

Victorian Disability Worker Commission and
Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria

Corporate plan 2022–24



Acknowledgement of Country

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's First Nations peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing role of the Aboriginal community in supporting those with disability.

Victorian Disability Worker Commission

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The Commission and Board are statutory entities of the State Government of Victoria created under the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*.

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Message from Commissioner and Board Chairperson

We are pleased to present this corporate plan, which sets out how the Board and the Commission will implement our joint strategic plan in 2022–23. The corporate plan builds on our experience and early learnings of implementing the Disability Worker Regulation Scheme.

It is the third year of regulatory activity for the Commission and the second year of taking registrations for the Board. We are therefore aware of many of the challenges and opportunities in front of us as we work to achieve our strategic outcomes.

Whilst we continue the major and essential parts of the Board and Commission's work of registering workers, taking complaints and notifications, this plan highlights the activity to achieve our priorities over the next year. Commensurate with the stage of development of the Board and Commission, our strategic activities are focused on educating stakeholders, building community understanding of our roles, and developing our capacity to achieve a high quality and safe disability workforce in Victoria.

Our key priorities for this financial year are to respond efficiently to the growing number of complaints and notifications regarding unsafe or poor-quality disability services. In identifying our key strategic actions and projects for the next financial year we have given urgency to those that have the biggest impact for our organisation as well as benefits to our stakeholders.

We are aware of the difficulties that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on our sector and its range of implications. We are committed to work closely with our stakeholders in the implementation of the scheme so that together we can make a realistic difference to people living with disability.

The corporate plan does not provide detail on the 2023–24 actions as the Commission has only received budget allocation until June 2023. We have limited our annual planning to known resources whilst we operate on the basis that for the following year we will receive a similar budget to this year, plus funding for some specific areas of work. In a way it is an ambitious corporate plan; however it is one we believe we can achieve.



Dan Stubbs
Commissioner
Victorian Disability
Worker Commission



Melanie Eagle
Chairperson
Disability Worker Registration
Board of Victoria

About us

Our purpose

We regulate all workers providing disability services in Victoria, regardless of how they're funded, setting standards for registration and training, resolving complaints and prohibiting unsafe workers.

What we currently do

This is the shared corporate plan for the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (Commission) and the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria (Board).

We manage the Disability Worker Regulation Scheme by:

- regulating registered disability workers through a voluntary registration scheme
- developing professional registration standards to promote professionalisation of the disability workforce
- regulating the conduct of all disability workers operating in Victoria via a Code of Conduct
- investigating and responding to complaints and notifications about disability workers
- sharing appropriate information with regulators about disability workers to support quality and safety in the disability workforce.

For a full list of Board and Commission functions please see the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*.

Figure 1 illustrates the interrelationships between the roles of the Commission, the Commissioner and the Board.

Figure 1: Interrelationships between the Commission, the Commissioner and the Board



In August 2018 the Victorian Parliament passed the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018* (DSS Act) to improve the quality and safety of disability care and service standards. The DSS Act set up the Disability Worker Regulation Scheme (the Scheme).

The Scheme covers all Victorian disability workers (registered and unregistered) and students training to be disability workers in Victoria. It started on 1 July 2020 and forms part of the Victorian Government's zero tolerance approach to the abuse of people with disability.

The DSS Act:

- creates a voluntary registration scheme for disability workers
- provides a way to make a complaint or a notification about any disability worker in Victoria
- requires all unregistered disability workers comply with a Code of Conduct
- creates the Victorian Disability Worker Commission, the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner and the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria as regulators of the Scheme.



Our operating environment

In Victoria, 17 per cent¹ of people identify as having a disability. Thirty-two per cent² of people with disability sometimes or always need help with self-care, mobility or communication.

In Victoria, just over 10 per cent³ of the 1.1 million Victorians with disability are eligible for a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan. This means that many Victorians receive support outside the NDIS framework.

The Scheme covers both NDIS and non-NDIS disability workers and protects people with disability, including those who are not NDIS participants. This represents the majority of Victorians with disability who use support services.

In Victoria, many bodies work together to support safe disability services. We work with other agencies and organisations, including other workforce regulators including:

- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)
- Health Complaints Commissioner
- Mental Health Complaints Commissioner
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Victorian Institute of Teaching
- Office of the Public Advocate
- Disability Services Commissioner.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, *Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings*, Australian Government, Canberra, cited in Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2022, *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan 2022–26*, State of Victoria, Melbourne, p 12.

2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020, *People with disability Australia*, Australian Government, Canberra.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, *Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings*, Australian Government, Canberra.

In Victoria, we also work closely with the Department of Justice and Community Safety, which administers NDIS worker screening, and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Disability support work is complex. It needs a workforce with the skills and expertise to provide safe, quality supports.

More broadly, there are pressures on the supply of the workforce in the disability sector. Key factors impacting the size of the workforce include:

- competition for workers with other sectors including aged care and childcare
- casualisation of the workforce, which is female dominated
- relatively low pay rates.

A high turnover rate amongst casual disability workers has also added pressure to the disability workforce. The turnover rate has increased from 18 per cent in December 2020 to 22 per cent in June 2021.⁴

During 2021 and 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to have unprecedented public health, social and economic implications for the community. These effects have been acute for people with disability and the disability workforce.

From an operational perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the operations of the Commission and Board have mainly been conducted online. Staff did not begin returning to offices and workplaces until early in 2022.

In this context, as new organisations, the Commission and Board have focused our work on building awareness of the Scheme with stakeholders. Our regulatory approach has reflected this aim. We actively provide a 'no wrong door' approach to support people with disability and help resolve their queries, including by referring matters to appropriate agencies.

4. National Disability Services Victoria, *Victorian Disability Workforce Environmental Scan for 2022, February 2022*, p 6.

Our values

Our values inform what we do and how we do it.

Diversity and inclusion

- We have inclusive recruitment and employment practices that foster diversity in our workforce
- We ensure that diverse communities see themselves reflected in who we are and what we do
- We are committed to being an accessible workplace and an accessible regulator for our diverse stakeholders

Independent and fair

- We treat everyone with respect, listening to all parties involved
- We do what we say we will do and we take proportionate action
- The community sees our processes and the decisions we make as independent and transparent

Fearless and accountable

- We use our powers to hold others accountable for their actions
- We are responsible for our actions and are open to scrutiny and feedback
- We continually evaluate and improve our operations

Trust and respect

- We are respectful and professional in our interactions with our colleagues and the community
- We foster trust by assessing matters impartially
- We have confidence in, and are respectful of, each other's skills and capabilities

Empathy and dignity

- We take a person-centred approach with everything we do
- We ask people what they need from us and how we can work with them
- We are responsive and flexible to support the diverse communities and individuals we serve.



Our Scheme strategic plan 2022–24

Our maturity model

As a new organisation we have to be conscious that our journey recently began, and that maturation requires time and effort. With this in mind we have designed an ambitious four-phase model to ensure that by 2024 we can operate at the same level of any established organisation.



Scheme strategic plan 2022–24

In 2022, the Commission and Board worked together to create a Scheme strategic plan. The plan has five pillars in total, the first four representing where the Scheme needs to concentrate its efforts to support people with disability, and a fifth pillar describing the crucial support required to enable the functions and delivery of pillars 1–4 acknowledging the relationships between the Commissioner, the Board and the Commission.

Figure 2: Strategic Plan 2022–24 on a page

The Victorian Disability Worker Regulation Scheme Strategic Plan 2022/23–2023/24					
Vision	People with disability can choose services that best meet their needs and supports their quality of life, free from abuse and neglect				
Purpose	We regulate all workers providing disability services in Victoria, regardless of how they are funded, setting standards for registration and training, resolving complaints and prohibiting unsafe workers				
Guiding Principle	People with disability who use disability services have the same rights as other members of the community				
Pillars	I. Safety and compliance 	2. Registration 	3. Workforce standards 	4. Engagement and communications 	5. Enablers 
By mid 2024	We have an accessible responsive and balanced notifications, complaints and assessment system	The percentage of the disability workforce that is registered is growing steadily	Our standards for registration and training improve the knowledge and capability of the workforce	People with disability, their families, advocates and service providers understand and have confidence in the Scheme and its processes	The Board, Commissioner and Commission work collaboratively and are well supported to develop and operate the Scheme
2022–24 priorities	1.1 Develop and implement a compliance framework for the conduct of registered and unregistered workers 1.2 Establish and implement procedures for receiving, assessing and actioning notifications and complaints 1.3 Implement monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement processes in relation to complaints and notification 1.4 Raise awareness of the Scheme’s complaints and notifications process	2.1 Build knowledge of the benefits of registration for disability support workers, their employers, and for people with disability, their families, carers and advocates 2.2 Ensure the registration process is simple quick and easy to use 2.3 Promote registration to disability support workers 2.4 Build demand for registered disability support workers from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – people with disability, their families, carers and advocates – service providers 	3.1 Develop a roadmap to guide the development of guidelines, standards and accreditation 3.2 Prioritise standards for registration of disability support workers 3.3 Collaborate with organisations including employers who develop the workforce through curricula, qualifications and training 3.4 Strengthen the Commissions capability, capacity and resources to develop standards	4.1 Work with other regulators and agencies in Victoria and nationally to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – achieve quality and safety outcomes for people with disability – avoid unnecessary duplication of effort 4.2 Build awareness of the role of the Board and Commission 4.3 Further strengthen our relationships with the community, sector and our stakeholders 4.4 Build our capability to engage and consult	5.1 The Board, Commissioner and Commission have: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> shared values and principles a complementary partnership, underpinned by a respectful empowering and learning culture high performing teams that draw on each other’s strengths the necessary resources, capacity and capability supporting technology hardware systems and applications 5.2 The Board, Commissioner and Commission collaboratively develop a regulatory approach that, is evidence-informed, risk-based, responsive and balanced 5.3 Progressively build an evidence-based understanding of the Scheme’s impact, strengths and shortcomings, and ways these may be addressed

Our focus for 2022–23

A significant proportion of our resources dedicated to delivering the Scheme are allocated to core regulatory and enabling functions as shown in Table 1. At this stage in our maturity journey, many of these functions correspond to completing foundational work.

Our key priorities for this financial year are to respond efficiently to the growing number of complaints and notifications regarding unsafe or poor-quality disability services. This reflects the maturity of the Scheme and the increasing number of people who use disability services as well as a growth in the number of registered disability support workers and practitioners.

Table 2 shows our key actions/projects for 2022–23. To this end we are building our capabilities, profile and recognition in the disability sector. Much of our actions and deliverables this year are therefore also reliant on promoting recognition and understanding of our work in the community.

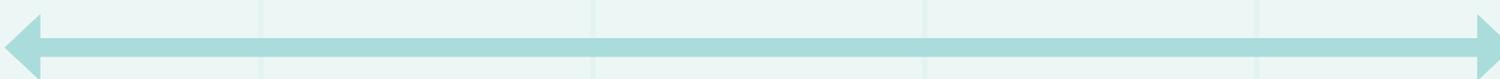
This important work will help us to increase our profile and build community confidence in the work of the Commission and Board.

At the same time, we plan to undertake analysis and consultation to prepare for the development and implementation of new important standards to promote the quality and recognition of disability workers registered under the Scheme.

Table 1: Core regulatory and enabling functions

 <p>Safety and compliance</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaint handling and responses • Investigations • Prohibition orders • Working with other regulators
 <p>Registration</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration assessment • Continuous improvement to application and renewal processes • Customer support • Publishing the register of registered disability workers
 <p>Workforce standards</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy directions and guidance • Standards, guidelines development and fees • Accreditation processes
 <p>Engagement and communication</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement • Public information and education campaigns • Media presence
 <p>Enablers</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate compliance • Internal audit • Board Secretariat • Strategic and operational policy • Recruitment management • Health and safety • Finance • Diversity and inclusion • Legal advice • Strategic planning and risk management • IT development and support • Data management and analytics • Monitoring and evaluation • Research • Delegations and authorisations

Table 2: Key strategic actions/projects for 2022–23

 Pillar	 1. Safety and compliance	 2. Registration	 3. Workforce standards	 4. Engagement and communication	 5. Enablers
2024 Outcome We have an accessible responsive and balanced notifications, complaints and assessment system	The percentage of the disability workforce that is registered is growing steadily	Our standards for registration and training improve the knowledge and capability of the workforce	People with disability, their families, advocates and service providers understand and have confidence in the Scheme and its processes	The Board, Commissioner and Commission work collaboratively and are well supported to develop and operate the Scheme	
Key strategic action/project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a compliance framework (including policy and regulatory approach) (Priority 1.1) • Develop a stakeholder feedback survey (Priority 1.3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a fee policy (Priority 2.3) • Develop a new model of assessment written as guidance (Priority 2.2) • Revise application and renewal process (Priority 2.2) • Undertake a criminal history check reform project (Priority 2.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a roadmap for registration standards (Priority 3.1) • Prioritise registration standards (Priority 3.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications and engagement plan (Priority 1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 4.2, 4.3) • Strengthen collaboration and engagement with other regulators and agencies (Priority 4.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a reporting infrastructure (Priority 5.3) • Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Priority 5.3) 	
Core regulatory and enabling functions 					

Tracking our performance

We have developed a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework to ensure the Commission and the Board have the tools needed to make well-informed, evidence-based decisions. We have established three ways of looking at our performance over the year.

Monthly review of key performance indicators and measures

Our two key regulatory functions are the focus of Pillar 1 – Safety and Compliance and Pillar 2 – Registration. These are supported by engagement and communications activities in Pillar 4. On a monthly basis the Commission monitors a range of key performance indicators and measures across these pillars and uses them to inform our day-to-day operations.

Performance reporting against our business plan

The Commission monitors progress against our key actions and projects monthly and updates the Board quarterly on this progress.

Yearly review of our impact

Central to accountability is our MEL framework. The framework contains the desired outcomes of the Scheme, an indication of how we are going to achieve these, and realistic indicators and measures.

Annual reviews have been planned describing our progress towards the Scheme outcomes and outputs.

Table 3: Example of performance measures

Measure	Pillar
Number of notifications received	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of notifications closed	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of complaints received	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of complaints closed	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of investigations commenced	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of workers counselled*	Pillar 1 – Safety and compliance
Number of applications for registration	Pillar 2 – Registration
Number of registrations granted	Pillar 2 – Registration
Number of stakeholders engaged through meetings	Pillar 4 – Engagement and communication
Number of documents downloaded from website	Pillar 4 – Engagement and communication

(*) Counselling has been the predominate compliance and enforcement tool in the establishment phase of the Scheme to align with the educative approach to compliance and ensure that disability workers understand their obligations. As the Scheme becomes more mature and expectations and understanding of regulatory obligations improve, a proportionate response is likely to include a wider range of compliance and enforcement tools.

Approach to risk management



We have taken a Scheme view of our risks (encompassing the Commission and Board). The significance of these risks will vary over time. Broadly, these risks relate to:

- protecting people with disabilities and their wellbeing through promoting the Scheme and taking appropriate compliance and enforcement action regarding the quality and safety of services received
- promoting the Scheme and the professionalisation of the disability workforce to enhance the quality and safety of services they provide
- the effective operation of the Scheme, appropriate resourcing and well-supported Commission and Board to deliver outcomes.

Operational risks are actively managed through ongoing internal discussions and an internal audit plan that actively addresses the way both the Board and Commission operate to manage the Scheme. When required, these risks are escalated in various ways, for example to the Audit and Risk Committee or with the Commissioner and Board Chair directly.