

About this Communique

The Department of Education and Training (DET) – Community Sector Organisation (CSO) Governance Group is a quarterly forum for communication, consultation, engagement and collaboration between the Department and the community sector. Meetings are co-chaired by DET and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and reflect topics of mutual interest to DET and the sector. You can read more about the partnership agreement that underpins this work on [VCOSS](#) and [DET](#) websites.

This Communique has been prepared by VCOSS to increase the visibility of this forum.

What was discussed in the December 2021 meeting?

The focus of this meeting was Disability.

Disability Inclusion Package

Sharon Barry, Executive Director, Inclusion Education Division provided an update on the roll-out of the Disability Inclusion Package, which commenced in the second half of 2021. The Package will be implemented over a five-year period. Work to date has included recruiting the facilitator workforce, developing a student voice toolkit in consultation with young people with disability, and delivering information sessions to schools.

Two students from the Youth Disability Advocacy Service spoke about the importance of including young disabled people in all aspects of the reform, including evaluation of the package and whether students' needs are being met. They highlighted the need to support students to build their skills and confidence to identify, understand and communicate their support needs.

Kim Stadtmiller, Executive Officer, Whittlesea, Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network, Michele Rowse, CEO, Y Whittlesea and Annette Jurisch, General Manager – Inclusion Services, Y Whittlesea presented on work being undertaken in Whittlesea to improve post-school transitions for neurodivergent young people. This place-based project includes a strong partnership between local organisations, schools and the Department of Education and Training to identify and address gaps in the transition process for this cohort of young people. A feature of the developmental process is codesign with neurodivergent young people.

Access to TAFE for learners with disability report – priority recommendations

Susan Thomas, Acting Executive Director, TAFE Partnerships and Governance, DET and Kerryn Lester-Smith, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Strategy Performance and Governance, Melbourne Polytechnic provided an overview of the parliamentary committee inquiry report into *Access to TAFE for Learners with Disability*. The committee's final report has a particular focus on: consistency of practice across the TAFE network; transitions, commencements, participation, retention and completion; and system performance – opportunities to enhance student outcomes for students at a systems level. The meeting noted that the themes and recommendations detailed in the Parliamentary Committee's final report align with a 2019 report commissioned by the TAFE Network to look at access and inclusion for students with disability.

Two students from the Youth Disability Advocacy Service shared their views on what could be improved to make TAFE more accessible for learners with disability. They particularly noted the importance of providing information about available supports when a student begins considering TAFE as an option; building positive community attitudes and awareness of disability to support a safe learning environment; improving communication between disability liaison supports and other teaching staff; upskilling teachers; and facilitating peer networks.

Emma King, CEO, VCOSS outlined five key recommendations from the report that, if adopted, would increase the accessibility of TAFE for learners with disability: a greater focus on transitions; better enrolment support; more comprehensive disability liaison support from before enrolment until completion; extending access to mental health practitioners on TAFE campuses and; the need for comprehensive data to help form a clearer picture of pathways into and out of TAFE.

Disability Inclusion Support Improvement Project

Mat Lundgren, Acting Executive Director, Early Learning, ECE spoke about the work the Department is undertaking to improve and build on existing supports in funded three and four-year-old kindergarten for children with disability and/or developmental delay. This work aims to take a child and family centred approach.

Next meeting

The DET-CSO will recommence meetings in 2022. Please contact VCOSS if there is something that you'd like to share with us, to guide our planning for future meetings.

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