



The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Minister for Disability
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

By email: lizzie.blandthorn@parliament.vic.gov.au

27 June 2024

Dear Minister

Re: Urgent need for gap funding for frontline advocacy in Victoria

The fifteen groups signatory to this letter write to request an urgent meeting to discuss the need for increased funding for frontline disability advocacy in Victoria.

The 2024 Victorian Budget maintained VDAP funding for disability advocacy services at the level paid in previous years. While this was welcome, most services report that with increased client demand, inflation and rising delivery costs this level of funding is simply not adequate to meet the real advocacy needs of people with disabilities in this State.

Many smaller advocacy groups with no other government funding have been operating with deficit budgets to provide their services, and now face cutting back on service delivery or the prospect of permanent closure. This risks the loss of highly skilled and dedicated frontline advocacy staff, with appalling consequences for all Victorians with disabilities.

The Disability Royal Commission highlighted the vital role independent advocacy plays in ensuring people with disabilities can build their self advocacy skills, better use their NDIS funding and protect their rights. The NDIS Review also stressed the critical need for advocacy in safeguarding people with disabilities and addressing abuse and exploitation.

The system of “foundational supports” recommended by the Review has yet to be established. While it may in time provide for adequate levels of advocacy, there is an urgent need for increased support for Victorian groups working right now on the frontlines of advocacy to tackle violence, abuse and discrimination on a daily basis.

We ask that the Victorian Government give serious consideration to an emergency doubling of VDAP funding until the foundational supports system is properly established and working.

We look forward to your response to this request at your earliest convenience. For the purposes of arranging a meeting, please call Denise Boyd (Executive Officer, STAR Victoria) on 0490 090 660 or Fionn Skiotis (CEO, VALID) on 0400 833 314.

Yours sincerely

Lando Antonelli	General Manager	Action on Disability Within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)
Deb Deshayes	CEO	Blind Citizens Australia
Col Brokenshire	Chairperson	Brain Injury Matters
Philip Waters	General Manager	Deaf Victoria
Ally Scott	Executive Officer	Disability Resources Centre (DRC)
Leanne Wishart	Executive Officer	Gippsland Disability Advocacy
Christian Astourian	Program Coordinator	Migrant Resource Centre, North West Region
Ben Foley	Executive Officer	Regional Disability Advocacy Service (RDAS)
Sandy Ross	CEO	Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC)
Melanie Keely	Coordinator	Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU)
Jennie Trigg	Executive Officer	Southwest Advocacy Association (SWAA)
Denise Boyd	Executive Officer	STAR Victoria
Fionn Skiotis	CEO	VALID
Nadia Mattiazzo	CEO	Women with Disabilities Victoria
Mija Gwyn	Head of YDAS	Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)