A discussion paper of the
Victorian state disability plan
2017–2020
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Every Australian is entitled to equality, but – regrettably – this is not always the case for the more than 1.1 million Victorians with a disability. The Andrews Labor Government is committed to turning this around.

We are committed to the rights of Victorians with a disability to live and participate in Victorian society on the same basis as everyone else – to be supported in their aspirations for an everyday life where they are judged by their efforts and achievements.

The next four years will be a time of great change and opportunity as we transition to the NDIS – not just for people with a disability, but for the Victorian community as a whole.

To maximise the social and economic benefits of the NDIS we must do more as a state – in the public and private sectors, in our workplaces, our schools and community – to ensure that people with a disability can participate fully in everyday life.

This is what the state disability plan is all about.

Our vision for is for an inclusive Victoria which supports people with a disability to live satisfying everyday lives. With this in mind, the discussion paper outlines four broad areas where we need to take action to realise this vision – citizenship, equality, employment and making the most of the NDIS.

Our ambition is very clear.

We want a better Victoria for people with a disability.

We want Victoria to be a national leader in realising the social, economic and civic aspirations of people with a disability.

We are also committed to addressing the culture of abuse experienced by people with disabilities that we have seen exposed through recent inquiries by the Ombudsman, Parliament and the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The State Disability Plan 2017-2020 will be shaped by your feedback and ideas. I urge all Victorians with and without a disability to join this important conversation. Between now and 2020 we need to work together to gain momentum for social and economic progress for Victorians with a disability – then maintain that momentum to achieve real change.

The time for action is now. We can’t do this without you.
During 2015 we started the process of developing the state disability plan 2017–2020. We met with over 200 people with a disability, held two roundtable discussions with peak bodies, statutory authorities and advocacy organisations, and worked with the Victorian Disability Advisory Council to elicit 42 submissions from local government authorities. We also analysed the feedback from 775 people with a disability as part of the state disability plan 2013–2016 six monthly questionnaire.

This told us a lot about what’s important to people with a disability. Among the many personal stories, ideas and issues, some strong themes emerged, including that:

- inaccessible environments, structures, systems and services continue to exclude people from truly being a part of the community
- negative community attitudes have a far-reaching and pervasive effect on people’s lives
- people with a disability continue to struggle to be independent and have more say over their lives and the things that are important to them
- economic participation is vital – for identity, security and social inclusion
- there is a need for greater accountability, including measures and targets, to drive change.

This information, together with previous consultations, reports, surveys and research, provided the basis for two documents:

- this discussion paper
- A companion document to a discussion paper of the Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020, which provides more detailed information and evidence about the themes identified.

During 2016, the government wants to hear from members of the public – including people with a disability, carers and people without a disability – about the actions they believe Victoria should take.

The discussion paper, companion document and a range of other materials to assist you to provide us feedback are available at: www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au.

Open and close dates for feedback are available at: www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au


Post: Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020, Office for Disability Department of Health and Human Services 50 Lonsdale Street GPO Box 4057, Melbourne 3000

Email: statedisabilityplan@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 880 043

TTY/voice calls – 133 677 then ask for 1300 880 043

Speak and Listen calls – 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 880 043

All feedback will shape the final version of the Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020, which will come into effect on 1 January 2017.
Introduction

One in five Victorians has a disability. Each of these Victorians will experience disability in a different way – depending on their individual circumstances, life experiences, the nature and severity of their impairment and their needs and abilities. In addition, their experience of disability is shaped by the social, cultural, educational, economic and environmental barriers they encounter each and every day. People with a disability can also experience additional layers of disadvantage on the basis of their gender, age, cultural or religious background, Aboriginality, sexual orientation and socio-economic position.

While the nature and level of this disadvantage varies from one person to the next, Victorians with a disability are overall more likely to experience discrimination and stigma, live in poverty, have poorer health, lower levels of educational attainment and be unemployed.¹ This discussion paper is inclusive of all Victorians with a disability, and the thinking behind it is simple: we need to do much more for people with a disability to be fully included in the Victorian community. Our aspiration is for Victoria to be a national leader in this area.

Victoria is rolling out the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); Australia is a signatory to the United National Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability; our Federation has a Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and a National Disability Strategy 2010–2020; and, at a state level, we have the Disability Act 2006, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

Victoria’s two previous state disability plans have been at the forefront of a new way of thinking about disability, driven by a commitment to human rights and focused on increasing individual choice and control, and community inclusion. This thinking is at the heart of the NDIS, which is set to be fully operational by 2020.

The NDIS is a once-in-a-generation reform that will enable around 105,000 Victorians with a disability to get the support they need to lead full and active lives – going to school, TAFE or university, getting a job, being a part of the community. But this must be complemented by broader reform. We also need to ensure that our mainstream services – and more broadly, the Victorian community – is accessible and inclusive so that all people with a disability have the same opportunities as any other citizen.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability reinforced what we already know – despite the fact that Victorians with a disability have the same rights as their fellow citizens, they often face significant barriers to participating in social, economic and civic life, and as a result, are unable to reach their full potential. They are often on the receiving end of conscious and unconscious bias, where incorrect assumptions are made about what they can and cannot do.

There is a pressing need to do better for all Victorians with a disability.

It is a responsibility we all share – governments, businesses, communities and individuals.

What’s in this discussion paper?

The discussion paper outlines four themes.
The four themes are:
• active citizenship
• rights and equality
• economic participation
• making the most of the NDIS.
The Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020 will have a clear focus on agreed, measurable outcomes.

With that in mind, the discussion paper looks at what we need to do differently to drive outcomes that will make a concrete difference in the lives of people with a disability.

The discussion paper is intended to continue the conversation that started in 2015. Some ideas for action are included under each theme, but we want to hear about what matters to you – what’s going to make the most difference in your life – and what the government, business and community can do to help make this happen.

To assist you in responding to this paper, we have included three or four questions at the end of each theme, and at the end of the ‘Driving Outcomes’ section of the paper, to prompt your thinking. Each theme has slightly different questions, but they all ask:
• What practical changes will make a difference to you?
• How should we measure progress?
• What could government do to make a real difference in this area?
• What could the community and business sectors do to make a real difference in this area?

We also want to know if you think the four broad themes capture the issues that are most important to you and provide the right framework for the next Victorian state disability plan.

Your feedback will help shape the final plan.
Theme 1: Active citizenship

... because people with a disability should be able to participate in community and civic life.
‘If a Deaf person wants to sit on a board of directors for a community organisation or sporting organisations, it is very unlikely the organisation will pay for access requirements, such as an interpreter or notetaker, to aid their participation.’

Social Inclusion Inquiry report

Less than 1% of public sector board and committee members have a disability.²

Only 6% of local government representatives have a disability.⁴

68% of people with a disability participate in sport

79% of people without disability participate in sport.³
Theme 1: Active citizenship

Victorians with a disability should be active participants in the life of their state.

Victoria has made some important inroads over the last decade or more. We have a vibrant self-advocacy sector. We have the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, which is made up of people with a disability and carers to advise government on disability issues. Many more disability advisory councils operate at the local level. But there is still so far to go.

Around 20 per cent of all Victorians have a disability. It simply makes sense to ensure the needs and experiences of this large part of our community are included in public debate and decision-making forums. Among other things, this means improving accessibility and ways of communicating that enable all people to have their say, including at the ballot box. It is in everyone’s interest for people with a disability to speak for themselves, rather than to be spoken for or left out altogether. In the words of many people with a disability, ‘there should be nothing about us, without us’.

Being connected and having a sense of belonging is fundamental to everyone’s experience of a full and rewarding life. Not only that, as a community, we benefit enormously from the diversity and richness of ideas, experiences and knowledge that people with a disability bring to cultural, sporting, social and civic life. Integrating opportunities for people with a disability to participate in mainstream sporting activities and sports clubs leads to both increased social and civic participation and helps to break down negative attitudinal barriers.

Important things to know

- Early engagement with people with a disability reinforced that civic engagement and social inclusion are two of the most important issues to them.
- There are very few people with a disability in political, elected and other civic roles in the broader community, including committees of management and board positions.
- When it comes to social participation, people with a disability are often excluded from opportunities. Less than a third of Victorians with a disability (31 per cent) are actively involved in community groups, compared with approximately 36 per cent of the total population.
- In a study by Deakin University, only nine per cent of people with a disability said their social contact needs were fully met and only six per cent said that their community participation needs were fully met.
- The Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability found that while mainstream settings are considered ideal for improving belonging and social inclusion, many are not fully inclusive.

For more information see the companion document.

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6 Ibid., p. 9.
We need to support all members of the community to get involved and contribute – as active participants, decision makers, leaders, spectators and volunteers.

**Some ideas about important things that could be done over the next four years include:**

- actively increasing the participation of people with a disability on boards and committees
- developing the leadership potential of people with a disability and providing pathways for aspiring leaders with a disability
- creating more opportunities for people with a disability to have a voice, represent their interests and influence government directions
- developing new pathways and opportunities for people with a disability to join cultural and social clubs
- building the capacity of sporting codes, along with local sporting and recreation clubs, to include people with a disability.

**Questions:**

- As an individual what would make the most difference to you in this area?
- How should we measure progress?
- What could government do to make a real difference in this area?
- What could the community and business sectors do to make a real difference in this area?
Theme 2: Rights and equality

... protecting and promoting rights and equal access to opportunities
Disability discrimination has been the single largest cause of complaints to the VEOHRC for the last five years.\(^7\)

45% of people with a disability live in or near poverty.\(^9\)

Nearly 1 in 4 women and girls with disability are reported victims of family violence.\(^8\)

People with a disability are 6 times more likely to be renting from a state housing authority.\(^10\)


\(^8\) Ibid., p. 13.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 11.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 15.
Victorians are committed to the concept of universal rights and a fair go.

But there is a gap between what we believe and how we behave.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability found that ‘Negative attitudes towards disability persist in the community and have consequences for how people treat and interact with people with disability. Low expectations, avoidance, discrimination and hostility result in exclusion and non-meaningful participation’.

Recent inquiries into disability care by the Victorian Ombudsman and Parliament have highlighted the abuse that people with a disability continue to experience. Exposure to abuse and violation of human rights also occurs in the wider community. The recent Royal Commission into Family Violence identified family violence is part of the serious and much broader issue of violence and abuse against people with a disability.

Challenges to rights and equality are compounded by disadvantage and discrimination that people with a disability can also experience on the basis of gender, age, sexuality, Aboriginality, cultural background, faith and migration status. All of these factors influence how people navigate day-to-day life and the level of inclusion or exclusion they face.

Along with all other Victorians, people with a disability regularly use a wide range of publicly available services and engage with a diverse range of systems. Unfortunately, though, the day-to-day reality for many people with a disability is one of inequitable access to places, services and information – for everything from housing to education and employment. People with a disability also experience inequitable treatment across a range of key service systems including health, transport and justice.
Equality demands that action be taken to turn this around. This means making everyday services more responsive to the needs of people with a disability and improving quality and safety to ensure that they can use these services with confidence.

We already have a strong disability advocacy sector, but we can do more. Having the right safeguards and universal protections in place to promote and protect people’s rights is at the heart of a just and fair society. This provides the checks and balances that ensure people’s dignity and rights are protected and that there is a strong foundation supporting inclusion in all aspects of life.

We also have work underway to improve the accessibility and responsiveness of a range of service systems. This includes the commitment to inclusive education and support for children and young people with a disability under the government’s Education State and the Special Needs Plan for Victorian schools.

State-funded health and community services are being asked to improve accessibility for people with a disability as part of providing quality and person-centred care.

Government is continuing to improve access to transport for all Victorians. This includes removing physical barriers to access, improving service quality and ensuring that accessibility is central to how we design, plan and expand our transport network.

Local governments are also leading the way to increase the accessibility of local businesses, such as working with local traders to improve access to local shopping precincts, including cafes and restaurants, to ensure that people with a disability can shop and dine locally.

**Some ideas about important things that could be done over the next four years include:**

- strengthening the capacity of the disability advocacy sector to address both systemic and individual issues
- including disability-focused family violence prevention actions, such as training and education programs, within the broader state family violence prevention strategy
- increasing accessible housing options, both in the public and private markets
- promoting universal design principles for all urban planning and building practices
- ensuring all newly built government schools are designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students
- improving and increasing training for early childhood educators and teachers to meet the needs of children with disabilities
- improving accessibility of online government information
- incorporating responsiveness to the needs of people with a disability in quality standards and purchasing for mainstream public services
- developing strategies to challenge inappropriate and disrespectful public attitudes and behaviours
- more targeted efforts to ensure that people with disabilities access effective preventative health and screening services.

**Questions:**

- What do you see as the most important equality issues that need to be addressed?
- How should we measure progress?
- What could government do to make a real difference in this area?
- What could the community and business sectors do to make a real difference in this area?
Theme 3: Economic participation

... because people with a disability need to be a vital part of Victoria’s workforce
Australia ranks 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment of people with a disability.\textsuperscript{12}

53\% of people with a disability in the workforce compared with 83\% of people without a disability.\textsuperscript{13}

38\% of people with a disability of working age have completed year 12 compared with 61\% of people without a disability.\textsuperscript{11}

The disability employment rate in the Victorian public sector workforce has fallen to 3\%.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 18.
A discussion paper of the Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020

Theme 3: Economic participation

Important things to know

- Economic participation is fundamental to social inclusion but in Victoria:
  - 43 per cent of people with a disability rely on a government pension or allowance as their main source of income, compared with only 10 per cent of people without disability
  - underemployment is a common theme reported by people with a disability in part-time employment. This is reflected in a significantly lower average income of $400 per week for people with a disability, compared with $750 per week for people without a disability
  - less than 27 per cent of people with a disability aged between 15 and 64 have a bachelor degree or higher, compared with about 40 per cent of people without disability
  - only 49.9 per cent of vocational education and training graduates with a disability were employed after completing their training, compared with 76.2 per cent of graduates without a disability
- Throughout the early consultations, we heard repeatedly that people with a disability want a job, and they want their own money so they can make their own choices.

For more information see the companion document.

Victorians with a disability have the right to a fair go in the workplace.

They have the right to a good education.

They have the right to realise their employment potential. And they have the right to be paid a fair wage.

Unfortunately, though, many people with a disability have poor educational outcomes, which limit their pathways to further education and work options. And as a consequence, they miss out on getting the skills and preparation they need to be a part of the economic life of our community.

Not only this, people with a disability can also face a whole range of physical and attitudinal barriers to participating in the workforce. Reducing workplace discrimination – in getting a job, in keeping a job, or in building a career – isn’t just good for the individual, it’s good for the economy. Improving employment outcomes for people with a disability can boost the gross domestic product and create more productive workplaces. Having more people with a disability working as empowered business owners and as consumers will also drive economic activity.

We want a Victoria where people with a disability live independently, find their own identity and place in the community, and secure their economic future.

The NDIS will create new opportunities for people with a disability to take part in the economy – whether as workers, employers, entrepreneurs, investors or consumers.

To maximise the broader economic benefits of the NDIS, though, more needs to done to break down the barriers to ensure workplaces, including those in the private and public sectors, are inclusive and reflect the diversity of all Victorians.
We have made some inroads but many challenges and opportunities lie ahead. For instance, a number of government departments have partnered with the Australian Network on Disability to offer ‘Stepping into’ internships for university students with a disability in order to provide them with valuable experience in the Victorian public service.

**Some ideas about important things that could be done over the next four years include:**

- developing a specific action plan to increase the economic participation of people with a disability in Victoria in partnership with the business sector
- expanding access to skills development and employment support to assist people with disability to secure sustainable employment
- strengthening support for teachers and schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- improve learning and participation outcomes for students with disabilities through the initiatives in the Special Needs Plan for Victorian schools
- working with employers to foster inclusive and diverse workplaces
- influencing suppliers to adopt practices that will increase the economic participation of people with a disability by leveraging the government’s role as a major procurer of goods and services
- developing strategies to increase the employment of people with a disability in the Victorian public service.

**Questions:**

- What do you think should be done to promote economic participation for people with a disability?
- How should we measure progress?
- What could government do to make a real difference in this area?
- What could the community and business sectors do to make a real difference in this area?
Theme 4: Making the most of the NDIS

... because mainstream services are critical to the success of the scheme
NDIS rollout map for Victoria
Victoria will roll out the NDIS in phases, from 1 July 2016.

- **2015**: Barwon
- **2016**: North Eastern Melbourne
- **2017**: Western District, Central Highlands, Loddon, Inner Gippsland, Inner Eastern Melbourne, Outer Eastern Melbourne, Ovens Murray
- **2018**: Hume Moreland, Brimbank Melton, Western Melbourne, Bayside Peninsula, Southern Melbourne
- **2019**: Outer Gippsland, Mataas, Goulburn

Metro enlarged
The Victorian state disability plan is about increasing Victoria’s inclusion and accessibility through concrete actions over the next four years.

At the same time, Victoria will be rolling out the NDIS, which starts on 1 July 2016 and will proceed geographically over the next three years.

The NDIS is a new way of providing support to people with a permanent and significant disability, their families and carers so that they have the dignity, lifestyle choices and human rights protections that many of us take for granted.

During the period of the next state disability plan, it will be a priority for us to get the NDIS right.

By July 2019, there will be around 105,000 Victorians accessing the NDIS. In addition, a wider group of people with a disability will be provided information and support activities funded by the NDIS.

Victorians with a disability, including people participating in the NDIS, will continue to receive services from the mainstream system, so we need to keep working on the accessibility and usability of our mainstream services.

This will help us improve outcomes for people with a disability in areas such as health, education, employment and housing.

We will also need to ensure there is effective coordination between mainstream services and the NDIS.

Theme 4: Making the most of the NDIS

Important things to know

• The Victorian Government is investing $2.5 billion a year in the NDIS to support Victorians with disabilities, their families, service providers and staff, and provide a disability safety net for all Victorians.

• The NDIS is a national program that will provide a new way of delivering services and support for people with permanent and significant disability in Australia.

• People with disability who participate in the NDIS can choose the supports and services that meet their individual needs, rather than have to fit into a one-size-fits-all system.

• The NDIS will be rolled out progressively in Victoria over a three-year period from July 2016.

• The scheme is available to Victorians who have a permanent impairment or condition and:
  - have Australian residency
  - are under 65 years of age
  - need support from a person or equipment to do everyday activities.

• Visit the NDIS website for more: www.vic.gov.au/ndis
Questions:

- What do you think are the most important ways in which government can assist Victorians to get the most from the NDIS?
- What do you think are the most important ways in which business and the community sector can assist Victorians to gain most benefit from the NDIS?
Driving outcomes

... because we all have a role to play in achieving better outcomes
More than 80% of Australians use the internet.\textsuperscript{15}

‘Because there are no benchmarks, no one can be held to account for failing to reach them.’

\textit{Social Inclusion Inquiry report}

‘The right to govern is a privilege and it must never be taken for granted. Governments must also be honest and transparent.’

\textit{Social Inclusion Inquiry report}

‘Rapid changes in the use of Internet enabled technologies can empower people with disability.’

\textit{Social Inclusion Inquiry report}

Driving outcomes

Victoria wants to see better outcomes for people with a disability.

If, as a state, we are serious about tackling the exclusion experienced by many Victorians with a disability, government needs to lead the way.

We already have disability action plans in place across government and most local councils.

This is a step in the right direction. However, we need to get better at joining up our efforts, across all levels.

We also need to track our progress.

We need to be more open and transparent about the action being taken.

We need to work in partnership with business and communities to drive action.

And, we need to measure what the outcomes of those actions are.

Some ideas about important things that could be done over the next four years include:

- better integrating disability planning across state and local government, including across all government departments and relevant statutory authorities
- developing an outcomes framework with clear measures and targets to drive greater public sector accountability
- strengthening social media and web platforms to engage with people and identify issues and systemic barriers
- strengthen transparency through public reporting.

Questions:

- What can government do to drive accountability for outcomes?
- How should government measure the impact of the plan?
- How should people with a disability be involved in the process?
The Victorian state disability plan 2017–2020 is being developed and will be implemented during a time of significant change in the disability landscape in Victoria. The plan and related actions will need to adapt and change as the environment transforms as a result of the NDIS. The plan will be our blueprint for the reforms that need to be done to maximise the benefits of the NDIS. This discussion paper outlines some of the Victorian Government’s thinking, but we need to hear from Victorians of all backgrounds. We want your ideas and vision for the future. The state disability plan will be released in December, and take effect from 1 January 2017. All contributions will help us finalise the plan. The greater the community engagement, the better the outcome for all Victorians. Find out more: www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au

Conclusion