



29 June 2016

State Disability Plan 2017-20
Department of Health and Human Services

To whom it may concern

I write on behalf of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) which represents 60 Muslim member societies within Victoria.

Our communities are diverse, including many people with disabilities who will be directly or indirectly impacted by the forthcoming 2017-20 State Disability Action Plan. Many people with disabilities seek enhanced community connections, which includes the worship and social activities of faith communities.

The ICV requests that the 2017-20 Plan recognises the significance of spirituality in many people's lives. I am aware that over the past decade or so, the Department of Human Services, Victoria, has funded at least two projects which sought direct feedback from people with disabilities about the spiritual dimension of their lives.

These reports were 'Spirituality and Disability: A process for Inclusion; A challenge for Community Service Agencies and Faith Communities (2005), and 'To Belong I need to be Missed (2010).

The important role of spirituality/faith/religion is rarely recognised when planners are considering quality of life. I refer specifically to services provided by the State – there is no spirituality 'box to tick'; that is, the opportunity to participate in community-based worship and social contexts of a person's interest and choice. Staff are not encouraged nor informed in order to consider and plan for this.

Both reports also recommended an extremely modest funding allocation of 2.0 EFT to support the development of educative and awareness materials for staff in residential settings to support people should they wish to practice their spirituality.

I also draw your attention to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* which is concerned about the difficult conditions faced by persons with disabilities who are subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, **religion**, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status.

The ICV requests you provide recognition of this important issue; both in wording within the 2017-20 Plan, and that recommended resources be made available for people to participate in the faith community of their choice.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. For further information please feel free to contact myself directly on 0430 545 800 / nail.aykan@icv.org.au.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nail Aykan', written in a cursive style.

Nail Aykan
Executive Director