



Rock Solid

Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families of children with special needs

Welcome to Rock Solid

Rock Solid is for Aboriginal families with school-aged or younger children with special needs in Victoria. Here, we use the term 'Aboriginal families' to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Rock Solid covers some common themes that people in community have told us about. This information is for everyone – for Elders, for parents and carers, for young people themselves, and for everyone involved in caring for Aboriginal children.

An education journey

These pages are like stepping stones in your child's journey through their education. We hope the information here helps that journey be acknowledged and respected. Some of this information you might already know. Some might be new to you, for example if your child is about to start school, or is moving from primary to secondary school.

In speaking to Elders to gather this information, we acknowledge the barriers that they themselves experienced in education, in times gone past. Now those Elders are involved in supporting young ones in their education. Like them, we acknowledge the importance of education in all its forms.

Understanding the terms

The terms used by schools and support services might be confusing to many parents and carers. Rock Solid uses some of these words too, in explaining how it all works. When we use one of those terms, it is in **bold**. These words are listed at the end of each section under 'Key terms explained' with a short explanation of what they mean.

About Rock Solid and its journey

Rock Solid has been developed through deep partnership with Aboriginal researcher and community advocate, Jody Barney. It weaves together community knowledge with information from the Association for Children with a Disability (ACD). It uses quotes, stories, ideas and language that aim to connect strongly with Aboriginal families.

Jody Barney is a Urangan/Birri-Gubba Deaf woman living in regional Victoria. Jody has worked in the area of Deafness and Disability for over 25 years. Jody has worked on numerous resources to increase the knowledge and information for families, communities and organisations.

Research and consultation

ACD asked Jody to do community research and consultation as part of developing a general education resource for all Victorian families who have children with special needs in school. The richness of the knowledge and stories shared by Elders and families in this research comes out of Jody's culturally grounded ways of doing that work.



A new resource for community

Rock Solid started life as just a few pages of a general education resource. It grew into Rock Solid because of the wealth of knowledge that Elders and families shared, because of the huge community need for information, and because families said that to be useful, a resource must use language, quotes, ideas and images that families use in everyday life.

A weaving together

That is why Rock Solid weaves together many different voices and knowledges.

Rock Solid weaves together information about schools and services from ACD's everyday work helping families, the voices of Elders and families who took part, and Jody's voice as researcher, and community advocate and cultural consultant.

These are reflected in the language used, and the quotes, stories and ideas shared. Rock Solid is first of all for families. We hope you find it useful.

But we also hope that schools and services can learn from Rock Solid – about what families might want, and what they have a right to expect.

What's in Rock Solid

Families share their experiences and knowledge throughout every section of Rock Solid. There are sections with information about:

- **Choosing a school for your child**

This section talks about how to go about choosing a school, the different school options, the move from primary to secondary school, and what to do if you are thinking of changing schools.

- **What school should do to help your child**

This section explains what you can expect from your child's school. It talks about how the school should work with you, what kind of help they can give your child, and how the funding works for children with special needs at school.

- **What you can do to support your child's journey**

You know your child best, and can help the school understand your child's needs and educate them the right way. This section talks about the many different ways you can support your child's education journey.

- **If there's a problem at school**

You have the right to raise a concern, whether you are unhappy about something at school, or worried about how your child is going. You can get help to raise your concerns, and to sort them out with the school.

- **More information for the journey**

This is a long journey, and you can't know everything you will need in times ahead. The important thing is to know where you can go, to get help and information when you need it. This section contains useful links to lots more information, and explanations of the key terms to do with special needs, schools and people who can help.



Thank you

We are grateful to Boonwurrung Elder Aunty Carolyn Briggs and Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Diane Kerr for their support for Rock Solid, including the Welcome.

Our deep gratitude to the Elders and families involved in Rock Solid for so generously sharing their knowledge and stories to help other children, young people and families in community.

Credits

Rock Solid is based on community research and consultation by Jody Barney. Text is by Sarah Marlowe with Jody Barney. Support from Cara Brough and ACD staff. Project management by Sarah Marlowe. With thanks for support provided by the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Artwork

The artwork in Rock Solid was created by Aboriginal artist Renee Jenkins. Renee says that to create the artwork she reflected on her own parenting experience, which she likens to a journey with stepping stones along the way.

Each aspect of the artwork has special meaning:

- The small feet on either side of the line represent the journey of little ones through life
- The leaf and gumnut represent connection to the earth
- The blend of colours from yellow to orange and red also represent connection to the earth
- The blue represents connection to water and the sky
- The cross-hatching in the leaf is called a 'southern linear' design which has significance to the area of Victoria, Australia
- Black represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- Yellow represents the sun, the giver of life and protector
- Red represents the red earth, the red ochre and a spiritual connection to the land

It was a personal journey for Renee as she created the artwork. We hope it resonates with other families as they go on their own journey.

The text of Rock Solid is published and owned by ACD, but with deep respect for the cultural intellectual property of the Elders and families, and of Jody as researcher, cultural consultant and co-author. This remains with them, and no use should be made of quotes or ideas herein without appropriate acknowledgements and permissions. Please contact ACD for more information.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this resource may contain images and names of people who have passed away.



Useful links

Koorie Education Coordinator contact details

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/marrungregional.aspx>

Koorie education resources for educators

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/kooriesources.aspx>

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association

<https://www.vaeai.org.au/>

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

<https://www.vacca.org/>

Deadly Story

www.deadlystory.com

Related topics

Choosing a school for your child

<https://www.acd.org.au/choosing-a-school-for-your-child>

What school should do to help your child

<https://www.acd.org.au/what-school-should-do-to-help-your-child>

What you can do to support your child's journey

<https://www.acd.org.au/what-you-can-do-to-support-your-childs-journey>

If there's a problem at school

<https://www.acd.org.au/if-theres-a-problem-at-school>

More information for the journey

<https://www.acd.org.au/more-information-for-the-journey>