

Victorian disability worker registration standards review

Consultation report 2025



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. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing role of the Aboriginal community in supporting those with disability and the importance of listening to these voices.

Accessibility statement

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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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Victorian Disability Worker Commission
Level 20, 570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone: 1800 497 132
Email: info@vdwc.vic.gov.au
Web: www.vdwc.vic.gov.au

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Summary

Disability worker registration standards are a key part of worker registration under the Disability Worker Regulation Scheme (the Scheme). The Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria (the Board) and Victorian Disability Worker Commission (the Commission) are committed to developing standards that meet the expectations of the sector and workforce. We want to ensure all services for people with disability are high quality and provided safely.

Between 11 November 2024 and 13 December 2024, the Commission and Board consulted on reviewing the three disability worker registration standards which are:

- criminal history
- English language requirements
- continuing professional development (CPD).

This report summarises the feedback from that consultation.

We also invited feedback on the effectiveness of the Scheme, suggestions to encourage disability workers to register and registration standards we could introduce in the future.

We invited stakeholders from across the Victorian disability sector to take part including people with disability and their families, disability workers, service providers and peak bodies.

We received 35 responses. In summary:

- there was general support for including other guidance in the criminal history standard.
- most respondents supported the proposed approach to self-assessing English language at level 5 of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or level 6.
- most respondents supported keeping the requirement for 10 hours of CPD and including refresher training.

The Board considered all feedback received. It decided to make the following changes to the proposed standards:

- The proposed criminal history standard is appropriate. But there is more guidance on when the Board accepts the NDIS Worker Screening Check.
- The IELTS 5 English language competency level is reasonable and necessary. The standard will include more guidance on how to self-assess English competency. The Board will consider competency in languages other than English when assessing registration applications. This includes Auslan.
- The current CPD requirement of 10 hours per year stays in place. These hours may include refresher training.

The Board and Commission is committed to improving the effectiveness of the Scheme and acknowledges the feedback and ideas received to support the skills, quality and capability of Victoria's disability workforce.

Background

The Disability Worker Regulation Scheme (the Scheme) regulates all disability workers in Victoria under the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*.

Two independent statutory bodies run the Scheme:

- the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria (the Board)
- the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner.

The Victorian Disability Worker Commission (the Commission) supports these statutory bodies.

You can read more about the Scheme on [the Commission's website](#).

Purpose of the consultation

We reviewed the disability worker registration standards. These standards were set when disability worker registration began in 2021.

We wanted to ensure they are effective and operate as intended. The three standards are:

- criminal history
- English language requirements
- continuing professional development (CPD).

The purpose of the review was to ensure:

- the standards were working well and meet the expectations of the sector
- the standards provide all the information a disability worker needs to understand how to meet them
- the standards promote a quality, safe, responsive and sustainable disability workforce
- all services for people with disability are high quality and provided safely
- opportunities were available for input from everyone involved:
 - people with disabilities and their families
 - disability workers
 - service providers
 - others in the disability community.

Consultation timeline



How we consulted

The Commission and Board conducted public consultation from 11 November to 13 December 2024. For this, we wrote a consultation paper and created a survey.

We promoted the consultation through various communication channels including:

- the Commission's newsletters
- the Commission's website
- stakeholder emails
- our social media
- external stakeholder newsletters and social media.

We ran an online information session on 19 November 2024. We also held consultation meetings with targeted stakeholders including:

- National Disability Services (NDS)
- the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU).

We provided Easy Read versions of:

- the consultation paper
- the proposed amended registration standards
- the consultation survey.

We also translated these into Auslan through video recordings. This was to encourage accessibility and inclusion.

Most people responded to the consultation questions via an online survey. We also accepted submissions via email or video format.

What we heard

We received 35 responses. This included survey responses and written submissions.

Respondents mostly included:

- disability workers
- people with disability and/or their nominees
- disability service providers
- peak bodies.

The Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) and National Disability Services (NDS) both responded.

The feedback has informed the Board on the Scheme's effectiveness. It has also suggested changes to the registration standards.

Registration under the Scheme is voluntary. We hope that a better understanding of the standards may lead to more disability workers choosing to register. This will support better quality and safer services for people with disabilities.

Consultation feedback

English language requirements registration standard

The Board asked for feedback on the proposed [English language requirements registration standard](#).

Proposed English competency level IELTS 5

Feedback summary	Board response
<p>Most respondents agreed with either IELTS 5 or IELTS 6 being the appropriate English competency level.</p> <p>Most people with disability who responded agreed with the proposed IELTS 5 level or lower.</p> <p>Most disability workers supported a higher level (IELTS 6). Common reasons included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workers need to be clearly understood by the people they are supporting (also noted by HACSU).• Disability workers must be able to read and understand complex support plans.• Reading and writing skills under IELTS 6 increases risk to participants.• Lower English language competency leads to lower standards of documentation and reporting. <p>NDS supported IELTS 5 because it aligns with visa requirements. NDS noted the benefits of workers who can communicate to participants who speak their first language. NDS also noted that increasing the level may be a barrier to registration. This is because the number of disability workers born overseas is increasing.</p>	<p>The Board listened to the feedback and has decided to maintain the IELTS 5 English language standard for self-assessing competency.</p> <p>Disability workers must have an adequate understanding of English. This includes being able to communicate with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the person accessing the service• the person's representatives and other service providers. <p>This is necessary to understand and effectively respond to their needs.</p> <p>The Board considers that Vocational English level 5 is the reasonable and necessary level of English for disability work. This is also the language level for working visas relevant to the disability and aged care sectors.</p> <p>The Board and Commission regulate a diverse disability workforce. Over 41% of workers were born overseas. More than 66% speak a language other than English at home).¹</p> <p>A higher level of IELTS 6 for self-assessing English language skills may be a barrier to workers registering. A lower level of IELTS 4 wouldn't be enough for migrant workers to get a visa to provide disability services. Migrant workers make up a large part of the disability workforce.</p>

¹ VDWC Workforce Data Dashboard (2024) Workforce Mapping Project. RMIT University, Workforce Innovation and Development Institute

Proposed condition for applicants who communicate in a language other than English

Feedback summary	Board response
<p>Of those that responded there was support for the Board to consider registering applicants who primarily communicate in a language other than English, including Auslan.</p> <p>Discussions with representatives from the Deaf community informed this change. Deaf Victoria said the current English language standard may be a barrier for Deaf workers who use sign language.</p> <p>NDS also supported including Auslan into the standard. NDS noted the significant role of assistive technologies.</p>	<p>The Board wants to increase accessibility and inclusion for workers who communicate in Auslan. The Board has listened to this feedback and adopted this condition.</p>

Continuing professional development registration standard

The Board asked for feedback on the [continuing professional development registration standard](#). The review proposed **no changes** to the core requirement of 10 hours of CPD per year in the standard. The review proposed changes such as including refresher training as part of CPD hours, pro rata requirements for workers registered for less than 12 months and an exemption process for not completing 10 hours of CPD, in exceptional circumstances.

Proposed 10 hours of CPD training

Feedback summary	Board response
<p>Most respondents supported having at least 10 hours of CPD per year.</p> <p>Types of CPD</p> <p>More than half of respondents agreed that specific courses or training should be part of the CPD standard. The most common types of training suggested were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• first aid• manual handling• food safety• mental health• behaviour support• restrictive practices.	<p>The proposed CPD standard will stay as 10 hours of CPD per year.</p> <p>The Board adopts a principles-based, rather than a prescriptive approach to types of training courses as part of CPD.</p> <p>Courses and training that improve a worker's knowledge and skills in the type of disability work they do can count towards the required 10 hours of CPD.</p>

Proposed 2-hour limit on refresher type training

Feedback summary	Board response
<p>Some respondents disagreed with limiting the number of hours that refresher training contributes to CPD.</p> <p>Some respondents stated that refresher training still has value and is important. This is especially the case in work where requirements are often updated such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• restrictive practices• active support• falls training. <p>Some workers find it difficult to attend other training without loss of income. Some respondents said the proposed limit could have a financial impact on these workers. Disability workers who are sole traders could be particularly affected.</p>	<p>The Board has heard the feedback that introducing the 2-hour limit on refresher training may make it harder for workers to comply. The Board also noted that this may have an unfair impact on contractors or sole traders.</p>

Criminal history registration standard

The Board asked for feedback on the proposed [criminal history standard](#). The review proposed **no changes to the core requirement in the standard**.

Feedback summary	Board response
<p>Most respondents agreed with the proposed criminal history standard including its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• language• content• structure. <p>Respondents noted the importance of the Board considering social determinants of justice when reviewing the criminal histories of applicants.</p>	<p>The Board takes criminal history seriously and can refuse registration for people with serious offending history.</p> <p>The Board has listened to feedback and will adopt the proposed criminal history standard without change.</p> <p>The revised standard provides more information about how the Board considers criminal history.</p> <p>The Board applies the categorisation of offences in the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i>. This Act allows the Board to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the seriousness of any offence• the impact on safety of working with people with disability.

Other feedback

The consultation also asked for feedback on:

- the effectiveness of the Scheme
- how to encourage workers to register
- whether the Board should introduce any other registration standards to improve disability services.

Scheme effectiveness

There was positive feedback on the effectiveness of the Scheme including the alignment of the Disability Service Safeguards Code of Conduct with the NDIS Code of Conduct, and the acceptance of the NDIS Worker Screening Check for registration of workers.

NDS said the Scheme is positive, constructive and collaborative. But NDS noted concerns among providers about duplication of regulation and complexity between state and federal registration.

Suggestions for increasing the number of workers who register included:

- providing incentives to high-quality disability workers to register
- promoting the benefits of being a registered worker
- marketing the Scheme to people with disability
- simplifying the registration and renewal process.

Some respondents supported mandatory registration of disability workers to increase the benefits of registration and make the Scheme more effective.

Many of these responses argued that making registration mandatory will lift the quality and safety of disability services.

Some respondents had concerns that worker registration or mandatory registration duplicates the work of the NDIS, increases administrative burden on disability workers or limits the choice and control of people with disability to choose their supports.

Encouraging disability worker registration

Some respondents suggested considering more opportunities to promote the benefits of worker registration and a registered disability workforce. People with disability will particularly benefit from this.

Others commented that the process of registration needs to be easier. Some mentioned difficulties uploading documents to support their applications in the past.

Future registration standards

Most respondents agreed the Board should introduce new registration standards. These would be made under section 138 of the Disability Service Safeguards Act. The priority standards suggested were:

- professional indemnity insurance
- scope of practice of a registered disability worker. Respondents supported future registration standards that included requirements related to previous practice experience of applicants.
- the physical and mental health of applicants.

Board response

The Board and Commission is committed to improving the effectiveness of the Scheme. We welcomed the feedback and ideas to support the skills, quality and capability of Victoria's disability workforce including through disability worker registration.

Next steps

We will publish the revised registration standards on the VDWC website in July 2025. Revised registration standards will take effect at the start of the 2025–26 registration period on 1 October 2025.

The registration standards will stay in place until they are revised or replaced. The Board will consult with the disability sector before making any other changes to the registration standards or introducing new standards.

We will continue to track changes to the disability sector and disability reforms across Australia. This will help in deciding the right time to review or introduce new registration standards for disability workers in the future.



About the Victorian Disability Worker Commission

The Victorian Disability Worker Commission is an independent body established to better protect people with disability and build a stronger, safer disability sector. It is responsible for the Disability Service Safeguards Code of Conduct, setting the minimum expectations for all workers in Victoria supporting people with disability, and the complaints service. It can accept complaints and notifications, with powers to investigate and ban workers who put people's safety at risk.

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