

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.



6 Support health and wellbeing

Goal: Victorians with disability feel a sense of wellbeing and can exercise their healthcare rights. The Victorian health system is accessible and responsive to the needs of people with disability.

In general, people with disability face worse overall health outcomes than people without disability, even in areas of health that are not related to their impairment.¹ This reflects the health system barriers that people with disability face, including discrimination, physical or other forms of inaccessibility, and inadequate knowledge or experience of disability amongst healthcare professionals. Health services, including disability and mental health services, should be delivered using an inclusive rights-based approach.²

We call on the Victorian Government to:

Reduce barriers to the delivery of effective healthcare

There are many barriers to the delivery of effective healthcare for people with disability in Victoria. The biggest issue that was raised by many people in our consultations was health providers' lack of knowledge and understanding about disability. The Victorian Government should work with health services to improve their understanding of the diverse needs of people with disability, and all health services should implement disability action plans. Employing peer workers also helps build an accessible and responsive health system.



Another barrier to effective healthcare is the limited availability of specialist services for people with co-occurring psychosocial and cognitive disabilities. Additional training and targeted services are needed to help health professionals assess and effectively engage and support people with dual disability. Access to healthcare services in rural and regional areas, physical accessibility of services, and high out-of-pocket costs are additional barriers and we would welcome work by the Victorian Government to address them.

Guarantee service continuity and avoid gaps with the NDIS

People with disability can experience a range of complex health needs related to their disability, and the boundary between health- and disability-related needs can be blurry. The Victorian Government can help to provide a strong framework for managing the emerging gaps between the NDIS and health services by developing resources such as protocols and guidelines and supporting health services to continue providing services to people with disability until the interface issues are resolved. Additionally, appropriate support for people with mental illness – including psychosocial rehabilitation – must be available, whether or not they are NDIS participants.

Support choice and control

People's choice and control over their healthcare should be supported wherever possible. This includes providing information about health and healthcare in a variety of accessible formats, and providing opportunities for choice around healthcare providers, for people to ask questions and seek further information about their care, and for support to develop advance care directives where relevant.

¹ VicHealth, Disability and health inequities in Australia, Research summary, 2012.

² VEOHRC, From Principle to Practice: Implementing the human rights based approach in community organisations, 2008.

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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/

