

# Empowered Lives

## SECURING CHANGE FOR VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITY



***Empowered Lives brings together people with disability, advocates, and organisations across the disability community.***

Together, we have developed this platform for change – outlining the key issues that face Victorians with disability in their interactions with Victorian Government systems, and setting out achievable actions the Government can take to provide more opportunities for people with disability, more inclusive environments and communities, and stronger support.

Empowered Lives recognises and builds on existing efforts across the Victorian disability community to advocate and fight for the rights of people with disability over many decades.

The vision outlined in Empowered Lives is for an inclusive Victoria where people with disability have the same opportunities as other Victorians.

It is rooted in an understanding of the fundamental human rights of people with disability, which are articulated through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

The UN CRPD also affirms the social model of disability, which shows us that the hardships commonly associated with disability are the result of interactions between people with impairments and an environment filled with a range of barriers.

Strong commitment and action from government is required to achieve this vision, including delivering inclusive service systems – whether it is health, education, justice or disability services – supporting Victorian families, creating jobs, and improving the accessibility of our transport and infrastructure.

Each of these areas is underpinned by a focus on the empowerment of people with disability and on strong safeguards to ensure safety and freedom from violence and abuse.

## 2018 election asks

We are asking all parties to commit to the following priority policies in the lead-up to the Victorian election.

- 1 Fully fund education support for students with disability**  
by adopting the Victorian Auditor-General's recommendations to invest in the Program for Students with Disabilities and other supports.
- 2 Fund dedicated supports for parents with disability**  
to provide tailored support commencing during pregnancy and continuing for as long as each parent needs it.
- 3 Increase public transport accessibility**  
by upgrading Victoria's worst train stations and tram stops in the next four years.

# 1. Fully fund education support for students

Too many Victorian students with disability and additional health and development needs are currently missing out on the support they need to participate fully and thrive in school life.

The Victorian Government's Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) supports roughly 4 per cent of the student population, but around 20 per cent of Victorian government school students are estimated to have disability needs that require reasonable adjustments for their learning.

The Victorian Government's own reviews and inquiries show that we need to update the way we provide funding to support students with disability so they can learn and achieve at school. Fully funding the PSD to appropriately support all students with disability will begin to address this.

# 2. Provide dedicated support to parents

Parents with disability may require specialised supports. The assumption of incapacity, especially for parents with intellectual disability, contributes to higher rates of child removal and child protection system contact.

It is important that the timely and appropriate information and services are available for parents with disability. Standard parenting programs are rarely designed to be inclusive and providers often lack the experience of resources to adapt their programs.

Victoria needs an appropriate, evidence-based parenting support program for parents with disability, that takes into account the needs and wellbeing of individuals and the family as a whole, and that is available long-term – including during pregnancy and as the child grows up.

# 3. Make public transport more accessible

Access to Victoria's public transport system is highly variable - and often limited - and Victoria is not currently meeting its own legal accessibility requirements.

By December 2017, 90 per cent of Melbourne's tram stops were legally required to be accessible, but less than 25 per cent of stops meet the target. There is a large backlog of legacy infrastructure that needs to be brought up to scratch and a large number of people being prevented from getting on with their lives.

The Victorian Government should dedicate an accessible transport investment fund to ensure legacy infrastructure can be retrofitted to maximise public transport access. This should begin with upgrading Victoria's least accessible tram stops and train stations to provide more access to transport for all Victorians.

## More information

More information about Empowered Lives, including the full platform and an Easy English summary, can be found online at [empoweredlives.vcoss.org.au/](http://empoweredlives.vcoss.org.au/)

*This project has been funded by the Victorian Government through a Disability Advocacy Innovation Fund grant from the Office for Disability.*

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2018*