

VALID 2026 Victorian State Election Statement

As Victoria's peak body for people with intellectual disability, VALID stands ready to help the next State Government deliver critical health, social and community outcomes.

We are deeply concerned by the escalating pressure on Victoria's hospitals, courts and emergency services, placing people with intellectual disability at increased risk of abuse and neglect, social isolation and economic exclusion.

VALID therefore asks the next Victorian Government to:

- **Invest in Specialist Disability and Family Violence Teams:** By establishing dedicated response teams and wraparound advocacy services to address critical service gaps across the state.
- **Invest in Long-Term Disability Advocacy:** By providing stable, adequate multi-year funding to strengthen Victoria's disability advocacy sector and workforce.
- **Co-design Foundational Supports:** By partnering with VALID to design and develop foundational supports to minimise inefficient service models, prevent long-term financial liabilities and deliver fit-for-purpose systems.
- **Develop Accessible Communications:** By funding the production of Easy Read, plain language and translated materials to ensure all Victorians can understand the changes and policies that affect them.
- **Develop a State-Funded Disability Safety Net:** To ensure that no Victorian is left without NDIS support and funding until high-quality, individualised Foundational Supports are fully operational, preventing cost-shifting onto other state services.

Supporting people with intellectual disability and their families is key to delivering a resilient and integrated health, social, and community sector for all Victorians.

1. Specialist Disability and Family Violence Teams

People with intellectual disability experience disproportionately higher rates of violence, and mainstream family violence systems currently lack the specialist capability required to safely protect them.

Recommendation: Invest in Specialist Disability and Family Violence Teams by establishing dedicated response teams and wraparound advocacy services to address critical service gaps across the state.

People with intellectual disability report the highest rates of all types of violence, compared to people with other types of disability ([Disability Royal Commission, 2021](#)).

For **women with intellectual disability, up to 90% will experience abuse in their lifetime**, with almost all the abuse being perpetrated by someone known to them ([Hughes et al., 2011](#)). Yet, mainstream family and domestic violence services operate in fast-paced, text focused environments that currently lack the capability to support complex communication or cognitive differences, such as non-verbal communication and informed consent processes. Crisis workers frequently misinterpret these barriers as compliance, often missing forms of abuse like restrictive practice, coercion control & guardianship, withholding essential care equipment, medication and isolating support workers ([Dyson et al., 2017](#); [PWDA, 2022](#)). Rejection from mainstream services leaves an individual at significant risk, often requiring urgent escalation to independent advocacy bodies or formal tribunals to safeguard their rights and safety.

The danger escalates when the perpetrator of violence is also the primary carer, forcing the person with intellectual disability to choose between enduring ongoing violence or reporting and losing life-sustaining daily disability supports. Intersecting forms of oppression such as ableism and sexism, result in individuals being forced to normalise violence as an everyday occurrence. When mainstream services fail to intervene, vulnerable Victorians seek support through emergency department presentations, acute housing placements and long-term state trauma interventions. This remains costly and inadequate at providing the specialist wraparound support people with intellectual disability need ([Starke et al., 2024](#)).

Investing in dedicated Specialist Disability and Family Violence Teams addresses this critical service gap. The NDIS reforms that plan to cut participants' budgets present a dangerous risk of isolation in unsafe environments, increasing the risk of family and domestic violence. The Disability Royal Commission repeatedly heard that

the worst abuse of people with disability occurred in closed settings and when they were isolated from society. It is critical that we provide specialist disability support in terms of frontline services providers and sector-wide capacity building ([Disability Royal Commission, 2021](#); [WWDA, 2026](#)).

Currently, Safe and Equal's Family Violence and Disability Practice Leader Initiative provides a vital capacity building role for the sector and enhances the accessibility of services for people with disability. Each Practice Leader is responsible for a DFFH area and supports local services through specialist disability consultation, emerging best practice, disseminating information on relevant training and advocacy. Expansion of this initiative will integrate specialist practitioners directly into frontline services and deliver tailored support and rapid coordination. Targeted intervention protects a highly vulnerable population while relieving financial and administrative pressure on Victoria's overstretched emergency infrastructure ([Safe and Equal, 2026](#)).

2. Long-Term Disability Advocacy

Without access to independent advocacy, vulnerable Victorians often fall through service gaps and fail to receive adequate support, exposing them to the risks of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Recommendation: Invest in Long-Term Disability Advocacy by providing stable, adequate multi-year funding to strengthen Victoria's disability advocacy sector and workforce.

Independent disability advocacy is a critical safeguard for people with intellectual disabilities because it ensures their personal rights, choices and safety are actively defended by someone who has no conflicting interests. Advocates are vital in supporting people with intellectual disability navigate complex systems and changes like the NDIS reforms.

For those who are isolated with no family, community supports or informal networks, **independent disability advocacy is often the only avenue for support** against abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Disability Royal Commission confirmed that people who exclusively rely on paid service providers or live in closed settings - such as segregated environments, prisons and group homes – are at higher risk. There is also a likely underreporting of these cases for people with intellectual disability who face significant

barriers to reporting, obtaining assistance and pursuing prosecution. Independent disability advocacy is critical for this cohort to uphold their human rights and dignity. Despite their effectiveness, disability advocacy organisations remain drastically under resourced and overwhelmed by the recent escalating surge in demand driven by the NDIS reforms. ([Disability Royal Commission, 2021](#); [DANA, 2022](#); [2023](#)).

These national reforms face significant implementation and support challenges if dedicated funding is not allocated to independent disability advocacy. Organisations are often operating on short-term, unstable funding cycles and face severe workforce retention and waitlist issues. When a person with disability cannot access an advocate to receive support with complex assessments, funding cuts or plan changes, they cannot safely enforce their rights or effectively navigate services. Lack of access to services carries considerable and preventable shifting costs onto state emergency, acute, health, justice and social services, resulting in poorer outcomes for people with disability, including earlier death ([DANA, 2022](#); [2023](#)).

Investing in long-term disability advocacy helps secure the local infrastructure needed to manage this transition. The next Victorian Government can support this by committing to stable, multi-year funding agreements that reflect the volume and demand of different local government areas. This funding will leverage the strength of established local relationships and community networks.

3. Co-Design Foundational Supports

Building systems for people with intellectual disability without their direct input risks creating inefficient service models and long-term financial liabilities.

Recommendation: Co-design foundational supports by partnering with VALID to design and develop supports to minimise inefficient service models, prevent long-term financial liabilities and deliver fit-for-purpose systems.

As responsibilities are divided between the Commonwealth and States and Territories, co-designing foundational supports is central to managing these reforms. VALID has a proven track record in providing specialist support during transitional phases of the NDIS, having successfully delivered the NDIS Transition Support Project from 2016 to

2019. This involved delivering targeted initiatives such as individual advocacy, group home consultations, information sessions and self-advocacy training ([Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, 2018](#); [VALID, 2018](#)). Currently, widespread uncertainty remains regarding how foundational supports will be appropriately funded, delivered and governed. People who are already facing cultural, language or geographic barriers are at extreme risk of losing care during this transition period. Without clear referral pathways and rapid response networks, people will continue to face acute care crisis ([Disability Royal Commission, 2023](#)).

This urgent demand requires genuine co-design with people with intellectual disability to ensure foundational supports are appropriate, relevant and culturally responsive to local community needs. A rushed consultation process risks tokenistic input, creating ineffective services and costly financial liabilities. When policies and programs are designed and implemented by people without disability, this leads to poor outcomes and trauma for people with disability. We cannot repeat past mistakes that allow for abuse and neglect to thrive. Importantly, genuine co-design protects the state budget by ensuring public funds are allocated to relevant, place-based models that align with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([Disability Royal Commission, 2023](#); [NDIS Review, 2023](#)).

As the peak body for Victorians with intellectual disability, VALID has a proven track record of successful project partnerships across community, government, legal and health sectors. Combined with our lived experience expertise, we stand ready to collaborate with the incoming government to protect disability rights and help ensure foundational supports are fit-for-purpose and community led.

4. Accessible Communications

Access to information is a fundamental human right. When policies are not delivered in plain language, Easy Read, and translated formats, thousands of Victorians are excluded from their own lives.

Recommendation: Develop Accessible Communications by funding the production of Easy Read, plain language and translated materials to ensure all Victorians can understand the changes and policies that affect them.

The recent NDIS changes have presented an uncertain and challenging landscape for people with an intellectual disability to navigate. This includes changes to funding, price caps and assessments which result in people with intellectual disability and their families having to calculate discrepancies and monitor complex administrative changes. Placing the onus on the participant to understand these changes and advocate for themselves is an unfair and impossible demand. ([Villamanta Legal Service, 2026](#)). Importantly, research by the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee confirms that the lack of accessible information creates severe and disproportionate barriers to basic social and political participation ([Electoral Matters Committee, 2026](#)).

To reduce systemic barriers, Victoria can fund independent, certified Easy Read, plain language and translated communication materials. This includes mandating simple layouts, independent direct translations and video materials that clearly explain funding rights and plan processes.

The importance of accessible communication in achieving improved outcomes for people with intellectual disability was outlined in VALID’s recent Driving Change 2026 project. Accessible communication remains foundational to each community recommendation outlined in the report such as introducing mandatory disability training for hospital workers, developing an outpatient model for hospitals, and expanding the Disability Liaison Officer workforce. Delivering transparent, disability-affirming information satisfies human rights obligations, prevents acute care breakdowns and empowers people to make decisions about their own lives ([VALID, 2026](#)).

5. State-Funded Disability Safety Net

Shifting NDIS systems risk leaving vulnerable Victorians without immediate care, which shifts pressure onto state services.

Recommendation: Develop a State-Funded Disability Safety Net to ensure that no Victorian is left without NDIS support and funding until high-quality, individualised Foundational Supports are fully operational, preventing cost-shifting onto other state health, social and community services.

The introduction of tighter eligibility definitions, restricted funding budgets and 90-day plan assessment timeframes creates a real risk of disruption to care. When funding or support plans change unexpectedly, people face immediate crisis before state

alternatives are fully operational. Without established alternatives and contingency planning, breakdowns in care will dramatically increase the burden upon already over-stretched emergency departments, public hospitals, housing and social services. These risks are intensified for regional and remote, First Nations and culturally and racially marginalised communities who already experience difficulty accessing appropriate or available services.

If Victoria is to successfully establish foundational supports, without risking immediate disruption to services that will place vulnerable Victorians at great risk, a State-Funded Disability Safety Net is essential. The consequences of service failure are potentially disastrous and must be addressed with urgency, as outlined in the Royal Commission Emergency Planning and Response Paper ([Disability Royal Commission, 2020](#)).

Delivering rapid-access emergency gap funding will maintain safety, prevent acute crises and ensure proactive risk management during this transition. Coordinated pathways will offer a practical, rights-focused solution that eliminates cost-shifting across state systems.

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