



Association for  
Children with a  
Disability

# Association for Children with Disability

## Submission to the Creative State Consultation

August 2024

ACD is the leading advocacy service for children with disability and their families in Victoria. We are a not-for-profit organisation led by, and for, families of children with disability.

For more than 40 years we have been advocating to improve the lives of children with disability and their families.

Our vision is an inclusive community where children with disability and their families thrive.

### For more information contact

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# A Creative Society for all Victorians

*'Authentic representation of disabled people on screen can be a powerful way to challenge societal stereotypes, attitudes and unconscious biases' – Screen Australia, Seeing Ourselves 2*

ACD welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Victoria's next *Creative State* strategy.

Stories are powerful vehicles for social change. They 'help us better understand other people and cultures.'<sup>1</sup> However, not all stories are well represented in Australian tv and film. Children with disability remain severely underrepresented.<sup>2</sup>

There has never been a more important time to ensure alignment across government portfolios and investments to create inclusive communities for people with disability in light of findings and recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission.

The theme from the discussion paper, *A Creative Society for all Victorians*, offers the opportunity for the Victorian Government to align the next *Creative State* strategy with *Victoria's State Disability Plan*.

Increasing strategic investment in targeted initiatives to amplify diverse stories and perspectives showcasing children with disability can improve attitudes towards children with disability and create a more inclusive community. This would support creative industries in Victoria and link directly with the Inclusive Communities pillar under *Victoria's State Disability Plan*.

The next *Creative State* strategy should include targeted initiatives to increase representation of children with disability in tv and film.

## Recommendation

1. Invest in an additional, dedicated funding stream to increase representation of children with disability in tv and film.

## Increase representation of children with disability in tv and film

When children see themselves reflected in stories – from tv and film to literature – it can influence how they see themselves and how others see them. Good representation can help children form positive identities and create a world of possibilities.

However, when there is an absence of positive representation that reflects the diversity of the Australian community, we miss opportunities to find points of connection through

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria's next *Creative State* strategy discussion paper, p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Screen Australia 2023, *Seeing Ourselves 2. Diversity, equity and inclusion in Australian TV drama*, p.78.

shared and different experiences. This can contribute to poorer outcomes for children with disability who experience bullying at more than double the rate of their peers.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian Government can improve community attitudes towards disability and support confident, aspirational children by investing in additional, dedicated funding stream to increase representation of children with disability in tv and film.

This dedicated funding stream should be captured as an action in the *Creative State* strategy and overseen by VicScreen. Intersectionality should be a consideration in the application process to ensure it captures the diversity of children with disability.

*'It's not just about out to see our family and our children reflected. It's for other people to see our kids reflected so they it becomes more normalised and when our kids get to school, they've already seen other kids with disability on screen. I think I think it could be really good, especially for young kids to see that.'*

*'[Children with disability should] be represented in a more empowered way.'*

*'Great to see characters with a disability where their disability is not their "storyline".'*

*'Representations generally only include a wheelchair or maybe a non-verbal child etc but my son has an intellectual disability and is non-verbal and non-mobile but still full of character!'*

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<sup>3</sup> Children and Young People with Disability Australia (11 June 2024) *CYDA Book Power webinar*, YouTube, <https://cyda.org.au/resources/book-power/>; Hall S, Fildes J, Liyanarachchi D, Plummer J and Reynolds M (2020) *Young, Willing and Able – Youth Survey Disability Report 2019*. Mission Australia, Sydney; Dickinson H, Smith C, Yates S, Faulkner A (2023) *How deep does it go? Australian students with disability and their experience of entrenched inequity in education CYDA School Education Survey 2022*, Report prepared for Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA), Melbourne.