

Office for Disability
Department of Health and Human Services
50 Lonsdale Street
GPO Box 4057, Melbourne 3000

To whom it may concern,
Re: Victorian state disability plan 2017-2020

Darebin City Council appreciates the opportunity to respond to the discussion paper regarding the development of the State Disability Plan 2017-2020 for Victoria.

Darebin City Council is committed to building a more accessible and inclusive community, and this is reflected through our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2019.

This submission has been compiled with input from the Darebin Disability Advisory Committee, and staff across different directorates of Darebin City Council.

The development of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020 is an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the government and community to forwarding the rights of people with disabilities in our community and promoting an accessible and inclusive community.

Darebin City Council looks forward to the launch of the State Disability Plan, and continuing collaborative efforts to promote access and inclusion across our vibrant and diverse community.

Kind regards,

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Community Development
Darebin City Council

Response to Discussion Paper Themes

Theme 1: Active Citizenship

Sporting, Recreational and Cultural Activities

Darebin City Council has implemented a 'Sporting Fees, Charges and Occupancy Agreement Policy' which provides incentives for sporting clubs who are actively building access and inclusion into the sporting club practices.

Darebin City Council has produced the 'Access for All: Promoting Disability Inclusion in Sport' Guide to support capacity building across sporting clubs in the region. This guide provides practical strategies and considerations for sporting clubs to support the inclusion of people with disabilities and acts to reduce attitudinal barriers to the social and civic participation of individuals in these organisations. Local councils are well placed to do this capacity building work with clubs as they have the direct links owing to the leasing of facilities, seasonal allocations and club development activities.

Recommendations:

- Consideration of the Access All Abilities (AAA) funding to be returned to local government rather than State Sporting Association's so that there can be an increase in ongoing participation via work with local sporting clubs. It is important that 'come and try' carnivals are translated into ongoing participation and local club involvement.
- Fund short term participation support to assist people with a disability to link with local sport and recreational options. Participants with disabilities at sporting clubs will often require more time to feel confident in a new setting and learn the 'rules'. This funding could be provided through local Council or as part of AAA funding.
- The Victorian State Disability Action Plan should include allocation for funding to support local Council upgrades of sports reserves and pavilions to meet minimum access standards. There are a number of categories covered in the current Community Sport Infrastructure Fund, but building works to support access requirements should be specifically addressed. Physical access to sporting and recreational facilities is an important first step in ensuring inclusion and participation of people with disabilities.
- Local sporting club/provider involvement to be a requirement in provision of state based funding for programs so as to ensure ongoing participation and sustainability.

Measure:

- Reported number of sporting club members with a disability as part of reporting to Council through their seasonal allocation/license agreements.
- Participation statistics to be collected 6 months after end of 'program' in order to measure impact.

Increasing Participation on Boards and Committees

Darebin City Council has engaged the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) to work with the Darebin Disability Advisory Committee, regarding the Voice at the Table (VATT) project. This project aims to support the active participation of people with cognitive disabilities on boards and committees through the provision of training and the development of guidelines. These guidelines are in draft form; however initial response to the introduction of these principles to our bimonthly Advisory Committee meetings has been positive.

Recommendation:

- The Voice at the Table guidelines should be implemented at State lead committee and board meetings to support the active participation of people with cognitive disabilities in civic life.

Measure:

- Number of state government advisory committees and boards of management employing principles to support the active participation of people with disabilities.

Theme 2: Rights and Equality

Issues of rights and equality are regularly raised through the Darebin Disability Advisory Committee. There are recurrent themes regarding access to public transport and mobility around the community, including accessible pathways and businesses.

Recommendation:

- All government websites should meet accessibility standards as per Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to ensure ease of access for people with different communication needs.
- The Victoria Planning Provisions and National Building Code should reflect the need for increased accessible housing in the community through amendments to include accessibility and universal design principles/guidelines.

Measure:

- Percentage of government websites that are compliant with WCAG 2.0 minimum standards by completion of 2017.
- Noted changes to legislation regarding the Victoria Planning Provisions and National Building Code to reflect universal design principles and accessibility requirements in housing stock.

Theme 3: Economic Participation

Fostering inclusive and diverse workforces

Darebin Council also has an internal 'Pathways to Employment Committee' whose purpose is to provide strategic and operational direction and recommendations to Council in relation to employment programs and initiatives that provide individuals a pathway to employment. This includes supporting people with disability, among other socially disadvantaged groups in the local community. This committee has supported the vocational placements of students from local special development schools across Darebin City Council, with council staff supported to undertake professional development to best support these placements.

Recommendation:

- Continued support for the Community Transition Support program that seeks to improve pathways through education and employment for young people with a disability. The North West Melbourne Regional Information Strategy promotes the cross sectorial provision of information for young people and their families regarding opportunities for education and economic participation.
- Actively supporting inclusive employment policy and practice in state government agencies.

Measure:

- Rates of employment of people with disabilities within Victorian State Government agencies.

Theme 4: Making the most of the NDIS

The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) represents a significant development in systems of support for people with lifelong disabilities in the Australian community. As one of the first rollout areas in Victoria, the City of Darebin has seen the impact that this will have on the sector and more importantly on members of the community. It is imperative that all levels of government play an active role in supporting the implementation of the NDIS, and that the business and community sector are engaged to ensure sustainability and success of the scheme. A key element in this is the provision of information and capacity building activities to ensure that the broader community are able to respond to the needs of people with disabilities with adherence to principles of access, inclusion and participation of all people in community life.

Recommendation:

- Maintenance of Building Inclusive Communities (BIC) Initiative

The Building Inclusive Communities Initiative (MetroAccess, RuralAccess and DeafAccess) came about as a key initiative of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012. It is a community strengthening initiative undertaken by local governments across municipalities in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). It is a whole-of-community and whole-of-life approach that supports the inclusion of people with a disability and their carers in community life.

The Access Officer at each council has local knowledge, local relationships and partnerships and is aware of and able to respond more effectively to local issues affecting people with a disability. The Access Officer also offers information & referral and advocacy support not only to local residents with a disability, but also to Council and the wider community.

Programs such as BIC has shown the successes that can be achieved at a local level and the integral role local government has in supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities. However the BIC Initiative only operates in Victoria, while the NDIS will operate nationally.

Measure:

- Maintenance of the Building Inclusive Communities Initiative across local council areas in Victoria.