



Senate Inquiry: Delivery of outcomes under the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to build inclusive and accessible communities

March 2017

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1. Introduction

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) commenced on 1 July 2007 under the Disability Act 2006 (the Act) to improve disability services for people with a disability in Victoria. This independent statutory office works with people with a disability and disability service providers in Victoria to resolve complaints.

Our complaints resolution process is free, confidential and supportive and we encourage and assist the resolution of complaints in a variety of ways including informal approaches to resolution, conciliation processes, or under certain circumstances through investigations. Our person-centred approach aims to achieve improved service outcomes while actively supporting the rights of people with disability to live with dignity and respect.

Our understanding of the needs and concerns of Victorians with a disability and their interactions with service providers uniquely positions us to comment on the issues of social inclusion and accessibility in local communities.

This submission responds to point A - the planning, design, management, and regulation of the built and natural environment, transport services and infrastructure, and communication and information systems.

2. The importance of accessible communication

A 2015 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that 1.1 million Australians needed to use a communication aid due to their disability¹ – from electronic to non-electronic aids, to hearing aids.

To support the communication accessibility needs of one in every 22 Australians, there should be minimum standards set for all government and public sector organisations. We suggest that all public sector websites, documents and materials are designed to meet accessibility requirements for people with a disability – for example, adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0).

Examples of accessible materials may include Easy English, Large Print, Rich Text Format, Auslan and audio as well as community languages. Examples of this variety of accessible materials are available on our AA-accessible website:
<http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au>.

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3. The importance of safe and accessible transport solutions

As detailed in our submission to the Parliament of Victoria Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure Inquiry into Ride Sourcing Services (August 2016), DSC supports the development of safe and accessible transport solutions for people with a disability.

Transport services, including public transport, taxis and ride sourcing services like Uber, should be subject to appropriate legislation upholding the right to full accessibility to services for all Victorians regardless of their age, gender, location, culture or physical and communication needs.

This includes factors such as vehicle accessibility, service provider registration and training, a regulatory body, and accessible information for service users.

We encourage you to read our submission in full at <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/eic/inquiry/438>.

4. Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020

Absolutely everybody, the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020 highlights the priorities and actions for achieving inclusion for people under four key pillars:

- Inclusive communities
- Health, housing and wellbeing
- Fairness and safety
- Contributing lives

DSC supports the key principles of this plan, which include universal design, access to public transport, inclusive education and more.

We encourage the Senate Community Affairs References Committee to refer to *Absolutely everybody* for guidance on planning for and building inclusive and accessible communities.

The Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020 can be accessed online here: <http://www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/>.

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5. Conclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stresses that people with disability have the right to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Expanding on this, we believe that all people have the right to be supported to participate in their local communities, with the appropriate systems and infrastructure to facilitate this involvement. Full inclusion will create a richer, fairer and more cohesive accessible society where everyone has the same opportunities to make meaningful connections and contributions.

The suggested changes to public services to increase accessibility, as outlined in our submission, will greatly enhance opportunities for inclusion for, and contributions by, people with a disability in society.

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015 (cat. no. 4430.0) available from the ABS website (www.abs.gov.au)