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| Victorian disability advocacy futures plan 2018–2020 |
| Summary |

# About disability advocacy

Advocacy is a critical safeguard to prevent abuse and neglect and to uphold, promote and protect the rights of people with disability. In Victoria disability advocacy has a proud history of championing the human rights of people with disability. Self advocates and advocacy agencies have led the disability rights movement in building a fairer community for people with disability.

The Victorian Government through the Office for Disability provides funding and support for disability advocacy through the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program.Every year we provide approximately $3 million to 24 [disability advocacy agencies](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disability-advocacy-and-self-help) <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disability-advocacy-and-self-help>

# Purpose of this plan

The purpose of the **Victorian disability advocacy futures plan 2018–2020** is to ensure a successful disability and self advocacy sector now and into the future. The plan will go until 31 December 2020 and will guide the Victorian Government to:

* make improvements to the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program
* decide how best to invest funding, including through the 2018–19 State Budget
* respond to the community’s call for better access to advocacy
  + determine a longer term approach to disability advocacy in Victoria from 2021.

Disability advocacy is a key priority of [**Absolutely everyone: state disability plan 2017–2020**](http://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au)**.** <http://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au>

# How we made the plan

Before we wrote this plan we wanted to find out what people thought would improve disability advocacy. We developed a discussion paper to outline our ideas and asked people for feedback. The discussion paper is available on the [state disability plan website](http://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/advocacy-futures) <http://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/advocacy-futures>

We received 37 responses from individuals with disability, advocacy groups and self advocacy groups and representative organisations. In addition to this we received two group submissions from the Self Advocacy Resource Unit and the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit on behalf of advocates and self advocates.

## Vision for the Victorian disability advocacy futures plan

**A thriving independent disability advocacy and self-advocacy sector led by and for people with disability that reflects their diverse voices and takes action to uphold and promote their rights, wellbeing and interests.**

## How the plan works

The plan has four outcome areas which demonstrate the progress we want to make towards our vision. The four outcome areas are:

* Inclusion – Disability advocacy is inclusive of everyone
* Connection – Disability advocacy is strong, connected and powerful
* Responsiveness – Disability advocacy is responsive and timely
* Sustainability – Disability advocacy grows into the future.

## How the plan is funded

We have committed $4.3 million over two years for the sector which will be provided over 2018-19 and 2019-20. Funding can be summarised as follows:

* a 25 per cent increase in funding for each of the 24 agencies supported through the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program ($1.55 million over two years).
* $2.15 million over two years through a Victorian disability advocacy futures grants program.
* funding to support delivery and evaluation of the plan, and to make improvements to the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program ($0.6 million over two years).

# What we will do

The plan includes 22 actions under each of the four outcome areas. These will help us to achieve our aims. There are two categories of action under each outcome area:

* funding to the sector – initiatives for which we can fund disability advocacy agencies and other organisations to achieve our outcomes
* other support for the sector – actions the Victorian Government will take to support the sector to achieve our outcomes.

## Outcome 1: Inclusion – Disability advocacy is inclusive of everyone

This outcome area includes actions to support disability advocacy agencies to capture the diverse voices and needs of people with disability. Actions are summarised below.

**Action 1.1 –** We will provide funding through the **Victorian disability advocacy futures grants** **program** which will be established in early 2019. The program will include an ‘Inclusion’ funding stream to help deliver actions under this outcome.This funding stream will focus on supporting people from diverse and hard to reach backgrounds to access and lead advocacy.

**Action 1.2 –** We will support advocacy agencies delivering initiatives for hard to reach and diverse groups to share their good practice with other sectors.

**Action 1.3 –** We will identify opportunities to support disability advocacy agencies to employ people with disability through **Absolutely everyone** and **Every opportunity: Victorian economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020.** We will continue to work with partner organisations to deliver leadership programs for people with disability including sector capacity building to ensure representation on committees and boards.

**Action 1.4 –** We will:

* collect better information and data on the numbers of people with disability from diverse groups accessing advocacy
* update program guidelines to reinforce the importance of increasing the representation of people with disability in paid and unpaid positions, governance and decision-making processes
* work with partner organisations to provide information about the program in community languages and promote this to different sectors and relevant government departments
* publish and promote case studies of initiatives supporting disability advocacy for everyone.

## Outcome 2: Connection – Disability advocacy is strong, connected and powerful

This outcome area includes actions to support different types of advocacy, increase the reach of advocacy and support partnerships – within and outside of the sector. Actions are summarised below:

**Action 2.1 –** We will provide funding through the **Victorian disability advocacy futures grants program** which will be established in early 2019. The program will include a ‘Connection’ funding stream to help deliver actions under this area. This funding stream will focus on supporting advocacy agencies to undertake systemic advocacy, have the resources they need to grow and encourage agencies to build partnerships.

**Action 2.2 –** We will provide opportunities for disability advocacy agencies and self advocates to share systemic advocacy initiatives or to discuss important issues for people with disability- with each other or with relevant government departments.

**Action 2.3 –** We will work in partnership with local government and other organisations to develop a list of free or low-cost community venues for use by self advocates and disability advocacy agencies.

**Action 2.4 –** We will publish and promote case studies of systemic and self advocacy initiatives. We will share information on systemic advocacy initiatives with relevant departments to influence outcomes through **Absolutely everyone** and related initiatives.

## Outcome 3: Responsiveness – Disability advocacy is responsive and timely

This outcome area includes actions to increase the capacity of disability advocacy agencies and raise the profile of disability advocacy. Actions are summarised below.

**Action 3.1 –** We will provide a 25 per cent funding increase to 24 agencies supported through the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program. This will help deliver the outcomes from the plan while ensuring agencies are able to respond to rapid growth in the sector.

**Action 3.2** **–** We will provide funding through the **Victorian disability advocacy futures grants** **program** which will be established in early 2019. The program will include a ‘Responsiveness’ funding stream to help deliver actions under this outcome area. This stream will focus on building awareness of advocacy and ensuing staff and volunteers have the skills they need. This stream will also ensure people can access advocacy where and when they need it.

**Action 3.3 –** We will commission research to help develop a simpler and more transparent intake process for people with disability and their families from 2021.

**Action 3.4** **–** We will promote the role and importance of disability advocacy as part of broader work to change attitudes. This will include working with other parts of government to include disability advocates and self advocates in relevant campaigns and programs.

**Action 3.5 –** We will ensure program guidelines support advocacy agencies to provide accessible and responsive service. We will provide program guidelines that include clear information on existing requirements as part of funding and service agreements. We will help advocacy agencies understand and implement these guidelines.

**Action 3.6 –** We will work with partner organisations to investigate the resources and value of developing a nationally accredited qualification in disability advocacy.

**Action 3.7 –** We will work with partner organisations to provide a more consistent and streamlined intake process for advocates.

## Outcome 4: Sustainability – Disability advocacy grows into the future

This outcome area includes actions to increase the capacity of disability advocacy agencies and raise the profile of disability advocacy. Actions are summarised below.

**Action 4.1 –** We will provide funding through the **Victorian disability advocacy futures grants program** which will be established in early 2019. The program will include a ‘Sustainability’ funding stream to help deliver actions under this outcome area. This funding stream will focus on supporting advocacy agencies to measure the impact of what they do and plan for the future.

**Action 4.2 –** We will seek external advice to help us to measure and evaluate the outcomes of this plan and the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program.

**Action 4.3 –** We will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories in the context of the National Disability Advocacy Program. This will be to advocate for a longer-term approach to the funding and administration of disability advocacy across Australia. It will also be to ensure that reforms to the Victorian and national programs complement each other and minimise red tape for advocacy agencies.

**Action 4.4 –** We will continue to update disability advocacy agencies and self advocates about changes to the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program and progress against this plan. This will include through presentations at forums, networks and meetings with individual disability advocacy agencies.

**Action 4.5 –** We will consult people with disability, their families and their advocates on a longer term plan and funding. This will help us develop another plan for the future of disability advocacy from 2021. We will do this from 1 July 2020 so people have enough time to provide their feedback. We will use what we have learnt from this plan.

**Action 4.6 –** We will provide tools for disability advocacy agencies to support them to collect better information to measure and evaluate advocacy outcomes.

**Action 4.7 –** We will continue to identify ways to improve and streamline data collection for the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program.

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