers, designers and educators, as well as health and social services providers, industry and government bodies.
Social procurement Progress: Established/Ongoing	Social procurement considerations were embedded in Griffith's procurement processes. Our social procurement impact report showed that people with disabilities were the third highest 'beneficiary group' of our social procurement activity in 2024 (see section 4.6).

3.2 Addressing barrier 2.2 – Data collection and understanding the employee lifecycle from a disability inclusion perspective

Table 2

Actions Designed to Improve Data Collection and Increase Understanding of the Employee Lifecycle from a Disability Inclusion Perspective

Action Item	Implementation Notes
A review of each stage of the employee life cycle to further embed inclusive practices for staff with disability Progress: Established/Ongoing	A review was completed in 2020 to identify areas for action.

Action Item	Implementation Notes
Include a disability identifier question in the all-staff employee engagement survey Progress: Established/Ongoing	From 2021 a question has been included in the employee engagement survey which asked staff whether they identified as a person with a disability.

3.3 Addressing barrier 2.3 - Accessibility of Griffith's physical and digital environment

Table 3

Actions Designed to Improve the Accessibility of Griffith's Physical and Digital Environment

Action Item	Implementation Notes
Major strategically funded capital improvement project Progress: Established/Ongoing	A major strategically funded capital improvement project ($20m) was established (and is currently being implemented) to address physical accessibility and inclusion of the University's campuses. This includes (but not limited to) improvements to wayfinding, toilets, libraries and paths of travel.
Accessible and inclusive event guidelines Progress: Established/Ongoing	An internal resource was developed in 2024 to assist staff to create events that are accessible for all members of our workforce and students. This document takes an intersectional approach between disability, First Peoples, LGBTQIA+ & culturally and racially marginalised people. This is available to all staff planning an event.
Update mandatory training courses and other onboarding activities to be accessible and inclusive Progress: Established/Ongoing	In 2025, mandatory training courses were updated to embed accessibility and inclusion, guided by a neuro-inclusive design approach and informed by consistent learner feedback. Griffith's transition from Blackboard to Canvas supported this shift, enabling more flexible and inclusive learning experiences. These updates are now part of standard review procedures, with feedback continuing to shape improvements. While the core modules have been refreshed, additional content areas such as Finance are undergoing review. Elective onboarding activities, including the "On the Move" campus tours, are also being assessed to ensure they promote inclusive engagement from the outset.

3.4 Addressing barrier 2.4 – Workplace adjustments

Table 4

Actions Designed to Improve Support for Workplace Adjustments

Action Item	Implementation Notes
Staff Disability Accessibility and Inclusion Procedure Progress: Established/Ongoing	In 2024 a Staff Disability Accessibility and Inclusion Procedure was created and included a workplace adjustment process for staff with disabilities. The adjustment process took a person-centred approach and streamlined the process for efficiency, and to better meet needs. Since 2021, there have been 55 instances of formal reasonable adjustments (see section 4.5).

3.5 Addressing barrier 2.5 - Candidate attraction, recruitment, selection and on-boarding

Table 5

Actions Designed to Improve Candidate Attraction, Recruitment, Selection and On-boarding of Individuals with Disabilities

Action Item	Implementation Notes
Added inclusion measures in recruitment and onboarding Progress: Established/Ongoing	Job advertisements now include the statement "If you require any accommodations, we welcome you to let us know so we can work with you to participate fully in our recruitment experience". The ability to request adjustments is reiterated when all candidates are shortlisted. Talent Acquisition Partners were trained to support candidates with adjustments. In 2025, guidance on inclusive recruitment is embedded in the Hiring Manager training (Manager Essentials Series).
Disability confidence training Progress: Established/Ongoing	The University became a member of the Australian Disability Network and engaged the organisation to deliver disability confidence training to uplift staff capability and understanding of disability, and its relevance to all areas of the organisation. Initially, specific workshops were provided to HR Business Partners and Talent Acquisition Partners. The University now holds 2-4 workshops annually for all staff. To date 318 people have attended this training.

4 Outcomes

We recognise that despite significant action taken to improve disability access and inclusion, outcomes have been variable to date. We acknowledge that demonstrating meaningful outcomes is a longer-term endeavour and remain committed to our continuous improvement.

4.1 Increase in staff engagement responses for people with a disability

In 2025, a new response option was introduced to the disability identifier question in the all-staff employee engagement survey. Previously, staff could only select "yes" or "no" when responding. To better reflect diverse experiences and improve data accuracy, the following option was added:

> "I do not identify as a person with disability, but I do have one or more conditions that might be considered a disability (e.g., physical, mental health, sensory, learning, etc.)."

This addition was designed to capture a broader cohort of individuals who may experience conditions that impact daily life but do not personally identify as a "person with a disability." By expanding the response options, we aim to acknowledge the intersectional and often fluctuating nature of disability and better represent the lived experiences of our staff. This approach supports a more nuanced understanding of how disability, whether formally identified or not, can affect individuals in the workplace and informs our efforts to foster a more inclusive environment at Griffith.

Since 2021, the number and proportion of staff identifying as having a disability or a condition that might be considered disabling has steadily increased as seen in Table 6 and Figure 2. In 2021, 125 staff (5% of respondents) identified as having a disability. By 2025, this rose to 15% (n=533), likely influenced by the expanded response options. This increase may reflect either a growth in the number of staff with disabilities or greater confidence among staff to disclose their experiences.

Table 6

Staff Identifying as Having a Disability in the Employee Engagement Survey, 2021-2025

Responses	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Staff with disability	125	180	205	241	115
Staff with conditions that might be considered a disability	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	418
Combined staff with a disability/ and disability condition	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	533
Staff without a disability	2479	3118	3216	3356	3445
% of responses from staff with a disability combined	5%	5%	6%	7%	15% (4%)

Note. In 2025, percentages reflect the combined cohort of staff who identified as having a disability or a condition that might be considered a disability. Bracketed figures show the percentage of staff who answered "yes" to the disability question. From 2021–2024, percentages represent only those who answered "yes."

Figure 2

Staff Identifying as Having a Disability in the Employee Engagement Survey, 2021-2025

Legend:
- ■ Staff with disability
- ■ Staff without a disability (answered 'no' to disability)
- ■ Combined staff with a disability/ and disability condition
- ● % of responses from staff with a disability from all staff
- ○ % of responses from staff with a disability or disability condition from all staff*
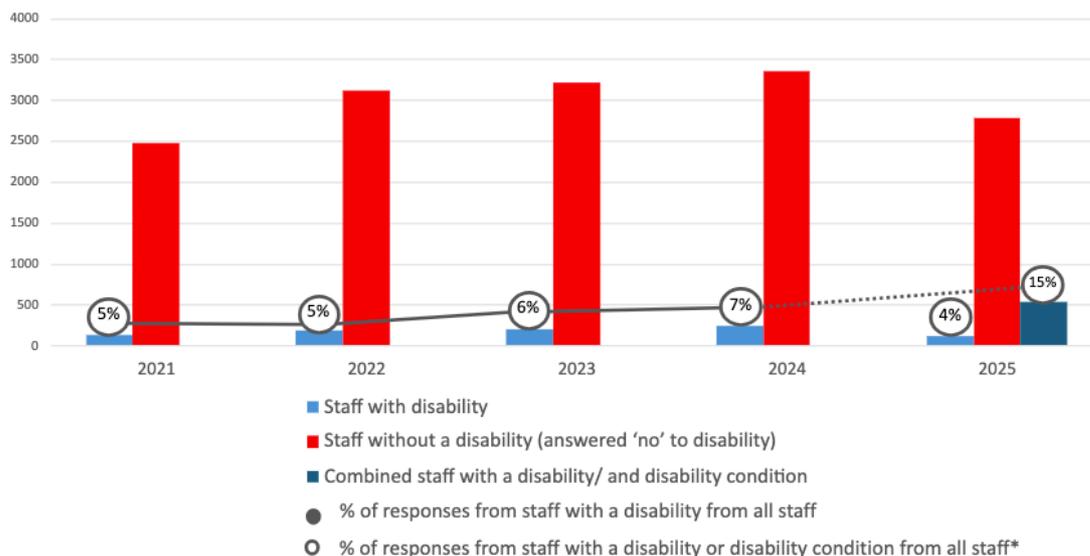
4.2 Key trends in employee engagement survey responses for people with a disability

As seen in Table 7, between 2021 and 2024 staff who identified as having a disability, and in 2025 a condition that might be considered a disability consistently reported lower scores across engagement, wellbeing, and progress compared to those who did not identify as having a disability.

Engagement (Figure 3) scores for the disability-identified cohort declined steadily, from 75% in 2021 to 64% in 2025, with a drop of 11 percentage points compared to a 4-point decline for staff without disability. While both groups experienced a sharp decrease in 2024, staff without disability saw a slight recovery in 2025, whereas scores for staff with disability continued to fall. Given the nature of the employee engagement survey, we cannot determine exact causes for this decline, which likely reflects multiple factors influencing engagement. However, the data indicates that the decline among staff with disability is primarily driven by lower agreement on two items: "My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment" and "I like the kind of work I do."

The gaps between cohorts are most pronounced in wellbeing (Figure 4) and progress (Figure 5), with disparities widening over time, reaching up to 14% in wellbeing and 12% in progress by 2025.

The introduction of a broader identifier in 2025, allowing staff to self-describe conditions that impact daily life, likely contributed to the increased visibility of these disparities. This expanded cohort offers a more accurate reflection of staff experiences and highlights the need for targeted inclusion strategies to address systemic barriers and improve workplace outcomes.

Figure 3.

Employee Engagement Survey "Engagement" Outcomes Between Staff Who Identified as Having a Disability or a Condition That Might Be Considered a Disability, And Those Who Answered "No" to the Disability Question

ENGAGEMENT

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Staff without Disabilities	79%	80%	81%	72%	75%
Staff with Disabilities	75%	73%	74%	67%	64%
Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions					67%

- — Staff with Disabilities
- — Staff without Disabilities
- — Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions

Figure 4.

Employee Engagement Survey "Wellbeing" Outcomes Between Staff Who Identified as Having a Disability or a Condition That Might Be Considered a Disability, and Those Who Answered "No" to the Disability Question

WELLBEING

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Staff without Disabilities	62%	64%	66%	61%	65%
Staff with Disabilities	56%	50%	55%	50%	50%
Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions					51%

- — Staff with Disabilities
- — Staff without Disabilities
- — Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions

Figure 5.

Employee Engagement Survey "Progress" Outcomes Between Staff Who Identified as Having a Disability or a Condition That Might Be Considered a Disability, and Those Who Answered "No" to the Disability Question

PROGRESS

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Staff without Disabilities	67%	67%	66%	49%	54%
Staff with Disabilities	60%	57%	56%	40%	38%
Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions					42%

- — Staff with Disabilities
- — Staff without Disabilities
- — Combined Staff with Disabilities and Disability Conditions

Table 7

Employee Engagement Survey Outcomes Between Staff Who Identified as Having a Disability or a Condition That Might Be Considered a Disability, and Those Who Answered "No" to the Disability Question
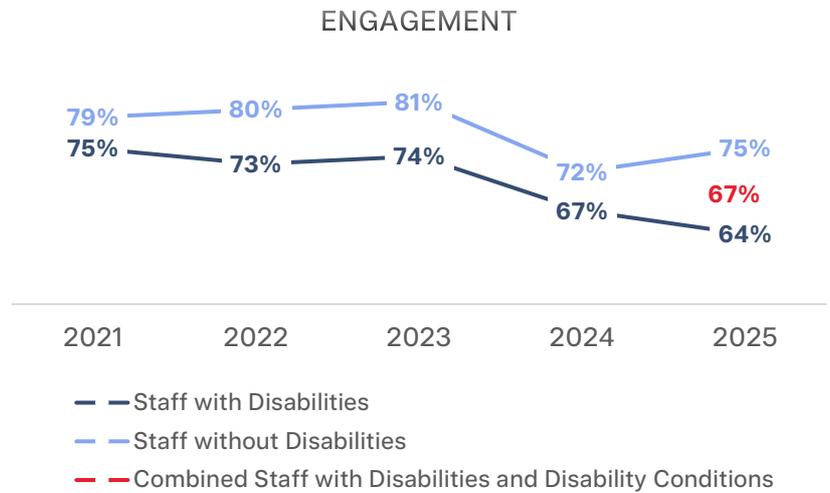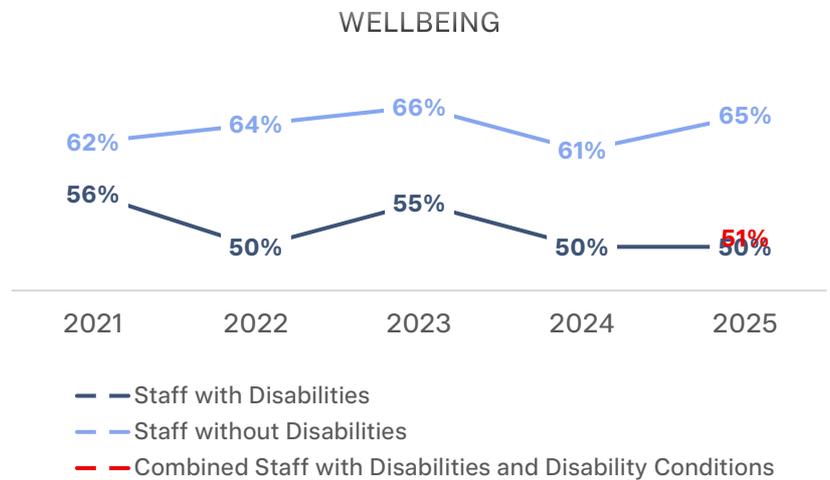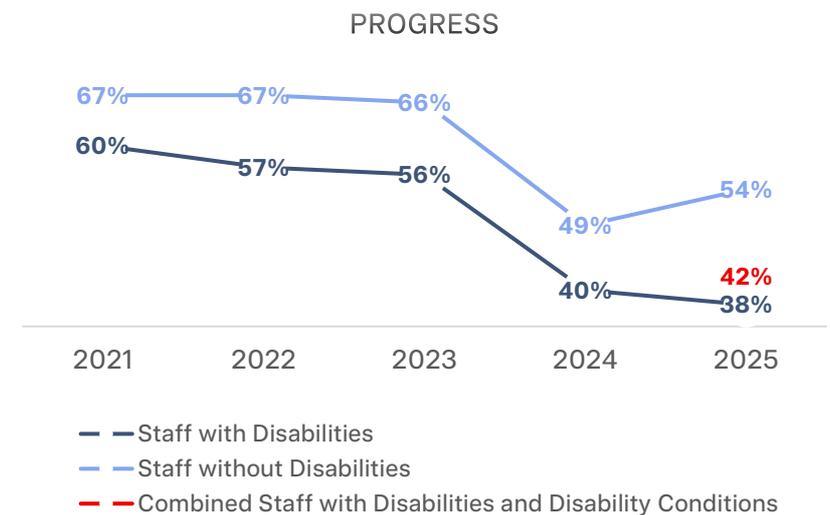
Outcome	2021			2022			2023			2024			2025			
	Yes	No	Gap	Yes	No	Gap	Yes	No	Gap	Yes	No	Gap	Yes	Combined	No	Gap
Engagement	75%	79%	-4%	73%	80%	-7%	74%	81%	-7%	67%	72%	-5%	64%	67%	75%	-8%
Wellbeing	56%	62%	-6%	50%	64%	-14%	55%	66%	-11%	50%	61%	-11%	50%	51%	65%	-14%
Progress	60%	67%	-7%	57%	67%	-10%	56%	66%	-10%	40%	49%	-9%	38%	42%	54%	-12%

Note: "Yes" indicates staff who identified as having a disability; "No" indicates staff who did not. In 2025, "Combined" includes staff who identified as having a disability or a condition that might be considered a disability. The gap represents the difference in outcomes between these groups. From 2021–2024, the gap reflects the difference between staff who answered "yes" or "no" only. The option to identify as having "a condition that might be considered a disability" was introduced in 2025.

4.3 Intersectional insights: engagement survey responses for staff with a disability

Outcome measures for staff identifying as having a disability or a condition that might be considered a disability revealed notable differences across gender identities since 2021.

Key highlights:

- Women reported the highest average scores across engagement (74.4%) and progress (54.6%) from 2021–2025.
- Men experienced a sharp decline in 2024, especially in progress (down 17 points) and engagement (down 9 points), with only partial recovery in 2025.
- Non-binary staff had the lowest scores in 2025: 64% engagement, 51% wellbeing, and 39% progress.
- Wellbeing scores fluctuated, with men showing the steepest drop in 2024 (down 11 points), followed by a modest rebound.
- Progress scores dropped significantly in 2024 for both men and women, suggesting broader challenges in career development.

Table 8

Outcome Measures by Gender ID for Staff Identifying as Having a Disability in the Employee Engagement Survey 2025

Outcome	2021			2022			2023			2024			*2025		
	Men	Women	Non-binary	Men	Women	Non-Binary	Men	Women	Non-binary	Men	Women	Non-binary	Men	Women	Non-binary
Engagement	73%	79%	n/a	74%	76%	70%	76%	77%	85%	67%	70%	65%	65%	70%	64%
Wellbeing	62%	57%	n/a	56%	51%	48%	60%	58%	58%	49%	54%	43%	50%	54%	51%
Progress	61%	62%	n/a	53%	62%	62%	53%	61%	65%	36%	44%	37%	40%	44%	39%

Note: Non-binary data for 2021 is excluded to protect anonymity (fewer than 10 respondents). 2025 data includes staff who identified as having a disability or a condition that might be considered a disability; 2021–2024 data includes only those who answered "yes."

4.4 Improvement on manager employee engagement items

Agreement with manager-related questions in the Employee Engagement Survey generally increased year-on-year from 2021 to 2023, with a slight dip or plateau in 2024. In 2025, scores remained stable or declined slightly for some items (Table 9).

The gap in responses between staff with disability and those without narrowed consistently from 2021 to 2024 across all manager-related measures. However, in 2025, some gaps widened again, potentially due to changes in cohort composition following the introduction of a broader disability identifier.

Table 9

Employee Engagement Survey: Agreement Percentages on Manager-Related Questions for Staff with Disability and Gap Compared to Staff without Disability (in brackets)

EES Question	2021	2022	2023	2024	*2025
My manager behaves in a way that is consistent with the values of Griffith	77% (–10%)	79% (–9%)	83% (–5%)	82% (–4%)	82% (–4%)
I have confidence in the ability of my manager	75% (–10%)	77% (–8%)	81% (–5%)	81% (–3%)	79% (–5%)
My manager listens to what I have to say	74% (–8%)	77% (–8%)	80% (–6%)	81% (–3%)	78% (–7%)
Supervision (category)	75% (–8%)	77% (–8%)	80% (–6%)	81% (–3%)	80% (–5%)

Note: Percentages in brackets represent the gap between staff with disability and staff without disability. For example, in 2025, staff with disability reported 80% agreement with "My manager listens to what I have to say," compared to 85% for staff without disability, a gap of 5 percentage points. Highlighted numbers indicate where agreement exceeds 80%.

*2025 disability data includes staff who identified as having a disability or a condition that might be considered a disability. From 2021–2024, only those who answered "yes" to the disability question are included.

4.5 Increasing workplace adjustment use for staff with disabilities

As shown in Table 10, as of September 2025, there was a notable increase in staff with disabilities accessing support through Griffith's Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) formal workplace adjustment procedure. The figures below reflect only those adjustments made for staff with a formally diagnosed disability and do not capture the broader, more inclusive definition of disability adopted by Griffith. In reality, the number of adjustments provided by HSW is significantly higher. From 2025 onwards, HSW will record all workplace adjustments, including those for staff with permanent disabilities and those requiring support due to temporary or fluctuating conditions..

Table 10

Annual Formal Workplace Adjustments for Staff with a Disability

Year	Number of staff who have undertaken formal workplace adjustments
2021	7
2022	11
2023	17
2024	10
2025	22 (as of September 2025)

4.6 Recruitment processes

The capacity for candidates to indicate their diversity was introduced with the implementation of the new Smart Recruiter system in 2022. (Disability accessibility and inclusion was a factor in our procurement decision-making). This has enabled Griffith to examine potential bias in our talent acquisition stages. We found that:

- There were essentially no differences in the interview rates (Table 11 and Figure 6) for people with a disability in comparison to people without a disability in 2022 and 2023. In 2024 people with a disability had a higher interview rate (+1.4%)
- In two of the three years measured, the hiring rate (Table 12 and Figure 7) for people with a disability was higher (2023 +0.1%, 2024 +1.9%) than for people without a disability.

Table 11

Number of Applications vs Interviews for People without and with a Disability, 2022-2024

Year	2022	2023	2024
Number of people without a disability			
Applications	6288	28496	8089
Interviewed	478	1429	368
Number of people with a disability			
Applications	135	698	185
Interviewed	10	34	11

Note: Analysis includes only candidates who disclosed disability status. Responses marked "Prefer not to say" and non-responses were excluded.

Figure 6

Interview Rate for People without and with a Disability, 2022-2024

Legend: ■ Interview rate People without disability ■ Interview rate People with disability

Table 12

Number of Applications vs People Hired for People without and with a Disability, 2022–2024

Year	2022	2023	2024
Number of people without a disability			
Applications	6288	28496	8089
Hired	136	382	103
Number of people with a disability			
Applications	135	698	185
Hired	2	10	6

Note: Analysis includes only candidates who disclosed disability status. Responses marked "Prefer not to say" and non-responses were excluded.

Figure 7

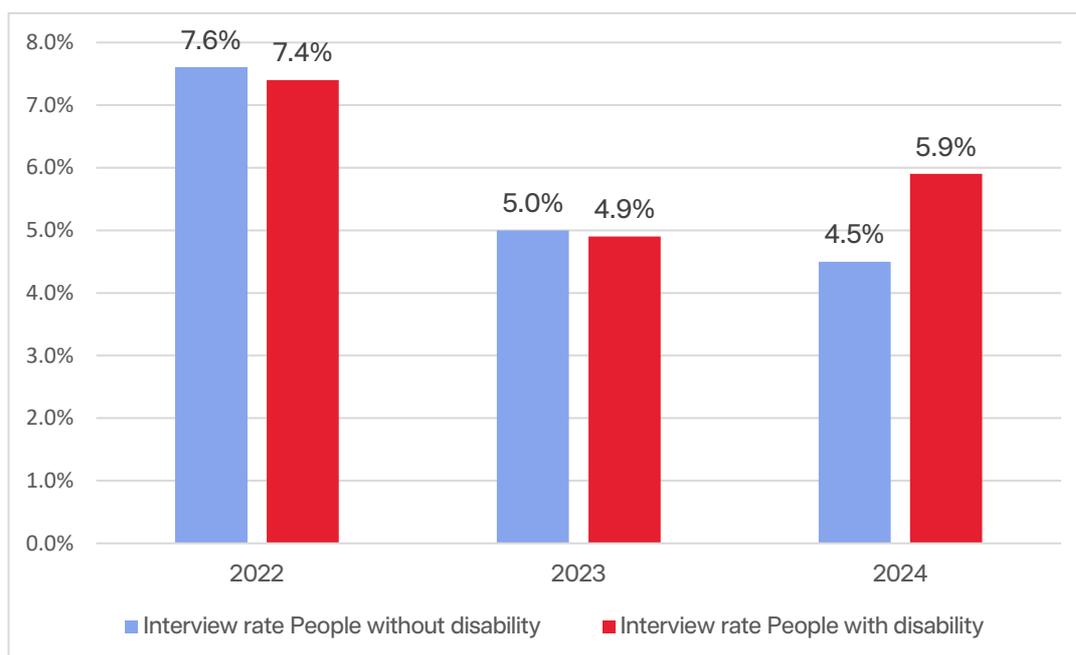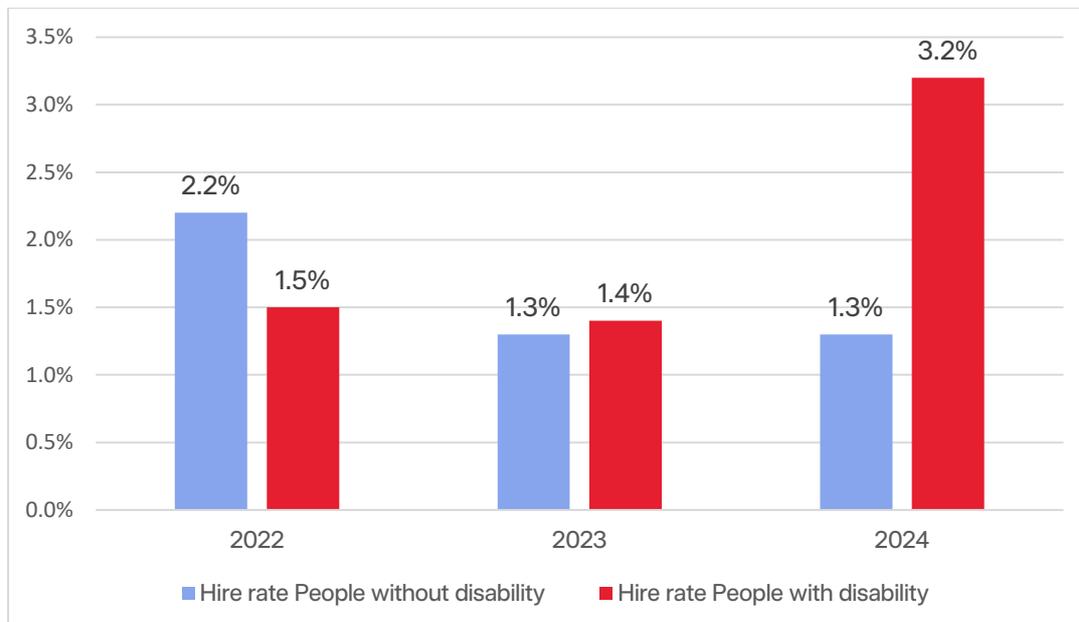*Hiring Rate for People without and with a Disability, 2022-2024*

5 Impact

Qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the experiences of staff with disabilities at Griffith University indicated positive improvements and sentiment towards the support for this group across the university; it also identified further areas of growth and action that could be undertaken to improve support for this group.

> "Everyone has been so supportive. Griffith as an organisation has given me everything that I have requested and more. I've never felt more included in the workplace that I do at Griffith which has been amazing." *Quote from Academic Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

> "I generally feel like Griffith is trying to do better and mainly that's because of the staff who are working, and trying to make sure that change happens... I wonder what more we can achieve because we have a lot of great staff working in the EDI space... so while there are still challenges. I'm hopeful." *Quote from Academic Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

5.1 Themes from qualitative data collection

In 2025, alongside the Employee Engagement Survey, staff shared their experiences as employees with a disability through consultations (n=11; 5 professional, 6 academic), plus discussions with managers (n=2) and key teams (n=4). These conversations explored staff experiences and current initiatives.

Findings highlighted Griffith's strengths in local leadership, practical problem-solving, and a shift toward universal design (UD) in the built environment. Staff praised supportive managers who act quickly on needs, and the $20m capital improvement project (Table 3) was seen as a strong signal of investment beyond compliance.

The key themes and supporting quotations emerging from these consultations are outlined and expanded upon below.[2]

5.1.1 Disability inclusion has improved but could be better

In consultations staff shared they felt that Griffith's strategic language signals inclusion but reported they observed a gap between policy and practice. Staff noted opportunities to strengthen alignment between policy and everyday practice.

> "They [Griffith Leadership] care about it [disability inclusion], they make comments about it and it's in strategic plans... Our values include staff and students with disabilities. ...But when it comes to practicalities, [it can] fall apart..." *Quote from Professional Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

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[2] Quotations have been included with participant approval, as required by the consent agreement for consultations. Quotations have been lightly edited for readability, and each quote was reviewed and confirmed by the participant who provided it to ensure their original meaning was retained.

Action Plan Items 1-8

5.1.2 Digital accessibility as a key enabler

Several staff members also shared that core systems and training modules often lack essential accessibility features, such as captions or screen-reader compatibility, which not only undermines compliance but also creates barriers for some staff.

> "[Discussing Griffith's digital infrastructure] it's these ongoing systems and programs that... [are] devoid of what inclusion looks like." *Quote from Academic Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Item 4

5.1.3 Meeting & event accessibility

Staff noted that accessibility in hybrid and in-person meetings can be challenging for hearing-impaired and Deaf employees. Workshops and meetings often lack microphones, captions, or Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART), making participation difficult. Additionally, meeting and event accessibility measures typically cater to only one type of disability, for example, providing Auslan interpreters for those with complete or near-total hearing loss, but not offering captioning services to support individuals with partial hearing loss.

> "[It's] been a struggle... to cope with... ad hoc meetings and... one-on-one interactions and networking so I can build my base as a leader because I can get a formal captioner in for a formal meeting... But then in that formal meeting, everyone stops to get a coffee and they get into little groups and talk. And I can't understand." *Quote from Professional Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Item 4

5.1.4 Invisible disabilities & psychological safety

Staff with non-visible disabilities (e.g., neurodivergence or chronic illness) highlighted the importance of psychological safety and clear guidance around workplace adjustments. Many expressed hesitancy to disclose their condition due to concerns about stigma or potential career impact. Additionally, the principle of Achievement Relative to Opportunity was reported as being poorly understood outside the context of grants and academic work.

> "It's more about the stigma, and I think a lack of understanding of [hidden disabilities and chronic illness]. ... [Some academics] have a poor understanding of disability themselves so [I feel] they wouldn't understand my situation and so there's no way I would feel safe stating that [I have a disability]." *Quote from Academic Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Items 4-5, and 9

5.1.5 Physical environment & wayfinding

Staff acknowledged that recent campus upgrades have improved accessibility; however, they suggested that real-time updates to signage and enhancements to emergency planning would further support predictability and safety.

> "The current construction on campus makes it very, very hard for me to navigate around campus [in my wheelchair], even though I can get from my car park to my building... When I need to go down to a cafe, [or] get lunch. I don't know where to go because a lot of the time pathways are changing and were accessible [but] now they are not..." *Quote from Academic Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Item 3

5.1.6 Cultural variability across units

Staff observed that inclusion practices often vary significantly depending on individual managers. While some teams demonstrate strong leadership and model best practice such as proactively discussing adjustments and fostering psychological safety, others lack awareness, confidence, or training to effectively support staff with disabilities.

> "I guess for me personally as a staff member with a disability, I think it's been pretty mixed and it's changed according to who's my manager... I have had managers who saw the fact that you had a disability [meant] you were less than everybody else. And I've had other managers, [who ask] "What do you need? We'll just put it in place." *Quote from Professional Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Items 4-5

5.1.7 Hidden workload for inclusion

Managers, project officers, and staff members reported spending significant time navigating processes to arrange workplace adjustments or to onboard staff with disabilities. These processes often involve multiple systems and unclear points of responsibility, which can lead to delays and create inequitable workload pressures for both managers and colleagues.

> "I don't think other people appreciate that if you're trying to be really inclusive, the extra staff time that it takes..." *Quote from Professional Staff Manager, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Items 4-7

5.1.8 Reasonable adjustments process

Staff reported that the process for securing reasonable adjustments can feel complex, time-consuming, and difficult to navigate, creating barriers to timely support. Additionally, external factors, such as reliance on the external employment assistance fund provider, introduce further challenges, including more lengthy approval timelines and limited flexibility, compounding the difficulty of accessing necessary adjustments.

> "I [have] an application with [the Employment Assistance Fund provider] at the moment for [ergonomic equipment], [and] the barrier [to that] has been more on the [Employment Assistance Fund provider] and the wheels of that being very slow..."
> *from Professional Staff Member, one-on-one consultation*

Action Plan Items 6-7

5.1.9   Workplace flexibility

Insights from the Workplace Flexibility Cygnet Award show that flexibility significantly benefits staff with disabilities. Those who access reasonable adjustments report higher job satisfaction, and flexible work arrangements often enable full-time work by accommodating health needs and medical appointments. However, access to flexibility remains inconsistent, as it depends largely on individual people leaders.

> "For me, working from home is one part of the flexibility. But the other significant part for me is just being able to take time off [for an appointment] or take a longer lunch if needed." *Quote from Staff Member, Workplace Flexibility Cygnet Focus Group – Staff with Disabilities*

Action Plan Items 6-7

5.1.10   Visibility & representation

Staff noted that disability inclusion currently lacks the visible campaigns and initiatives seen for Pride, First Nations peoples, and gender equity. This absence can contribute to lower visibility and awareness of disability as an integral part of diversity.

Action Plan Item 8

6 Further Action

The actions outlined below align with the following key themes:

- Providing education and resources to staff and people leaders.
- Enhancing communication to staff about existing policies and procedures that support employees with disabilities or disability-related conditions.
- Reviewing current policies, procedures, resources, and communication channels to ensure they effectively support staff with disabilities or disability-related conditions.

These actions adopt a multi-system approach, incorporating initiatives that deliver both quick wins and long-term, sustainable support for staff with disabilities or disability-related conditions at Griffith.

Table 13

Action Plan for Staff with Disabilities Support

	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
1	Staff with disabilities report lower engagement and wellbeing than those without disabilities. Enhancing resources, education, and supporting career development can foster inclusion and improve senior-level representation.	Expand learning and development to build inclusive capability across staff and leadership. Include targeted education to increase understanding of non-visible and fluctuating disabilities and promote the Achievement Relative to Opportunity principle for professional staff.	2026– ongoing	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Head, Capability & Development	Improved engagement and wellbeing scores. Increasing representation of staff with disabilities at senior levels over time.
2	Physical and digital accessibility barriers significantly impact staff	Continue to collaborate with Capital Works and Facilities Management to develop a plan and budget for an	2026– ongoing	Senior Project Manager	Chief Digital Officer	Implementation of accessible digital wayfinding solution.

	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
	and students with disabilities.	accessible digital wayfinding solution. Include features such as construction detour alerts, (closer to) real-time updates, and improved signage. Continue updating content in mandatory training modules and onboarding material.			Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education)	Positive feedback from staff and students with disabilities on campus navigation experience. Reduction in reported accessibility-related navigation issues.
3	Currently inconsistent data on staff with disabilities limits understanding and strategic planning. By incorporating demographic questions into the human resources system we can better understand our workforce.	Improve 'My Staff Equity' data categories and consultation opportunities to better capture disability-related information.	2026-ongoing	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development) Product Manager – Finance & HR	Chief Digital Officer	Enhanced accuracy and completeness of disability-related workforce data in HR systems. Increased voluntary disclosure rates of disability status by staff. Improved ability to track and report on disability inclusion metrics.
4	The experience of staff with disabilities is heavily influenced by their people leader's knowledge and support. By providing training and resources we can equip	Develop and promote staff resources on disability inclusion and workplace adjustments including staff disability access and inclusion procedure and toolkits for HR Employees and Managers.	2026	Disability Inclusion Strategy Advisor/Partner	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Comprehensive, easy-to-access resources and toolkits available on Griffith's inclusion hub. Increased usage of disability inclusion resources by people leaders.

	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
	people leaders to further facilitate inclusion for staff with disabilities throughout their employee lifecycle.	Refresh the "front door" of Griffith's inclusion hub to improve navigation to resources, toolkits, training, and support groups. Create an internal resource for all staff to assist staff to host meetings that are accessible for all members of our workforce and students.				Positive feedback from staff with disabilities on the support received from their managers.
5	Staff with disabilities face barriers in accessing workplace adjustments, and the process can be difficult to navigate. Equipping people leaders with 'just-in-time' resources can ease the burden on employees, ensure their needs are met, and support workplace productivity.	Develop and promote resources on the workplace adjustment process for employees with disabilities to people leaders via Griffith's EDI website. Liaise with the Disability Advisory Committee for input into the resources.	2025–2026	Disability Inclusion Strategy Advisor/Partner	Head, Capability and Development, Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Increased staff engagement with the adjustments process; improved manager understanding and responsiveness.
6	Staff with disabilities are more likely to require flexible workplace arrangements as part of the workplace adjustments	Make flexible work arrangements and workplace adjustment processes more streamlined for staff with disabilities by:	2025 – annual	Disability Inclusion Strategy Advisor/Partner	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Increased uptake of flexible arrangements; improved satisfaction with the adjustments process.

	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
	process. By ensuring the process and support is adequate for their needs we are more likely to attract and retain high quality employees.	Annually updating the Disability Advisory Committee on the workplace adjustments process, ensuring it meets the needs of staff with disabilities and the University. Creating staff resources that provide information on disability inclusion and workplace adjustments including staff disability access and inclusion procedure and toolkits for HR Employees and Managers (as per Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan).				
7	Small, timely adjustments are often delayed due to delays with the external employment assistance fund provider or administrative hurdles. Providing clarity to managers regarding what they are empowered to do with respect to workplace adjustments will reduce	Edit the Staff Disability Accessibility and Inclusion Procedure to make clear that managers are empowered to make workplace adjustments in their local area and with local budget.	2026	Disability Inclusion Strategy Advisor/Partner	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Staff Disability Accessibility and Inclusion Procedure revised. Reduction in delays for small, no and low-cost workplace adjustments. Increased satisfaction among staff with disabilities regarding responsiveness to adjustment needs.

	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
	administrative burdens and delays, particularly for simple and low-cost adjustments.					
8	Disability lacks the visible campaigns seen for Pride, First Peoples, and gender equity; storytelling and campaigns can facilitate inclusion, awareness, and normalise disability as a part of diversity.	Increase the number of articles (i.e., in Griffith Staff News) on disability inclusion and visibility. Seek to align with days of significance (for example, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Global Accessibility Awareness Day).	2026 – ongoing	Disability Inclusion Strategy Advisor/Partner	Senior Lead (Inclusion & Development)	Increased engagement and wellbeing scores for staff with disabilities. Increased recruitment and hiring of staff with disabilities over time. Increased number of Griffith Staff News articles related to disability inclusion and visibility.
9	Staff with hidden or non-visible disabilities often face the additional emotional and cognitive burden of having to explain their condition and advocate for understanding. This can lead to fatigue, stress, and feelings of exclusion. Increasing awareness and recognition of hidden disabilities can reduce this	Griffith University formally join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program (business member). Utilise training delivered by the organisation to uplift staff and student awareness on hidden disabilities.	Late 2025 – ongoing	Training and Events Coordinator - Student Disability and Accessibility	Manager, Student Disability and Accessibility	Increased awareness and understanding of hidden disabilities. Reduction in self-reported burden of disclosure among staff with hidden disabilities. Positive feedback on visibility and support initiatives.

Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcome/Targets/Success Indicators
burden and foster a more inclusive culture.					Uptake of Sunflower symbol by staff and students who wish to self-identify.