

Invest in high quality education

“The wellbeing and progress of society as a whole is diminished when people with a disability do not have opportunities to fully develop their gifts and abilities through education.”

- Victorian State Disability Plan

ACD calls on the next state government to provide educators and support staff access to mandatory pre-service training and ongoing professional development to ensure they possess the skillset required to provide an enriching education experience for students with a disability

The challenge:

Despite the shift towards inclusive education for children with a disability the vast majority of pre-service teachers in Victoria are permitted to graduate without any training in disability education. Registered teachers in Victoria are not required to have completed any disability specific pre-service training.

Equally, there is no requirement to include disability in the mandatory annual 20 hours of professional development required to retain teacher registration. There is a clear disconnect between the principles that underpin the Victorian Teaching Standards as they pertain to Professional Knowledge and Engagement and what is required to operate as an educator.

The facts:

- Only **one** undergraduate course in education in Victoria offers a mandatory individual learning unit, compared to **77** on offer in NSW
- There are **nine** elective units on disability and individual learning compared to **36** in NSW
- **62% of teachers** and **53% of principals** in Victoria reported they did not have adequate support, training and resources to cater to children with a disability (VEOHRC report 2012)

The solution:

- Encourage Victorian tertiary institutions to place a greater focus on individual learning by implementing a requirement for all teachers seeking registration in Victoria to have some element of disability specific training
- Invest in better pre-service training for undergraduate teachers and support staff to better equip them to service the needs of children with a disability
- Provide ongoing professional development in disability and inclusion for teachers and support staff

Invest in peer to peer support for families

“Caring can be a tough job, so supporting carers can make a big difference to their lives, and the lives of the people they care for. While the needs of carers and the needs of those being cared for are different, supporting the care relationship brings benefits to both.”

- Victorian Charter Support People in Care Relationships, 2012

ACD calls on the next State Government to invest in families by increasing funding to the Strengthening Parent Support program so that the program can meet current demand

The challenge:

- The Strengthening Parent Support program is the only peer support program for families of children with a disability or developmental delay. The program currently supports over 11,500 families per year by coordinating support groups, publishing newsletters, running workshops and social activities and providing individualised support. Current funding for the program is grossly inadequate to cater to demand from Victorian families.

The solution:

- Increase funding for the Strengthening Parent Support program to AUD 1 million per year

“Attending the program was the first time I found out about services that could help me. Getting support from the program changed my life”

“It was worth me taking an hour off work just to get this one piece of information”

“I’m new to all of this as my son has just been diagnosed with ASD but already your newsletter has helped so much”

Invest in Changing Places fully accessible toilets

“There is a clear role for the Victorian Government to facilitate the rollout of these facilities in key public places, including major transport hubs, in public buildings and to ensure the use of mobile Changing Places as a contracted deliverable for major events.”

- Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorian with Disability, 2014.

ACD calls on the next State Government to reduce social isolation and increase community participation by incorporating a requirement to install Changing Place toilets into all tenders for new and refurbished public infrastructure projects.

The challenge:

- Around **200,000 Australians** with a disability require assistance to use the toilet. For many people with a severe or profound disability, standardised disabled toilets are not functional.
- Without a full sized change table and hoist many people with a disability including growing children, have to be changed on the floor of an unhygienic public toilet. The only alternatives are the unhealthy and undignified prospect of remaining in soiled clothing or never venturing far from home.
- The current State Government has made a start by funding six Changing Places toilets but there is a long way to go. An expansion of the Changing Places initiative is required to meet the goals of the State Disability Plan 2012-16 .

The solution:

- By incorporating Changing Place toilets into the specifications for new public infrastructure projects the Victorian government will overcome a major barrier to social inclusion for many children with disability and their families
- Having Changing Places facilities in major public spaces throughout Victoria will put the state in a good position to capitalise on the accessible tourism market in Australia, worth an estimated AUD 1.3 billion
- By implementing this best practice solution into its own projects, the government will encourage private sector investment into these much needed facilities

“People need to be able to get to and move around in buildings, places and spaces to make use of opportunities for study, work and leisure, to use shops.”

Victorian State Disability Plan 2012-16

Invest in individualised support for families

“The impacts of relinquishment are profound. Failure to give adequate support to families, or to respond to relinquishment in a coordinated manner, jeopardises the human rights of children with a disability and families.”

- VEOHRC, 2012

ACD calls on the next State government to increase funding for flexible and individual support packages to reduce the number of expensive out-of-home care placements across Victoria

The Challenge:

- Current resources allocated for flexible and individual support packages are inadequate to meet demand from families.
- Victorian families are being forced to wait for long periods of time before accessing support packages.
- Time and time again families have been denied the help they need to avoid reaching crisis point. All too often too much damage to care arrangements and personal relationships has occurred and families are forced to make the unbelievably heart-wrenching decision to give up the full time care of their child. Alternative care options are undesirable and very expensive.

Fact:

A 2012 report by VEOHRC estimated that placing a child in residential care is seven times more expensive than providing respite assistance twice a week.

(Desperate Measures, 2012)

The solution:

- Individualised support plays a key role in providing early preventative assistance for children with a disability and their families. This includes the provision of information, planning and longer term disability supports as well as assistance to access community and mainstream supports.
- By providing early basic assistance through disability-funded support packages the Victorian government can address issues before they escalate to the point where more intense support is required.

After two years of trying to get behaviour support and being told no, we knew we had reached the end.”

(Parent)