Empowered Lives brings together people with disability, advocates, and organisations across the Victorian disability community.

Together, we have developed this platform for change – outlining the key issues that face Victorians with disability in their interactions with Victorian Government systems, and setting out achievable actions the Government can take to provide more opportunities for people with disability, more inclusive environments and communities, and stronger support when needed.

This factsheet provides information about one of the areas for change identified in the platform.

number 8Create jobs and support economic participation

**Goal:** Victorians with disability have a job they enjoy which suits their interests and skills.

People with disability face a range of barriers to securing and maintaining employment, leading to significant under-representation in the workforce.1 Barriers start at school, with career advisors and staff not understanding the range of career opportunities and pathways available for students with disability, and a culture of low expectations. After school, people with disability can encounter attitudinal barriers amongst employers and the community, and a lack of vocational opportunities and pathways.2 For people who cannot access employment, the Australian Government’s social security system provides necessary but insufficient support and has not kept up with the cost of living.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

Promote the benefits of employing people with disability

Changing community and employer attitudes, including building employers’ understanding of the benefits of working with people with disability, will be an important part of increasing employment opportunity for people with disability.3 The Victorian Government could develop a public awareness campaign to build understanding of disability across the community, and relevant information and resources to employ people with disability.1

Improve career advice and pathways

Understanding different career options and navigating post-school pathways can be challenging for many young people, and especially for young people with disability.4 Training should be provided for career advisors and other school staff in mainstream and specialist schools, so they are aware of current opportunities and best practice in developing career pathways for students with disability and can support students to pursue them.

Ensure the public sector leads the way

The Victorian Government has an important role to play in helping increase the inclusion of people with disability in our society and communities, including workplaces. This includes exploring ways the Government could provide greater support for people with disability transitioning into the workforce, and throughout their career, and increasing employment of people with disability in the public service. Government procurement processes could also be used to support the employment of people with disability in organisations from which the Government buys goods and services.

Support increased to social security

People with disability face much higher risk of poverty than people without disability.5 The difficulties experiences by people with disability in obtaining and retaining employment contribute to this, and many people rely on the Australian Government’s social security (like the Disability Support Pension) for their income, but eligibility is restricted, and payment rates are low.6

The Victorian Government should advocate to the Commonwealth Government for increased access to social security and more income support for people with disability.

1. ABS, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Victoria, 2015*, Catalogue #4430.0.
2. ARTD Consultants, *Ticket to Work pilot outcomes study:   
   A quasi-experimental evaluation of pathways from school to economic and social inclusion*, for National Disability Services, 2016; National People with Disabilities and Carer Council, Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia, National Disability Strategy Consultation Report, 2009, Commonwealth of Australia.
3. P Waterhouse, H Kimberley, P Jonas and J Glover, *What would it take? Employer perspectives on employing people with a disability*, Group Training Association of Victoria, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2010.
4. VCOSS, *High expectations and meaningful career advice: VCOSS Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools*, 2017; CYDA, Post School Transition: The Experiences of Students with Disability, 2015.
5. ACOSS, *Poverty in Australia 2014*, p.10; VicHealth, *Disability and health inequalities in Australia: Research summary*, 2012, p.5.
6. J Norman, ‘*New Disability Support Pension recipients down by almost 60,000, due to Gillard-led crackdown*’, ABC News, 21 February 2018.