

# 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.



## 5 Provide affordable and accessible housing

**Goal:** Victorians with disability live in an accessible and affordable home of their choice.

A safe, affordable and appropriate home is essential for people to live a good life, but across Victoria many people with disability find it difficult, if not impossible, to meet this basic need. In the current housing crisis, barriers for people with disability include lack of affordable and accessible properties in both the private and social housing markets, rental insecurity, and lack of accessible crisis accommodation.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

### Increase accessible housing options

Victoria has a severe shortage of accessible housing, particularly in rural areas. This limits people's options and can lead to inadequate living situations and poor outcomes. Universal housing is designed to be used by all people to the greatest extent possible.<sup>1</sup> Requiring all new houses, apartments and other residential buildings to be built to universal housing standards would ensure new homes are suitable for every Victorian and increase the supply of accessible housing.<sup>2</sup>

For existing housing, people with disability can face disadvantage and discrimination in the rental market.<sup>3</sup> Changing tenancy laws to prevent landlords from refusing tenants permission to modify properties, where these modifications are



reasonably required to support a person's ageing, disability or health condition, could help people with disability when renting.

### Deliver an effective Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) model

Research shows that small-scale and dispersed housing produces better outcomes for people with disability.<sup>4</sup> Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) funding through the NDIS should be used to support independent living arrangements, and more innovative housing models, rather than a return to the group home model of the past.

The Victorian Government should advocate to the Commonwealth Government and NDIA for a transformed model of housing and supports: one which gives people genuine choice and control in their housing arrangements and assists people to live independently.

### 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/](https://empoweredlives.vcross.org.au/)

### Invest in accessible social housing and crisis accommodation

Housing in the private market can be unaffordable for many Victorians, but there is a serious lack of social housing (including public and community housing) to fill the gaps,<sup>5</sup> and accessible social housing is even more difficult to find.

The Victorian Government should accelerate growth in Victoria's social housing stock, and ensure that these new homes are accessible. Crisis accommodation, including refuges for women and children escaping family violence, must also be supported to be more accessible and inclusive.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> VCOSS, *Universal Housing, Universal Benefits*, 2008, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> I Wiesel and D Habibis, *NDIS, housing assistance and choice and control for people with disability*, AHURI Final Report No.258, 2015, p.17.

<sup>4</sup> I Wiesel and D Habibis, *NDIS, housing assistance and choice and control for people with disability*, AHURI Final Report No.258, 2015, p.25.

<sup>5</sup> DHHS, *Victorian Housing Register and transfer list by local area*, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> P Frawley, S Dyson and S Robinson, *Whatever it takes? Access for women with disabilities to domestic and family violence services: Key findings and future directions*, Compass Issue 05, ANROWS, August 2017.

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