



EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Victorian economic participation plan
for people with disability 2018–2020

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this publication show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services. This publication may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

ISBN 978-1-76069-035-9 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76069-036-6 (pdf/online)

Available at www.statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au

Photography by Gary Radler except for photographs on pages 11, 15 and 19.

Photography on page 11 by Simon Kelly Artscendence.

Print managed by Finsbury Green (1706049)

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Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and its rich culture and pays respect to its Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we live, work and play. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches our society more broadly. We embrace the spirit of self-determination and reconciliation, working towards equality of outcomes and ensuring an equitable voice.

Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied heritages and histories both pre and post-invasion. The impacts of colonisation – while having devastating effects on the traditional life of Aboriginal Nations – have not diminished Aboriginal people's connection to country, culture or community. Aboriginal Nations continue to strengthen and grow with the resurgence of language, lore and cultural knowledge. These rich and varied histories need to be understood and acknowledged by all Victorians, to truly understand the resilience and strength of previous generations, as well as the history of the fight for survival, justice and country that has taken place across Victoria and around Australia.

As we work together to ensure Victorian Aboriginal communities continue to thrive, the government acknowledges the invaluable contributions of generations of Aboriginal warriors that have come before us, who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities towards Aboriginal self-determination. We are now honoured to be part of that vision.

Minister's foreword

Like any other Victorian, people with disability should expect to be active participants in our economy.

Unfortunately, for many, this is not the case. We have seen very little advancement over the past 20 years, particularly in relation to employment.

Making progress is a priority, especially when we think about the opportunities afforded to people with disability and their carers by the National Disability Insurance Scheme – whether this be as workers, employers, entrepreneurs, investors or consumers. Emerging opportunities will not be realised without significant effort from businesses big and small, and all levels of government.

Victoria's economy is undergoing a transformation and has many strengths to build on. The Victorian Government wants to make sure people with disability are included as our economy grows. We want to ensure that we can all reap the benefits of this now and into the future.

The Victorian Government is committed to giving people with disability every opportunity to reach their potential, and to have a fair chance to work, study and make their way in business. All Victorians have much to gain from a more inclusive approach and better economic participation opportunities for people with disability.

Every opportunity: Victoria's economic participation plan sets out the actions we will take to drive positive change, backed by strong leadership from the public sector and in partnership with the broader business community. It's a key part of *Absolutely everyone: state disability plan 2017–2020*.

We know that good intentions alone are not enough to achieve equality. The most successful initiatives are those that apply challenging targets, backed by supportive actions and incentives.

We also know that government has a big role to play, as both a major employer and purchaser of goods and services.

All of us can and must do more to address the barriers and discrimination that exist.

I would like to acknowledge the members of the Victorian Disability Advisory Council and all the people who contributed their insights and ideas through consultation on this strategy. I look forward to seeing these actions starting to change the tide, providing measurable improvements for Victorians with disability.

Working together I believe we can create the cultural change that is needed for people with disability to make their way in an economy and society that are more inclusive.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Foley'.

Martin Foley MP
Minister for Housing,
Disability and Ageing

The need for an economic participation plan for people with disability

“ *It's true of almost everything in life – clothes, relationships, jobs, etc ... one size does not fit all. And I wonder if, to make sure that every member of our community has the chance to find a job in our community, we need to accept that 'one size does not fit all' in the way people find jobs*

(Graeme Innes AM)

Victorians with disability can and want to work, yet continue to face barriers and discrimination which leaves them significantly underrepresented in the workforce, with very little positive change over the past 20 years. Employment rates – in both the public and private sectors – remain static and well below those of people without disability.

The Victorian Government wants to ensure people with disability are included as our economy changes. We want to ensure that people with disability, employers and the economy, reap the benefits now and into the future.

This plan takes a broad view of economic participation, rather than focusing solely on access to jobs. It encompasses the range of ways people contribute to and participate in the economic life of their community, including through employment, self-employment, career progression, enterprise development, education and training, and as consumers. The plan also aims to counter discrimination, remove systemic barriers and tackle entrenched attitudes that prevent people with disability from achieving levels of economic participation other Victorians enjoy.

Now is the time for Victoria to drive better economic outcomes for people with disability – a group representing 20 per cent of our population. People with disability, their families and carers have much higher expectations of being active participants and contributors to their communities and the broader economy than ever before.

The Victorian Government's *Absolutely everyone: state disability plan 2017–2020* seeks to ensure people with disability participate on an equal basis in our economy alongside other Victorians. The development of an economic participation plan is key commitment of *Absolutely everyone* and links to work already underway.

The government has also endorsed the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020*, which provides the framework for implementing our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is a commitment by all levels of government, industry and the community, that includes economic security and education as key priority areas.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a significant reform driving a real shift in how disability is perceived and what people with disability can achieve with the right supports. By 2019, Victoria will be investing \$2.5 billion per year into the NDIS to substantially improve inclusion of people with disability in the community, create better life outcomes for participants and their families, and reform mainstream services to take advantage of the opportunities arising from access to reasonable and necessary supports.

Enhancing the economic participation of people with disability is a key objective of the NDIS; however, this opportunity will not be achieved without significant targeted and complementary effort.

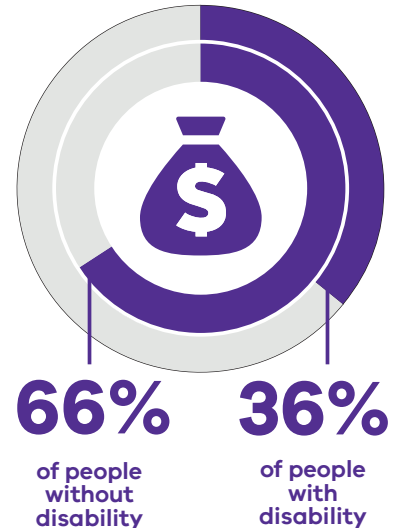
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, Cocks, Thoresen & Lee 2015, National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2015, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, and data provided by the Victorian Public Sector Commission in 2016.

Economic participation: facts and figures

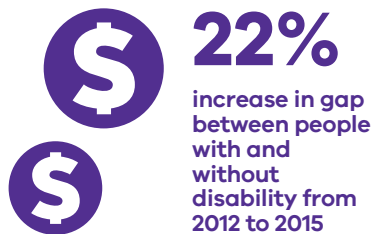
In the workforce (paid or unpaid)



Earning a salary



Median income



Employment rate

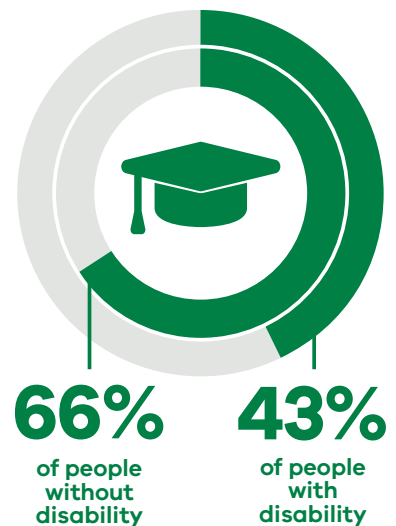
The employment rate for people with disability is:



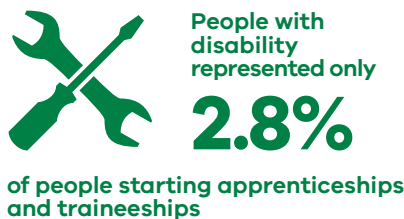
Graduates who are employed



Completed year 12



Apprenticeships

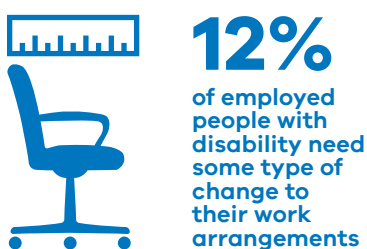


Work and study

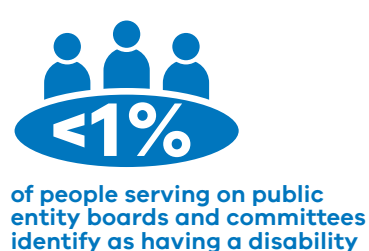
Of young people aged 15–24 years who work and/or study full-time:



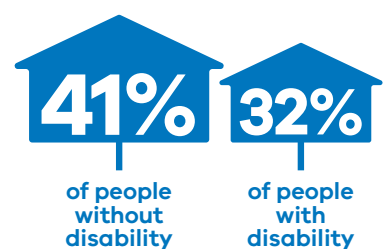
Work adjustments



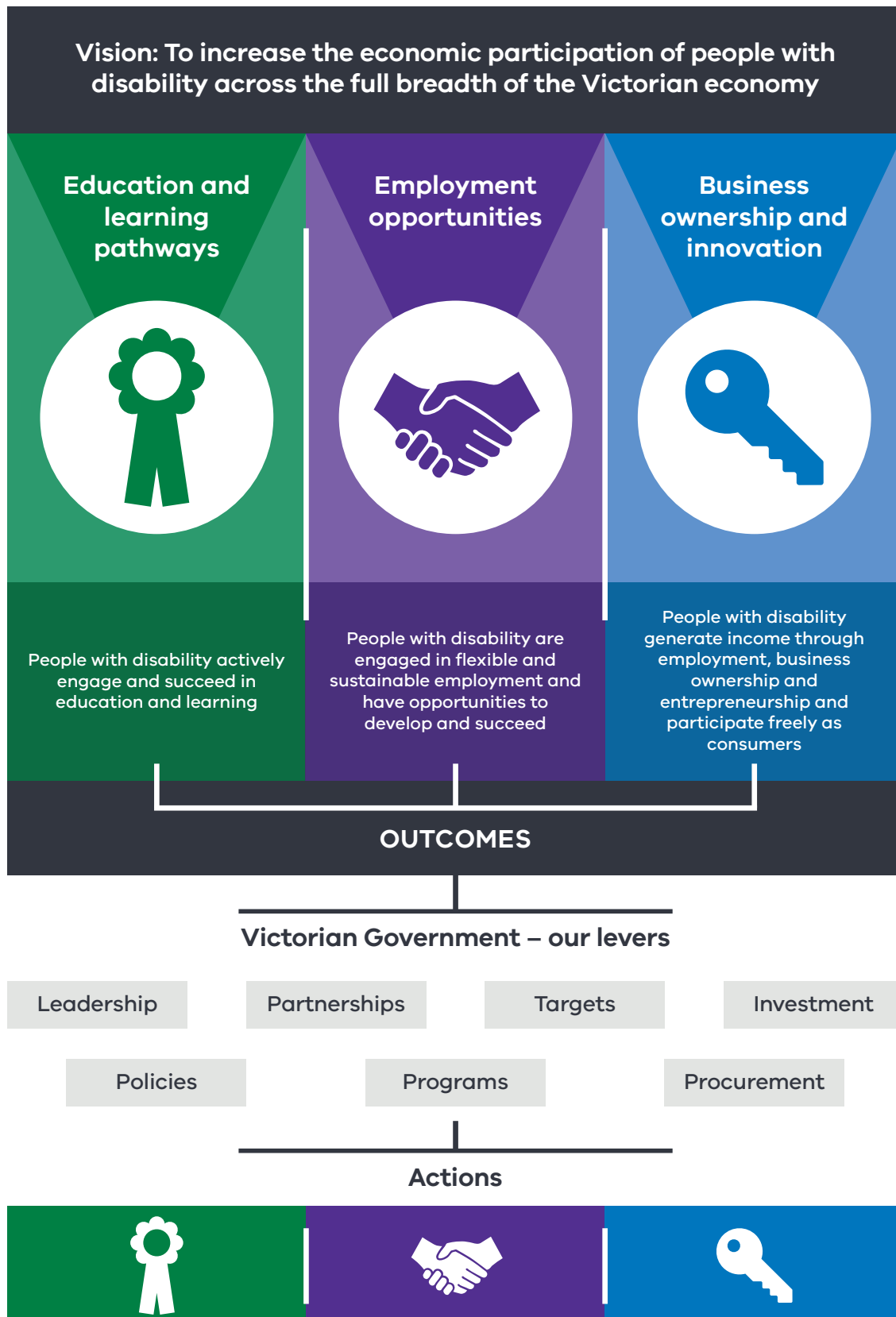
Board membership



Home ownership



Every opportunity: at a glance



Every opportunity: early actions

Education and learning pathways 	Employment opportunities 	Business ownership and innovation 
<p>Schools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and update key resources to better support students with disability in workplace learning 2. Deliver a series of activities for students in Years 9 and 10 from a broad range of government schools, highlighting the changing world of work and potential pathways to further education, training or employment 3. Strengthen support for school-based apprenticeships or traineeships for students with disability through professional development for staff involved in delivery 4. Support the Ticket to Work and after-school job project to assist young people with significant disability <p>Skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Improve outcomes through an analysis of participation, attainment and transition data for students with disability in the Victorian training system 6. Complete reviews of Skills First, Reconnect and TAFE Community Service Funding to inform future opportunities for students with disability 7. Attract more people with disability into careers in disability 8. Deliver a range of leadership programs and initiatives for people with disability 9. Sponsor traineeships, cadetships and graduate careers of people with disability in Victorian health services 	<p>In the public sector</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Develop a Victorian public sector disability employment action plan which includes a 6 per cent target by 2020 increasing to 12 per cent by 2025 11. Implement and evaluate the impact of the RISE employment initiative for people with autism at the Department of Health and Human Services 12. Identify and replicate good practice in the employment of people with disability and social procurement across local government <p>Across the Victorian economy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Increase investment through Jobs Victoria initiatives to provide more employment opportunities for people with disability 14. Create 50 internships for people with disability across the Victorian economy 15. Launch the Dandelion Program in Victoria to support 20 young people with autism into meaningful careers 16. Build a strong focus on employment outcomes into the NDIS, commencing with funding three initiatives through Information, Linkages and Capacity Building transition funding 17. Create employment opportunities for young school leavers with intellectual disability through the Victorian Government's JobsBank initiative 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Implement the Victorian Government's social enterprise strategy with a focus on providing more employment opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers, including those with disability 19. Develop a whole-of-government social procurement framework that takes action to enhance economic opportunities for people with disability 20. Open up opportunities through the Small Business Festival Victoria 2018 to showcase small business owners with disability, and encourage more people with disability to establish businesses or be employed in small business 21. Enable more people with disability to set up their own businesses through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

The challenges of economic participation

“Disability is not the problem of the individual, it is a result of the mismatch between the individual and their environment... A person with a disability can go through a whole day not really thinking about the disability, if their environment is structured in a way that responds to their needs.

(Dr George Taleporos, JobAccess 2012)

People with disability face direct and indirect discrimination and stereotyping, affecting the community's understanding and awareness of disability. This often leads to misunderstandings about the contribution people with disability can and do make in their communities and to the broader economy.

Some people with disability face even deeper challenges when it comes to economic participation. Workforce non-participation rates for Australians with severe mental illness are estimated to be between 70 and 78 per cent (Contreras et al. 2012) and were at 58 per cent for Australians with autism in 2012 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014).

Aboriginal Victorians experience disability at double the rate of that experienced by non-Aboriginal people (First Peoples Disability Network Australia 2016) combined with higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Women with disability in Australia are much more likely to live in poverty than people in the general population, are more likely to be unemployed, and are more concentrated than other women and men in precarious, informal, subsistence and vulnerable employment (Women with Disabilities Australia 2016).

People with disability who are mature-aged (Diversity Council Australia 2015) or from some culturally and linguistically diverse communities (National Ethnic Disability Alliance 2013) face additional barriers, including increased discrimination in the workplace.

Seizing opportunities

“ The right to work and study means we will have bigger experiences in bigger lives and we will be safer because people will know us. They will learn to care about us as friends and neighbours, colleagues and classmates.

(Women with Disabilities Australia 2017)

The Victorian economy has many strengths that provide a solid foundation for enhancing economic participation. Business investment and confidence measures are strong and lead all other states.

The Victorian Government's broad economic development agenda is about investing in jobs, services, regions and vital infrastructure to support the Victorian economy of the future.

Government also has a role to lead as both a major employer and purchaser of goods and services in driving change for people with disability.

More than 285,000 people are employed across the Victorian public sector. This represents approximately nine per cent of Victoria's total workforce. As a government, we too want to tap into the benefits that diversity in the workplace offers. We need to do more – and we will.

Work is already underway on our plan to create new opportunities for people with disability to make their way in an economy and society that are more inclusive, as we know more can and must be done

Through a whole-of-government, whole-of-economy focus, this plan sets out practical and sustainable actions to increase the economic participation of Victorians with disability. Early actions, to be built on over time, are founded upon research and demonstrated good practice locally, internationally and from the broader business community.

Employees with disability are:



Reliable

On average, people with disability take fewer days off, take less sick leave and have a higher retention rate than other workers.



Productive

Once in the right job, people with disability perform equally as well as other employees



Lower risk

People with disability have fewer compensation incidents and accidents at work in comparison with other employees



Good for business

People with disability build strong relationships with customers and boost staff morale and loyalty – and they enhance the company image among staff, customers and the community

(Australian Safety and Compensation Council 2006, JobAccess 2016)

Driving change

“... it is not the attitude of people with disability that is responsible for the appalling unemployment rates of that cohort – it is the attitude of prospective employers and people without disability who are responsible for providing employment opportunities for them.

(Jessica May, Founder Enabled Employment, January 2017)

Addressing the systemic difficulties faced by people with disability requires careful consideration of what works:

- **Transforming attitudes** – literature shows that firsthand contact with members of a stereotyped group can play a powerful role in shifting attitudes and promoting inclusion (Murfitt et al. in press; Fisher & Purcal 2016) and employers who have had a positive experience employing people with disability are far more likely to hire again (OECD 2010).
- **Using employer-led approaches** – the most effective approaches are ‘employer-led’; that is, they are based on an understanding of the employer’s operational and business needs, ensuring employers are equipped with the right knowledge, tools and resources to help create more economic opportunities for people with disability.
- **Preparing for and supporting transitions** – targeted academic preparation, family involvement, youth empowerment and service collaboration and linkages contribute to post-school success of youth with disability, as do work experience, paid employment (Luecking & Luecking 2013) and well-supported career development for transition into employment (Cocks, Thoresen & Lee 2015).
- **Using targets** – economic participation for people with disability can benefit from the same success and positive outcomes achieved by gender targets, including benefits for employers such as more effective recruitment and career development systems, a more capable workforce and an enhanced corporate recruitment brand (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2016).

Case Study: Get Skilled Access

Australian wheelchair basketballer, wheelchair tennis player, Paralympian of the Year, radio host and public speaker: Dylan Alcott is busy with a broad range of passions that drive him.

Dylan was born with a tumor wrapped around his spinal cord, which was cut out when he was two days old. The operation saved his life but damaged his spinal cord, leaving him a paraplegic. He has been in a wheelchair all his life.

At 11 he took up wheelchair tennis and at 15 started playing wheelchair basketball. When in year 12, he became the youngest

wheelchair gold medallist ever, winning gold at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing. Winning 2 gold medals in tennis at the 2016 Rio Paralympics, he then went on to win a third consecutive Australian Open title in wheelchair tennis, at Rod Laver Arena in January 2017.

‘Over the years I have faced a broad range of responses to my disability – both positive and negative. The need to break the outdated paradigms of disability and accessibility drove me to establish Get Skilled Access, a customer service training company that works with major businesses and governments to offer a more inclusive customer experience.’

Our approach

The Victorian Government's substantial investment in education and economic development secures a strong foundation upon which to grow opportunities for people with disability.

Positive change will be driven by activating all relevant parts of government and the broader Victorian business community. To achieve this, the plan will:

- **create strengthened engagement and partnership opportunities with senior business, public sector leaders and other key stakeholders, whose support will play a critical role in long-term success**
- **draw on and activate the levers available to government, including public sector employment, procurement, investment, accountability measures and leadership**
- **facilitate the delivery of targeted initiatives that test, develop, refine and document practical evidence-based solutions in a Victorian context**
- **ensure a broad range of existing government policies and initiatives address the challenges to economic participation faced by people with disability in a targeted manner, to drive greater economic outcomes.**

Advocating for change

The Commonwealth Government has significant responsibilities for employment services and work-based adaptive equipment and supports for people with disability. The Victorian Government has an important role to play in promoting stronger economic participation for Victorians with disability through advocacy via the Council of Australian Governments.

Key themes and actions

We will take concrete action to make the Victorian public sector and broader economy more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. To do this, the plan sets out initial actions in three areas:

Education and learning pathways



Employment opportunities



Business ownership and innovation



We will build on these actions as further opportunities in the economy are identified over the three years of this plan.

Education and learning pathways



“ *It is crucial that young people with disability receive the support required to participate in the workforce as early as possible to drive effective long-term employment outcomes and maximise the benefits of improved standards of living and social inclusion that come with employment.*

(Deloitte Access Economics 2011, p. 8)

Having strong foundations to support Victorians with disability to participate in the economy will be critical to the success of this plan. Economic outcomes are strongly influenced by access to supportive, quality education and training opportunities because these underpin a lifetime of contributions and involvement in the broader economy for all Victorians.

What we're building on

Establishing Victoria as the 'education state' means giving all children and young people, including those with disability and additional needs, a quality education that enables meaningful participation in society.

The Inclusive Education Agenda is strengthening the capacity of our education system to support students with disability and additional needs to ensure these students participate, achieve and thrive at school, as part of a genuinely inclusive education system.

We are also actively addressing post-school options. Through *Skills First*, Victoria's training and technical and further education (TAFE) system is being reformed and a new approach to training is being implemented, boosting training quality and supporting the courses that are most likely to lead to employment (Department of Education and Training 2017).

Absolutely everyone: state disability plan 2017–2020 is building leadership capabilities among people with disability to support them to be strong contributors to public debate and influence change within government, the broader community and the economy.

Keeping our sector strong, Victoria's workforce plan for the NDIS, is helping ensure the training system in Victoria meets demand for quality training for an expanding NDIS workforce that includes people with disability.



Meet Anne Chibnall, artist and business owner

Anne is a talented painter and screen-printer who has set up her own business, 'Chibz', in regional Victoria.

'I work in a studio out at Learmonth. I make products to sell at stalls. I make T-Shirts, Tea-towels, cards, artworks, postcards, placemats and coasters.'

Anne knew she wanted to become an artist after completing a short Work Education program run by the local TAFE.

'It was a dream to put a business of my own together. I can run it, my business, but I need other people involved to help.'

The Department of Health and Human Services created an arts-focused Future for Young Adults Program to support local aspiring artists, like Anne, who has Down Syndrome. This helped kick-start a number of supported arts studios for people with disability in the area.

Anne now receives support through the NDIS. She continues to be part of these studios and works with other mentors and professional artists to develop her business skills.

Anne's ideas, work ethic and energy are driving her success. She loves seeing red dots at exhibitions and has big dreams to grow her business in the future.

Getting to work

To take the next steps in building stronger foundations in education and learning, we will focus our efforts in schools, on skills and across the broader Victorian economy.

Schools

Action 1: Review and update key resources to better support students with disability to participate in workplace learning including:

- workplace learning guidelines (covering work experience, structured workplace learning and school community work) and the resource *A job well done*
- the *Strengthening pathways planning guidelines*.

Action 2: Deliver a series of activities for students in Years 9 and 10 from a broad range of government schools, highlighting the changing world of work and potential pathways to further education, training or employment. These include:

- a World of Work on Wheels tour
- VET Industry Tasters and
- Industry Immersion Days

Action 3: Strengthen support for school-based apprenticeships or traineeships (SBATs) for students with disability, including through professional development for school-based staff and others involved in SBATs delivery.

Action 4: Through the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund support the Ticket to Work and after-school job project to assist young people with significant disability to prepare for, gain and sustain after-school work.

Skills

Action 5: Analyse participation, attainment and transition data for students with disability in the Victorian training system to inform the development of further targeted support for these learners.

Action 6: Complete reviews of *Skills First*, Reconnect and TAFE Community Service Funding to inform future opportunities for students with disability.

Action 7: Attract people from a range of backgrounds to a career in disability, including people with disability.

Action 8: Implement a range of leadership initiatives for people with disability including scholarships, mentoring, role shadowing and networking.

Action 9: Sponsor traineeships, cadetships and graduate careers of people with disability in Victorian health services.



“ I was fortunate to receive a scholarship from Department of Health and Human Services for the Williamson Community Leadership Program. The opportunity was amazing and plays a large part of my commitment to give back to the community. I know that leadership programs open doors for people with disability like never before and I am excited for the leadership roles we will hold in the future. Active citizenship is possible for all, and leadership development provides a certain kick-start for which our community will benefit greatly.

(Colleen Furlanetto, Chair Victorian Disability Advisory Council, 2017)



Employment opportunities

“*(I like open employment)... like my own two feet sort of thing, like I have a life, that it is my own. I don't have to ask permission for, can I please have money for a drink. I can say I actually have money to buy my own things. I can go out and buy what I actually want. I'm also very generous with my money, like in the family when there's things I can help like the vet bill, I say here I can help, use some of my money.*

(Inclusion Australia 2014, p. 6)

Access to employment and other economic opportunities are key ways that Victorians with disability can make their own contribution to, and benefit from, our overall prosperity.

Victoria has a long and proud history of taking action to grow the economy and working to ensure all Victorians reap the benefits of our prosperity. This includes our work to ensure all Victorians are able to realise the economic benefits of the NDIS.

What we're building on

Jobs Victoria is the Victorian Government's approach to driving inclusive jobs growth, supporting Victorian jobseekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market into work, and providing targeted services for people looking for work and for employers looking for workers.

The \$3 million **Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund** was established to support new and innovative projects that have the potential to contribute towards improved employment services in Victoria. The fund provides grants to support new projects, including projects that benefit disadvantaged jobseekers who face significant barriers to employment, such as people with disability.

More recently, through **JobsBank**, a dedicated jobs pipeline is being built to support Victoria's most disadvantaged jobseekers, including people with disability and mental illness.

Disability action plans are enshrined in the *Disability Act 2006*. Public services, including government departments, prescribed statutory authorities, statutory corporations and local government, must have a disability action plan in place and report against it on an annual basis. These plans make commitments to reduce barriers to accessing goods, services and facilities, and to obtaining and maintaining employment.

The Victorian Government is a large employer and is in a strong position to play a lead role in helping shift attitudes and drive positive change. We offer a number of entry points for jobseekers, including people with disability. Current programs include the Youth Employment Scheme, the Jobs Victoria Youth Cadetship Scheme and the Graduate Recruitment and Development Scheme.

What gets measured gets done

Despite a growing awareness of the benefits of inclusion, reliance on this alone won't be enough to change the attitudes, cultures and behaviours that lead to the exclusion of people with disability in the economy.

As a major employer, the Victorian Government is committed to demonstrating leadership on the inclusion of people with disability in the workforce.

Setting targets is the first step on our journey.



Meet Daniel, graphic designer, photographer

'After trialing freelance work for 18 months, I decided that a structured workplace would suit me better, as I found myself distracted at home by things like doing the washing or the internet. I needed that accountability to get the best out of me at work.'

Daniel thought about his personal networks and realised he knew the director of an organisation he was interested in working for, so approached her about opportunities. She recognised Daniel's talent as a designer when she saw his portfolio.

'That was four years ago now and I see myself staying here and continuing to develop the skills I have.

I feel I offer my workplace a unique way of seeing the world, especially through my photography. I'm committed to the job. I try and be friendly towards my colleagues. It's a very inclusive workplace.

Relying on social skills at interviews doesn't always give people with autism a level playing field. Adjustments needed aren't equipment, they are more around being more accepting. Whilst I work hard on social skills they are not my greatest strength.

I'd encourage employers to be creative when it comes to the recruitment process. Recognise that perhaps we need to look at new ways we see people at work, rather than rely on the traditional job interview.'

Getting to work

We will take action over the life of this plan to enhance employment of people with disability in both the Victorian public sector and broader Victorian economy.

In the public sector

Action 10: Develop and implement a Victorian public sector disability employment action plan focused on:

- achieving a target of six per cent of people with disability employed across all government departments and Victoria Police by 2020 increasing to 12 per cent by 2025
- inclusive attraction, recruitment, retention and career progression strategies
- supporting prospective and existing employees and their managers
- creating safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces, free of discrimination
- strengthening disability data collection across the public sector
- partnering with the VPS Employees with Disability Network (The Enablers) to support a more inclusive public sector

Action 11: Implement and evaluate the impact of the RISE employment initiative for people with autism at the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with Specialisterne Australia and La Trobe University.

Action 12: Identify and replicate good practice in local government's employment of people with disability and social procurement through innovation funding.

Across the Victorian economy

Action 13: Increase investment to provide more targeted opportunities for people with disability, including by:

- establishing a dedicated disability employment support stream within the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund
- piloting a new employer liaison role to secure more jobs for people with disability.

Action 14: Create 50 paid internships for people with disability across the Victorian economy.

Action 15: Through the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund launch the Dandelion Program in Victoria to place 20 young job seekers with autism into meaningful careers.

Action 16: Build a strong focus on employment outcomes into the NDIS, commencing with three initiatives through Information, Linkages and Capacity Building transition funding:

- High Growth Jobs, Talented Candidates project to develop employers' disability confidence before selecting and training potential candidates
- Using STEM and Agri Lab models to create employment opportunities for rural young people with autism
- WISE Ways to Work pilot to support people with psychosocial disability, using evidence-based interventions and supports from community mental health and disability employment to promote sustainable, long-term employment.

Action 17: Create employment opportunities for young school leavers with intellectual disability through the Victorian Government's JobsBank initiative.

The public sector at work

The power of networks

The Enablers Network is a network of people with disability and their supporters that represents every government department and agency across the Victorian public service. The purpose of the network is to represent the needs, interests and concerns of Victorian Government employees with disability to ensure fair and equitable treatment.

Creating workplaces where people perform at their best

In 2017, the Department of Health and Human Services introduced 'RISE at DHHS', an initiative providing real employment opportunities for people on the autism spectrum. Initially eight full-time opportunities will be offered through fixed-term, 23-month employment contracts at the Victorian Public Service Level 2. The new team will be part of a large records management project.

Developed with the support of Specialisterne Australia, RISE will help build a workforce that better reflects the communities the department serves, offering opportunities to people with autism spectrum disorder to be truly valued for their unique skills.

A key feature of RISE is its innovative approach to recruitment, with applicants assessed through a specialised three-week assessment program, rather than through the regular departmental interview process.

In the lead up to the launch of RISE at DHHS, the department hosted a workshop for all interested employees to raise their awareness and understanding of autism and the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.

Business ownership and innovation



“ *We're limited by the soft bigotry of low expectations – if the bar is set low, that's as far as most of us will go.*

(Graeme Innes AM 2015)

Small business is the backbone of our economy and Victoria is home to Australia's largest collection of social enterprises, with more than 5,000 operating throughout the state, supporting the jobs of more than 75,000 Victorians (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources 2017).

Social procurement is also increasingly being applied to create positive change for Victorian communities and individuals that face complex challenges, through:

- building economic empowerment by purchasing goods and services from social benefit suppliers, including social enterprises
- employing and training socially and economically disadvantaged people in the broader economy.

Case study: Clean Force Property Services

Clean Force Property Services is a multi-award winning social enterprise which provides employment for people with disability, including mental illness. Clean Force provides commercial cleaning services for customers including Telstra, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, New South Wales Health, and the Mernda Rail Infrastructure Project. In 2012 Clean Force undertook a comprehensive Social Return on Investment Study, which found that for every dollar invested in Clean Force there was \$6.10 return to the community. For more information visit www.cleanforce.com.au

What we're building on

As part of the Jobs Victoria initiative, the government released Australia's first social enterprise strategy to improve sector support and ensure more social, economic and employment opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians. Five million dollars of funding was allocated in the 2017/18 Victorian State Budget to implement the plan's initiatives, including establishing a statewide social enterprise network, sector research and modelling, a feasibility study for online skills development and growth training for social enterprises (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources 2017).

Social procurement is a relatively recent feature of the economy that involves choosing to purchase a social outcome when buying a good or service, thereby creating added social benefits.

The Victorian Government has demonstrated its commitment to using procurement for wider social benefit through the Major Projects Skills Guarantee, where public works above \$20 million in value must use apprentice, trainee or cadet labour for some 10 per cent of total work hours as a way to deliver a skilled workforce for the future. Major infrastructure delivery agencies, such as the Level Crossing Removal Authority, Melbourne Metro Rail Authority and the Western Distributor project, require a social procurement plan from project delivery partners (Victorian Government 2017).



Noah Callan, Founder, CEO Disability Tek

Noah's life took a new direction a few years ago after he found he couldn't use his new Apple TV because it only worked with a Siri remote which his disability prevented him from using. Noah has cerebral palsy and is quadriplegic.

'I wrote to Apple CEO Tim Cook explaining that I was concerned Apple products were becoming too clever with their swipe technology and that they were locking people such as myself out.'

Noah was inspired to set up his own business, Disability Tek, when he saw Apple taking steps to meet the needs of people with disability and releasing products with assistive technology.

'Technology is my life - everything I do revolves around it ... it has the power to improve our quality of life so greatly.'

Disability Tek gives people with disability an easy way to find out what technology will best suit their needs by providing a platform to share information and discuss useful devices and software.

Noah has spent months refining his business model to get Disability Tek ready for launch.

Most recently, he was successfully admitted to the Runway Accelerator Program in Geelong, a 12 week program that supports innovative startups.

'I need to make this work. For me the time is now, technology is the future and hopefully with the NDIS becoming an important enabler for the disabled community the sky is the limit!'

Getting to work

The Victorian Government will look to grow new opportunities and ways for people with disability to participate in the economy. Early efforts will focus on leveraging existing government commitments to drive better economic outcomes.

Action 18: Implement the Victorian Government's social enterprise strategy, which will build the capacity of social enterprises, remove barriers to them doing business in Victoria and help them provide more employment opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers, including those with disability.

Action 19: Develop a whole-of-government social procurement framework that takes action to enhance economic opportunities for people with disability.

Action 20: Dedicate a number of activities and events in the Small Business Festival Victoria 2018 to raise awareness about inclusion, showcase the contribution people with disability make as small business owners and employees and encourage more people with disability to establish businesses.

Action 21: Enable more people with disability to set up their own business through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)¹ in partnership with the National NEIS Association, leveraging targeted NEIS funds.

¹ For further information about the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme refer to the resource section.

Monitoring and accountability

This plan will be jointly led by the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing and the Minister for Industry and Employment.

Support and leadership from all departments will be critical to the plan's success, given the level of disadvantage and broad range of barriers faced by people with disability in participating in the economy.

The Department of Health and Human Services will lead the overall coordination of the plan across government.

The impact of the plan will be measured through the *Absolutely everyone* outcomes framework.

The first public *Absolutely everyone* report will be tabled in parliament in 2018, with progress against the indicators and measures, including those related to economic participation, reported annually thereafter.

Ten things employers can do now

This plan sets out short-term and long-term actions to improve inclusion and participation for people with disability across the Victorian economy. There are also actions employers can take today to build more inclusive workplaces.

- 1** Making an adjustment can make all the difference. Ask people what support they need, and work with them to make it happen.
- 2** Consider whether your job application processes give people with disability a fair opportunity to demonstrate they are the best person for the job. Use inclusive, non-discriminatory language in all communications (Victorian Public Sector Commission 2016).
- 3** Be clear, specific and public about your commitment, such as through a statement on your website about your organisation's commitment to employing people with disability (see the Resources section for details).
- 4** Offer flexibility in the assessment process and consider transferable skills the candidate may have acquired from non-traditional work or personal experience.
- 5** Offer work experience opportunities to assess people's suitability for ongoing employment in a real work environment.
- 6** Don't forget about career progression. Look at how staff are selected for training opportunities and ensure staff with disability are eligible, notified and nominated.
- 7** Ensure recruitment companies know you are willing to consider candidates with disability. This will give you access to the full talent pool and make sure strong candidates are not being screened out.
- 8** Ask for assistance when required. A range of services and funding is available to support the sustainable employment of people with disability (see the Resources section for details).
- 9** Develop a good working relationship with your employee's Disability Employment Service or Jobs Victoria partner if one has been involved in the placement. They can help you with any disability-related issues and potential barriers that could hinder satisfactory work performance and job retention in the longer term.
- 10** Consider your procurement needs and how you might help generate employment opportunities for people with disability through your purchasing decisions.

This information is based on an analysis of existing good practice and material drawn from JobAccess (2012). See the Resources section for details.

Resources

JobAccess

JobAccess is a free one-stop shop for advice and support on workplace adjustments and employment for people with disability. It also offers expert advice on managing mental health in the workplace and can connect employers and people with disability to their local Disability Employment Service.

www.jobaccess.gov.au

Employment Assistance Fund

The Commonwealth Government's Employment Assistance Fund helps employers and people with disability achieve accessible workplaces through financial help for suitable equipment and workplace adjustments.

www.jobaccess.gov.au

Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance

The alliance is a national approach by business, community and government to encourage Australian workplaces to become mentally healthy. It has partnered with beyondblue on the rollout of the national Heads Up campaign to create mentally healthy workplaces.

www.headsup.org.au

Australian Network on Disability

The network is an employer-driven organisation with the specific purpose of advancing the equitable inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business. It is not-for-profit and has scores of Australian businesses, government departments and community-based organisations as members.

www.and.org.au

SelfStart

SelfStart offers support through the first stages of starting your own business.

<https://jobsearch.gov.au/selfstart>

New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

This scheme helps jobseekers to become self-employed business owners. A total of 8,600 NEIS places are available nationally each year, offering a mix of accredited small business training and business mentoring, income support and rental assistance for eligible jobseekers. NEIS now also specifically caters for people with disability through the HD (Highly Disadvantaged) program.

<https://jobsearch.gov.au/jobseeker-info/start-your-own-business>

Media Access Australia

Media Access Australia is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to increasing web and digital accessibility for people with disability by providing information and specialist expertise.

<https://mediaaccess.org.au>

Jobs Victoria

The State Government allocated \$53 million to establish Jobs Victoria in May 2016. It delivers programs for people looking for work and for employers looking for workers.

<http://jobs.vic.gov.au/>

Disability Leadership Institute

This institute offers coaching, mentoring, training and connection to opportunities, including communities of practice, leadership development, and a range of resources to both existing and emerging leaders with disability. It also hosts the **National Register of Disability Leaders**: open to all people with disability to join, and open to all companies and agencies wishing to improve their diversity.

<http://disabilityleaders.com.au/>

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