



6 July 2016

Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-20
Office for Disability
Department of Health and Human Services
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Melbourne VIC 3000
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Ask for: Kathleen McClusky
Phone: 9932 1004
Our Ref: A2421115

Dear Minister,

Submission: Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-20 Discussion Paper

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-20 and discussion paper.

Through Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17 and Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17 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.

Attached is our submission. We look forward to seeing the outcomes and continuing to work with the Victorian government to create change.

If you have any questions regarding the submission please contact Kathleen McClusky, Manager Strategy and Advocacy on 9932 1004 or email kmccclusky@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Chris Eddy
Chief Executive Officer





Hobsons Bay City Council's submission for the Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-20 Discussion Paper

Hobsons Bay is situated on Port Phillip Bay, approximately seven to 20 kilometres south west of Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD). The current population is estimated at 90,000 people, of which approximately 17 per cent have a disability.

People with a disability in Hobsons Bay have told Council that they want the things that everyone else in the community takes for granted. They want to go to school and work, get married, go on holidays, and have access to shops and restaurants. Most importantly, people with a disability in Hobsons Bay want to be accepted and want the opportunity to be spontaneous. They want the chance to participate in and contribute to community life, and require others in the community to share their vision.

The State Disability Plan 2017-20 will be a key document for Council, not only will it articulate where the priorities are for the state and inter-government partnerships but also how the state government departments will work together to create state wide change.

Below are Council's responses in relation to each theme in the discussion paper.

Theme 1: Active citizenship

Being able to actively engage in the community in a meaningful way is a key priority for people with a disability in Hobsons Bay. People with a disability have a lot to offer a community, however due to barriers such as discrimination, lack of awareness and built environmental barriers people with a disability can be left isolated and disengaged from those around them.

Currently if you want to participate in a local sporting or recreation group there is limited information as to what is available. Previously councils were funded through the state government to support an Access All Abilities (AAA) role. The aim of this role was to work with local clubs to build their capacity to be more inclusive as well as connect community members with a disability to clubs. This funding has now been redirected to a state wide role, therefore the local connections are not as strong. Councils and the state are largely unaware of which clubs are inclusive and have limited resources to work with individual clubs to strengthen their ability to be inclusive. Currently Council is working with the Hobsons Bay Community Fund and Melbourne University to undertake a student project to help map inclusive clubs in the municipality, re-building our base level understanding since the loss of AAA. While this project will support Council and the community navigate the current opportunities more local funding needs to be sourced to support building and understanding the disability network as well as building the capacity of sport and recreation clubs.

Currently people with a disability that are living and or visiting Hobsons Bay have a limited number of accessible businesses to choose from to both shop and or work at. Given the age of Hobsons Bay many buildings are not compliant with the current Australian Standards and many of which have heritage listings. Council is trying to



work with traders to support retro fitting to help improve access as well as build their capacity around other accessible elements such as communication, signage, menus, and staff understanding. This takes time and Council has no legislative ability to enforce traders to be more inclusive. Given this there could be a role for state government to ensure that businesses improve physical access to buildings as well as undertake training and implement inclusive strategies within their business models. This will not only improve their business, but also support integration of people with a disability into the community and improve opportunities for employment.

A big barrier to community inclusion is community awareness and stigma that is placed on people with a disability. This needs to change. A key way to do this is by promoting and role modelling people with a disability actively engaging in the community. This could be via sport and recreation, arts and film, business, and general family life. People with a disability need to be viewed alongside able bodied people in campaigns, events and in the media to breakdown this stigma. Everyone has a role to play to achieve this however state government, through an interdepartmental approach, has the ability to reach a wide audience and be a key role model.

People with a disability are not all the same and do not all require the same supports. If we are going to make a community inclusive for all we need to recognise that this also means ensuring that women, children, older people, people from a non-English speaking background and people with varying levels of disability are able to be included in the community. This requires truly understanding and responding to community needs rather than applying a one size fits all approach. Councils are well placed to understand community needs through avenues such as community engagement officers, community development officers, and community advisory committees.

Recommendations:

1. Opportunities for more local funding and coordination needs to be sourced to support building and understanding the disability network as well as the capacity of sport and recreation clubs to be more inclusive.
2. State government need to explore how to ensure that businesses improve physical access to buildings as well as ensure businesses undertake training and implement inclusive strategies within their business models.
3. Promoting people with a disability, removing stigma and changing attitudes. Everyone has a role to play to achieve this, however state government, through an interdepartmental approach, has the ability to reach a wide audience, leading by example.
4. The needs of people with a disability and inclusion in general requires local understanding. Councils are well placed to understand community needs through avenues such as community engagement officers, community



development officers, and community advisory committees. This should be used to guide place based planning.

Theme 2: Rights and equality

Although each person with a disability has different experiences, there are many common issues and barriers faced. When compared to people without a disability, people with a disability generally have less access to housing, education, employment, healthcare, and participation in community life.

In order to be able to participate many people with a disability require support. Despite the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (to which Australia is a signatory) and the introduction of legislation such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Act 2006*, many people with a disability continue to face discrimination, inequalities and barriers to full participation in their community.

Access to education is a key enabler for life long health and wellbeing. All schools need to be not only accessible through infrastructure but also have additional supports such as technology and teacher aids available to help children and young people who have learning difficulties. In addition teachers need to be equipped to be able to identify when children need additional support. These principles should also be included within TAFE, University and other life long learning opportunities.

It is pleasing to see the addition of access to preventative health and screening as an idea within the next four years, however this should be inclusive of all health and wellbeing services. Recently Council has undertaken a survey of what mental health services are accessible in Hobsons Bay, with many not having buildings that are accessible let alone practitioners that have the skill sets to work with people with a disability. Health services need to be accessible for all, including practitioners with appropriate skill sets as well as equipment and infrastructure that enables access.

Residents have told us that services are currently being stretched and under resourced, especially for 18 to 25 year olds and adults. This includes accommodation support, day programs as well as accessible community run programs. This needs to be addressed with increased services as well as more integration within mainstream services. Currently Hobsons Bay has very limited services located within the municipality, requiring residents to navigate public transport or, for some, miss out entirely.

A key way that people are able to access services, social activities, and opportunities within a community is via transport. While improvements have been made, public transport is still not accessible for all. Many of the train stations are not accessible, such as the Newport train station that has an underpass that motorised wheelchairs have difficulty with, let alone someone using a standard wheelchair or other mobility aids; or the Laverton train station that is reliant on lifts which are often not working. When on the train, if a passenger with a disability needs to get off there is often a gap



between the train and the station platform. While there is a button to seek support from the driver to put out a ramp, one of our young residents is in a wheelchair and is unable to reach the button. This situation prevents independent travel, restricting opportunities for engaging in community activities.

In addition to this, a majority of buses in Hobsons Bay are not accessible, therefore restricting access. Given the public transport barriers, people are looking for other alternatives, however Hobsons Bay also has a lack of accessible taxis.

These transport barriers make it difficult for people with a disability to not only engage in community activities but when activities are inclusive, they find it difficult to access them.

Recommendations:

5. All schools, TAFEs, and Universities need to be physically accessible. Additional supports such as technology and teacher aids need to be available to help children and young people that have learning difficulties, and teachers need to be equipped to be able to identify when children need additional support.
6. All health services should be physically accessible and have practitioners with appropriate skills and equipment that enable people with a disability access to care.
7. Services such as accommodation support, day programs as well as accessible community run programs need additional funding, especially those in areas where there is limited access.
8. Train stations, trains, buses and taxis need to increase their accessibility to enable people of all ages and abilities to participate in the community.

Theme 3: Economic participation

Despite having the ability and willingness to work, many people with a disability still do not receive the same opportunity to enter the workforce as the rest of the community. Whether this is as a result of negative attitudes, misconceptions about disability from employers or the lack of opportunity to access meaningful education, people with a disability continue to be underrepresented in the workforce.

The median individual income for people with a disability in Australia is \$343 per week, compared with \$650 for people without a disability (ABS, 2012a). The impact of disability also extends to those who are primary carers, with their median income being \$366 per week compared with \$614 for the general population (ABS, 2012a).

As stated in theme one, to increase employment businesses need to be more accessible. Councils have been trying to make some headway in this space for many years, however due to factors such as ageing buildings, businesses not owning



buildings, cost of retro-fitting, and lack of legislation to support Councils, many buildings are not physically accessible. Councils, as well as other organisations such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, have aimed to progress this through trying to build the capacity of businesses, however more needs to be done including further support for businesses and the strengthening of legislation around access regardless of the age of buildings.

Volunteering is another key area that can build skills as well as promote community inclusion. This sector needs to be strengthened to build capacity to ensure that it includes opportunities that are inclusive for people with a disability.

Through consultation with our community, a key theme emerging is that there is a lack of opportunities for people with a disability once they turn 18 and or leave school. Whilst at school they are hopefully receiving the support they require as well as healthy social interactions. When they leave school they do not have the employment pathways available. In addition to this, there is a significant lack of community activities accessible for people with a disability aged between 18 to 25 years. Given this, the transition from school for these young people can not only be difficult but also isolating. In a time when other young people are building their community networks, people with a disability are becoming more and more isolated. Education, life long learning, employment, volunteering and community activities need to actively target people with a disability, especially those that have left school and or aged between 18 to 25 years.

Recommendations:

9. Further support needs to be given to businesses to increase accessibility. In addition there needs to be a strengthening of legislation around access regardless of the age of buildings.
10. The volunteering sector needs to be strengthened to build capacity to ensure that it includes opportunities that are inclusive for people with a disability.
11. Education, life long learning, employment, volunteering and community activities need to actively target people with a disability, especially those that have left school and or aged between 18 to 25 years.

Theme 4: Making the most of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The introduction of the NDIS will change the way people with a disability access services. It will also significantly change the current service system, with the potential of new providers, bringing diversity, competition and innovation.

As the NDIS aims to be more client centred, some people may require additional support in areas such as budgeting, awareness of what services are available, as well as an awareness in understanding what services they might need to access in order to support their health and wellbeing. This will be especially critical for those people with high needs and their carers. From our understanding in order to get this support people will need to pay additional fees for case management, potentially limiting the amount of



funds that those most in need have to spend on services. It is suggested that an equity model be applied, ensuring that those that need the most support are able to access it without limited funds available for services.

The existing service providers within the municipality have developed an understanding and connection with the local community. With the implementation of NDIS there is a possibility that the current providers will not be able to transfer to the new model therefore there is a risk of losing this community knowledge and client connections. In addition with the introduction of competition within the market, which in itself brings positives, the negatives can be that services decrease in quality and provide services that are viable rather than of quality and or those that minority groups within the disability population need. During implementation it is critical that incoming services work with existing services to ensure a supportive transfer of clients.

The roll out of the NDIS needs to be closely monitored to ensure that people that do not have a permanent disability that significantly affects their ability to take part in everyday activities or are not aged less than 65 when they first access the scheme do not fall through the cracks, especially those with mental health and wellbeing issues.

Councils will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the NDIS, especially in relation to the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program that aligns well with Councils core business as well as existing roles such as Metro Access.

Recommendations:

12. With the implementation of NDIS some people, especially those with high needs and their carers, may require additional support in areas such as budgeting, awareness of what services are available, as well as awareness in understanding what services they might need to access in order to support their health and wellbeing. An equity model should be applied to ensure that those with high needs are able to access support such as a case worker without impacting on the funds available for services.
13. During implementation it is critical that incoming services work with existing services to ensure a supportive transfer of clients. In addition services should be strictly monitored to ensure that they are providing a quality service and are inclusive of minority groups within the disability population.
14. The roll out of the NDIS needs to be closely monitored to ensure that those that are not eligible do not fall through the cracks, especially those with mental health and wellbeing issues.

Driving outcomes

In order to drive outcomes and create sustainable change, disability and access for all ages and abilities needs to become everyone's responsibility. This needs to include the general public, businesses, and all levels of government. It is pleasing to see the state



indicate the need to take an inter-departmental approach. Changes within access cannot be achieved by just a disability strategy, rather other state departmental strategies also need to include disability. This includes housing, transport, sport and recreation, arts and culture, infrastructure, and leading strategic plans such as Plan Melbourne, Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the State Planning Policy Framework. If disability is included from the beginning it will mean that it will not fall back to one department to keep advocating to their counterparts in other departments to create change. Everyone has a role to play.

Recommendations:

15. Changes within access cannot be achieved by just a disability strategy alone, rather other state departmental strategies need to include disability. This includes housing, transport, sport and recreation, arts and culture, infrastructure, and leading strategic plans such as Plan Melbourne, Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the State Planning Policy Framework.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Opportunities for more local funding and coordination needs to be sourced to support building and understanding the disability network as well as the capacity of sport and recreation clubs to be more inclusive.
2. State government need to explore how it can ensure that businesses improve physical access to buildings as well as ensure businesses undertake training and implement inclusive strategies within their business models.
3. Promoting people with a disability, removing stigma and changing attitudes. Everyone has a role to play to achieve this, however state government, through an interdepartmental approach, has the ability to reach a wide audience, leading by example.
4. The needs of people with a disability and inclusion in general requires local understanding. Councils are well placed to understand community needs through avenues such as community engagement officers, community development officers, and community advisory committees. This should be used to guide place based planning.
5. All schools, TAFEs, and universities need to be physically accessible. Additional supports such as technology and teacher aids need to be available to help children and young people that have learning difficulties, and teachers need to be equipped to be able to identify when children need additional support.
6. All health services should be physically accessible and have practitioners with appropriate skills and equipment that enable people with a disability access to care.



7. Services such as accommodation support, day programs as well as accessible community run programs need additional funding, especially those in areas where there is limited access.
8. Train stations, trains, buses and taxis need to increase their accessibility to enable people of all ages and abilities to participate in the community.
9. Further support needs to be given to businesses to increase accessibility in addition there needs to be a strengthening of legislation around access regardless of the age of buildings.
10. The volunteering sector needs to be strengthened to build capacity to ensure that it includes opportunities that are inclusive for people with a disability.
11. Education, life long learning, employment, volunteering and community activities need to actively target people with a disability, especially those that have left school and or aged between 18 to 25 years.
12. With the implementation of NDIS some people, especially those with high needs and their carers, may require additional support in areas such as budgeting, awareness of what services are available, as well as awareness in understanding what services they might need to access in order to support their health and wellbeing. An equity model should be applied to ensure that those with high needs are able to access support such as a case worker without impacting on funds available for services.
13. During implementation it is critical that incoming services work with existing services to ensure a supportive transfer of clients. In addition services should be strictly monitored to ensure that they are providing a quality service and inclusive of minority groups within the disability population.
14. The roll out of the NDIS needs to be closely monitored to ensure that those that are not eligible do not fall through the cracks, especially those with mental health and wellbeing issues.
15. Changes within access cannot be achieved by just a disability strategy alone, rather other state departmental strategies need to include disability. This includes housing, transport, sport and recreation, arts and culture, infrastructure, and leading strategic plans such as Plan Melbourne, Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the State Planning Policy Framework.