



Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development

# Disability Action Plan

2013—2016



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This document is also available on the internet at  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/pages/disability.aspx>

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The *Disability Discrimination Act 1993* defines a disability as:

- a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person
- g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- a) presently exists; or
- b) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- c) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- d) is imputed to a person.

For more information, see the Australian Human Rights Commission's [A brief guide to the Disability Discrimination Act](#)

## Foreword

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department) impacts the lives of many Victorians through the provision of development, education and training services to children, young people and adults. The Department also employs approximately 66,000 people in its central and regional offices and in schools across the state. As a universal service deliverer and as an employer, the Department is committed to building a community that embraces diversity and inclusion and maximises the opportunities of all, including people with disabilities.

The **Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016**, reflects the Victorian Government's commitment to ensuring that people with a disability have the chance to participate fully in Victoria's economy and communities, and is based upon the vision of an inclusive Victorian society that enables people with a disability, their families and carers to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. The State Plan provides the framework for the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Disability Action Plan 2013-16** and outlines our contribution to the achievement of the Vision.

The Disability Action Plan outlines our goals, strategies and actions and demonstrates the important contribution the Department's services and workforces make to the outcomes for people with disability and their full participation in our economy and communities.

Delivery of the Disability Action Plan will lead to care and educational settings and workplaces that celebrate and recognise diversity and the achievements and contributions of people with disabilities. The Disability Action Plan will deliver significant benefits to:

- **Workforces** – Training will be provided to employees in the early childhood and schools settings and tools will be provided across the education and training sectors to build knowledge and skills to meet the learning and development needs of people with disabilities. The plan also outlines the actions the Department will take to ensure we continue to lead the way in providing a workplace culture that is inclusive of all employees, including those with disabilities.
- **Learners** – All learners with disabilities will benefit through actions that focus on improving their learning, development and wellbeing outcomes and enhancing transitions from school into further education, vocational training or employment.
- **Families** - The importance of families in a learner's education is recognised within the plan, with actions designed to engage, inform and support families and carers of people with disabilities

The Department's Disability Action Plan will be available from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/disability.aspx>.

## Context for the Disability Action Plan

At the time of the launch of this plan, the disability sector is undergoing significant reform arising from the launch of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-16 and the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. Within the Department considerable reform is also underway in how we support people with disabilities.

These reforms outline a vision for an inclusive community that values and supports diversity. The development of the Department's Disability Action Plan is closely aligned with this vision. More information on each of these initiatives is provided below.

### National Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 sets out a ten year national policy framework for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers.

The Strategy is the result of a nation-wide public consultation process, involving more than 2,500 people and was formally endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 13 February 2011.

The Strategy's six priority areas for action to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers are:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities
2. Rights protection, justice and legislation
3. Economic security
4. Personal and community support
5. Learning and skills
6. Health and wellbeing

### Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016

The Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016 articulates the government's view for the future and sets a clear direction for the next four years.

The plan outlines the approach to reducing the barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing education, employment and other services within the community. The plan is constructed around a framework (Figure 1), which outlines vision and principles, long-term goals and shorter-term outcomes.

The principles of the Victorian State Disability Plan are:

1. Fairness
2. Opportunity
3. Choice
4. Self-determination
5. Simplicity
6. Sustainability

Figure 1 - Victorian State Disability Plan 2013

<p><b>Goals</b> Reaching the four goals will bring about the changes that matter to people with a disability, their families and carers. All four goals are connected and work together to make our vision a reality.</p>	<p><b>1</b> A strong foundation in life</p>	<p><b>2</b> Upholding rights and promoting participation</p>	<p><b>3</b> Accessing information, transport, buildings and places</p>	<p><b>4</b> A contemporary approach through disability system reform</p>
<p><b>Outcomes</b> The outcomes are improvements leading towards our goals. They are what will be different for people with a disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better opportunities in education and early childhood development services</li> <li>• Improved housing and accommodation choices</li> <li>• An improved response to lifelong health needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better protection of human rights</li> <li>• Better pathways to employment</li> <li>• Greater participation in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More transport options</li> <li>• Improved access to buildings and places</li> <li>• More accessible government information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More opportunities for independence, choice and control</li> <li>• Better targeted and integrated services</li> <li>• The role of families and carers is better supported</li> </ul>

## Reporting

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development along with other government departments has committed to a set of Objectives to contribute to the vision of the Victorian State Disability Plan.

The Department is required to report to the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on Disability on its performance against its objectives within the Victorian State Disability Plan. The IDC comprises relevant Senior Officers for Disability from state government departments and agencies and reports to the Minister for Community Services on the overall achievement of the state plan.

The Department's Disability Action Plan outlines the actions the Department will undertake in order to achieve its commitments within the Victorian State Disability Plan. These actions form the basis of reporting to the IDC.

## Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: Strategic Plan 2013-17

The Department's commitments in the State Disability Plan, as set out in the DAP, are aligned with the Department's mission outlined in the Strategic Plan 2013-17 to support Victorians to build prosperous, and socially engaged, happy and healthy lives. The strategic plan has a priority to improve the opportunities for all learners without exception.

The Department's Strategic Plan also provides the organisation's planning framework for the development of a whole of Department policy and reform strategy for children and young people with developmental delays and disabilities to deliver high quality, integrated and sustainable provisions and support. The disability reform strategy will provide a broad framework for understanding and responding to disability, strengthen the support available across our three schooling sectors and build a whole of life approach that has a focus on high quality services, support and intervention in the early years. This program of work will include building the capacity of our system, improving current provision and exploring the potential to reform existing resourcing and funding for children, young people and adults with disabilities.

For more information on the Department's Strategic Plan please visit <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/Pages/stratplan.aspx>

## Goal 1 - A strong foundation in life

### Strategy: Improve workforce capacity to meet the learning and development needs of children and students with a disability

Objectives	Actions
1. Improve early assessment of learning and development and appropriate referral to specialised supports available to children and students	<p>1.1 Standardise intake referral processes for state funded Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) to streamline access to this specialist support.</p> <p>1.2 Provide online professional learning on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) Practice Principle of Assessment for Learning and Development.</p> <p>1.3 Distribute a DVD resource on the VEYLDF to students undertaking early childhood courses.</p> <p>1.4 Ongoing promotion of the VEYLDF Evidence Paper and Practice Guide supporting professionals to engage in effective assessment for learning and development.</p> <p>1.5 Undertake investigations and actions to improve assessment practices in the four key areas - tools and evidence, capacity and capability, communication and participation, and governance.</p> <p>1.6 Provide an online professional learning resource for early childhood professionals working with gifted and talented children (aged up to 8 years) which includes recognition of children with a disability with dual exceptionality i.e. disability and talented.</p>
2. Provide early childhood professionals with learning opportunities to assist with the application of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and Practice Principles and strengthen assessment, curriculum, reporting and effective teaching and learning approaches	<p>2.1 Professional Practice Leaders promote VEYLDF related workforce development opportunities to the Department's regional based early childhood workforce.</p> <p>2.2 Pilot nine multidisciplinary networks aiming to develop the capacity of participants to assess children's progress using the learning and development outcomes outlined in the VEYLDF as part of an ongoing planning cycle (2013).</p> <p>2.3 As per 1.3, distribute a DVD resource on the VEYLDF to students undertaking early childhood courses.</p> <p>2.4 Develop and provide professional learning materials on the VEYLDF for Early Childhood Intervention Services to support their conversations with families and other professionals about learning and development opportunities.</p> <p>2.5 Provide Educational Leaderships programs for the early childhood sector through the Department's Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership.</p>
3. Support the development of individual learning plans for students with a	<p>3.1 Provide the ABLES tool to all Government schools in 2013/14 and non-Government schools by 2015 to enhance learning accountability.</p>

disability by providing DEECD staff with a comprehensive set of tools through the Abilities-Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) resource	3.2 Implement the ABLES professional learning program in all schools in 2013/14.
4. Provide professionals in early childhood education and care settings, primary and secondary schools with learning opportunities that will enable them to better assist transitions and planning for children and students with autism spectrum disorders	4.1 Promote the Autism Spectrum Disorder - Planning Successful Transition (Early Childhood Education and Care, Primary and Secondary) resource and professional learning and the complementary resources, Transition - A Positive Start to School initiative for all children (including the Sharing Our Journey resource) to all regions.
5. Continue to support the development of a consistent approach to planning of support and service provision in early childhood intervention services that is responsive to individual child and family needs	<p>5.1 Standardise and streamline intake referral processes for state funded Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS).</p> <p>5.2 On-going review of ECIS program guidelines to reflect current evidence- based practice and to support state-wide consistency in the provision of high quality ECIS programs.</p>
6. Support professionals to collaborate and share information about children's learning and development to assist with continuity of learning and to support transitions	<p>6.1 Implement Student Online Cases System (SOCS) across all networks for SSSOs and school work forces.</p> <p>6.2 Develop the Year 6/7 Transition Plan resource in 2014.</p> <p>6.3 Continue to promote a range of support resources and materials to assist early childhood and school professionals to support children and families as they transition to school through the Transition: A Positive Start to School initiative (including the Sharing Our Journey resource) and Autism Spectrum Disorder - Planning Successful Transition (Early Childhood Education and Care).</p> <p>6.4 Provide an educational leadership program - Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Professionals - for the early childhood sector through the Department's Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership.</p>

**Strategy: Support educational and early childhood development settings to be more inclusive**

**Objectives**

**Actions**

<p>7. Strengthen the focus on inclusion in leadership programs provided for professionals in education and early childhood development services</p>	<p>7.1 Provide the Disability Standards for Education 2005 online learning resource to all Victorian schools by July 2013.</p> <p>7.2 Incorporate information on Disability Standards for Education 2005 and legal obligations into Principal induction programs.</p> <p>7.3 Promote implementation of inclusive practices through provision of the Department's Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership program - Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Professionals - for the early childhood sector.</p>
<p>8. Provide information and advice to support disability action planning by education providers so as to improve participation and outcomes</p>	<p>8.1 Promote professional learning opportunities to Victorian government school staff in 2014, including Inclusion Online and Disability Standards for Education 2005 online learning resource.</p> <p>8.2 Distribute information to ensure providers in the vocational training sector are aware of their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.</p> <p>8.3 Increase awareness of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 within the TAFE sector by referring to it in the Minister's Letter of Expectation for TAFE Institutes for 2014.</p>
<p>9. Increase access of the non-government school sector to the Department's professional learning about building a culture of inclusion</p>	<p>9.1 Provide access to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 online learning resource to all non-government school sectors in 2013/14.</p> <p>9.2 Provide online professional learning on the VEYLDF, including the Practice Principle of Equity and Diversity, for professionals working in all early childhood education and care sectors.</p> <p>9.3 Pilot nine multidisciplinary networks aiming to develop the capacity of participants to assess children's progress using the learning and development outcomes outlined in the VEYLDF as part of an ongoing planning cycle (2013).</p>
<p>10. Build understanding and competence in implementing evidence-based inclusive practice in all school education and early childhood development services</p>	<p>10.1 Inclusion Online professional learning modules available to Victorian government schools in 2013/14.</p> <p>10.2 Implement Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Inclusion Support Program trials in 2013/14 in 15 schools.</p> <p>10.3 Professional Practice Unit work with Departmental staff to build understanding of evidence-based inclusive practice and align practices.</p> <p>10.4 Standardise intake referral processes for state funded Early Childhood Intervention Services to streamline access to this specialist support.</p>

- 10.5 Promote and make available evidence paper and Practice Guide on the VEYLDF Practice Principles of equity and diversity, and high expectations for every child to all professionals working with children aged from birth to eight years old.
- 10.6 Provide professional learning opportunities that support Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to understand that inclusive practice is reflected in and supported through the National Quality Framework for ECEC and National Quality Standards.

11. Support early childhood services and schools to provide educational settings that assist children and students with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in these environments

- 11.1 In the design and construction of new schools, refurbishment of existing schools and through the Accessible Buildings Program, the Department provides facilities that enable people with disabilities to access government schools, including the curriculum and education within those schools, in compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory frameworks, and with the aim of continuously improving the accessibility of government schools.
- 11.2 Provide a range of resources and programs that support schools to provide educational settings that assist students with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in these environments.
- 11.3 Provide professional development resources that promote collaborative partnerships between early childhood education and care and early childhood intervention professionals that focus on implementation of inclusive learning and development opportunities that are responsive to the needs of children with disabilities.
- 11.4 Build capacity of state funded kindergartens to implement inclusive practices through the provision of consultative support, resourcing and advice from the Preschool Field Officer and Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages programs.
- 11.5 Distribute resources that support ECIS providers to understand and implement evidence based practices that build capacity of ECEC professionals to provide inclusive learning and development environments that are responsive to the individual needs of children with disabilities or developmental delays.
- 11.6 Provide comprehensive travel education, curriculum and program documentation in 2014 to specialist schools to increase independent travel skills of students with disabilities attending these schools

12. Support services and early childhood professionals to implement the practice

- 12.1 Provide online professional learning on the VEYLDF, including the Practice Principles of Equity and Diversity, family-centred practice, and high expectations for all children.

principles in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, particularly those regarding principles of equity and diversity, family centred practice, and high expectations for all children	<p>12.2 As per 1.3, distribute a DVD resource on the VEYLDF to students undertaking early childhood courses.</p> <p>12.3 Promote the Evidence Papers and Practice Guides on the VEYLDF Practice Principles, including equity and diversity, family centred practice, and high expectations for all children.</p>
13. Support professional learning of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 for Department staff and leaders to positively influence the culture of inclusion in education and care communities	13.1 Promote awareness of and engagement in the Disability Standards for Education 2005 online learning resource to all Victorian school staff and state funded kindergarten providers and early childhood professionals.

## Strategy: Support families to be actively engaged in their child's learning and development

Objectives	Actions
14. Support services to build competency in family centred practice to assist families to confidently contribute to planning for their child's learning and development	<p>14.1 Continue to promote the use of the Family Centred Practice, Person Centred Practice guides to relevant school and regional personnel.</p> <p>14.2 Support continued development of family centred practice in ECIS through provision of family centred practice resources and supporting their engagement in VEYLDF professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>14.3 Support ECEC professionals to implement family centred practice through the Online professional learning on the VEYLDF, which includes the Practice Principle of Family Centred Practice.</p> <p>14.4 Provide ongoing promotion of the VEYLDF Evidence Paper and Practice Guide supporting professionals to engage in family centred practice.</p> <p>14.5 Make available professional learning materials on the VEYLDF for Maternal and Child Health nurses to support their conversations with families about learning.</p>
15. Build capacity in early childhood professionals to support families in their parenting role	15.1 Develop a series of twenty six parent newsletters that will be available directly to parents or through early childhood professionals. The newsletters will cover topics to highlight the importance of learning and development in the early years and supplement similar the Department's parent newsletters - Prep for Parents and Beyond Primary.

16. Support the involvement of parents of children with an autism spectrum disorder in assisting transition to and planning for early childhood education and care settings, primary and secondary schools

16.1 Promote parents' engagement in the Autism Spectrum Disorder - Planning Successful Transition (Early Childhood Education and Care, Primary and Secondary) resource.

16.2 Promote awareness of the Department's Autism Friendly Learning website and resources to parents of children and students with an ASD.

## Goal 2 – Upholding rights and promoting participation

### Strategy: Improve the practical application of human rights

Objectives	Actions
17. Assist support services to understand, implement and advocate for the rights of all children including those with disabilities	<p>17.1 Provide a professional learning program to build the knowledge base of support staff in relation to the rights of children and young people with disability.</p> <p>17.2 Promote awareness of and engagement in the Disability Standards for Education 2005 online learning resource to all Victorian school staff and state funded kindergarten providers.</p>

### Strategy: Better enable people with a disability, families and carers to exercise their rights

18. Provide professional learning opportunities for early childhood intervention professionals that will enable them to better assist families to understand the services available and confidently advocate for inclusive opportunities for their child and family	18.1 Review guidelines for ECIS programs to inform provision of support that builds capacity of families to provide and advocate for their child's ongoing learning and development needs.
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### Strategy: Improve the transition from school to post-school further education, employment and training

19. Roll out a coordinated communication strategy to better inform young people with a disability, their parents and teachers about further education, training and employment options	<p>19.1 Build capacity of schools to implement Victorian Careers Curriculum framework, Career Action Plans and Managing Individual Pathways.</p> <p>19.2 Promote the Strengthening Pathway Planning resources in schools to foster independence and increase participation in further education, training and post-school employment through strengthened careers and transition planning.</p> <p>19.3 As part of the Strengthening Pathway Planning resource, develop and distribute a customised version of the Engaging Parents in Career Conversations (EPICC) Framework for careers practitioners to engage parents of children with a disability in their children's career development journey and transition.</p>
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20. Develop and implement approaches that strengthen the pathway to employment for young people with a disability with particular emphasis on improving information provision, planning, and support coordination

20.1 As per 19.2, promote the Strengthening Pathway Planning resources in schools.

### **Strategy: Build skills and work readiness**

21. Develop and implement approaches to build work awareness and work readiness of young people with a disability both in school and post-school, with particular emphasis on opportunities to gain work experience in open employment

21.1 Support specialist schools to develop applications for funding to access new vocational training facilities through the Trade Training Centres in Schools Program.

22. Provide the training market with information that will support it to improve outcomes for learners with a disability

22.1 Distribute information that supports vocational training providers to develop strategies with the aim to improve outcomes for learners with a disability.

### **Strategy: Lead the way in the employment of people with a disability**

23. Improve the capacity of the Victorian public sector to employ, retain and offer professional development to people with a disability

23.1 Develop a VPS5/6 Leadership Program incorporating a module focusing on the barriers and enablers impacting on the recruitment, development and retention of employees with a disability.

23.2 Develop the Department's Employee Value Proposition for all people including people with a disability.

23.3 Develop best practice recruitment and selection processes in which diversity and inclusion are central considerations in all processes.

23.4 Explore opportunities for cadetships, traineeships, internships and work experience programs for people with disabilities.

23.5 Support the organisation to improve awareness of, and demonstrate positive behaviours in, the importance of respecting diversity and inclusion in the Department's workforces.

23.6 Develop HR Service centre expertise to assist people managers to effectively manage reasonable adjustments for candidates, new starters and current employees with disabilities.

### **Strategy: Increase the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal people with a disability**

- 24. Improve education and transition pathways for Aboriginal students with a disability by mapping current education pathways and information sharing between Disability Services, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) and Koorie Education Support Officers
  - 24.1 Facilitate linkages between Koorie Education Co-ordinators and Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups to facilitate information sharing and engagement with Disability Services.
  - 24.2 Disseminate information to Koorie Education Support Officers via regions to promote understanding of and linkages to ECIS.
  - 24.3 Liaise with VAEAI to promote understanding of ECIS and to inform the development of culturally relevant information that supports access to ECIS.
  - 24.4 In partnership with VAEAI develop an annual report on patterns of Koorie participation in the vocational training sector and industry needs, including pathways and outcomes for Indigenous students with disabilities.

## Goal 3 – Accessing information, transport, building and places

### Strategy: Provide accessible information about government services

Objectives	Actions
25. Provide policies, standards and guidelines to assist all government departments and agencies to make their websites more accessible to people with a disability	<p>25.1 Ensure Department print publications for external audiences are available in alternative formats upon request. Clear statements on how to access alternate formats must be located on the imprint page of these publications.</p> <p>25.2 Ensure all new Department digital content (including documents, images, videos, audio) created for external audiences is prepared in line with accessibility best practices and standards and is available in alternative formats. Exemptions will only be considered where an accessible technical solution cannot be found. Key communications and IT staff within the Department should be trained in content accessibility techniques appropriate to their role.</p> <p>25.3 Develop and update digital content accessibility guidelines and other resources for use by all Department business units and incorporate into web CMS training for Department staff.</p> <p>25.4 Develop or repurpose digital content accessibility guidelines and other resources for use by all Victorian Government schools.</p> <p>25.4 Review Department Corporate image templates for accessibility compliance to assess accessibility compliance.</p>

## Goal 4 – A contemporary approach through disability system reform

### Strategy: Work towards a sustainable National Disability Insurance Scheme to give greater certainty to people with disability, their families and carers

Objective	Actions
26. Support the launch and evaluation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Barwon area in order to better prepare for full scheme launch	<p>26.1 Contribute to the planning and implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for the Barwon launch site and Victorian full scheme rollout.</p> <p>26.2 Support planning and transition of DEECD clients and programs to NDIS.</p>
27. Continue working with the Commonwealth and other states and territories on the fundamental design of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including longer-term funding and governance to provide certainty to people with a disability, their families and carers	<p>27.1 Work with the Barwon Launch Transition agency to ensure protocols and processes are in place to implement the NDIS across early childhood and school services.</p> <p>27.2 Ensure that the lessons learnt from the launch experience related to family centred practice and the gaps between current ECIS services and those provided through the NDIS are identified and addressed in the full roll out</p>

### Strategy: Provide better support for people with autism spectrum disorder

28. Provide support to children, adults, families and carers who are dealing with autism spectrum disorder in a more coordinated and complementary approach across government	<p>28.1 Promote awareness of the Department's Autism Friendly Learning website and resources to parents of children and students with an ASD.</p> <p>28.2 Strengthen the communication and alignment with existing Department of Human Services programs providing support for children, adults, families and carers dealing with an ASD.</p> <p>28.3 Support Regional Autism Coaches to work collaboratively with teachers and school leaders to change whole school culture and better support students with an ASD in 2013.</p>
29. Use the Department's regional autism spectrum disorder annual implementation plans to support an integrated early years and school approach through identifying regional priority areas such as professional learning and transition support	<p>29.1 Each region will have a set of provisions and strategies to build the capacity of early years and school settings to support children and young people with an ASD.</p>

