



Call to the Parties 2010 State Election

The Coalition for Disability Rights brings together people with a disability, families, carers, advocacy bodies and disability support provider organisations to work together to ensure that people with a disability and their families have the right to be fully participating citizens of Australia.

The Coalition covers the whole of the disability sector in Victoria with partners including:

- National Disability Services (NDS)
- The Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)
- Carers Victoria
- Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN)

There are many thousands of members that comprise these peak bodies, advocacy groups and associations and indirectly, the people with disability they represent, their families and supporters.

Overview

- 1 in 5 people in Australia (almost 4 million people or 20%) report having a disability.¹
- Approximately 2.5 million people are providing care to a person because of disability or old age.
- Approximately 643,000 full-time informal carers in Australia providing an estimated 24.4 million hours of care per week.
- Nearly two thirds of primary carers (295,000) were not employed.
- Over half of primary carers had left work due to their caring role.
- Carers and families of people with disabilities experience high rates of mental health problems, poor physical health, employment restrictions, financial hardship and relationship breakdown.
- Australia's ageing population will increasingly stretch the existing system.
- For the next 70 years, the population of people with severe and profound disability is projected to grow at 2-3 times the rate of the population as a whole.
- While the number of people with disabilities continues to grow, the availability of informal care is in decline.
- Despite growth in funding by all levels of government, there continues to be unmet need for services. This need is largely met by families and informal carers.
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2005) estimates that unmet demand for specialist disability services has risen 7.5% in real terms. Government spending has not kept pace with this.
- A 2004 study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that:
 - unmet need for people requiring constant support would grow from 1% in 2004 to 49% by 2031;
 - unmet need for people requiring regular support would grow from 25% in 2004 to 48% by 2031; and
 - unmet need for people requiring lower support would grow from 77% in 2004 to 90% by 2031.

Key Demands for the 2010 State Election

The citizenship rights of Victorians with disabilities and their families continue to be limited and denied through a lack of commitment by government to address a range of core needs. Therefore, the Coalition for Disability Rights calls on all parties to:

- Ensure that appropriate housing and support options are provided for all people with disabilities.
- Ensure that quality disability support is guaranteed to all Victorians with a disability to enable full participation in the cultural, social, economic, political and civic life of Australian society.
- Provide equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities for all Victorians with disabilities.
- Provide access to a public transport system that is equal to that available to other Victorians.
- Protect and promote the human rights of all people with disabilities and ensure fair and just treatment and support for those who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

What are we asking for?

Housing

Current State of Play

- More than 1300 people with disabilities on urgent list for accommodation and support.
- Only 269 new supported accommodation units, including shared and individual units and shared homes are under development in Victoria, including My Future: My Choice places; and homes developed through the Disability Assistance Package. Demand vastly outstrips supply.²
- 350+ Victorians are still living in large institutions.
- 4983 adults in shared accommodation are given no choice about where they live or who they live with.³
- To date only 1% of social housing places created in Victoria under the Commonwealth Nation Building Program have been committed to people with disabilities.
- Lack of strategic urban planning process that links the provision of social housing with the need for access to services and community infrastructure for people with disabilities with limited mobility.



Housing

What we want

1. Government investment in the development of a comprehensive disability and mental health housing strategy that sets clear targets for people with a disability or mental health issues in provision of social housing.
2. Commitment to prioritise coordinated housing and support packages for people with disabilities living with ageing parents.
3. Funded commitment to close all remaining large institutions (Colanda, Sandhurst, Oakleigh and Plenty Residential Services) and relocation of up to 355 residents to appropriate community based housing and accommodation options.
4. Ensure that people with a disability, their friends and family members are adequately informed about the range of available options and innovations in accommodation and support, including private, public, community, mixed and shared equity options.
5. That the Victorian Government introduce planning regulations that ensure that at least 25% of new housing in Victoria will meet universal design standard by 2031 through the adoption of the 10 items identified by the Universal Housing Alliance.⁴
6. Victorian Government to develop an inclusive strategic urban plan that takes into account the need for mobility impaired citizens to have easy access to community services and infrastructure.

What are we asking for?

Disability Support

Current State of Play

- The Victorian Government has made positive progress towards implementation of the State Disability Plan. However, large waiting lists for services, unviable unit cost funding levels for services and a growing number of ageing parent carers mean that for many, this Plan is rhetoric with limited capacity to deliver real choices and change. Over 2,575 people with disabilities are registered as needing urgent accommodation & support and daytime activities.⁵
- There were over 3000 ageing parent carers in Victoria in 2008 and this is estimated to increase to over 4000 by 2013 on current projections. The majority of ageing parents are not registered on the Disability Support Register as in need of supported accommodation options. They are desperately concerned about the need for ongoing care for their son or daughter and wish to be engaged in planning future housing and support arrangements for them, while they still have the capacity and energy to support their child through this transition. There is currently no mechanism for people with a disability and their families to register a future need for housing and support. In addition, programs which provide families with support with emergency, long term and succession planning for their relative are yet to be developed and consolidated.
- Over 80% of total population of potential service users do not have access to services.⁶
- The unit costs paid to service providers are inadequate, jeopardising their capacity to provide quality supports. During the past twelve months, there have been two significant, independent costing studies of disability services. The Department of Human Services contracted PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2008) to undertake an independent review; and an industry sponsored review (Saward Dawson, 2009) was commissioned by 11 large disability service providers who between them receive approximately 50% of total community services sector disability funding. The Productivity Commission 2010 report found that while the real cost of direct service delivery rose by 5.78% between 2004- 2009 the real funding decreased for accommodation and community access (this includes day services funding) by 18.29%. While the 2010 State budget provided additional funding for accommodation services, day services and therapy remain seriously underfunded.⁷

Disability Support

What we want

1. That the Victorian Government makes a commitment to ensuring that there is an entitlement to individualised lifetime planning and disability support for all Victorians with disabilities that enables full participation in all areas of community life, as set out in the Victorian State Disability Plan. This means the elimination of unmet needs and waiting lists.⁸
2. That individualized funding arrangements for people with disabilities and carers promote maximum opportunities for choice and self determination and access to the same opportunities available to other Victorians. This needs to include the development of quality substitute care arrangements outside school and centre hours to allow family members to participate in the paid workforce.
3. Funding for lifelong planning that provides adequate support to people with disabilities and their families during key life transitions such as early intervention; school to work or education/training; adapting to community living; ageing and retirement. This includes:
 - A register of ageing parent carers, monitoring and outreach support, and
 - The provision of information regarding wills, estate planning, emergency and succession planning.
4. That the Victorian Government will ensure that there is a coordinated approach to provision of housing options and disability support packages.
5. That the Victorian Government will act to prevent premature entry to aged residential care for older people with disabilities in line with government 'ageing in place' commitments.⁹
6. That the Victorian Government will maintain a commitment to link community capacity building work currently in place across Victoria in the form of the Rural and Metro Access Program and Access for All Abilities Program that is closely linked to needs identified in individual planning process in each local area.
7. That the Victorian Government will ensure that there is a strong, responsive and high quality and sustainable service delivery sector that is fully funded and supported by a well trained, well resourced and well managed workforce.

What are we asking for?

Transport

Current State of Play

- Lack of access to affordable public transport continues to shut many people with disabilities out of the life of their communities and deny them full citizenship rights.
- While the Victorian Government has invested heavily in major freeway infrastructure developments that have been opened ahead of scheduled completion dates they have set a very distant target of 2032 for putting in place a fully accessible public transport system.¹⁰
- 2012 progress targets agreed to by Victorian Government for accessible transport are unlikely to be met.¹¹
- In the meantime, Victorians with mobility impairments are forced to rely on more expensive taxi services that still fall far short of providing a service level that is equitable to that offered to non-disabled Victorians.

Transport

What we want

1. That the Victorian Government adopts and implements the recommendations of the Victorian Auditor General's Report into accessible public transport.
2. That the Victorian Government invests in making all public transport accessible by 2020 instead of current proposed date of 2032.

2020 ~~2032~~

What are we asking for?

Education

Current State of Play

- The existence and expansion of Early Childhood and other intervention services has made a positive difference to the lives of those children able to gain access but it has not provided the suite of services, nor policy reform, required to facilitate every child reaching their full potential.
- Many people with disabilities have been denied equitable access to school education and will continue to wear the impact of this across their lifetime.
- Current funding constraints reinforces the broader level of disadvantage experienced by those children with a disability from lower income backgrounds, rural and regional areas and students from an indigenous background.

Education

What we want

1. Expansion of Early Childhood Intervention Services, Kindergarten Inclusion and the Program for Students with Disabilities, so that all people requiring support are eligible.
2. Increased retention rates for people with a disability at secondary and tertiary level.
3. More teachers and education support staff appropriately qualified to support students with complex needs.
4. An inquiry by the Auditor-General into the state of education for children with a disability focussing on access to support and educational outcomes.
5. Increased meaningful post-school education and training options for people with a disability.



What are we asking for?

Justice

Current State of Play

- People with mental health issues, intellectual disabilities and acquired brain injury constitute a disproportionate number of Victorians serving a custodial sentence.
- There is a lack of timely provision of case management, disability support services and appropriate step-down accommodation planning for people with disabilities released from custodial sentences and consequently, recidivism is high.
- People with disabilities are over represented in victim of crimes statistics and higher levels of vulnerability lead to increased likelihood that abuse and crimes against more vulnerable people with disabilities will go unnoticed and unreported.
- The shift to individualised funding is placing greater responsibility on people with disabilities and their families to make choices about how funding will be administered and who will provide services. Access to good information and independent advice and advocacy will be a critical factor under a more individualised approach to funding disability supports.



Justice

What we want

1. That the Victorian Government will extend and fully fund current trial of the Assessment and Referral List to ensure that disability and mental health issues will be acknowledged and accommodated in providing just treatment and appropriate supports for people with disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system.
2. That the Victorian Government will develop and resource appropriate diversionary strategies to reduce number of people with disabilities inappropriately placed in custody.
3. That people with disabilities and mental health issues are properly supported with pre-release planning and that this is done with a realistic, culturally appropriate and accessible exit strategy that includes access to long-term affordable housing, step-down facilities, case management services that span all government departments.
4. That all professionals involved in the criminal justice system receive education about people with disabilities and mental health issues.
5. That the Victorian Government will ensure that all Victorians with disabilities and mental health issues will have access to independent, professional advocacy support when needed to provide independent advice and to pursue breaches of rights and complaints.

The Coalition's Vision

UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities & Disability Legislation

The Coalition is advocating for a well resourced individualised approach to funding disability support needs for all Victorians with disabilities and their families. Principles for the use of individualised funding have been drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), Victoria's Disability Act 2006 and the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 (Department of Human Services, 2002). These principles are important because individualised funding is not just a funding mechanism. Individualised funding promotes the independence, well-being and citizenship rights of the person concerned. The key principles for each person are:

- Respect for the inherent dignity.
- Individual autonomy and independence.
- Self-determination and choice.
- Opportunities to realise individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.
- Opportunities to participate in the social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual life of society.
- Sufficient resources being available to meet needs.

The right to participation in society, the right to live in an accessible community, the right to live independently in safe secure housing, to access justice and to equal recognition before the law are State responsibilities that are not adequately being met by the present government.

The right to be a fully participating citizen is unable to be achieved for many people with disabilities in Victoria.

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights is an agreed set of human rights, freedoms and responsibilities protected by law. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Person with a Disability. Under both the Charter and the United Nations Convention governments must observe these rights when making decisions, creating laws, setting policies and providing services.¹² Despite growth in funding by all levels of government, there continues to be unmet need for disability services. This means that in many cases peoples' basic human rights are not being met.

A transformational shift in policy and services delivery is essential. For the next 70 years, the population of people with severe and profound disability is projected to grow at 2-3 times the rate of the population as a whole. While the number of people with disabilities will continue to grow, the availability of informal care will decline.¹³

Whole of Government Approach

The Coalition of Disability Rights strongly supports the State Disability Plan 2002-12, which seeks to ensure that people with a disability share the same rights as other citizens and have the opportunity to live full lives as members of our community. This significant Government reform agenda will not be able to be achieved unless the substantial long term under-funding of the sector is addressed.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Government in consultation with the States and Territories has commissioned a feasibility study into the development of a comprehensive National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Victorian Government must work collaboratively with the Australian Government, other states and territories and the Productivity Commission to develop and cement a National Disability Insurance Scheme as a central plank of Australian social and economic policy. The Coalition believes that access to individualized, needs based funding will address many of the current stresses placed on families, service providers and people with disabilities themselves. It will provide people with disabilities choice and freedom of where they live, work and recreate as well as giving family carers opportunities to pursue their own careers, maintain their health and well-being.

The anticipated staged implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme over 7 - 10 years obliges the Victoria Government to immediately invest in disability services now. **VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES CANNOT WAIT FOR 7-10 YEARS!**

Coalition Partners

Association of Children with a Disability

The Association of Children with a Disability is an information, support and advocacy organisation for children with a disability and their families, in Victoria. The organisation is run by parents of children with a disability - most of the staff and committee are parents - so we know what it means to have a child with a disability. We cover all types of disability and are a non-profit organisation.

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www.acd.org.au

Victorian Disability Advocacy network (VDAN)

The Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN) is a coalition of independent, community based organisations that advocate with and for people with any disability and, where appropriate, their families. VDAN's aim is to maintain an effective coalition through networking and education as well as promoting and defending advocacy. It has more than 30 member agencies.

Contact

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Carers Victoria

Carers Victoria is the statewide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to carers in Victoria. Carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail. Over 700,000 Victorians are caring for a family member or friend with a disability, mental or chronic illness, or who is frail aged.

Contact

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National Disability Services (NDS) Victoria

National Disability Services (NDS) is the peak industry body for non-government disability services. Its purpose is to promote and advance services for people with disabilities. Its Australia-wide membership includes around 600 not-for-profit organisations, which support people with all forms of disability. Its members collectively provide the full range of disability services-from accommodation support, respite and therapy to community access and employment. NDS provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to State, Territory and Federal governments.

Contact

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www.nds.org.au



References >>>



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- 2 Milligan. V, Gurrán. N, Lawson.J, Phibbs.P, Phillips.R (2009) Innovation in Affordable housing in Australia: Bringing policy and practice for not-for-profit housing organizations together Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. 2009 NDS Submission to the Inquiry into Adequacy and Future Directions of Public Housing (unpublished)
- 3 Arthur Rogers (Dec 2009) Presentation to a hearing of the Family and Community Development Committee, for the Inquiry into the provision of supported accommodation for Victorians with a disability or mental illness.
- 4 Victorian Universal Housing Alliance <http://www.vcross.org.au/what-we-do/housing/vuha.htm> (accessed December 2009) The 10 items identified by the Universal Housing Alliance [link to <http://www.vcross.org.au/what-we-do/housing/vuha.htm>] as necessary for housing to be liveable, visitable and adaptable by people of all ages, including many people with a disability.
- 5 June 2009 Disability Support Register http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/information,_planning_and_advocacy/how-we-provide-services-to-people#june2009 (accessed January 2010)
- 6 These indicative estimates are projected from the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2003) national data on estimated numbers of ageing parent carers who are over 65 and living with their disabled offspring. They have assumed an even distribution of parent ageing from the 2003 cohort of parent carers between 45 and 64, and divided this by 24% - Victoria's share of the population.
- 7 June 2009 Disability Support Register http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/information,_planning_and_advocacy/how-we-provide-services-to-people#june2009 (accessed January 2010)
- 8 A recommendation of the 2009 Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability and /or Mental Illness Family and Community Development Committee Parliament of Victoria
- 9 Ibid
- 10 Making Public transport More Accessible for People who Face Mobility Challenges Victorian Auditor General December 2009
- 11 Ibid
- 12 From Principals to Practice; Implementing the Human Rights Based Approach in Community Organisations (2008) Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission p7. Department of Human Services Disability Supports Register
- 13 THE WAY FORWARD - A New Disability Policy Framework for Australia (2009) Report of the Disability Investment Group.

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