

South Australia's First Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023

Community Consultation: Summary Report



Supported by
Government of South Australia
Department of Human Services



Purple Orange

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Background

Following the introduction of the *Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)*, the South Australian Government is developing its first State Disability Inclusion Plan ('the State Plan'). The development of the first State Plan is an important step towards building a truly inclusive South Australia. The State Plan will shape the government's vision for the next four years, guiding the work of State Government and local councils. The development of the State Plan is supported by a Disability Inclusion Act Reference Group, comprising members from State Government agencies, local councils and other state bodies.

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"Everyone has a responsibility to make our community inclusive."

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JFA Purple Orange – an independent social policy organisation that works to enhance the life chances of people living with increased vulnerability – was engaged by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to lead a six-week community consultation to inform the development of the State Plan.

DHS developed a discussion paper to inform the consultation, which was organised around four themes: liveable communities; participation in decision-making; creating opportunities; and fairness, safety and equality. Discussions were based on these themes. People provided feedback in a variety of ways, including via community forums, individual interviews, an online discussion forum, emails, hard-copy written submissions and phone calls.

Consultation participants gave input on a wide range of topics affecting the lives of people living with disability including:

- community attitudes
- social inclusion
- the built environment
- participation in decision-making
- employment
- education and training
- service provision
- the accessibility and availability of information
- transport
- housing
- law and justice
- advocacy
- health
- safety

Participants considered the specific situations of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women and children. Further consultation with these priority groups is being separately undertaken by DHS.

Participants commented on various positive initiatives and developments. Some noted, for example, that attitudes towards disability are slowly improving. Others observed that the built environment is gradually becoming more accessible, particularly for people who use wheelchairs. Developments such as accessible playgrounds and beaches were described as highly beneficial.

While some progress and positive initiatives were identified throughout the consultation, participants identified many areas where further action is needed to ensure that South Australia becomes a truly accessible

and inclusive place to live for all. In this respect, over a thousand ideas were generated for the State Government and local councils to consider.

A key message to emerge throughout the consultation was the need to normalise disability, reduce barriers and stigma and encourage more understanding of people living with disability. As one participant said, if we 'redefine attitudes to disability... the rest will follow.'

Overall, participants were optimistic about the potential of the State Plan and Disability Access Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) to have a meaningful impact on the lives of people living with disability.

Note: The issues and ideas presented in this report bring a valuable perspective. However, they do not necessarily represent the views of all South Australians who live with disability or are otherwise engaged with the disability community.

People living with disability guide the way

JFA Purple Orange worked with a co-design group comprising people representing different experiences of disability, including intellectual disability, physical disability and acquired brain injury, as well as the parent of a person living with disability. The co-design group provided valuable input on the discussion paper and the design of the community forums. It will continue to meet to inform the development of the State Plan, also working alongside DHS.

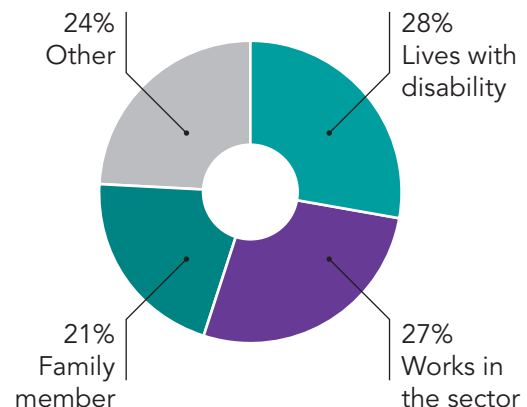
Who was consulted and how?

Overall, 384 people took part in the consultation:

- 126 people participated in one of five community forums in Salisbury, Noarlunga, Adelaide, Mount Gambier and Whyalla
- 152 people took part in a service provider consultation forum in Adelaide
- 68 people made a written submission
- 19 people were interviewed by JFA Purple Orange
- 17 people commented on the YourSAy website
- 2 people provided input over the phone

In total, input was received from over 130 people living with disability. Other people taking part in the consultation included family members and carers, people working in the disability sector, local and state government representatives, community members and researchers.

Community forum participants



“The State Government should lead the way in access and inclusion, setting a positive example for the rest of the community and the nation.”

Key messages

An overarching theme to emerge throughout the consultation is that people living with disability aspire to lead meaningful, fulfilling lives. They want to:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- find meaning in their lives
- make their own decisions
- be actively involved in their communities
- live somewhere that feels like home
- be able to get places
- receive an education
- work
- feel safe
- have fun
- make friends
- be connected and informed
- understand their rights
- have access to the services they need.

Disability access and inclusion needs to be addressed holistically, as the issues that people face often overlap and inter-relate.

Consultation participants encouraged the State Government and local councils to introduce strong accountability mechanisms and outcome measures under the State Plan and DAIPs, to ensure that progress is achieved and measured. It was suggested that a longitudinal evaluation could be conducted at local council level and state-wide, to measure the impact of the State Plan and DAIPs over time.

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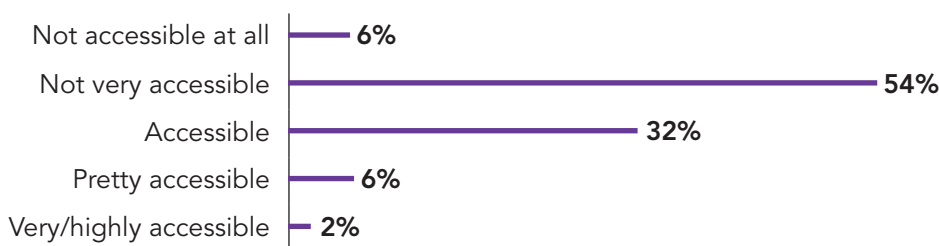
+ “Everyone has different abilities. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to use their abilities.” +

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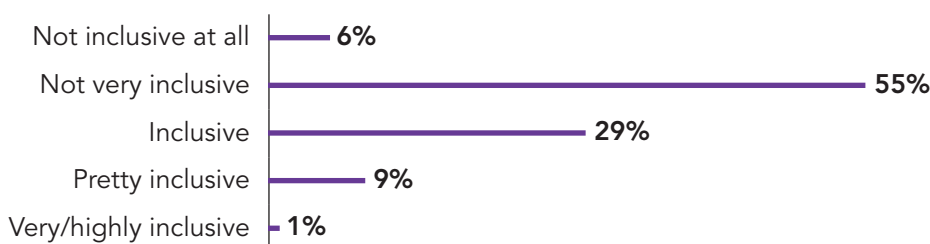
How accessible and inclusive is your community?

Consultation participants were asked to rate how accessible and inclusive their community is.

Accessibility of community (n=127)



Inclusiveness of community (n=121)



What's working well?



Consultation participants noted that a range of improvements are being seen...



Disability is becoming more accepted and attitudes are slowly improving



The Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA) has potential to bring about change



Gradual improvements are being made to the built environment, especially for people who use wheelchairs



The State Government and local councils are starting to deliver more inclusive consultations



Some schools and workplaces are becoming more inclusive and accessible



There is a growing number of audio descriptions for cultural and other events



Accessible playgrounds and beaches are expanding people's recreational choices



People are starting to talk about mental health



The disability rights legal framework is becoming stronger

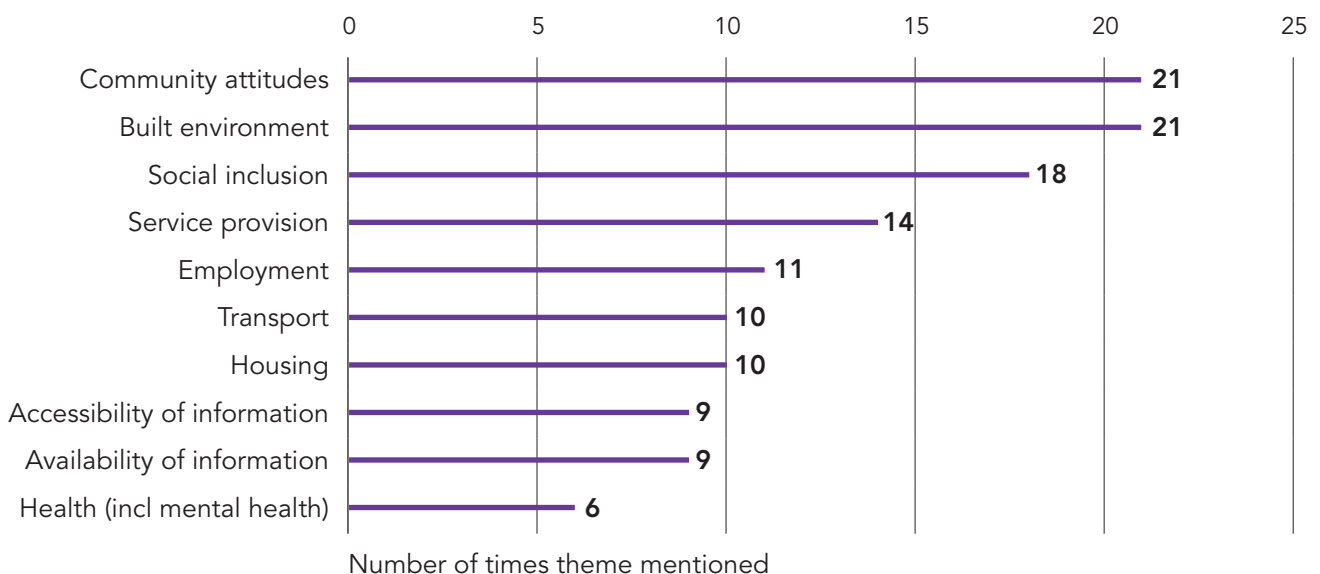


Governments are starting to disseminate resources and information in Easy English (Easy Read)

Biggest frustrations

During the community forums, participants were asked to write down their one biggest disability-related frustration. A total of 109 participants took part. Some frustrations were counted under more than one theme.

Top 10 biggest frustrations



Key findings

Vision for the State Plan

The State Plan discussion paper set out a vision of “a community that is liveable for all, where people’s voices are heard and respected, opportunities are available for all, and fairness, safety and equality are upheld.” Participants wanted the vision and framing of the State Plan to include specific mention of people living with disability, use colloquial language such as ‘having a fair go’, give everyone the opportunity to contribute to the community and describe the community as a place where everyone is valued and accepted.



Community attitudes

“Attitudinal changes are key to making physical changes and removing barriers.”

According to some consultation participants, disability is becoming more accepted in the wider community and awareness is slowly increasing. However, people reported ongoing negative attitudes, discrimination, low recognition of the value of people living with disability and a general lack of understanding of disability. A lack of community awareness and understanding can affect various aspects of people’s lives, such as their inclusion in social events and their education and employment prospects. Some attributed this lack of awareness partly to the lack of visibility of disability within the community and government, as well as the role of the media.

Ideas for action

- Launch a state-wide inclusion campaign and fund positive messaging campaigns
- Deliver far-reaching community education, training and awareness-raising about disability and inclusion, focusing on people’s strengths and contributions



Social inclusion

“Fun is underrated.”

Social inclusion was raised as a key priority. This includes involvement in sport and recreation, participation in community life, and interaction with a range of people as friends, colleagues, neighbours and in other capacities. Some programs and initiatives – such as the companion card and accessible playgrounds and beaches – are increasing people’s social participation. However, a concerning number of people living with disability said that they do not feel included in mainstream social events and activities. They described a range of barriers to social participation including transport and parking, funding for support, infrastructure and a lack of information about inclusive and accessible events, many of which are addressed in other sections throughout this report.

Ideas for action

- Allocate more funding to access and inclusion across government
- Improve the accessibility of existing venues and facilities
- Provide more inclusive, low-cost sports and recreational activities



The built environment

“Riding on some footpaths in a wheelchair is like ‘cross-country’ riding.”

The physical accessibility of the built environment has a significant impact on people’s ability to participate in social, economic and community life. Though some consultation participants reported an overall improvement in physical accessibility, especially for wheelchair-users, many remain frustrated about the number of physical access



barriers they continue to face on a daily basis – from footpaths and roads, to businesses and restaurants, to public facilities and community spaces. Many stated that there are not enough ramps and accessible toilets. Some people also commented on inconsistent compliance with disability access standards and insufficient commitment to universal design.

Ideas for action

- Commit to universal design across government and introduce stricter compliance requirements
- Develop stricter standards and codes for building and planning
- Modify unsafe roads, pedestrian crossings and footpaths
- Designate more accessible car parks and taxi ranks in suitable locations



Participation in decision-making

“Saying people were part of the discussion is not sufficient, the involvement must extend into the decision-making.”

The requirement under the *Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)* for governments to consult was noted as a positive step, and some participants feel that the State Government and local councils are starting to deliver more inclusive consultations. Some local councils also connect with the disability community through advisory groups and committees. One of the main concerns to emerge throughout the consultation was that decisions affecting people living with disability are still too often made by people who do not have lived experience of disability. Although people living with disability are consulted more frequently than in the past, it is rare that they are directly involved in decision making.

Ideas for action

- Establish a formal state government disability advisory body
- Establish ad hoc committees/groups to advise government on particular matters
- Ensure greater representation of people living with disability on committees, panels and other decision-making bodies
- Provide programs and initiatives to better equip people living with disability with the skills, knowledge and information they need to lead fulfilling lives (e.g. leadership, rights and self-advocacy)
- Commit across government to using collaborative design (“co-design”)
- When consulting with the community, consult at the outset of new developments; spend more time in regional areas; be flexible with respect to timing, location and methodology; and reach out to people with complex needs



Employment

“Educate the community about ABILITY.”

Some workplaces are reportedly becoming more inclusive and accessible for people living with disability. Employee assistance funding helps people to find work, but they often lose their jobs once the initial funding period has ceased. The main message stemming from employment discussions was the need to improve the attitudes and practices of employers, especially by increasing awareness about the benefits of employing people who live with disability. A general lack of work opportunities outside supported employment was commonly raised, as well as a need for better services to connect people to job opportunities, including for those who are in supported employment or finishing school.

Ideas for action

- Set disability employment targets or quotas in government and mainstream workplaces
- Make government recruitment processes and workplaces accessible and inclusive
- Provide training, materials and support to employers about working with people who live with disability, with a focus on the benefits
- Offer more incentives for employers to recruit people living with disability
- Support the development of volunteering and mentorship programs



Education and training

“Major reforms are needed to transform culture, policies and practices across early childhood, school and tertiary education.”

Some consultation participants felt that education providers at different levels lack sufficient understanding and awareness of disability, resulting in inadequate levels of support for students who live with disability. At school-level, some mainstream schools are reportedly taking steps to better include students living with disability, but there are still many segregated classrooms and schools. Participants emphasised a need for more systematic training about disability inclusion, both for current teachers and those in training, as well as greater funding to meet individual students' support needs. Students at TAFE and university also reportedly need more support staff and services.

Ideas for action

- Deliver systematic training about disability inclusion in the education system, both for current teachers and those in training

- Provide more support staff and services for students living with disability at school, TAFE and university
- Improve the transition from school to employment for people living with disability e.g. by providing more work experience opportunities



Service provision

“There needs to be more empathy and appreciation of individual strengths and challenges when working with people with disability.”

Access to quality services is of critical importance to people living with disability and participants recognised that some organisations in South Australia provide a high level of support. However, many expressed concern about a lack of support workers, particularly in regional areas, as well as insufficiently trained service providers. A number of people discussed the gaps that are arising between Commonwealth and state responsibilities as a result of the transition to the NDIS.

Ideas for action

- Provide more training to, and increase the number of, disability support workers
- Provide more funding opportunities for community organisations to support the disability community
- Identify, analyse and fill gaps between the responsibilities of the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments





Accessibility and availability of information

“Information provision is vital to people in order for them to be safe and informed and uphold their human rights.”

Access to information is essential for people to benefit from services and take part in community life. Consultation participants were grateful that governments are starting to disseminate resources in Easy Read versions. Overall, they felt there is limited information about available services and supports, people’s rights, and what is happening in the community. They urged agencies not to assume that all people have the resources, skills and ability to navigate websites in order to extract and input information, also noting that certain disabilities – such as deafness, blindness and intellectual or cognitive disabilities – give rise to specific needs. Another concern was the low number of Auslan interpreters in South Australia.

Ideas for action

- Disseminate information in a wide range of accessible formats, not just online
- Establish a centralised information centre to provide disability-specific information to the community
- Provide Auslan interpreters and captioning for public announcements and events
- Subsidise the Auslan interpreting diploma and/or teach Auslan in schools



Transport

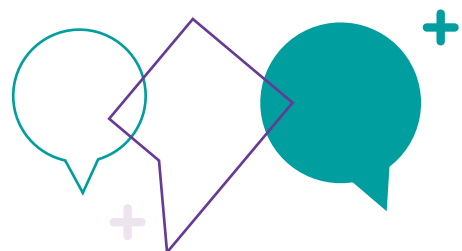
“We can do stuff, we just can’t always get to places.”

Though some progress was observed, the accessibility and availability of public transport, as well as low levels of disability awareness among transport workers, were raised as significant concerns, particularly in regional areas. People also noted an insufficient number of accessible car parks, particularly for wheelchair-users. A number of people reported that the South Australian Transport Subsidy Scheme (SATSS) worked well and expressed concern about how transport needs would be met after 2019. They explained that without access to suitable and affordable transport, people living with disability cannot easily participate in community life.

Ideas for action

- Ensure that all South Australians living with disability have access to sufficient funding to meet their transport needs
- Develop a state-wide transport plan for metropolitan and regional areas
- Improve the accessibility of public transport, including stops and interchanges
- Introduce a voice-operated system in buses

“Absolutely anything and everything should include people with disabilities.”





Housing

“Maintain and build accessible housing. Especially to meet the needs of vulnerable people. No more segregation.”

A number of consultation participants stated that housing-related issues should be included in the State Plan. Housing designed specifically for people living with disability was noted as making a huge difference to people's lives. It was made clear that at present, there are not enough suitable, affordable accommodation options for people living with disability. This results in a lack of choice, long wait times and people living in inappropriate housing. Consultation participants also commented more broadly on the links between adequate housing and education, employment, health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

Ideas for action

- Upgrade State Government housing, applying universal design principles
- Increase the availability of purpose-built accommodation and supported independent living options



Law, justice and advocacy

“Advocacy services are vital and need to be adequately staffed and funded to operate efficiently, expediently and effectively.”

Consultation participants noted that the legal framework for the protection of the rights of people living with disability is quite strong. However, many people living with disability do not know enough about their rights and where to seek advice, and do not always receive the support they need. This is a particular issue for those who experience discrimination and/or have contact with the justice system. It was commonly observed throughout the consultation that advocacy services in South Australia are working well but are under-funded and under-staffed, resulting in long waiting lists. The need for advocacy was raised across a range of topics, including discrimination and rights protection, education, employment, health and housing.

Ideas for action

- Fund more legal advice and support services for people living with disability
- Fund individual and systemic advocacy services, especially in regional areas
- Support self-advocacy programs and peer support networks for people living with disability

“Think BIG!
Don't limit the vision! Have measurable, meaningful actions. Be a leader in access and inclusion in Australia!”





Health (including mental health)

“People see the physical but not the mental/emotional disability.”

The main health-related issues raised related to health practitioners, with a number of participants commenting that overall, there is limited understanding in the profession of how to treat people living with disability, especially psychosocial disability. They noted, however, that more people are starting to talk about mental health. They observed a need for more support workers to facilitate access to health services, particularly in hospitals, as well as more advocacy services.

Ideas for action

- Provide more training for health care workers and students on how to work with people living with disability
- Provide support workers and disability advocates in all hospitals
- Invest more in mental health, including for people living with physical disability



Safety

“Sometimes people living with disability have been treated like they are less. And that is what we have come to expect”

Safety issues were mostly raised with respect to public transport, roads and footpaths, though some also highlighted the general vulnerability of people living with disability. Some of the suggested actions have been addressed elsewhere in this

report, such as educating people about safety and rights and funding more advocacy services. It should be noted that the open, public way in which the community consultations were run was not necessarily conducive to people speaking out about experiences of violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse.

Ideas for action

- Increase police presence in the community, on public transport and at transport interchanges/stops and provide more after-hours transport options
- Provide safer access points for accessible taxi pick up and drop off
- Refine and implement quality safeguarding processes
- Fully support implementation of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability at the State Government level

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who gave their input on South Australia's first State Disability Inclusion Plan. The State Government looks forward to working together with the community to improve access and inclusion in South Australia. It is essential that the State Plan is developed and implemented alongside the community so that the whole of South Australia takes ownership and responsibility for bringing it to life.



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