FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL INCLUSION AND VICTORIANS WITH DISABILITY

Committee functions

Extract from the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* (Vic)

S.11   The functions of the Family and Community Development Committee are, if so required or permitted under this Act, to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on:

(a) any proposal, matter or thing concerned with–

    (i)   the family or the welfare of the family

    (ii) community development or the welfare of the community

(b) the role of Government in community development and welfare, including the welfare of the family.

Committee membership

Committee Members

Ms Dee Ryall, MP (Chair)	Mitcham
Ms Bronwyn Halfpenny, MP (Deputy Chair)	Thomastown
Mrs Andrea Coote, MP	Southern Metropolitan
Mr Justin Madden, MP	Essendon
Mr David O'Brien, MP (until 27 March 2014)	Western Victoria
Mrs Jeanette Powell, MP (from 27 March 2014)	Shepparton

Secretariat

Dr Janine Bush	Executive Officer
Ms Vicky Finn	Research Officer
Ms Natalie Tyler	Administration Officer

Terms of Reference

To the Family and Community Development Committee — for inquiry, consideration and report no later than 6 August 2014* on social inclusion and Victorians with a disability, and the Committee is asked to inquire into:

(a) define 'social inclusion' for Victorians with a disability;

(b) identify the nature and scale of relative inclusion (exclusion) and participation of Victorians with a disability in the economic, social and civil dimensions of society;

(c) understand the impact of Victorian government services and initiatives aimed at improving inclusion and participation;

(d) identify examples of good practice on inclusion and participation driven by local government and the community sector;

(e) assess how the *Disability Act 2006* has impacted on the social inclusion of people with a disability with respect to Victorian government services; and

(f) recommend ways to increase social inclusion, including the roles of and collaboration between local, state and federal governments, the community sector, individuals with a disability and their carers.

*The deadline for reporting was subsequently extended to 17 September 2014

Chair's foreword

Circumstances for people with disability in Victoria have markedly improved with shifts away from past approaches that were characterised by segregation and institutionalisation.

Over the past decade numerous national, international and Victorian legislative and policy interventions have sought to create conditions for increased social inclusion. Despite these efforts, people with disability continue to report experiences of exclusion from social, economic and cultural life in Victoria.

This Inquiry is timely. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in 2013 is contributing to a major transformation of the disability support system. It is shining a light on social inclusion and disability, and bringing the issue to the forefront of the minds of Victorians. It is an opportune time to continue Victoria's leadership in disability by moving away from a focus on people with disability as recipients of care and strengthening efforts on their social inclusion in the Victorian community.

Social inclusion extends beyond simply being present or passively participating in activities in the community. For people with disability, like everyone, social inclusion means experiencing respect for difference and for individual aspirations. It means having control over their own lives and having opportunities to contribute and participate in society in meaningful ways. It means feeling valued and experiencing a sense of belonging. It involves having significant and reciprocal relationships. It can also mean having the appropriate support to be socially included.

The Committee determined that the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) and the *State disability plan 2013–16* provide the Victorian Government with a strong policy and legislative basis to shape its future social inclusion agenda. And the Building Inclusive Communities Program provides local government with a solid foundation to continue grassroots efforts in local communities across the state.

Numerous individuals and organisations took the time to provide written submissions and appeared at public hearings. This valuable evidence assisted the Committee to understand the nuances and complexities of social inclusion (or exclusion) experienced by people with disability. The Committee is grateful for the considered and thoughtful evidence provided to the Inquiry that were fundamental to its deliberations and the recommendations it ultimately makes to the Victorian Government.

In addition to the need to provide clarity of definitions and implement further measurement tools to assess the social inclusion of people with disability, the Committee identified that existing legislated tools could also be further strengthened. This would help determine how the aspirations of people with disability are changing over time, and put greater focus on the importance of creating favourable conditions for sustainable relationships and social connections. The Committee also makes recommendations to provide greater opportunities for people to meaningfully participate and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of Victoria.

On behalf of the Committee I thank the staff of the Secretariat for their ongoing dedication to the work of the Committee and for their work in producing this report — Janine Bush (Executive Officer), Vicky Finn (Research Officer) and Natalie Tyler (Administration Officer).

And finally, I would personally like to thank Committee Members for their commitment and cooperative approach to this Inquiry — Bronwyn Halfpenny MP (Deputy Chair), Andrea Coote MP, Justin Madden MP, David O'Brien MP, and Jeanette Powell MP.

Dee Ryall, MP

Chair

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Glossary

Aboriginal—The term refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Accessibility—In common language, the ability to reach, understand, or approach something or someone. In laws and standards on accessibility, it refers to what the law requires for compliance.

Aspiration—A hope or ambition of achieving something in the future.

Attitude—An expression of favour or disfavour towards a person, place, thing, or event. Attitudes and corresponding behaviour are related in complex ways.

Block funding—The process by which governments directly fund service providers with lump sum payments. These payments are then used by the providers to deliver support services.

Building Inclusive Communities Program (formerly the Community Building Program)—Established in 2002 to build and strengthen the community's capacity to provide support to people with disability and their families and to facilitate integrated local community planning to engage and involve people with disability and their families, disability service providers and community organisations.

Dignity of risk—The right of people to choose to take some risk in engaging in life experiences.

Disability Act 2006 **(Vic)**—The Act sets out principles for people with disability and for disability service providers. The Act aims to provide a stronger whole of government, whole of community response to the rights and needs of people with disability, and a framework for the provision of high quality services and supports for people with disability.

Disability Action Plan—Under the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) all public services—government departments, statutory authorities and statutory corporations—must have a Disability Action Plan, which is a plan to reduce barriers for people with disability as community members and make it easier for people with disability to use services available to all Victorians.

Disability Service Provider—A person or body (for example a community service organisation) that provides disability services under the Disability Act and is registered on the register of disability service providers. The Department of Human Services is also a disability service provider.[1]

Disability Services Commissioner—The Disability Services Commissioner was established on 1 July 2007 under the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) to improve services for people with disability in Victoria through assisting in the resolution of complaints raised by or on behalf of people who receive services. The Commissioner is a statutory body that functions independent of government, the

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[1] Department of Human Services (2014) *Individual support packages for people with a disability. Handbook.* Melbourne, DHS, p.87.

Department of Human Services and Victorian disability services to provide a free, confidential and supportive complaints resolution process.

Discrimination—Can be direct or indirect:

- Direct discrimination is treating or proposing to treat a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that attribute.

- Indirect discrimination can happen when a requirement, condition or practice is imposed or proposed that is not reasonable and has or is likely to have the effect of disadvantaging a person with an attribute.

Empowerment—The process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

Individualised or self-directed funding—Where government funds can be given directly to service users to then purchase services. This would mean service providers receive funding only after being approached (chosen) by the service user.

Individual Support Package (ISP)—ISPs enables a person to provide direction for the identification and implementation of supports that are most appropriate to their individual needs and circumstances. It enables the person to exercise choice in obtaining support that will assist them to achieve their goals and pursue their own lifestyle.[2]

Individual Support Plan—The *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) requires that a person has a support plan in place if they are in receipt of an ongoing disability support such as an Individual Support Package (ISP). The support plan outlines the person's goals and the strategies and resources required to achieve those goals. If the supports require disability funding, these need to be written in a funding proposal.[3]

Job shadowing—An unpaid opportunity to spend part of a day or more observing and interacting with employers in a workplace.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package (KISP)—The objective of KISPs is to build the capacity of funded kindergartens to support the access and participation of children with disability and high support needs and/or with complex medical needs.[4]

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)—An independent statutory agency whose role is to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).[5]

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)—The new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.[6]

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[2] Department of Human Services (June 2014) *Individual support packages for people with a disability: Guidelines.* Melbourne, DHS. Accessed on 26 August 2014 from http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/individual-support-package-guidelines.

[3] Department of Human Services (2009) *Individual Support Package handbook.* Melbourne, DHS, p.41.

[4] Department of Education and Early Childhood Development *Kingergarten Inclusion Support Packages.* Accessed on 26 August 2014 from http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx.

[5] National Disability Insurance Scheme *About us.* Accessed on 26 August 2014 from http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us.

National Disability Services (NDS) Victoria—The Victorian state office of the national peak body for non-government disability service organisations. Its purpose is to promote quality service provision and life opportunities for Victorians with disability.[7]

Natural networks—Refers to the real world links between groups or individuals, such as networks of friends, family networks or networks of former colleagues.

Productivity Commission Report—In February 2010 the Australian Government requested the Productivity Commission undertake an inquiry into a national disability long-term care and support scheme. The inquiry assessed the costs, cost effectiveness, benefits, and feasibility of the scheme. On 31 July 2011, the Productivity Commission provided the *Disability care and support* report to the Australian Government, which was released on 10 August 2011.

Reverse integration—The process whereby people without disability are integrated into activities that previously were limited exclusively to people with disability.

Self-directed funding—see Individualised funding.

Social capital—Relates to the social norms, networks and trust that facilitate cooperation within or between groups. It can generate benefits to the whole community by reducing transaction costs, promoting cooperative behaviour, diffusing knowledge and innovations, and through enhancements to personal wellbeing and associated spillovers.

Social exclusion—The process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community.

State Disability Plan—Under the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic), from 2013 the Minister for Community Services is required to prepare a State Disability Plan every four years that must:

- identify the needs of persons with a disability

- establish goals and priorities for the support of persons with a disability

- identify objectives and policy priorities for the development and delivery of services for persons with a disability

- identify strategies for achieving those objectives and priorities.[8]

State Disability Plan 2013–16—Articulates the Victorian Government's view for the future and sets a direction for the next four years. At the centre of the Plan is the framework, which outlines the vision and principles of the Plan, the long-term goals, shorter-term outcomes and four-year strategies that guide the two-yearly implementation plans. Its vision is an inclusive Victorian society that enables people with disability, their families and carers to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.

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[6] National Disability Insurance Scheme *Welcome.* Accessed on 26 August 2014 from http://www.ndis.gov.au/.
[7] National Disability Services *About the National Disability Services.* Accessed on 26 August 2014 from http://www.nds.org.au/about.
[8] *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) s.37.

Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC)—Conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) throughout Australia from 5 August 2012 to 2 March 2013 and is the seventh comprehensive national survey conducted by the ABS to measure disability. The survey collects information from three target populations:

- people with disability

- older people (those aged 65 years and over)

- people who care for people with disability or older people.

Data from this survey is used to measure the prevalence of disability in Australia, measure the need for support of older people and those with disability, and provide a demographic and socio-economic profile of people with disability, older people and carers compared to the general population.[9]

UN Convention—Australia ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN Convention) on 17 July 2008. By ratifying the UN Convention, Australia joined other countries around the world in a global effort to promote the equal and active participation of all people with disability.

The purpose of the UN Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people with disability, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.[10]

Universal Housing Design—Designing Australian homes to meet the challenging needs of home occupants across their lifetime. It recommends the inclusion of key easy living features that aim to make homes easier and safer to use for all occupants including people with disability, ageing Australians, people with temporary injuries, and families with young children.

Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC)—Established under the Disability Act 2006 (Vic), VDAC provides advice to the Minister for Community Services on issues that affect people with disability across all government services. VDAC is a way for people with disability to have a say in decision making on whole-of-government policy issues. Most Council members must be people with disability and they must come from a range of different backgrounds.

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[9]   Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) *Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: Summary of findings, 2012.* cat. no. 4430.0, Canberra, ABS. Accessed on 14 August 2014 from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0.

[10]   Attorney-General's Department *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.* Australian Government. Accessed on 3 September 2014 from http://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Pages/UnitedNationsConventionontherightsofpersonswith disabilities.aspx.

Acronyms

AAA	Access for all abilities program
ABCD	Assets-based community development
ABI	Acquired Brain Injury
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACD	Association for Children with a Disability
ACSO	Australian Community Support Organisation
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADEs	Australian Disability Enterprises
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CBPARS	Community Building Project Achievement Reporting System
CDDHV	Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CQL	Council on Quality and Leadership
CSO	Community Service Organisations
Cth	Commonwealth
DAPs	Disability Action Plans
DD Act	*Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DES	Disability Employment Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DMD	Disability Mentoring Day
DSC	Disability Services Commissioner
DSP	Disability Support Pension
EO Act	*Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
EOI	Expression of interest

EPICC	Engaging Parents in Career Conversations
FIDA	Football Integration Development Association
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPs	General Medical Practitioners
HACC	Home and Community Care
ID	Intellectual Disability
IGAs	Inter Governmental Agreements
ISP	Individual Support Package
KISP	Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package
LACs	Local Area Coordinators
LEAD	Leading, Educating and Advocating for Disability Program
LGAs	Local Government Authorities
LYCP	Live Your Community Program
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MBA	Milward Brown Australia
MORF	Measuring Outcomes and Results Framework
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Services
NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPA	Office of the Public Advocate
OTA	Occupational Therapy Australia
POM	Personal Outcome Measures
PRC	Parenting Research Centre
PTAC	Public Transport Access Committee
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RAC	Residential Aged Care
RDAV	Riding for Disabled Association of Victoria Inc
RSAs	Regional Sports Assemblies

SAIF	Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund
SCI	Spinal Cord Injury
SDAC	Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers (ABS)
SSA	State Services Authority
SSAs	State Sports Associations
SWAT	Scooter and Wheelchair Access Team
SWEP	Statewide Aids Equipment Program
SYA	Scope's Young Ambassador Program
TAC	Transport Accident Commission
TTR	Transition-to-retirement
UK	United Kingdom
VAEP	Victorian Aids and Equipment Program
VALID	Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc
VCASP	Victorian Coalition of ABI Service Providers
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service
VDAC	Victorian Disability Advisory Council
VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VICSERV	Psychiatric Services Victoria
VPLRC	Victorian Parliamentary Law Reform Committee
WA	Western Australia
WDV	Women with Disabilities Victoria
WHO	World Health Organization
YDAS	Youth Disability Advocacy Service

Executive summary

A GREAT LIFE
I'm part of this world and I have a disability
But I don't want it to rule my life
I want to find out what I'm good at and do it really well
I want to do stuff with my brothers and sisters
and I want to be happy at school
and I want people to feel OK around me
I want to hang out with friends and do cool stuff
I love my parents but I don't want to live with them
forever so … I'll need to get a job
I want to fall in love and maybe have kids
And when it's all over, I want to be able to say that I
didn't just have a life
— I had a great life.
Source: *Transcript of Evidence*, Association for Children with a Disability, Melbourne, 17 March 2014 , p. 2.

Numerous interventions over the past decade at an international, national and state level have sought to create conditions that improve the quality of life of people with disability and their social inclusion. These include the:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN Convention)

- *National disability strategy 2010–20*

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

- *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)

- Victorian *State disability plan 2013–16*.

The Committee recognises that for the duration of this Inquiry, individuals with disability, their families and supporters, and organisations have continued to work with local communities across Victoria to increase opportunities for social inclusion. New and innovative programs and strategies are continuously being implemented and contributing to change.

Despite policy and legislative interventions and efforts in local communities, the Committee heard that people with disability continue to report feeling excluded from social, economic and cultural life.

The introduction of the NDIS in July 2013 is contributing to a major transformation of the disability support system. While essentially a new scheme for funding and providing disability support for people with permanent and significant disability, the NDIS was also intended to minimise the impact of disability, to raise awareness of disability, and to increase social inclusion by stimulating social capital.

> **Social inclusion**—*means people with disability:*
>
> *—experience respect for their differences, their aspirations and their right to have control over their own lives*
>
> *—have opportunities to contribute and participate in society in a meaningful way and feel valued*
>
> *—experience significant and reciprocal relationships*
>
> *—have appropriate supports, where necessary.*[11]

The NDIS is currently being trialled across Australia with its full roll out to occur between 2016 and 2019.

It is an opportune time to consider what social inclusion for Victorians with disability means, the extent to which it is experienced, and what actions need to be taken to achieve social inclusion. In the context of the transition to the NDIS, the Committee considers that efforts to increase social inclusion need to be ongoing and that governments need to continue to fulfil their obligations.

Given the numerous policy and legislative interventions to improve the quality of life of people with disability, governments need to know if they are effective.

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[11] Compiled by the Family and Community Development Committee. Refer to Recommendation 1.1 in Chapter 1.

In undertaking its Inquiry, the Committee considered eight key areas relevant to the social inclusion of Victorians with disability.

Chapter	Discusses
1. Defining disability and social inclusion	What is 'social inclusion'? What does it mean for people with disability? And how should it be measured? How can we know over time if the interventions put in place are effectively increasing people's feelings of inclusiveness?
2. Leading the social inclusion agenda	In a context in which responsibilities for assessing and funding disability support are transitioning across governments, who holds responsibility for leading the social inclusion agenda?
3. Aspirations and social inclusion	What do people with disability themselves aspire to in the context of social inclusion? What are their goals and ambitions? Do they have opportunities to pursue them?
4. Sustainable relationships and networks	Social inclusion is more than merely being present or passively participating. It is about social connectedness, relationships and natural networks. How can people with disability increase their social capital through their connections?
5. Foundations to social inclusion	There are core foundations to achieving social inclusion for all members in the community. How do people with disability secure the core foundations for social inclusion, including good health, quality supports, financial security, access to justice, and safe, affordable and secure housing?
6. Contributing and participating	People with disability make valued contributions to Victoria's economic, social and cultural life. What needs to happen to ensure there are new and ongoing opportunities to meaningfully participate in education, employment and other activities?
7. Accessibility	People with disability continue to experience daily barriers to accessing transport, the built environment and information that can facilitate their opportunities to contribute, engage and feel included. How can these barriers be effectively removed?
8. Changing attitudes and behaviours	Negative attitudes towards disability persist in the community and have consequences for how people treat and interact with people with disability. Low expectations, avoidance, discrimination and hostility result in exclusion and non-meaningful participation. How can attitudes be changed to improve the ways that communities interact with people with disability?

Defining and measuring social inclusion

While considerable progress has been achieved in recent decades in improving the lives of people with disability, Victorians with disability continue to express experiences of:

- inequitable access to education, employment, health and housing opportunities

- feelings of isolation, lack of autonomy, and pervasive discrimination and devaluation

- reduced opportunities to pursue goals and ambitions.

> *To me, inclusion means:*
>
> *—having friends with and without disabilities*
>
> *—being part of the work force and the real world*
>
> *—people liking me because of who I am*
>
> *—being part of a team that values my abilities*
>
> *—being free to make my own mind up and have my own opinions.[12] (Heather)*

Currently it is not possible to accurately measure the extent to which people are included or excluded in Victoria, or to determine the precise nature of exclusion.

To measure and understand the social inclusion of Victorians with disability, the Victorian Government needs to adopt a definition of social inclusion. It also needs to establish a robust measuring tool.

The Committee identified that social inclusion tends to be understood in the context of participation alone, or 'passive' rather than 'active' participation. Participation focuses on the level of engagement in particular activities, while social inclusion has a greater focus on the extent to which people feel valued and respected in their contributions to society and the degree to which communities accept and embrace people with disability.

The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government adopts the following definition of social inclusion (see Recommendation 1.1):

- Social inclusion for people with disability means—

    ♦ experiencing respect for their differences, their aspirations, and their right to have control over their own lives

    ♦ having opportunities to contribute and participate in society in a meaningful way and feel valued

    ♦ experiencing significant and reciprocal relationships

    ♦ having appropriate supports, where necessary.

Like others in the community, people with disability are diverse. Their experiences of social inclusion (and exclusion) vary considerably. In the development of any measuring tool, this diversity needs to be taken into account. People with disability vary in their:

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[12]   *Submission S059*, VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc), p.8.

- age, gender, culture and geography

- social and economic backgrounds, Aboriginal heritage, and cultural and linguistic diversity

- experiences, needs and aspirations

- type of disability and their level of functioning within their disability.

The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government review the range of mechanisms for measuring the social inclusion of people with disability—including local, national and international tools—and identify an appropriate method for determining levels of social inclusion experienced by Victorians with disability (see Recommendation 1.2).

Leading the social inclusion agenda

Since the 1980s, Victoria and Australia more broadly have introduced policy and legislative reform with the goal of moving away from segregation and improving the lives of people with disability.

The policy and legislative context of social inclusion and disability cannot be considered without taking into account the introduction of the NDIS. The NDIS is designed to fund and provide for reasonable and necessary supports required by people with a permanent and significant disability. In addition, the NDIS is also expected to change the way people with disability are treated in the community.

Increased social inclusion will not be accomplished solely through reforms such as the NDIS. Instead it requires acknowledgement and understanding of the issues across all Government services and initiatives; followed by rigorous planning that incorporates participation, inclusion and feedback from people with disabilities.[13]

(Darebin Disability Advisory Committee)

While fundamental, support is only one element that contributes to social inclusion for people with disability. Many other barriers to inclusion will not be directly addressed by the NDIS, such as inaccessible environments and negative attitudes towards disability in workplaces and other settings. The long-term success of the NDIS is reliant on people being more socially included.

In Victoria progress towards a social inclusion agenda has been made with the introduction of the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic), the release of the *State disability plan 2013–16* and the establishment of the Building Inclusive Communities Program (formerly the Community Building Program) in 2002.

In particular, these initiatives provide sound legislative principles and a good policy framework from which to further progress a social inclusion agenda. They have led to the creation of partnerships across local government, state government departments and non-government organisations. While evolving, the Committee considered these partnerships are important beginnings and require ongoing commitment to foster their future development.

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[13]   *Submission S041*, Darebin Disability Advisory Committee, p.12.

The Committee determined that by 2019 the Victorian Government will need to have commenced review of the Disability Act to ensure it aligns with the NDIS, reflecting the Victorian Government's future involvement in disability (see Recommendation 2.1).

The Committee heard that the Disability Act provides a strong legislative basis for increasing social inclusion. It contains three legislated tools designed to improve the lives of people with disability in Victoria:

- Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC)

- State Disability Plan

- Disability Action Plans

The *State disability plan 2013–16* has four goals that are directly related to social inclusion:

- Goal 1—a strong foundation in life

- Goal 2—upholding rights and promoting participation

- Goal 3—accessing information, transport, buildings and places

- Goal 4—a contemporary approach through disability system reform

The Plan contains multiple strategies and 141 implementation actions. Inquiry participants stated that the Plan demonstrates good policy intent and has the right frameworks in place. Yet the Committee heard concerns that the implementation actions do not have measurable outcomes or targets and it recommends that future implementation plans and State Disability Plans include such targets (see Finding 2.7 and Recommendations 5.1, 5.3, 6.1 and 7.1).

The Committee identified that VDAC has considerable powers under the Disability Act, but that these are not often exercised. In addition, it found that VDAC does not have a strong profile in the general community. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Community Services:

- seek advice from VDAC on future directions for social inclusion and that it is incumbent on VDAC to ensure it gathers relevant information to be considered in the development of Tier 2 of the NDIS (Recommendation 2.4)

- request that VDAC develop a strategy to increase its profile and that it will be incumbent on VDAC to implement this strategy (Recommendation 2.2).

Inquiry participants highlighted the potential value that disability action plans can contribute to increasing social inclusion for people with disability. The Committee heard that there is room for strengthening the disability action plan process to increase their effectiveness. Inquiry participants expressed concern that there are no consequences for public bodies that do not develop a disability action plan.

The Committee also heard that there is inconsistency in disability action plans across local government and there are no outcome measures or monitoring of the plans. It recommends that the Victorian Government request the Victorian Auditor-General undertake an audit of the suitability, effectiveness and

implementation, and the monitoring and improvement of disability action plans in local government (see Recommendation 2.3).

The Building Inclusive Communities Program provides a strong basis for ongoing efforts to increase the capacity of communities to be more inclusive of people with disability. The Committee determined that in the NDIS co-design process the Victorian Government should work with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Local Area Coordinators (LACs) associated with the NDIS and Access Officers in the Building Inclusive Communities Program to ensure their social inclusion interventions are complementary (see Recommendation 2.5).

Following changes to the structure of the Department of Human Services in 2012 the Committee heard the Building Inclusive Communities Program is not being driven effectively where it is currently situated. To ensure the Program's ongoing role in building inclusive communities, the Committee considered that it should be overseen by the Office for Disability (or equivalent) in partnership with the Municipal Association Victoria (MAV).

Aspirations and social inclusion

To understand what social inclusion means for people with disability, a key starting point is to consider their life aspirations and how these relate to inclusion. Not surprisingly, the goals and dreams of people with disability are no different from other people in the community and are equally as unique for each individual.

In 2000, the Victorian Government commissioned a research study on the aspirations of people with disability—*The aspirations of people with a disability within an inclusive Victorian community*. It found that like most people, they want to choose their own living arrangements, to secure meaningful employment, to engage in recreational activities they enjoy, and have social connections and relationships with others.

> *Inclusion is about having the opportunity to fulfil our goals, our aspirations, our dreams and to live in and contribute to a community where these are acknowledged and supported as our rights as equal human beings.[14] (Whittlesea Disability Network)*

The journey of pursuing a goal or dream contributes to people's growth, their ideas and the shaping of their future aspirations. Yet the challenges in pursuing aspirations are often greater for people with disability than for other members of the community. Attitudes, fears and preconceived views about the capabilities of people with disability to aspire towards employment, social connection and other forms of social inclusion can influence the individual aspirations of people with disability themselves. Often expectations are lower than the capabilities of people with disability and their desire to achieve their ambitions.

As with all people, a number of factors influence the aspirations of people with disability. These include:

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[14]   *Submission S037*, Whittlesea Disability Network, p.1.

- individual factors—such as, health status, personal characteristics, diversity, capacity and capability

- life transitions—such as starting and changing schools, leaving school, getting a job, starting a family, moving into later life, or acquiring a disability

- family and friends—such as expectations and level of supports

- society—such as accessible environments and the extent to which communities welcome people with disability.

Negative experiences can reduce the aspirations of people with disability and decrease their opportunities for social inclusion. In addition, many people with disability report that the activities they engage in are limited and not what they would choose to do if barriers to their participation were removed.

The Committee identified that to improve social inclusion there is a need to ensure that people with disability can have the highest of aspirations and have opportunities to fulfil their aspirations and goals. They need access to communities and, for some, support to pursue their hopes and goals.

People with disability told the Inquiry that, like anyone, they want the freedom to pursue their life journey, and the opportunity to take risks and sometimes make mistakes. To do this, the Committee considered there is a need to reduce barriers in the community. In addition, for those who experience difficulties in identifying or articulating their needs and aspirations, formal and informal carers should be encouraged to use a supported decision making approach.

> *I need the ability to run my own life. If I do make a mistake, I only want myself to blame. Not having complete control of my choices makes me feel not quite human, so to me, social inclusion is about freedom.[15] (Bily)*

The Committee determined that the Victorian Government needs to consider how the aspirations of people with disability have changed as a consequence of legislative and policy developments, including the Disability Act. The Committee recommends a follow-up survey to the 2000 study on aspirations. In doing this, the Victorian Government should identify the aspirations of people with disability across Victoria and how they may have changed over time to inform ongoing social inclusion strategies (see Recommendation 3.1).

The Committee also considered that the Victorian Government should work in partnership with local councils and disability advisory groups to develop an agreed approach to identifying the social inclusion aspirations of people with disability in their local communities. This includes how they work with people with disability to pursue initiatives and changes that will contribute to positive outcomes. Such an approach could be linked to the implementation of disability action plans and the work undertaken by Access Officers (see Recommendation 3.1).

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[15]   *Transcript of Evidence*, Summer Foundation Ltd, Melbourne, 17 March 2014, p.4.

Social connectedness

For most people in the community, relationships and social networks are integral to their sense of belonging, feelings of inclusion and general emotional wellbeing. Social connections can lead to other benefits, such as access to resources, services and increased opportunities to participate. Social networks have the potential to contribute to positive economic, social and health outcomes—also known as social capital.

There are different types of relationships, connections and networks that can contribute to these benefits. They might be:

… in the Five Star Project community everyone rallies around each other. People always encourage each other to get out and join in. We are working out how we can look after each other when parents/care givers cannot support us.[16] (Wellington Community)

- close bonds—such as intimate partners, family and friends

- distant connections across the community—such as work colleagues, neighbours, or professional service providers

- ties to people in positions of power and authority—such as a local council member or a police officer

- formed through networks, groups or online forums.

Relationships and social connections are reciprocal, dynamic and changing. They often evolve over time as people transition through different stages of their lives and forge new links or experience the weakening of pre-existing ties.

Like all members of the community, people with disability can experience difficulties in either establishing or maintaining relationships and social connections for a multitude of reasons. For people with disability, however, there can be additional challenges in nurturing their connections, which can relate to accessibility of the environment, facilitated communication requirements or the need for support to build social skills.

In view of the multitude of benefits that potentially flow from social connections, there is a strong case for creating and supporting conditions that increase opportunities for people with disability to develop sustainable relationships and networks in their communities.

The Committee identified that innovative approaches are being developed and implemented across the state. Local communities are contributing to increased opportunities for people with disability to engage and participate through formal and informal programs and initiatives. The Committee considered there is scope for the Victorian Government to take advantage of this energy and identify innovative and strategic ways for people with disability to build social capital. Such an approach needs to:

- be driven by people with disability

- emphasise the importance of naturally occurring networks

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[16] *Submission S083*, Wellington (Local Government Area) Community, p.5.

- take advantage of the value that volunteers can contribute

- create opportunities and establish favourable conditions for social connections to develop and be sustained.

> *I've been lucky to have had really supportive colleagues and supervisors.*
>
> *… management have been great in identifying that it'll take me a little longer to work it out and have been supportive, and also providing training in areas that will help me get on top of things.[17] (Aaron)*

The Committee recommends that when developing its next State Disability Plan in 2016 and in consultation with people with disability the Victorian Government incorporate a strategy for effectively and appropriately strengthening connections and social capital (see Recommendation 4.1). This goal would include three objectives:

- creating opportunities for establishing and maintaining connections and networks—such as new networks and building the capacity of people with disability who need support

- establishing favourable conditions for sustainable relationships and networks—such as social 'brokerage' (mentors, coaches) and good public infrastructure

- supporting existing opportunities and networks—such as existing programs that aim to provide opportunities for social interaction.

Foundations for social inclusion

There are core foundations to achieving social inclusion for all members in the community. These foundations include good health, financial security, access to quality support, and affordable, appropriate and secure housing. They are central to self-determination, choice and control.

Some people with disability need support to achieve autonomy in the community and to engage in activities that contribute to social inclusion. The Committee recognises that disability support for people with profound disability will transition to the NDIS in 2019 and that many of the issues raised about access to disability specific supports will be addressed through the transition to the NDIS.

The Committee heard that for people with disability it is well established that they experience more issues relating to their overall health and wellbeing than the general community, are more economically disadvantaged than other members of the community, and have fewer choices about their living arrangements than other community members.

Health

Health and social inclusion are inextricably intertwined. Poor health and wellbeing can undermine a person's capacity and desire to participate in the social, economic and cultural dimensions of society. In turn, social exclusion has consequences for people's health and wellbeing and can result in a limited capacity to participate. The Committee heard that there are unique barriers

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[17]   *Submission S111*, Melbourne City Mission, p.11.

experienced by people with disability that can have an effect on their health and wellbeing:

- attitudes to disability—particularly those of service providers and health professionals

- choice and control—people with disability do not always have control over their own health

- accessible services—accessing relevant services can be difficult (such as sexual and reproductive health services) and health promotion initiatives often do not target people with disability

- provision of information—health information in accessible formats can be difficult to obtain and some people with disability can have limited knowledge and understanding about health, which in turn might impede their decisions to seek medical help.[18]

In addition, the Committee heard that in comparison with other members of the community, people with severe and profound disability report having moderate and high or very high distress levels, including suicidal thoughts. Inquiry participants highlighted that people who acquire a disability are particularly at risk. While there are some programs that target specific groups, such as those with spinal cord injury, the Committee identified a need to consider the mental health of people in rehabilitation and after their release (see Recommendation 5.1).

> *From hospital I went into rehab in a nursing home. It is difficult to know how to describe that time. I can tell you that I tried to end my life.[19] (Bily)*

The Committee recognises that the *State disability plan 2013–16* has multiple implementation actions that address issues relating to health and wellbeing. The Committee recommends that in its future State Disability Plan to be developed in 2016, the Victorian Government needs to incorporate specific strategies, actions and targets to improve health promotion efforts for targeted groups of people with disability, to ensure accessible health information, and to identify and respond to the causes of mental health issues that people with disability experience (see Recommendations 5.1 and 5.2).

Housing

Access to affordable, appropriate and secure housing is essential for all people to feel safe and comfortable in their own environment and as a foundation for social inclusion. People with disability are no different. However, accessibility, economic disadvantage and support requirements can lead to barriers in securing housing that meets the needs of people with disability. There are profound impacts on a person's physical and mental health when they cannot choose or control their living arrangements. This can also affect their capacity and desire to participate in other domains of life.

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[18]   *Submission S051*, Women with Disabilities Victoria, p.15; *Submission S097*, Whitehorse City Council, p.11.
[19]   *Transcript of Evidence,* Summer Foundation Ltd, p.4.

Like others in the community, people with disability live in diverse types of housing and accommodation, and like all members of the community their living arrangements depend on their unique circumstances. Factors such as location, appropriate support and housing design are key considerations for ensuring housing enables social inclusion. People with disability need to choose the living arrangements that are suitable to their lifestyles and the following range of housing generally exists:

> *For most people, it is easy to make a decision and move house. For me it has not been easy at all. The difference has been money and finding a suitable house, end of story. What others have the freedom to do, I do not.[20] (Bily)*

- living in the community—such as their own home, renting, or living with a partner, family or friends

- living in communities with specialist disability support—such as KeyRing models and supported living arrangements

- living in government funded disability accommodation—such as shared supported accommodation.

The Committee identified that people with disability experience ongoing issues in accessing affordable, appropriate and secure accommodation. As a result they often have limited options and choices in their living arrangements.

Inaccessible housing remains a persistent issue for people with disability. The *State disability plan 2013–16* encourages the building industry, councils and social housing providers to incorporate the *Livable housing design guidelines*. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government is more specific about how it intends to do this and introduce incentives, for example stamp duty concessions (see Recommendation 5.3).

The Committee recognises that some people with disability will need to access mainstream services to live independently in their homes and that the NDIS will assist its participants to achieve this. This includes:

- supports that build people's capacity to live independently in the community

- home modifications to the participant's own home or private rental property

- support with personal care—such as assistance with showering or dressing

- domestic assistance around the home where the participant is unable to undertake these tasks due to their disability.

In addition to these supports, the Committee identified a need for developing flexible housing models that meet the needs of people with disability. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government work with the NDIA in the co-design stage of the NDIS to ensure resourcing for flexible housing models (see Recommendation 5.4).

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[20]   *Transcript of Evidence,* Summer Foundation Ltd, p.4.

Creating opportunities for participation

Participation in social, economic and community life can provide avenues for social interaction, opportunities for learning and developing skills, and pathways to financial security. Members of the community, including people with disability, can benefit considerably from their experience of participating in society. In turn, there are also valuable returns for local communities, the economy and society generally.

The ways that people participate in the community vary enormously, and people with disability contribute to society in equally diverse ways providing valuable skills, knowledge and experience. People with disability continue to participate in segregated activities—sometimes by choice, sometimes through necessity—such as supported employment, specialist schools, disability sports and cultural activities.

While many people with disability actively strive to engage in the community, the Committee heard that they often experience daily challenges in their efforts to contribute and participate.

In the context of education, the Committee heard that many children and young people with disability continue to experience barriers in mainstream, and some specialist, education environments. These barriers include challenges transitioning into and across schools, education environments that are not accessible, supports that do not meet the individual needs of students, and the attitudes of education professionals and other students.

Inquiry participants emphasised that most people with disability want to work, and that participation in the workforce is a key component of social inclusion. The Committee heard that being employed contributes to people with disability feeling valued and recognised as equal and contributing members of society. Paid employment also allows people with disability to support themselves and provides the means to participate in other social and cultural spheres of society.

> *I have a very expensive passion (being photography), and being on the disability [support pension] basically means I couldn't afford to pursue it.*
>
> *But having a job/income, and a supportive workplace means I can afford to pursue my photography, and cope with the balance between work/study.[21] (Aaron)*

It is well established that the employment of people with disability in Australia is substantially lower than the employment of others in the community, and that Australia compares poorly with other countries in the OECD.[22] The Committee heard that low participation rates and reduced opportunities to contribute to their best potential often relates to the attitudes of employers, inaccessible work environments, assumptions about the productivity of people with disability, and an inflexibility across workplaces to adapt to people with different functioning levels.

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[21]   *Submission S111*, Melbourne City Mission, p.11.
[22]   Deloitte Access Economics (2011) *The economic benefits of increasing employment for people with disability*. Sydney, Access Economics Pty Ltd, p.ii.

The Committee received information about the State Disability Transition Program in South Australia. This is a partnership between the school and Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors and the South Australian and Australian governments to promote Open Employment within school communities. The aim of this early intervention approach is to support a smooth transition from school to real work for students with disability and has had demonstrated success.[23]

In addition to education and employment, like others in the community, people with disability participate in a diverse range of other activities, including:

- a multitude of sporting activities, yet at substantially lower rates than other people in the community despite the valuable health benefits

- arts and cultural activities, but often experience barriers that prevent their full participation due to physical inaccessibility, negative attitudes and lack of information about accessibility

- in advocacy and leadership roles within the disability community, but there remain very few people with disability in political and other elected roles in the broader community, such as boards and committees of management.

The Committee recognises that in its *State disability plan 2013–16* the Victorian Government has a multitude of strategies and implementation actions relating to education, employment, sports and recreation, and increasing the voice and representation of people with disability. It also acknowledges the role that the NDIA will have in providing early childhood education supports under the NDIS.

> *I'm involved in local community groups like Whitehorse Disabilities Advisory Group and the Alfred Community Advisory Group. I volunteer, talking to people in hospital who may be about to or who have just undergone limb amputation, and serve in medical research Committees.[24] (woman with disability)*

The Committee recommends that future implementation plans and State Disability Plans include measurable outcomes and targets for strategies and actions that relate to increasing participation by people with disability (see Recommendation 6.1).

In addition, the Committee recommends that the Victorian Government:

- undertake a study of children with disability who progress from early childhood education into schools over the next five years to identify the extent to which mainstream schools provide inclusive environments for children with disability (Recommendation 6.2)

- commission a review of reverse integration approaches to assess their value and potential to provide exposure and increased awareness for children of all abilities to the diversity of children with disability (Recommendation 6.3)

- consider the feasibility of introducing a partnership program between the school and VET sectors and the Victorian and Australian governments to promote open employment within school communities with the intention of

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[23] South Australian Government Department of Education and Children's Services (2009) *South Australia's State Disability Transition Program.* Adelaide, SA Department of Education and Children's Services.

[24] *Submission S051*, Women with Disabilities Victoria, p.7.

supporting a smooth transition from school to real work for students with disability (Recommendation 6.4)

- develop a job shadowing program to assist young people with disability to gain experience in the workplace and to provide employers with exposure to the contributions that people with disability can provide (Recommendation 6.5)

- develop a strategy on access to elected office for people with disability (Recommendation 6.6).

Accessible and enabling environments

Seamless access to information, the built environment and transport networks contributes to social inclusion by ensuring that people can live, work and move around the community as they want and need to. Without this seamless access most people would be unable to function properly in society. Unfortunately, however, this is a reality for many people with disability.

Over the past two decades the Victorian Government has continued to make efforts to improve accessibility in the community, including:

- the physical infrastructure of the public transport system

- accessibility of public spaces and new buildings

- providing information in accessible formats.

Yet despite these efforts, people with disability continue to report that they have challenges in accessing and moving through many parts of the community. The Committee determined that there is a need for ongoing attention to be given to accessibility and creating enabling environments.

Environmental factors that continue to limit the choices and participation of people with disability include:

- transport and moving through the community, with key issues relating to whole of journey travel, customer service staff attitudes in the public transport system, and the accessibility of information relating to travel

- accessing the built environment, particularly in older buildings such as schools where staged change needs to occur

- accessing information relevant to their daily lives and engagement with the community.

> *I currently choose my doctor, dentist, accountant, where I shop for my clothes, what cafes I go to, what entertainment I choose and where I buy my lunch all based on not what the quality of the service is or what I like about it but whether or not I can get into the building.*[25] *(Keran)*

The Committee heard that advances in technology have contributed to the increased physical independence, functional capacity and social interactions of people with disability. However, technology can also create unintended barriers for the participation of people with disability.

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[25] *Transcript of Evidence*, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Melbourne, 6 March 2014, p.2.

Limited accessibility has consequences for social inclusion and the Committee determined that further improvements are needed to make transport, buildings and outdoor spaces more accessible. Access to technology and information are equally important to the daily lives of people with disability and while they enable social inclusion, many people with disability continue to report that barriers exist to accessing technology and information.

The Committee recognises that many of the concerns raised about accessibility have been identified in the *State disability plan 2013–16*. It recommends that in future implementation plans and State Disability Plans, the Victorian Government sets measurable outcomes and targets (see Finding 2.7 and Recommendation 7.1). It also recommends that the Victorian Government develops a long-term strategy for improving the accessibility of pre-existing buildings, such as schools, and public spaces in the community (see Recommendation 7.2)

The Committee also determined that the Victorian Government needs to explore the evolving role of technology in the lives of people with disability, how it enables their social inclusion and identify ways to intersect technology with current support and accessibility initiatives (see Recommendation 7.3).

Changing attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability

Despite improvements over time in how society understands disability and interacts with people with disability, people with disability continue to identify that the attitudes of others are one of the most significant barriers to social inclusion.

The Inquiry heard that attitudes towards people with disability can affect social inclusion in all areas of their life, including their social connections, their access to places and their involvement in employment, education and other activities.

Attitudes towards people with disability include fear, ignorance and being regarded as inferior or as objects of pity. These attitudes can result in low expectations, discrimination, bullying, hostility and avoidance. The Committee identified that there is still a long way to go to achieve the change in attitudes needed to ensure that people with disability are included in our society.

The NDIS will have a limited role in improving awareness and attitudes towards people with disability. The Victorian Government will continue to have an important role in improving attitudes towards disability and how people interact and treat people with disability. It already has a number of mechanisms in place, such as disability action plans, VDAC and anti-discrimination legislation. The Committee recommends

> *The broader community still keeps people with disability at a distance unless it is somebody they're related to, or know well. Society considers people with disability to be lesser beings. We need to change Society's perception of PWD [people with disability]. We need to value people as human beings. It is easier said than done. People need to change the way they think feel and react to people with disability.[26] (Robyn)*

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[26] *Submission S121*, Summer Foundation Ltd, p.6.

that the Victorian Government initiate a review of Commonwealth, states and territories discrimination legislation to streamline and clarify existing avenues to make a complaint of discrimination (see Recommendation 8.1)

Evidence has shown that initiatives that go beyond changing attitudes to target the way people treat and interact with people with disability can be effective in increasing social inclusion for people with disability. Changing society's attitudes towards people with disability can be achieved at a reasonably low cost using a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- a focus on positive personal experiences and interactions with people with disability

- broad-based approaches and approaches that target specific audiences

- encouraging initiatives that aim to change the way people treat and interact with people with disability, such as children and young people in schools.

In addition to specific initiatives, the Committee recognises that under the Disability Act, public bodies are required to address attitudinal barriers that lead to discriminatory practices against people with disability in their disability action plans. The Committee has recommended that the Victorian Government reviews the monitoring of these plans (see Recommendation 2.3).

In view of the ongoing role of the Victorian Government in improving attitudes towards and treatment of people with disability in Victoria, the Committee recommends that the State Disability Plan in 2016 incorporates a strategy to change attitudes towards people with disability, which would aim to:

- encourage interactions and positive personal experiences between people with disability and members in the community

- change broad community attitudes, prevent children and young people from developing negative attitudes, and target specific audiences to change negative attitudes (such as employers and business owners)

- promote initiatives that aim to change the way people treat and interact with people with disability (Recommendation 8.2).

It also recommends that the Victorian Government establish an inclusion innovation hub to develop innovative approaches to changing attitudes towards people with disability and how they are treated in the general community (see Recommendation 8.3).

List of recommendations

Number	Recommendation
Defining and measuring social inclusion	
1.1	That the Victorian Government adopt the following definition of social inclusion throughout government: • Social inclusion for people with disability means: ♦ experiencing respect for their differences, their aspirations, and their right to have control over their own lives ♦ having opportunities to contribute and participate in society in a meaningful way and feel valued ♦ experiencing significant and reciprocal relationships ♦ having appropriate supports, where necessary.
1.2	That the Victorian Government review the range of mechanisms for measuring the social inclusion of people with disability—including local, national and international tools—and identify an appropriate method for determining levels of social inclusion experienced by people with disability in Victoria.
Leading the social inclusion agenda	
2.1	That the Victorian Government commence a review of the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic) by 2019 to ensure it aligns with the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Cth) and reflects the Victorian Government's future involvement in disability.
2.2	That the Minister for Community Services request that the Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC) develop a strategy to increase its profile and that it will be incumbent on VDAC to implement this strategy.
2.3	That the Victorian Government request the Victorian Auditor-General undertakes an audit of the suitability, effectiveness and implementation, and the monitoring and improvement of disability action plans in local government.
2.4	That the Minister for Community Services seek advice from the Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC) on future directions for social inclusion and that it is incumbent on VDAC to ensure it gathers relevant information to be considered in the development of Tier 2 of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
2.5	That the Victorian Government work with the National Disability Insurance Agency to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Local Area Coordinators associated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Access Officers in the Building Inclusive Communities Program to ensure their social inclusion interventions are complementary.

Number	Recommendation

Aspirations and social inclusion

3.1	That the Victorian Government:

- Consider how the aspirations of people with disability have changed as a consequence of legislative and policy changes, specifically the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic), by undertaking a follow-up survey to the 2000 study—*The aspirations of people with a disability within an inclusive Victorian community.*

- Work in partnership with local councils to develop an agreed approach to identifying the aspirations of people with disability in their local communities to be included in disability action plans and the work undertaken by Access Officers.

Sustainable relationships and natural networks

4.1	That when developing its next State Disability Plan in 2016 and in consultation with people with disability, the Victorian Government incorporate a strategy for effectively and appropriately strengthening connections and social capital with three objectives:

- create opportunities for establishing and maintaining connections and networks—such as new networks and building the capacity of people with disability who need support

- establish favourable conditions for sustainable relationships and networks—such as social 'brokerage' (mentors, coaches) and good public infrastructure

- support existing opportunities and networks—such as existing programs that aim to provide opportunities for increased social interaction.

Foundations for social inclusion

5.1	That the Victorian Government incorporate into future State Disability Plans specific strategies, actions and targets that aim to:

- improve health promotion efforts for people with disability

- ensure accessible health information

- identify and respond to the causes of mental health issues that people with disability experience.

5.2	That the Victorian Government negotiate with the National Disability Insurance Agency to establish an online forum for the disability service sector to ensure up-to-date and clear information about the services available to people with disability and their families in Victoria, in order to ensure a smooth transition between Victorian supports and supports to be provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Number	Recommendation
Foundations for social inclusion (cont)	
5.3	That the Victorian Government is more specific about its intentions to encourage the building industry, councils and social housing providers to incorporate the national *Livable housing design guidelines* and introduces specific incentives to encourage the development of affordable housing that meets livable housing design guidelines.
5.4	That the Victorian Government negotiate with the National Disability Insurance Agency to ensure resourcing for flexible housing models that have proven success in promoting the social inclusion of people with disability.
Creating opportunities for participation	
6.1	That the Victorian Government establish measurable outcomes and targets in future State Disability Plans and implementation plans that relate to increasing participation by people with disability in education, employment, sports and recreation, cultural activities, and political and other elected roles.
6.2	That the Victorian Government undertake a study of children with disability who progress from early childhood education into schools over the next five years to identify the extent to which mainstream schools provide inclusive environments for children with disability.
6.3	That the Victorian Government commission a review of reverse integration approaches to assess their value and potential to provide exposure and increased awareness for children of all abilities to the diversity of children with disability.
6.4	That the Victorian Government consider the feasibility of introducing a partnership program between the school and Vocational Education and Training sectors and the Victorian and Australian governments to promote open employment within school communities with the intention of supporting a smooth transition from school to real work for students with disability.
6.5	That the Victorian Government develop a job shadowing program to assist young people with disability to gain experience in the workplace and to provide employers with exposure to the contributions that people with disability can provide.
6.6	That the Victorian Government develop a strategy on access to elected office for people with disability.
Accessible and enabling environments	
7.1	That the Victorian Government establish measurable outcomes and targets in future State Disability Plans and implementation plans that relate to improved accessibility for people with disability in the built environment and public spaces, accessible information, and whole of journey travel. Tender requirements should give consideration to the priority of the needs of

Number	Recommendation
	people with disability.

Accessible and enabling environments (cont)

Number	Recommendation
7.2	That the Victorian Government identify a long-term strategy for improving the accessibility of pre-existing buildings, such as schools, and public spaces in the community.
7.3	That the Victorian Government explore the evolving role of technology in the lives of people with disability and how it enables their social inclusion to identify ways to intersect technology with current support and accessibility initiatives.

Changing attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability

Number	Recommendation
8.1	That the Victorian Government initiate a review through the Council of Australian Governments in order to streamline and clarify the interaction of state and Commonwealth avenues for lodging complaints about discriminatory treatment of people with disability.
8.2	That the Victorian Government incorporate a strategy into its future State Disability Plan in 2016 to change attitudes towards people with disability and how they are treated in the general community that aims to: • encourage interactions and positive personal experiences between people with disability and members in the community • change broad community attitudes, prevent children and young people from developing negative attitudes, and target specific audiences to change negative attitudes • promote initiatives that aim to change the way people treat and interact with people with disability.
8.3	That the Victorian Government establish an inclusion innovation hub to promote the development of innovative approaches to changing attitudes towards and interaction with people with disability.

Inquiry process

On 26 November 2013, the Parliament of Victoria's Legislative Council asked the Family and Community Development Committee to inquire into social inclusion and Victorians with a disability. The following box outlines the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Terms of reference

Inquire, consider and report on social inclusion and Victorians with a disability, specifically:

   a.   define 'social inclusion' for Victorians with a disability;

   b.   identify the nature and scale of relative inclusion (exclusion) and participation of Victorians with a disability in the economic, social and civil dimensions of society;

   c.   understand the impact of Victorian government services and initiatives aimed at improving inclusion and participation;

   d.   identify examples of good practice on inclusion and participation driven by local government and the community sector;

   e.   assess how the *Disability Act 2006* has impacted on the social inclusion of people with a disability with respect to Victorian government services; and

   f.   recommend ways to increase social inclusion, including the roles of and collaboration between local, state and federal governments, the community sector, individuals with a disability and their carers.

In undertaking its Inquiry, the Committee considered the scope of the investigations it needed to undertake and how social inclusion and participation of people with disability can be improved in Victorians now and into the future.

To ensure it could review the extensive amount of evidence received, the Committee requested and was granted an extension to its tabling timeline to 17 September 2014.

Inquiry method

The Committee undertook a comprehensive range of methods to gather evidence to inform its findings and recommendations. These included calling for written submissions, holding public hearings, and seeking further information from organisations.

Submissions

To assist those who wanted to make a written submission to the Inquiry, the Committee released a Submission Guide. This was published on the Committee's website and circulated to those who expressed an interest in submitting to the Inquiry.

The Submission Guide outlined the scope of the Inquiry and the process for making a written submission. It provided an outline on the types of issues about which it was seeking evidence. It posed questions for individuals and

organisations to consider when preparing their submissions. A copy of the Submission Guide is provided in Appendix 1.

On 14 December 2013, a call for submissions was advertised in *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*. In addition, between 14 and 18 December 2013 advertisements were included in *The Weekly Times* and five regional newspapers across Victoria.

The Committee extended its invitation for submissions through an extensive database comprising a range of individuals and organisations, such as service providers, peak and advocacy bodies, community groups, research institutes and academics, and local government.

The initial due date for submissions was 28 February 2014. Due to the high level of interest in the Inquiry, the Committee continued receiving submissions until 30 April 2014.

The Committee received 133 written submissions from a range of individuals and organisations. The authors of these submissions included:

- individuals

- service providers

- professional organisations from the disability, health and education sectors

- advocacy and community organisations

- local governments

- peak and statutory bodies

- academics and research organisations.
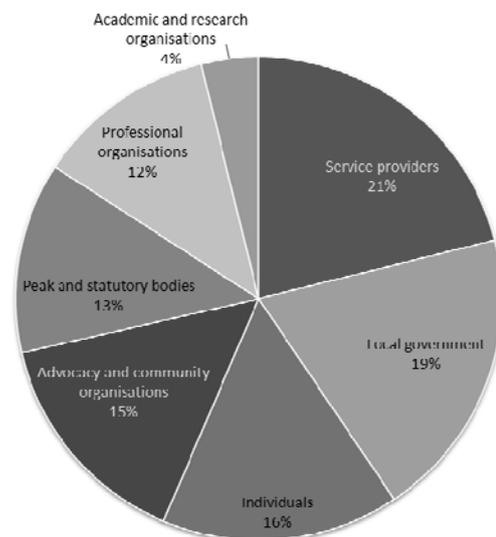
Public hearings

The Committee held hearings between March and May 2014. It heard from a range of organisations, including academics and research groups, peak bodies, service providers and other organisations representing the interests of people with disability. The Committee also heard from the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

In total, 75 witnesses (including people with disability) appeared before the Inquiry, representing 39 organisations and government departments.

Additional information

Throughout the Inquiry, the Committee actively sought information via correspondence from organisations, statutory bodies, experts and government departments. This additional information related to queries about evidence or information provided, or concerned newly emerging issues.