

Empowered Lives

SECURING CHANGE FOR VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITY



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.



1 Empower and advocate with people with disability

Goal: Victorians with disability can represent themselves or be supported to make decisions and choices. Their voices are heard by the Victorian Government.

People with disability have the same rights as other people. This includes being able to make well-informed choices, and understand and execute their responsibilities. For these rights to be meaningfully achieved, people with disability need effective advocacy and self-advocacy, the ability to access information and communicate their needs, and a voice in the government decision-making processes that affect them.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

Increase advocacy support for Victorians with disability

Disability advocacy empowers people with disability, and their families and carers, to understand their human and legal rights, communicate their needs, and have these needs met.¹ The Victorian Government provides funding for advocates to work with approximately 2,000 people each year,² but many thousands of people miss out on these services. By increasing

its advocacy funding, as recommended by the Productivity Commission,³ the Victorian Government could ensure advocacy support is available to many more Victorians who need it.

Include people with disability in government policy and planning

It is important for people with disability to be represented and included in government policy, planning and decision-making, particularly where the decisions affect them. Different ways the Victorian Government could do this are by (i) ensuring people with disability are included in government committees and advisory groups, (ii) using disability impact assessments to consult with communities and examine the impact of new government proposals on people with disability, (iii) measuring community attitudes towards disability, and (iv) improving government data collection around people with disabilities' access to services.

Provide appropriate information and support for decision-making

Access to information and a means to communicate in a manner that meets individual needs is central to decision making and inclusion, from access to interpreting in Auslan or community languages to a means to communicate that is not reliant on speech.

The Victorian Government has an important role to play in providing access to communication services (such as the Language Services Credit Line) and to information, even after the NDIS has been fully rolled out. Where needed, support for decision-making is also essential, particularly for people with cognitive disability.⁴

More information

More information about Empowered Lives, including the full platform and an Easy English summary, can be found online at empoweredlives.vcross.org.au/

Deliver appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

Almost half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults live with a disability or chronic health condition,⁵ but very few receive adequate support services. To better meet their needs, significant investment in culturally safe and appropriate services is required across Victoria.

The best way to do this is through strong, sustainable Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs), which deliver a wide range of culturally appropriate services, designed and trusted by Aboriginal people.

The Victorian Government should support ACCOs to provide disability services to community, ensuring culturally safe services are available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, whether or not they are NDIS participants.

¹ Disability Advocacy Resource Unit, *What is disability advocacy?*, 2016.

² The annual target number of advocacy clients was increased from 1,700 to 2,000 in the 2018-19 Victorian Budget (Budget Paper No. 3, p.262).

³ Productivity Commission, *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Costs: Study Report*, 2017, Recommendation 10.4.

⁴ OPA, *Supported Decision-Making in Victoria: A guide for families and carers*, 2017.

⁵ ABS, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15*, Cat. no. 4714.0.

This project has been funded by the Victorian Government through a Disability Advocacy Innovation Fund grant from the Office for Disability.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Victorian Council of Social Service
Level 8, 128 Exhibition Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000
2018

