



Ventura Since 1924

ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN 2021-24



^Image: Vision impaired man sitting with a guide dog.

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Message from our Managing Director

Ventura plays an important role in connecting Melbournians with their destination, and provides a dependable, friendly and sustainable bus service for everyone.

Our founder, Henry Cornwall, built this company irrespective of the physical and societal challenges of living with a disability. As a family-owned company, we value everyone's right to fully participate in society, and for this reason providing a fully inclusive and accessible service to our community is a priority close to our heart.

We acknowledge that there is strength in growing our partnerships with our communities, customers, industry and government agencies; and will continue to work with these groups to overcome barriers and make improvements to ensure an inclusive, accessible and safer journey and workplace for all.

This is Ventura's first Accessibility Action Plan and is an important development in embedding our commitment to providing inclusive, fair and safe workplaces, and travel for those with a disability or individual accessibility needs.

We are proud of our efforts to date in building long-standing relationships with Wallara Industries, operating a large number of special school bus services, and implementing bus design changes to improve accessibility. We now look forward to implementing further best practice initiatives in accessibility and be well-placed to provide a truly inclusive workplace and travel option.

Andrew Cornwall

Ventura Bus Lines, Managing Director



^Image: Ventura Managing Director Andrew Cornwall standing next to a bus.



Ventura: About Us

Ventura is a fourth-generation Australian family company, proudly founded on the 24th December 1924 by Henry Cornwall. Henry was a Victorian farmer and war veteran when he first purchased a bus and began transporting customers between Box Hill and Spencer Street Station.

Today, Ventura is Victoria's largest public transport provider, bus operator and charter coach operator; employing over 1600 staff members to run and maintain a fleet of over 900 buses. Our depots are strategically located within our communities to ensure that we service over 42 million customer per year safely and efficiently.

Building on 98 years of exception performance and hard-earned experience, Ventura continues to consistently exceed targets for punctuality and reliability; and has achieved nearly 100 per cent service reliability performance over the past 10 years. With Melbourne's growing population and increasing congestion on our roads our environment is challenging. However, with more of our community encouraged to utilise public transport, we need to ensure that our network connects people to the places that they want to go and is inclusive and accessible for all.

Ventura is committed to making Melbourne's bus network more accessible, and we are committed to working with our external partners and the wider community to ensure that we can provide a cleaner, smoother, accessible and safe journey which is an inclusive travel option for everyone.

We have created this Accessibility Action Plan with a focus on improving our customers experience by enhancing our communication tools to include accessible formats, working with the State Government to ensure that our customers journeys are connected at accessible stops, and continuing to consult with the community and key stakeholders.

We recognise to implement this action plan we need to ensure all our employees are supported and empowered to make our organisation stronger through diversity of thinking, perspectives and experiences; to increase participation within the workforce we need to enhance our modern work practices to support flexibility and to provide a fully inclusive culture and workplace.

Legal Framework and Guiding Principles

As an operator of both public and private services, we work closely with the State Government, Department of Transport (Public Transport Victoria), Transport Safety Victoria, and other key clients and stakeholder groups to provide a bus network that is integrated with other modes of transport, schools and key community locations to connect Melbournians with their destination.

Our Accessibility Action Plan encompasses important outcomes that are underpinned by both Federal and State legislation, as well as relevant standards and plans. These include:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (Vic) 2006
- Disability Act (Vic) 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act (Vic) 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992
- Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (Cth) 2002
- Australian Standards (as relevant)
- Australian Design Rules under Motor Vehicle Standards Act (Cth) 1989
- Department of Transport 'Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2020-2024'

In addition to our requirement to comply with legislation, our Accessibility Action Plan is also guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), where disability is referenced in relation to education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, and data collection and monitoring. These Sustainable Development Goals and our Accessibility Action plan are also linked to several other internal plans and strategies, including our strategic plan, diversity strategy, mental health strategy, and corporate social responsibility and environment, social and governance frameworks.

What is Accessibility?

The term accessibility is likely to mean different things to different people. We acknowledge that accessibility goes beyond just physical access, and should ensure that a product, device, service, or environment is accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of disability, and to be inclusive for everyone.

What is a Disability?

A disability is any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions. A disability may be as a result of an accident, trauma, genetics or disease. A disability may be temporary or permanent, total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or invisible. The Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992, uses a very broad definition of "disability" to identify discriminatory practices, this Accessibility Action Plan seeks to eliminate disability discrimination from our workplace and be inclusive of all within our workplace and community.



^ Image: Customer in a wheelchair disembarking from the bus.

A photograph of two women, likely Ventura bus drivers, standing together. They are both wearing dark blue zip-up jackets over light blue collared shirts. The jackets feature the Ventura logo, which includes the word 'Ventura' in a stylized font and 'Since 1944' above it. The woman on the left has long, straight blonde hair and is smiling. The woman on the right has curly, light brown hair and is also smiling. The background is slightly out of focus, showing what appears to be the side of a bus with a window.

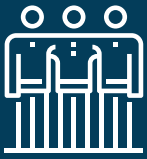
Ventura's Plan, Values, and Behaviours

This Action Plan identifies opportunities for Ventura to enhance our engagement with our community, to improve customer experience for all, and to build the frameworks for inclusivity within our workforce.

Our Accessibility Action plan has been developed in consultation with our external partners, staff and the community. We acknowledge the ideas, expertise and life experiences of those that have contributed to our accessibility plan, and that by working together we can achieve successful outcomes.

Our values offer the foundation to embedding accessibility and inclusion into our business. Ventura's behaviours are the way we are expected to act to bring our values to life.

Our behaviours help to foster a positive culture and will make the biggest impact in fostering a culture that is inclusive, accessible and safe, and makes Ventura a bus provider of choice.



We are Ventura

Common goal of accessibility, inclusion, and taking pride in representing Ventura.



Always doing better

We strive for continuous improvement in accessibility and service excellence.



Care & Empathy

We take an interest in our employees and customers as individuals



Seek to Understand

We listen before we speak and put ourselves in other people's shoes.



Think & Do

We take action to create an accessible, inclusive and safe environment



Be Genuine

We can be our authentic selves and tell the truth.



Challenge with Respect

We can openly express an opinion.



Give Credit

We celebrate each other's success and recognise a job well done.



Customer

Customers are at the heart of everything that we do: through this plan we will be able to build stronger relationships with our community, to better understand and respond to their individual needs in a respectful manner, and to ensure that everyone has full access to our services.



Future Focus

We are evolving for our customers and workforce: through this plan we will be able to provide the best possible outcomes for our workforce and customers, by enhancing our systems to ensure that information is accessible for all; and ensures that journeys are safer for all through enhancements in technology. This plan is the first step of a staged action plan that will evolve through further iterations and drive continuous improvement.



Teamwork

We are one and we support each other: through this plan we will be able to go beyond accessibility, inclusion and representation of people with disability in our workforce; and ensure that these are included at different levels of the organisation including recruitment, promotion and succession planning.



Ownership

We fulfil our responsibility and involve ourselves in Ventura's best interests: through this plan we will be able to increase the understanding and capability of our staff in responding to our customers needs, and ensuring that we all play our part in building a fair and inclusive organisational culture.

Public Transport Accessibility Plan

Ventura supports the Department of Transport (DoT) 'Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2020-2024' and commits to continuing to work with the State Government to deliver on the identified accessibility actions for the bus network.

The five priority areas of DoT's Accessibility Action Plan are:

1. Customer, community and engagement
2. Access to public transport services
3. Accessible processes and systems
4. Access to facilities
5. Workplace accessibility

Ventura will embrace, support and contribute to DoT's 'Travelling in the Shoes of Others' partnership program and increase awareness of public transport accessibility issues. We will actively seek to undertake a number of the actions listed within DoT's action plan to ensure that training and awareness is available to our staff members, we engage with the State Government to continually improve bus stops, interchanges and bus fleet to ensure infrastructure, information and specifications meet accessibility needs of our community.

The funding and strategy to upgrade bus stops and interchanges is the responsibility of the State Government. Our service delivery is monitored by DoT to ensure that we are delivering services as contracted.





Ventura's Priority Areas

Ventura have created this Accessibility Action Plan and our key priority areas in alignment with DoT's action plan. Our key priorities are:

Priority 1: Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities

We will provide systems and information in accessible formats to suit individual needs. We aim to support customers in planning their journey, their entire onboard experience when travelling to their destination, and easy means of providing feedback. We will also continue to provide recommendations to State Government on accessible bus specification and design of interchanges.

(Aligns to DoT priorities 2 & 4)

Priority 2: Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment

We recognise the important role our organisation and employees play in ensuring that our community can access and maintain employment through utilisation of our network. It also means that we need to support our employees in feeling confident in supporting customers or other employees with their individual accessibility needs; and ensure that we continue to develop with modern work practices, which provides an inclusive workplace and culture for all.

(Aligns to DoT priority 3)

Priority 3: Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability

We are committed to promoting inclusiveness and engaging with the broader community and our accessibility partners to contribute to increased participation in the community for everyone. We will continue to build strong partnerships with local organisations and reference groups to ensure engagement and promotion of inclusion within the broader community.

(Aligns to DoT priority 1)

Priority 4: Achieving tangible changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

We are committed to leading by example to ensure that there is a sustainable change in normalising accessibility for all within our community and workforce. We will build the foundations of our systems, policies and processes to ensure that our organisation creates a culture that is inclusive, fair and safe for all.

(Aligns to DoT priority 5)

Progress on Actions

This Accessibility Action Plan is our first developed plan focusing on disability action; however, we have had a long history of providing access and inclusion to people with disability within our community.

Over previous years, Ventura has implemented a range of actions which are aligned to key accessibility priorities. We have been developing strong partnerships with local manufacturers, suppliers, and services, to ensure that we are continuing to implement best practice in design, systems, and safety.

The below table provides a summary of actions taken to improve safety, inclusion and accessibility

Vehicle Specification

Route Vehicles

Our current fleet specification for route vehicles, is DDA compliant and has several features which reduce some of the barriers that our customers with disabilities may face on their journey. Specifications include:

- Compliant non-slip flooring.
- Increased the number of handles and hold points within the bus.
- Increased the number of 'stop' call buttons installed.
- Installation of Ride Safe panels and red seating.
- Introduction of hearing loops in buses to improve electromagnetic signals

Ride Safe Panels

In 2019, we conducted an internal review of injuries occurring to customer's during their journey. Vehicle design was attributed to as a contributing factor, in particular the Priority Seating areas. We partnered with Volgren to improve the design, whilst remaining compliant with relevant standards. We have now introduced extra modesty panels on higher risk seats, cushioned edges on wheel arches and backing boards on all new buses. We also introduced red coloured seating to indicate the safest seats to sit within the bus.

Wheelchair Restraints

We were the first bus company in Victoria to design and install a wheelchair restraint system on route buses in 2018. In 2021, we commenced working with Federation University Australia, through a program sponsored by DoT, to improve current wheelchair restraint systems for wheelchair users. This will include trials of an enhanced restraint system with wheelchair participants, with the outcomes of the research utilised for future bus design. Due to extended COVID-19 lockdowns the trial of restraint systems has been put on hold until 2022.

Onboard Announcements

In 2021, we commenced trialling onboard announcements and in-bus displays and are looking to expand this with GPS technology to announce and display all bus stop locations and assist customers which may have a sight/hearing/orientation impairment.

Employment Partnerships

Creating jobs for people with disability program

Ventura have partnered with Wallara Industries since 2016, to create meaningful opportunities to participate within our workforce. Starting out with participants completing bus cleaning duties on a weekly basis, we have expanded our relationship to include land and garden maintenance activities. The program has engaged over 30 participants, and we look forward to further expanding job opportunities and skilled tasks.

WorkFocus Australia for JobAccess services

In 2021, we commenced our partnership with WorkFocus Australia to participate in a 12-month program through JobAccess, to increase employment opportunities for people with a disability. Through this program we engaged with a National Development and Reform Commission advisor to complete a review of our current recruitment and onboarding processes and provide feedback and recommendation from an accessibility perspective. This feedback is being reviewed and implemented.

Community Participation

UN Women Project

Ventura have donated 4 buses to the Port Moresby, PNG community through the UN Women program to enable female residents with disabilities to travel safely.

Kiribiti Disability Buses (Pacific Islands)

We have donated 2 buses to ensure students with disabilities can safely access education facilities.

Our Action Plan

Ventura will undertake a phased approach to the implementation of the Accessibility Action Plan.

Year 1 (2021) will see the organisation deliver foundational activities which will provide us with necessary insight into our customers accessibility needs and build the foundations of our partnerships. Year 2 (2022) will be a year of continued action and building momentum by delivering a range of programs and services which will have an impact on our community and employees. Year 3 and 4 (2023-2024) will see us move into implementing best-practice actions to ensure our workplace and network is accessible to everyone, now and in the future.

Priority 1: Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services, and facilities

Initiatives	Measure of success	Responsibility	Timeframe
Review of Ventura's website to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and ensure compliance with Level AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0)	Completion of website review, and a report detailing clear recommendations	CFO / Marketing & Communications Coordinator	2022
	Recommendations and improvements are implemented	CFO / Marketing & Communications Coordinator	2023
Scope further developments for our Ventura Tracker app to enable safer and easier travel planning	Complete a review of Ventura Tracker app, and report detailing opportunities for improvement	COO / Planning Manager	2022
	Opportunities for improvement are implemented and Ventura Tracker app updated	COO / Planning Manager	2023
Enhance customer information and feedback options through Ventura Tracker app, website and customer hub	Improve response time to customer feedback by 5%	CFO / Marketing & Communications Coordinator / COO / Planning Manager	2023
Engage the Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) in future vehicle design to ensure both barriers and opportunities are considered in relation to accessibility (Dependent on priority 3)	Vehicle design specification process and sign off includes feedback from ARG	GM Fleet and Maintenance	2024
Develop a Customer Service Charter which ensures a consistent approach across PTV modes, and inclusive of accessibility for people with a disability	Customer Service Charter provides fair and equitable customer service outcomes for all	COO	2022
Review major interchanges and relevant bus stops and provide advice to DoT on matters relating to accessibility and inclusion	Complete a review of major interchanges and relevant bus stops and identify opportunities for improvement	COO / Planning Manager	2022
	Opportunities for improvement are communicated to DoT (or other relevant agency/operator)	COO / Planning Manager	2022

Priority 2: Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment

Initiatives	Measure of success	Responsibility	Timeframe
Review our recruitment processes to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and remove unintended barriers for candidates with disabilities.	Review is completed and a report detailing clear recommendations for improvement	COO / HR Manager	2022
	Recommendations and improvements are implemented	COO / HR Manager	2023
Establish partnerships with Disability Employment Services for recruitment	Establish partnerships agreements with 2 partner organisations	COO / HR Manager	2022
Actively seek to create opportunities for engagement with and recruitment of persons with a disability	Create a job library outlining jobs/tasks that can be reasonably adjusted/modified for accessibility	COO / HR Manager / SHEQ Manager	2023
	Identify and report on the number of applications of people with a disability. Increase %	COO / HR Manager	2024
Review existing partnership contract with Wallara Industries to increase meaningful opportunities for employment	Increase partnership commitment and number of roles sub-contracted to Wallara Industries	MD	2022
Rollout unconscious bias awareness training programs	Deliver training to managers and recruiters.	COO / HR Manager	2023
	Number of employees trained.	COO / HR Manager	2023
Ensure our (12) depots are audited against accessibility guidelines	Completion of depot audits, with report on recommend workplace adjustment.	GM Fleet and Maintenance / Facility Manager	2022
	Reasonable workplace adjustments are made as recommended	GM Fleet and Maintenance / Facility Manager	2023
	Long-term plan created for remedial upgrades to occur over 5-10 years	GM Fleet and Maintenance / Facility Manager	2022

Priority 3: Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability

Initiatives	Measure of success	Responsibility	Timeframe
Review our induction program to identify opportunities to improve and inform our workforce on disability	Review of induction program completed, with recommendations for improvement	COO / HR Manager	2022
	Recommendations for improvements are made to induction program	COO / HR Manager	2022
Disability awareness training for all frontline staff to improve knowledge and skills to assist customers who require additional support, and to support employees to be 'disability confident'	Training module developed and rolled out, with pre and post survey assessing disability awareness	COO / HR Manager	2023
	All employees trained	COO / HR Manager	2024
Establish an Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) for Ventura that includes diverse organisations to ensure the experiences of our community living with disability are considered	Building relationships with Australian Disability Enterprises to establish ARG	COO / HR Manager	2023
	Terms of reference developed, and 6-monthly meetings scheduled	COO / HR Manager	2024
Establish annual survey for users of the Ventura Tracker app & with relevant disability advocacy groups to capture feedback	Survey sent out to respondents	COO / Planning Manager	2021
	Increase in customer participation rate and satisfaction scores	COO / Planning Manager	2022

Priority 4: Achieving tangible changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

Initiatives	Measure of success	Responsibility	Timeframe
Embed Senior Leaders and champions to demonstrate the commitment to safety, fairness and inclusion for all	Building an avenue for all staff to raise and report access and inclusion issues	COO / HR Manager	2022
	Initiatives relating to access and inclusion to be raised at Operational Meetings	COO / HR Manager	2022
Enhance existing systems to include accessibility and inclusion	Development of accessibility and inclusion policy and procedures, and updating grievance procedures to reflect accessibility	COO / HR Manager	2022
Establish methods to capture, monitor and respond to feedback, complaints and grievances against Ventura employees from people with disability	Ability to capture information on accessibility and relationship with training materials. Continuously improve based on feedback.	COO / HR Manager	2023
	Analysis of each accessibility and inclusion related complaint and compliment; provide trends and recommendations to ARG and Operations Meeting.	COO / HR Manager	2024

Monitoring and Reporting of our Accessibility Action Plan

Ventura aims to be transparent and accountable for delivering on the outcomes listed within this Accessibility Action Plan.

To achieve this, we will:

- Publish our Accessibility Action Plan on our website and register the document with the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Participate in compliance and reporting mechanisms which have been set up by DoT to guide and monitor the implementation of this plan.
- Implement reports on our actions set out in this plan to be distributed to the Accessibility Reference Group for review and feedback.
- Summarise performance against each action which will be shared and discussed at Ventura Operational Management Meetings on a monthly basis.
- Summarise performance against each action which will be shared and discussed at Department of Transport Strategic Partnership Management Meetings quarterly.

Ventura Bus Lines Accessibility Action Plan will be reviewed each contract year through consultation with key internal and external stakeholders. Achievements and feedback will be used for reference in future Accessibility Action Plans.

If you need this information in an accessible format, please contact us on the details below. If you're deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.

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