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Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020  
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Dear Sir/Madam

## **Surf Coast Shire Council submission to the Draft Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Draft Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020. The following comments have been drafted in consultation with Council's All Abilities Advisory Committee.

We strongly support the vision of the Draft State Disability Plan 2017-2020 for people with a disability to be fully included in the Victorian community. Council is committed to an inclusive community where all people, including people with a disability, are active citizens, have equal rights and have access to economic outcomes.

Surf Coast Shire has adopted an Accessible and Inclusive Strategic Plan that commits to:

- Accessible built and natural environments
- People centric and flexible services responsive to the needs of people with a disability
- Opportunities for people with a disability to participate in community life and decision making
- Supporting others in the community to implement inclusive practices
- Develop a workforce that embraces diversity and accessibility

We are supportive of endorsing the four themes of the Draft Victorian Disability Plan and provide the following suggestions:

### **Theme 1: Active citizenship**

#### ***People with a disability should be able to participate in community and civic life***

The State Plan should include:

- Programs to support recreation and sporting groups to foster fully inclusive participation. This can include funding opportunities, awareness campaigns and education programs.
- A way to match people with a disability with boards and committees seeking leaders and volunteers.
- Strengthen leadership programs for people with a disability so they can go on and reach their full potential as leaders. These people are the examples for others.
- Education and incentives to boards and committees from Government to ensure that opportunities and benefits are clear to community leaders.

Every social, sporting, cultural and arts event that is organised and or funded through Victorian Government should demonstrate accessibility and inclusion for all people. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) guide for planning small and large scale events can be a resource to ensure that all people in society are welcomed and can access the event.

Community and business sectors can ensure people of all abilities feel welcome and valued. They can be encouraged to develop inclusive promotion and invitations to their event or business. We should all include language such as "All Abilities, All welcome" or "People with all abilities are encouraged to join the planning committee". Business, community and Government should include Auslan interpreters and individual assistance at events and this could be made mandatory for State funded events.

The progress of the Active Citizenship theme could be measured by the number of community groups accessing funding or education programs. The number of events adopting the HREOC guide is another measure of progress.

## **Theme 2: Rights and equality**

### ***Protecting and promoting rights and equal access to opportunities***

People with a disability have the same rights as everyone else. The perception that people with a disability are less able to make a contribution needs to shift. While people have different needs and people contribute differently, all contributions should be valued.

Actions to carry the Rights and Equality theme forward for people with a disability include:

- Strengthen the capacity of the disability advocacy sector to address both systemic and individual issues.
- Include disability-focused family violence prevention actions, such as training and education programs, within the broader state family violence prevention strategy. Example is CRAF training being rolled out in 2016 in the Barwon region.
- Increase accessible housing options, both in the public and private markets.
- Promote universal design principles for all urban planning and building practices and expand the principles of universal design to ensure people with a disability can access facilities without fear of their safety. e.g. shared cyclist and pedestrian pathways.
- Ensure that all newly built government schools are designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students.
- Develop the service sector in rural areas so that people with a disability can access services in their local community rather than having to travel to a regional city.
- Develop strategies to challenge inappropriate and disrespectful public attitudes and behaviours.
- Develop more targeted efforts to ensure that people with a disability access effective preventative health and screening services.
- Rural and Regional Issues - There are few, if any, strategies in the Draft Plan that address 'rural and regional' issues such as isolation and access to services specifically.
- Public transport in rural areas is often poor or non-existent. This has an impact on people being Active Citizens and participating economically. Strategies need to be put in place to improve transport for people with a disability in rural areas.

### **Theme 3: Economic participation**

#### ***People with a disability need to be a vital part of Victoria's workforce***

A Victorian Government action plan to promote economic participation for people of all abilities into all sectors of Government would provide the leadership and message to the community about the benefits of employing people with all abilities.

Volunteering provides a unique opportunity for increased competence, confidence and independence for all people. The State Government could develop a volunteering resource and policy to assist local government, communities and businesses to create volunteering opportunities for people of all abilities with the view to step into paid employment.

Suggested activities to support the implementation of the Victorian Government action plan are:

- Develop education programs that identify benefits for employers about employing people with a disability.
- Develop incentives for employers to employ people with a disability.
- Strengthen financial support packages for people with a disability to access training and education.
- Reinforcing an earlier suggestion; strategies need to be put in place to improve transport for people with a disability in rural areas to enable economic participation.
- State and local government could introduce awards for local businesses who demonstrate commitment in employing people with a disability.

Victorian Councils through their Metro and Rural Access positions are already working with community and private business to promote inclusive and accessible practices. A good example of this promotion is the "Come in Were Accessible" campaign which encourages hospitality and retail outlets to become aware of the importance of access for people with a disability. These programs could be strengthened and expanded to demonstrate that good access is good business! See [www.accessiblebusiness.com.au](http://www.accessiblebusiness.com.au)

### **Theme 4: Making the most of the NDIS**

#### ***Mainstream services are critical to the success of the scheme***

Council wishes to ensure that communities across the state have access to the support they need to live the lives they want. The launch and implementation of the NDIS in the Barwon region has been welcomed by many people including the participants receiving individual support.

Council strongly believes that building community capacity to include people with a disability should be a strong focus of the State Disability Plan. Through community development initiatives such as State funded Rural and Metro Access programs, Councils have been able to provide a wealth of opportunities for people with a disability. This work has resulted in people with a disability being able to access events, community groups, arts programs, sporting clubs and volunteer opportunities.

Community building roles are essential to ensure each community 'promotes and protects the rights of people with a disability and actively supports their participation and engagement'.

Council would like to see the State Disability Plan strongly recommend that Rural and Metro Access programs are ideally placed to deliver the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) component of the NDIS. The State Government can play a role to facilitate the NDIS to fund these community building programs with local government which has more than a decade of provided outcomes for people with a disability. This essential community

building program cannot be lost due to a bureaucratic funding change from State to Federal Government.

Individual NDIS support packages are making a huge difference to the lives of participants. More work is required for programs and services to be made available in rural areas to ensure participants can use their funding on programs and services they truly want to participate in. Currently NDIS recipients in rural areas may struggle to access programs in their local community. This again raises the issue of transport highlighted throughout the submission.

### **Driving Outcomes in the Draft Plan**

Surf Coast Shire Council agrees with the point that government needs to lead the way and the need to measure the outcomes of the actions taken in the Plan.

Council has adopted a results based accountability framework to measure our 10 year Access and Inclusion Strategic Plan to measure quantity, quality and effectiveness.

We encourage the State Government to include an evaluation framework to measure the outcomes of the plan and suggest data collection methods including statewide surveys, analysis of local government consultation results, accessing existing measures e.g. NDIS, other State and Federal Governments and direct engagement with people with a disability, their families and carers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this submission. Please feel free to contact me or our Community Relations Manager, Damian Waight on 5261 0540 if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Hodge', written in a cursive style.

**Cr Rose Hodge**  
Mayor