

2024–25 At a glance



Summary of the 2024–25 Annual Report of the
Victorian Disability Worker Commission and
Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria

About us

The **Victorian Disability Worker Commission** is the independent regulator of all disability workers in Victoria. The Commission takes complaints and notifications about the conduct of registered and unregistered disability workers. It also investigates disability worker conduct when required.

The Commission also communicates to the public about disability workers. It maintains the Board's register of registered workers and the Commission's register of prohibited workers.

The **Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner** is the head of the Commission. The Commissioner regulates the conduct of unregistered disability workers and has the power to prohibit a worker from practising in Victoria. Dan Stubbs is the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner.

The **Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria** registers disability workers who meet certain standards set by the Board. The Board regulates the conduct of these registered workers. The Board, chaired by Melanie Eagle, started registering workers in July 2021.

Figure 1 illustrates the interrelationship between the roles of the Commission, the Commissioner and the Board. For more information on the Commission and Board, visit our [website](#).



Dan Stubbs,
Commissioner



Melanie Eagle,
Chairperson Disability
Worker Registration
Board of Victoria

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



The Disability Worker Regulation Scheme

The Scheme was established through the **Disability Service Safeguards Act**. It promotes the quality, safety, responsiveness and sustainability of the disability workforce in Victoria through strengthening safeguards for all disability workers and voluntary worker registration.

The Scheme includes:

- a Code of Conduct for all Victorian disability workers
- mandatory notification requirements for employers and workers to report concerns that a disability worker may be putting safety at risk
- an independent complaints service where quality and safety concerns about any Victorian disability worker can be reported
- disability worker registration, which ensures disability workers meet independent standards for safety, skills and professionalism.

The Board and Commissioner can also take immediate action or ban a disability worker, if needed, where a disability worker's conduct puts people at risk.

Section 7: Guiding principles, *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*

It is a guiding principle of the regulatory scheme under this Act that persons with a disability to whom disability services are provided have the same rights as other members of the community:

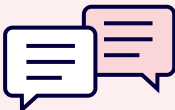
- a) to be respected for their human worth and to be treated with dignity as individuals; and
- b) to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation; and
- c) to realise their individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development; and
- d) to exercise choice and control over their own lives; and
- e) to access information and communicate in a manner appropriate to their communication and cultural needs; and
- f) if a child, actively to involve the child's family and any other caregivers in decisions affecting the child and to have information and support to enable this to occur; and
- g) to choose disability workers with the values, skills and qualifications that meet their needs; and to access services which support their quality of life.

Year in review 2024–25

Responding to concerns about disability worker conduct

Our increased engagement has contributed to greater reporting of complaints and notifications about worker conduct.

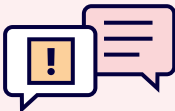
374 enquiries



415 closed
6% increase*

128 complaints
24% increase*

92% of complaints decided within 60 days



127 closed
5% increase*

74 notifications
32% increase*

98% of notifications decided within 60 days



81 closed
37% increase*

*increase on previous year



28 investigations underway

11 new investigations begun, 7 completed



51 Interim Prohibition Orders made

involving 14 unregistered disability workers posing a serious risk being prevented from providing disability services.

This was the largest number of workers prohibited by the Commissioner in a 12-month period. Some workers were subject to consecutive Interim Prohibition Orders preventing them from practising because they were considered a serious risk.



5 Prohibition Orders

A high-quality workforce through disability worker registration

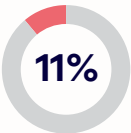


1,016

registered disability workers,
a 35% increase*

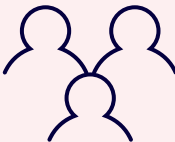


are disability support workers



are disability practitioners

519 new applications
for disability worker
registration, a 22% increase*



93% of new
applications decided
within 90 days

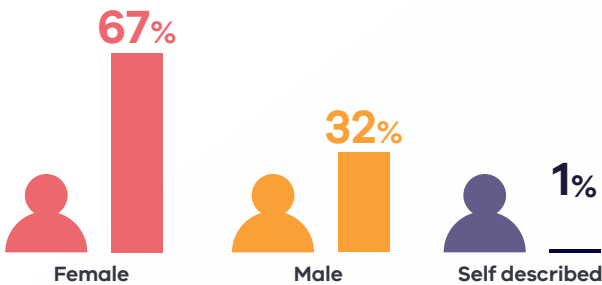
82% of registered
workers renewed
their registration



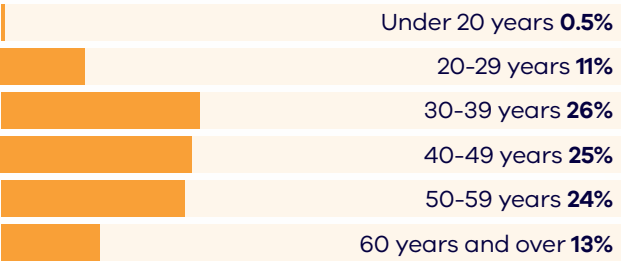
75% of renewal
applications decided
within 30 days

*increase on previous year

Gender



Age

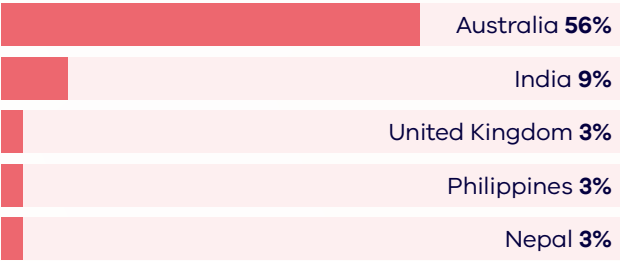


Pathways to qualify



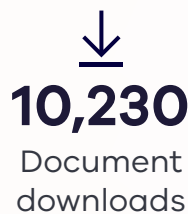
* All applicants must have experience providing disability services in the past 10 years to be eligible for registration.

Top 5 countries of birth



Year in review 2024–25

Awareness and education about disability worker regulation



*increase on previous year

Listening to the disability sector

Disability sector survey

We conducted the third annual disability sector survey and in-depth interviews, hearing from more than 1,000 participants in the Victorian disability sector including disability workers, people with disability, carers and employers.

The purpose of the survey is to understand the sector’s awareness and understanding of the Scheme and its key elements including the Code of Conduct, our complaints service, mandatory notifications, registration of disability workers and Prohibition Orders.

The survey assists the Commission in targeting its work for engagement and awareness as well as the types of communication methods that best reach the disability community.

The results showed strong awareness of the Scheme, its purpose and functions as well as areas for Commission focus to improve awareness.

Findings about the Scheme



Awareness of:

Reporting unsafe conduct (mandatory notifications)	The Code of Conduct	The Commission’s complaints service
72% of service providers	72% of service providers	75% of service providers
69% of workers	66% of workers	39% of people with disability
49% of practitioners*	40% of practitioners*	

*disability practitioners are disability workers with advanced skills, experience and qualifications.

A diverse and skilled workforce of registered disability workers

Across Victoria, registered disability workers provide critical services in the community, performing a variety of disability services. This could be assisting with shopping, cooking or cleaning, providing self-care, tutoring and training, supporting a person's social and recreational activities and allied health professionals providing clinical and therapy services.

By being a registered disability worker, these workers show they have the right skills and experience to deliver quality services, providing confidence to people with disability and their families.

The following examples of registered disability workers use pseudonyms.



Registered Victorian disability practitioner

Alex is a 26 year old disability practitioner living in Shepparton.

Alex qualified for registration with a Graduate Diploma of Psychology, Master of Educational and Developmental Psychology and experience as a senior psychologist and behaviour support practitioner. She is also a registered psychologist with Ahpra.

Alex is employed to provide specialist therapy supports funded through various streams including NDIS, Medicare and fee-for-service options.

Alex works with people with disability, their families and other disability employers to deliver high-quality, best-practice therapeutic services and person-centred supports, either at home or in the community, to support them to participate, thrive and achieve their goals. She conducts psychological assessments, develops behavioural support plans and supports clients with anxiety, stress, depression, trauma, grief and loss, and other emotional regulation issues.



Registered Victorian disability practitioner

Katherine is a 39-year-old disability practitioner living in inner-city Melbourne.

Katherine qualified for registration with a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (with honours) and experience as an occupational therapist. She works with adults and children with physical, cognitive and developmental disabilities to develop skills for work/school and community involvement.

Katherine is a registered occupational therapist with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra).



Registered Victorian disability support worker

Puja is a 33-year-old disability support worker living in inner north-eastern Melbourne. She qualified for registration with more than 5,000 hours' experience providing personal care, assistance with daily tasks and learning new skills, emotional support, social interaction and community participation.

Puja started her career as a disability support worker working for a large disability service provider. She was employed for 5 years before starting her own business and has been self-employed since 2023. She has a current NDIS worker screening clearance and Mental Health First Aid certificate.

Puja assists people with disability with many aspects of self-care and self-management, including support with meal preparation and household chores, budgeting, medication management, using public transport and education and learning including teaching skills such as fashion and sewing.

Puja was born in Mauritius and is fluent in Hindi, Creole and French.



Registered Victorian disability support worker

Manuel is a 56-year-old disability support worker living in Somerville on the Mornington Peninsula.

Manuel qualified for registration with a Certificate IV in Disability Support and experience providing personal care, community access and companionship in supported accommodation and respite services.

Manuel currently works as a disability support worker for a large disability employer and has a NDIS worker screening clearance. He assists with daily living activities, including showering and grooming, dressing, meal preparation, cooking and attending medical appointments.

He also has experience as a job coach in which he counselled people with disability in supported employment to upskill, with the aim of landing and sustaining open employment.

Manuel was born in Portugal and is fluent in French, Portuguese and Spanish.

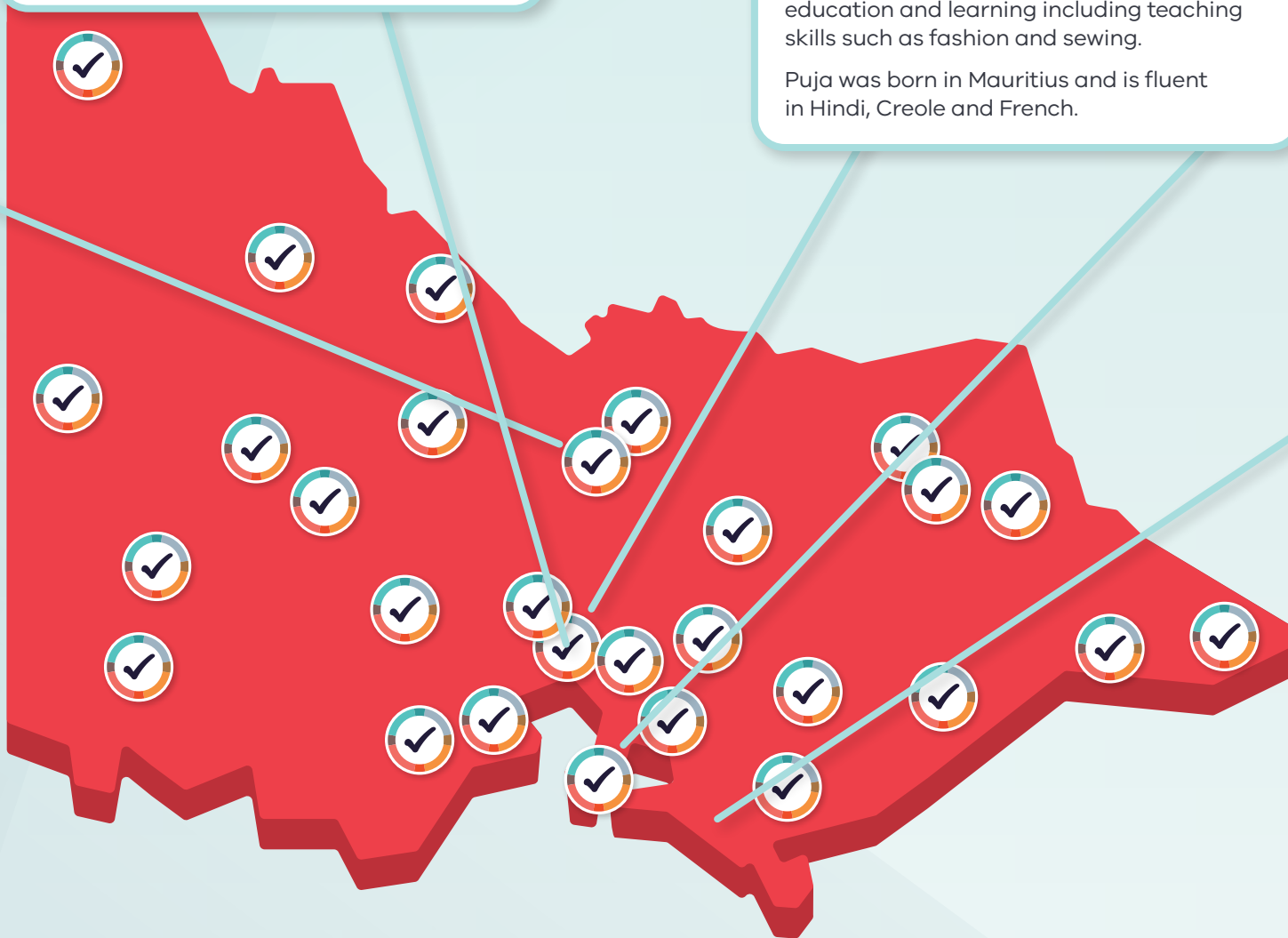


Registered Victorian disability support worker

Joanne is a 43-year-old disability support worker living and working in the Bass Coast Shire of Gippsland, south-east of Melbourne. She qualified for registration with a Certificate IV in Disability Support, Certificate IV in Education Support and a Certificate III in Community Services (Children's Services).

She has 10 years' experience as an education support officer at a specialist school, where she demonstrated her passion for the welfare of students, often going above and beyond to ensure their needs were met.

Joanne now works as a self-employed disability support worker and holds a current NDIS worker screening clearance. She has also undertaken training in Advanced Personal Care and Emergency Asthma Management.



Case studies

The following case studies show types of matters the Commission responded to in 2024–25. Pseudonyms are used and some details have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. The images are used for illustrative purposes only.



Case study

Acting to stop serious misconduct

Disability workers in Victoria must follow the Code of Conduct and not engage in practices that put a person with disability or the community at risk.

This example shows how the Commission can act where allegations of physical assault are made, and how we work with other regulators and authorities.

What happened

The Commission was told that Diane, an unregistered disability support worker, had physically assaulted Raveed, a man with an intellectual disability and complex physical needs. The incident happened during a personal care routine and was also reported to the police.

What we did

We worked with Victoria Police as they carried out their investigation. Diane was charged with unlawful assault and later pleaded guilty. While the police matter was underway, we made an Interim Prohibition Order to stop Diane from working as a disability support worker.

As part of our investigation, we gave Diane the chance to respond to the allegations about her conduct as a disability worker. She chose not to provide a statement. Based on all the available evidence, we found that Diane had breached the Code of Conduct and put Raveed's safety at risk.

Outcome

The Commissioner issued a permanent Prohibition Order, meaning Diane is no longer allowed to work in disability services in Victoria. This decision was published on our website, as required by law.

We met with Raveed and his family to explain what had happened. They told us they were relieved and grateful to know that strong action had been taken to protect their son and others in the community.

Case study

Supporting choice and independence

All people with disability have a right to be supported to realise their individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. They must be respected for their human worth and to be treated with dignity as individuals with choice and control.

This example highlights the importance of disability workers respecting and supporting the choices and decisions of individuals.

What happened

Hamish, a young man with autism, wanted to learn how to use the tram to travel to his local shops. He raised this with Sasha, his disability support worker, but she preferred to drive him instead. Although Hamish appreciated Sasha’s help overall, he felt unheard and contacted the Commission for support.

What we did

We spoke with Sasha to share Hamish’s concerns. Sasha admitted she hadn’t made a formal plan with Hamish about his goals and hadn’t realised how important tram travel was to him. We encouraged Sasha to listen to what Hamish wanted and to work with him on a plan that reflected his goals. This ensured that Sasha was providing disability support consistent with the Code of Conduct, respecting Hamish’s rights.

Outcome

Sasha apologised to Hamish and they worked together to create a support plan. Hamish was thrilled to see his tram goal written down and to know Sasha was now on board to help him build his independence.

Sasha also completed training on how to develop person-centred support plans. Sasha mapped out the steps for Hamish to enable him to work towards his goals. Hamish shared his new plan with us and said he was excited about learning new skills on his own terms.

Case study

Respecting professional boundaries

Under the Code of Conduct, disability workers must meet high standards of behaviour, be respectful and make sure people with disability receive services that are safe. This means having professional boundaries for relationships between disability workers and people with disability.

This case example shows what the Commission can do in response to allegations that a worker has not maintained professional boundaries.

What happened

Henry, who lives in supported accommodation and has Down syndrome, received care from Rosa, an unregistered disability support worker. Rosa often gave Henry a cuddle before bedtime during her overnight shifts. While Henry liked this and said it helped him sleep, her employer was concerned it crossed professional boundaries and notified the Commission.

What we did

We spoke with Rosa and reviewed the information provided by her and her employer. Rosa confirmed she had been giving Henry a cuddle before bed. She said she thought it was a comforting gesture that helped him feel safe.

We explained to Rosa that even though her intentions weren’t harmful, disability workers must maintain professional boundaries at all times to keep the relationship safe, respectful and clear. This protects both the worker and the person receiving support.

Outcome

Rosa agreed to complete extra training about professional boundaries and the Code of Conduct. She now has a better understanding of how to show care and support in ways that are safe and appropriate.

Henry’s service provider continues to support him to feel comfortable and settled at bedtime, while making sure his care always meets the highest standards. His family were reassured that the matter was taken seriously and handled with care.

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 and the importance of listening to these voices.

Accessibility statement

The Victorian Disability Worker Commission aims to make its information and publications accessible to all. This summary report has been designed in both a PDF and accessible Word format. If you require an alternative format, please email the [Commission](#).

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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