



12 June 2015

Victorian Disability Advisory Council
Office of Disability
GPO Box 4057
Level 24, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3001
E: regional.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Ask for: Natalie Walker
Phone: 03 9932 1096
Our Ref: A2133994

Dear Victorian Disability Advisory Council,

State Disability Action Plan 2017-20 Submission

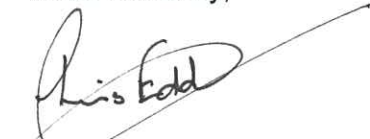
Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback for consideration as part of the development of the next State Disability Action Plan 2017-20.

Council is committed to promoting and protecting a municipality which is conducive to wellbeing, where all people can live, work, learn and play now and into the future. In addition Council is committed to working towards achieving a fully accessible and inclusive municipality where all residents, regardless of their ability can reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

The success of the plan will be dependent on a whole of government approach from all levels of government as well as appropriate funding streams for the implementation of the key actions.

Council looks forward to the outcome of the consultation and the development of the State Disability Plan 2017-20. If you would like to discuss this submission further, please contact Natalie Walker, Director Strategic Development on 9932 1096 or email nwalker@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,


Chris Eddy
Chief Executive Officer



Hobsons Bay City Council State Disability Action Plan 2017-20 Submission

1. What sort of structures do you have in place to engage with people with a disability in your local council area

Hobsons Bay City Council connects and engages with people with a disability through formal structures such as the Hobsons Bay Disability Advisory Committee as well as through providing services and programs such as Home and Community Care, youth services, libraries, community centres, arts and events. The Council's Metro Access and Inclusion Officer supports and leads community development projects with the aim to increase social inclusion and connections for people with a disability.

In addition Council has key touch points with the community and while they might not specifically target people with a disability, they are areas which need to be accessible for all. This includes customer service, communications, community infrastructure, open space and urban design.

Council also engages with the community through its website, social media and surveys, such as the Annual Community Satisfaction Survey. In addition Council consults with the community on key issues during the development of key plans and strategies such as the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17 and the Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17.

Council strives to support and build a community where people with a disability can actively participate, feel like they belong, and are included. If Council is able to ensure practices, programs and services are inclusive of Universal Design principles then all people, including people with a disability, will be able to engage.

Council has recently drafted its first Community Engagement Framework. This framework will be a key resource in supporting Council to coordinate the above engagement and consultation activities as well as build internal capacity, skills and knowledge across the organisation.

2. In submissions made to the Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability, councils identified a number of priorities to fulfil social and economic participation of people living with a disability, including:

- **Physical infrastructure and accessibility to the built environment**
- **Social inclusion through increased participation in community life**
- **Economic participation and independence**
- **Locally-focused initiatives to improve social inclusion**
- **Reducing attitudinal barriers and discriminatory practices in the community**

Do these points reflect the issues that exist in your community? What does your community see as the top three priorities for government in this area?



Below are the key priority areas for the Hobsons Bay community. These were identified through community and stakeholder consultation and form the focus for Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17.

i. Access to Places and Spaces

People with disabilities, their families and carers informed Council that accessing places and spaces within Hobsons Bay is still a large problem. They also stated that some shops, restaurants, playgrounds and the beach continue to be inaccessible.

In response to this Council has committed to improving access to the built and natural environments through the implementation of Universal Design principles. However Council has limited control over infrastructure such as public transport, taxis, state housing, and large scale residential developments.

In order to strengthen this the Victorian Government needs to ensure that Universal Design principles are included within Planning Schemes providing clear guidance in the particular provisions section of the planning schemes and the Building Regulations (National Construction Code) to ensure private dwellings and public infrastructure is built to be inclusive to all.

ii. Getting Involved

People with a disability have told Council that one way they would like to get involved is through employment. Despite having the ability and willingness to work, many people with disabilities still do not receive the same opportunity to enter the workforce as the rest of the community. This could be due to employers' negative attitudes and misconceptions, or the lack of opportunity to access meaningful education.

In response to this Council is committed to ensuring the provision of opportunities for all residents to get involved in employment and skill development. To support this Council is working with local businesses to build their capacity on how to be a more accessible business and employer. Council is also reviewing existing internal employment opportunities to ensure it is providing a supportive environment to current and future employees with a disability.

In order to create broader change there needs to be an increase in educational opportunities and meaningful employment for people with a disability. The Victorian Government needs to invest in early years, primary, secondary and higher education, including supports for vulnerable communities to ensure they are supported and have access to education, skill development and employment opportunities.

iii. Acceptance and Understanding

Despite the introduction of legislation such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Act 2006*, many people with disabilities continue to face discrimination, inequities and barriers to full participation in their community.

Both physical and attitudinal barriers can result in discrimination against people with disabilities. The outcomes of a community attitudes survey undertaken by Council



demonstrated that Council needs to undertake further work in order to raise awareness and understanding of disability within the community; particularly in relation to people with intellectual disabilities and mental health illness.

In response to this Council is committed to positively influencing the attitudes that can prevent people with disabilities from participating in the community as well as working with residents, service providers and organisations to be more inclusive of people with disabilities.

The Victorian Government also has a clear role in ensuring that disability is not siloed into one department, but rather integrated across departments such as arts, recreation, housing, infrastructure, transport, education and employment. Disability and inclusion needs to be a part of everyday language across all areas, rather than an 'add on' or afterthought. The success of the plan will be dependent on a whole of government approach from all levels of government as well as appropriate funding streams for the implementation of the key actions.

iv. Better Supports

People with disabilities in Hobsons Bay told Council that they would like to have more opportunities to participate in community life by being able to get out more, participate in more sporting and recreational activities and just be able to do everyday things that allow for greater independence.

However, in order to be able to participate in the community, many people with disabilities require support. Unfortunately, as identified by the Productivity Commission inquiry in 2010, *'the current disability care and support system is underfunded, inflexible, fragmented and inefficient giving people with disabilities little choice and no certainty of access to appropriate supports'*.

In response to this Council is committed to increasing opportunities and providing support for people with a disability to participate in local events, sport, and recreation however resources to do this in a sustainable way are limited, especially with the redistribution of the disability Access all Abilities funding and the increasing pressures on local government to decrease spending. The Victorian Government has a critical role to play supporting and ensuring that sporting clubs, arts, events and festivals are promoting positive images of people with a disability as well as delivered in accessible venues.

In order to address the other underlying issues, local government needs the support of the Victorian Government. Within Hobsons Bay there is a need for external service providers and Victorian Government services, especially health care. Currently Hobsons Bay City Council has a minimal number of GPs servicing the municipality and even less specialist services meaning that people with a disability have to travel outside of the municipality via a transport system that is limited, infrequent and inaccessible to most.



In addition the funding and service supports for young adults with a disability is minimal. As soon as young people leave education the social, recreational and further education or employment opportunities available currently do not meet their needs. In addition, the accommodation available to this group is also limited, with many being placed in homes that are not appropriate for their age and or abilities. Finally, within Hobsons Bay the level of access to local respite is not sufficient for demand. Respite across the state needs to be reviewed to ensure it is accessible to those most in need.

3. Strengths: What features of the State Disability Plan 2013-16 have enabled councils and communities to influence change? How and why have these features helped?

The State Disability Plan 2013-16 set a state direction for disability and planning. It outlined key priority areas and where possible, enabled Council to align. The plan also goes beyond individual planning, looking at structural liveable community elements, which is needed if sustainable change is to occur.

4. Improvements: How can the next State Disability Plan provide a more effective guide or tool for councils to influence change within their local communities?

Goal one: A strong foundation for life.

This goal area includes education, housing, and improved response to lifelong health needs. All of these elements are key foundations for wellbeing.

Areas for improvement within this goal include the indicators. Within education, while the outcomes articulate early childhood development, there is no indicator to measure this progress. The indicator within outcome two, 'proportion of people with a disability across a variety of household tenure types' while this could potentially measure diversity of housing stock it is not measuring if this housing is appropriate for residents' needs.

In addition the strategy outlines the need to reform the Victorian social housing system. This is a key area of work that still needs to be undertaken and therefore should be continued within the next strategy. Furthermore work related to housing should be integrated within other Victorian Government affordable housing initiatives such as inclusionary zoning within the planning schemes.

Finally, outcome three refers to health needs. Building capacity of the health system and access to services is also still a key priority therefore this should remain however the indicators need to reflect the strategies. This could include indicators such as the number of services providing quality accessible services to meet community needs, and an increased access to services for people with a disability.

Goal two: Upholding rights and promoting participation.

The latest statistics indicate that nine out of ten women with disabilities experience violence and sexual assault (VicHealth 2012). This is not acceptable and more needs to be done within services as well as the community to prevent and protect some of our most vulnerable community members.



Currently Hobsons Bay City Council is working with councils across the western region to pilot a sexual health program (Living Safer Sexual Lives: Relationship and other Stuff). Preventive partnership programs such as these need to be further funded to protect and educate people on the application of human rights.

Outcome six within this goal area recognises the need to increase community participation through recreation. Unfortunately with the de-funding and centralisation of Access All Abilities, resources to support local sporting clubs are very limited. In addition the centralisation of this resource has lost connection with local opportunities and community members therefore is unable to achieve effective sustainable results.

Goal three: Accessing information, transport, buildings and places.

Public transport, including taxis, and accessible public and private spaces and places are critical to enable access and social inclusion for people with a disability. The Victorian Government has a key role to play in this and much more support is needed. Public transport is still largely not accessible, the majority of taxis are ill-equipped for wheelchairs and assistance dogs, and the building codes are still not inclusive of universal design principles therefore public and private infrastructure as well as dwellings are being developed that are not accessible for all community members. This is an area that the Victorian Government needs to take a lead in especially within the department of Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Department of Environment Land and Water and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Goal four: A contemporary approach through disability system reform.

The Victorian Government, previous and current, should be congratulated for the commitment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Within the implementation of the scheme, the Victorian Government will have to ensure services available are accessible e.g. accessible public transport. In addition the implementation will need to ensure that the scheme does not further disadvantage people who have a disability due to their age. This will need to be monitored closely.

5. What do you think is needed to increase the economic and social participation of people with a disability in your community?

The current need is a focus on the social model of disability going beyond disability awareness and directly tackling disability disadvantage. Change needs to be implemented that will have a positive and immediate impact on people's lives such as the use of universal design principles to support the development of accessible housing, built environment, and transport. In addition community members need to have access to meaningful education, sport, recreation and inclusion activities, and be free from abuse and discrimination.



Disability cannot be a stand alone strategy or issue. Inclusion is everyone's responsibility therefore it needs to be integrated across all levels of government and all departments ensuring that everything that is implemented or delivered is accessible.