

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across which we meet today, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people, as well as the Traditional Owners of the various lands from which you join us, acknowledging that sovereignty has never been ceded.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to any First Nations people who may be joining us today.

- Dr Paul Ramcharan, University of Melbourne
- Helen Williams, CEO, Inclusion Melbourne
- Nathan Despott, Head Policy Research Advocacy, Incl. Melbourne
- Cameron Bloomfield, Peer Worker, Rainbow Rights & Advocacy

Partnership of leading researchers and systemic advocates in the inclusion of people with intellectual and cognitive disability

inclusion melbourne 



The Journey so far...



2016-17

Commissioned to develop resources for the VEC.

- **Electoral Inclusion** report: Guide to global best practice projects.
- **I Can Vote** dual-read guide for supporters
- **Plan to Vote** form: for supporters to plan election preparation for voters with intellectual disability

Much of work from 2018 to 2023 has focused on building on what we learnt while developing these guides.



plan to vote



This plan can be used with the *I Can Vote* guide for people with a disability, their family carers, advocates and support professionals: www.inclusiondesignlab.org.au/voting

You can fill this form out on a computer. Download this PDF file to your computer. Open it up in Acrobat Reader and tap the first white box to start typing. You can use the 'tab' key to move to the next question. Make sure you SAVE the file after filling in the form.

Name:

Tick all that apply ✓)

Family member

Circle of Support

Member

Friend or advocate

Other

Someone helps you as you prepare to vote. This may be a person you can write this person's name and contact details here.

Email address:

Tick all that apply ✓)

Closest regular voting centres are:

Reason for postal ballot because:



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i can vote

a guide for people with a disability, their family carers, friends, advocates and support professionals



Appearance of:

- Lack of ability to understand political ideas.
- Lack of engagement with real world politics.
- View that supporting people with cognitive disability to vote to will damage our democracy.

Substantial hesitation on the part of support workers and carers due to concerns about partiality, lack of own political knowledge, fear of undue influence.

No meaningful practice guidance for teachers, supporters, NDIS providers regarding addressing the substantial lack of inclusion in political communication and learning.

Low expectations of people with cognitive disability based on initial assessments and assumptions.

Substantially fewer opportunities for everyday political conversations. Political learning viewed as much lower priority than other support needs.

No requirement for meaningful political education for people with cognitive disability in special schools and mainstream schools.

Perceived primary barriers

Research shows these are minor drivers of low voter participation, with a smaller impact than initially assumed:

- difficulty getting on the roll
- “unsound mind” clauses in electoral legislation
- being removed from the roll
- voters with ID not understanding what to do on election day

Actual barriers

1. Not enough support to learn about politics
2. Not enough support to help people learn to make decisions. Supported Decision Making is really important but it doesn't happen enough in learning about politics. Victoria has already affirmed the value of SDM in our updated Guardianship Act.
3. Too many people think that people with intellectual disability can't learn about politics and voting

4. Political culture is not cognitively inclusive.

5. Not enough information about...

...politics and parties and elections

...that people with disability can

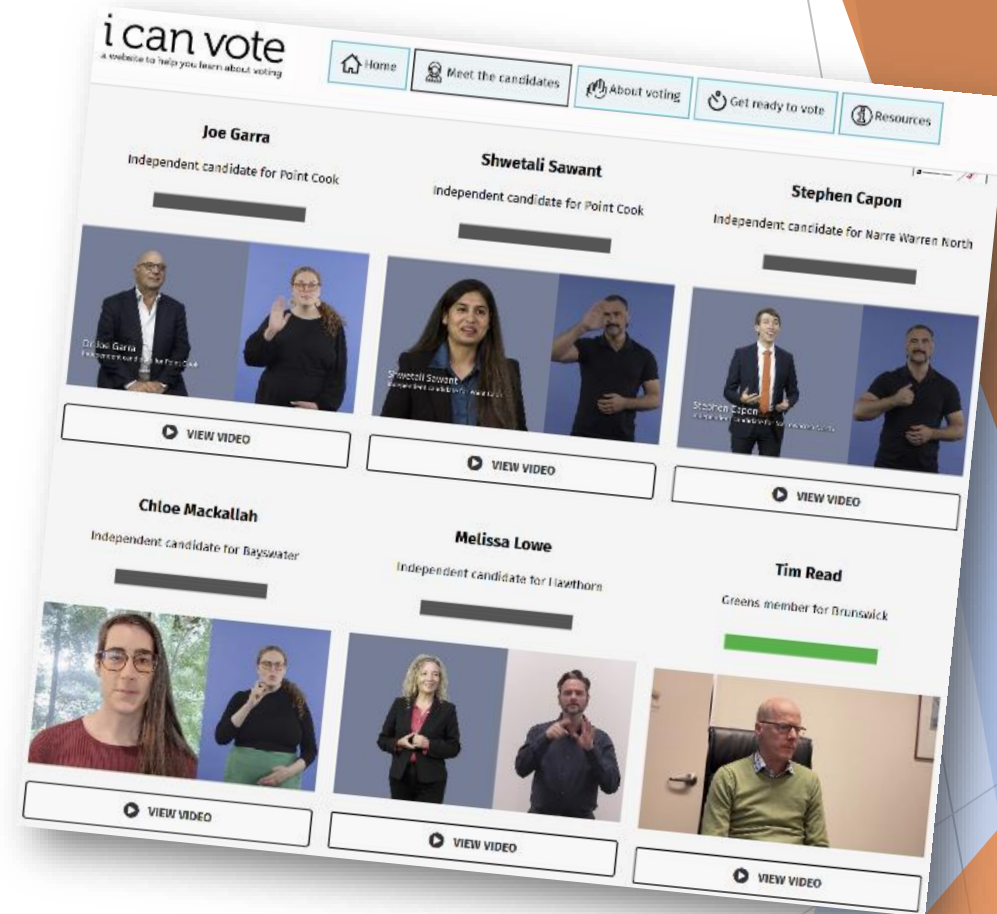
...access and understand.

i can vote

I Can Vote aspires to link the finer details within issues of citizenship, political awareness, informed voting and election preparation. It brings together...

- cognitively accessible political information
- political citizenship education
- planning materials
- direct support practice guidance, and
- logistical support tips

...to empower people with intellectual disability to participate in politics and voting.



i can vote: victorian election 2022



We ran a state-wide project promoting the opportunity for parties and independent candidates to create a 2-3 minute easy language video explaining their key messages:

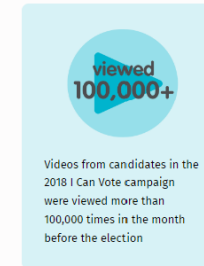
- Fully captioned and with Auslan interpretation
- Hosted on I Can Vote website
- Total cost for easy language translation, filming, production, and Auslan less than \$300 thanks to partner pro-bono work.
- Strict rules for project team and translators
- 6 of the largest parties participated. Only one larger party declined.

Get your message to more people in the 2022 Victorian State Election

Easy language videos for Victorian voters

To create a quick, accessible, and VERY inexpensive easy language video, email us using this form. We will verify your identity then send you the simple instructions for creating your video:

[↓ Sign Up Now](#)



The Nationals Victoria



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

Victorian Labor



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

The Funding Dilemma

While supportive of the program (and endorsing the *I Can Vote* and *Electoral Inclusion* publications), the VEC is unable to fund or participate in the development of partisan easy language content due to the current legislation for electoral commissions.

Philanthropic and Research Funding Bodies are often hesitant to fund political content due to perceived 'risk'. Many funding bodies are either impartial, or partial to certain political parties through support.

Due to this, the majority of funding bodies do not want to be seen to be supportive of any political content, regardless of the supportive outcomes for people with disability.

political inclusion national summit 2023

australians with cognitive disability and
inclusion in politics and voting

14-15 august, 2023



hosts:

partners:



Nearly 100 people attended our 10 hour Summit over 2 days.

Here is what self-advocates said they learnt:

- We learned from best practice from Canada, UK and Sweden.
- We heard about learning in a group. We heard about:
 - Families and friends supporting people to learn
 - Circles of Support or Microboards as types of support. They help people learn about politics.
- People want their ideas heard – ideas about many areas of life, about the environment, roads, trains, and other things.

- People want support to understand the political ideas and learn about parties.
 - This is very different to learning about organising to vote. The AEC can't do this.
 - VEOHRC says it is a right to get support to learn about politics if you need that support.
 - The role of Electoral Commissions is a bit unclear.
- People with cognitive disability need time to prepare. It is not good to rush people to learn. It is not good to rush people on election day.
- There are a lot of gaps in advocacy across Australia. Some people have access to a lot more support than others. Some self-advocacy groups run meetings with politicians

- Supported Decision Making is all about:
 - Start with the idea that all people can learn and grow. Another way of saying this is: People have capacity.
 - Relationships: Families and friends helping people learn.
 - Having a chance to learn about new things in a way that is clear, step-by-step, and with support to ask questions.
 - Some people need support when they communicate. People have a right to this support.
 - “Self-fulfilling prophecy”: Many people with cognitive disability get seen as not having capacity. Then people don’t try to help them learn.

Responsibility and rights

Government and Parliament need to make sure rights become reality. The right to get support to learn about politics is a very important part of the right to vote. At the moment, no one in government is looking after this.

Clever ways to learn about politics

Make sure people with cognitive disability have opportunities and support to learn about politics. Learning about voting is only one part of this.

Supported Decision Making and learning in groups are important.

Support for political inclusion needs to be better.

Supporters, carers, families, the NDIS, and the community should do more to support people to learn about politics.

This support should not be avoided. Support needs to be more reliable.

People with cognitive disability have a voice.

People with disability have lots to say about disability issues, but also lots to say about many other things. Politicians and government need to have more inclusive conversations with people with cognitive disability.

Political information that is easy to understand and access.

There needs to be a large effort to make sure political information is easy to understand and access.

This needs to be funded by government, run by the community, and put in one place.

Next steps

1. Parliamentary Motion to enable political inclusion of Victorians with cognitive disability

- * Affirm the existence of gaps
 - * Affirm the usefulness of accessible language, supported decision making
- * Affirm that the right to vote includes the right to support to learn about politics
- * Mandated production of easy language materials for election candidates and other partisan political matters
 - * Appropriate education interventions

2. Scoping Project

Victorian Government sponsored scoping project, with oversight from the Electoral Matters Committee, to assess needs for addressing the gaps and refining solutions to ensure enfranchisement of Victorians with cognitive disability.

Includes research:

- * Development of comprehensive framework
- * Evidence-based responses to perceived and actual risks, with mitigations
- * Review of education and support gaps, with proposed interventions

3. Enablement of required materials and systems.

- * Establishment of formal responsibility for enfranchisement of people with cognitive disability
 - * Resourcing accessible language material development and dissemination systems
 - * Adequate resourcing of intellectual and cognitive disability peer networks for the purpose of political learning and to enable grassroots organising
 - * Resourcing of recommendations from (2) Scoping Project