

2025–26 At a glance



Summary of the 2025–26 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. Kate Maddern is the Acting 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.



Kate Maddern
Acting Victorian
Disability Worker
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 (DSS 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:

- to be respected for their human worth and to be treated with dignity as individuals
- to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- to realise their individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development
- to exercise choice and control over their own lives
- to access information and communicate in a manner appropriate to their communication and cultural needs
- 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
- to choose disability workers with the values, skills and qualifications that meet their needs
- to access services which support their quality of life.

Year in review 2025–26

Responding to concerns about disability worker conduct

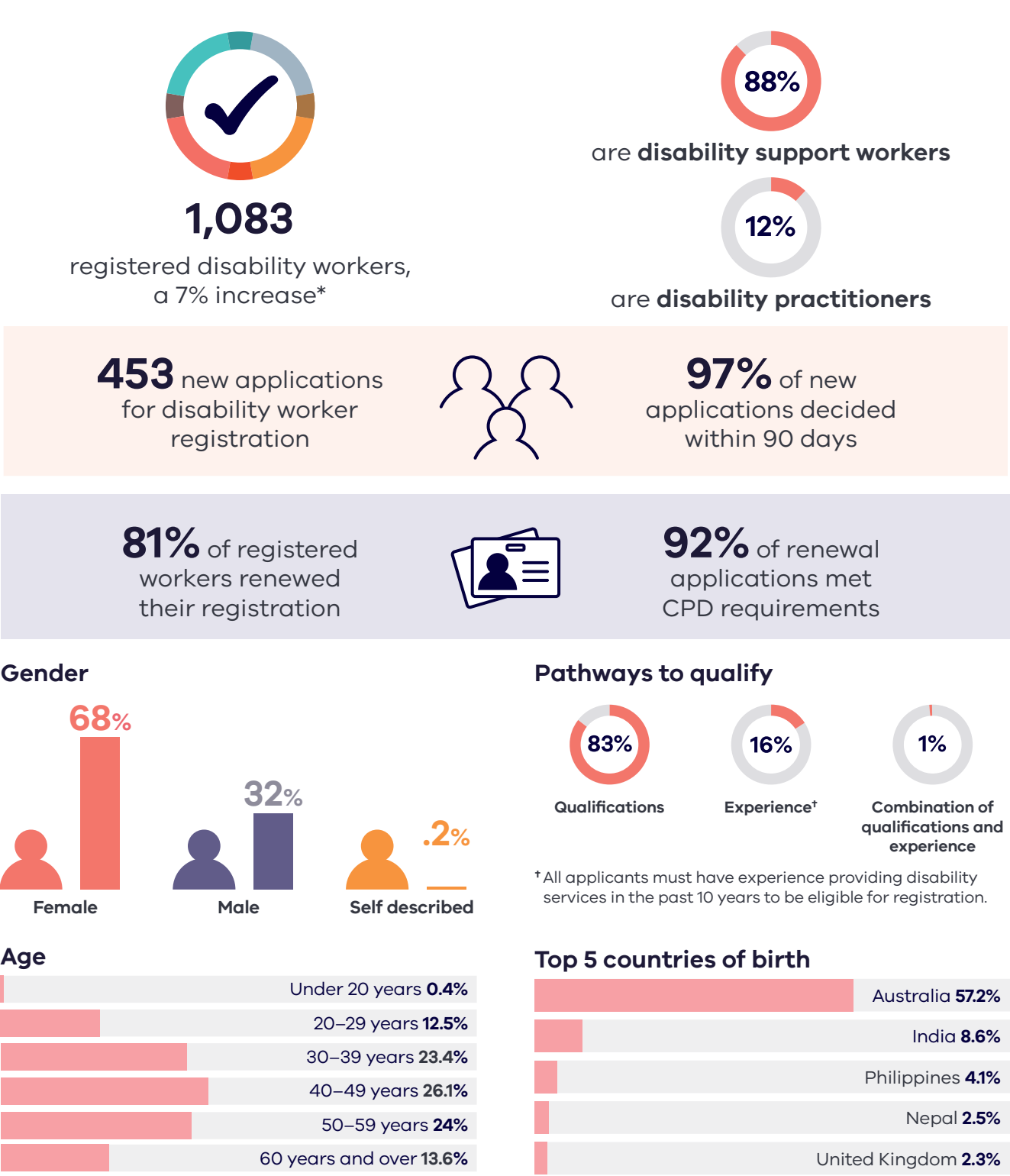


Investigations into worker conduct



[†]Includes some matters opened in 2024–25
*increase on previous year

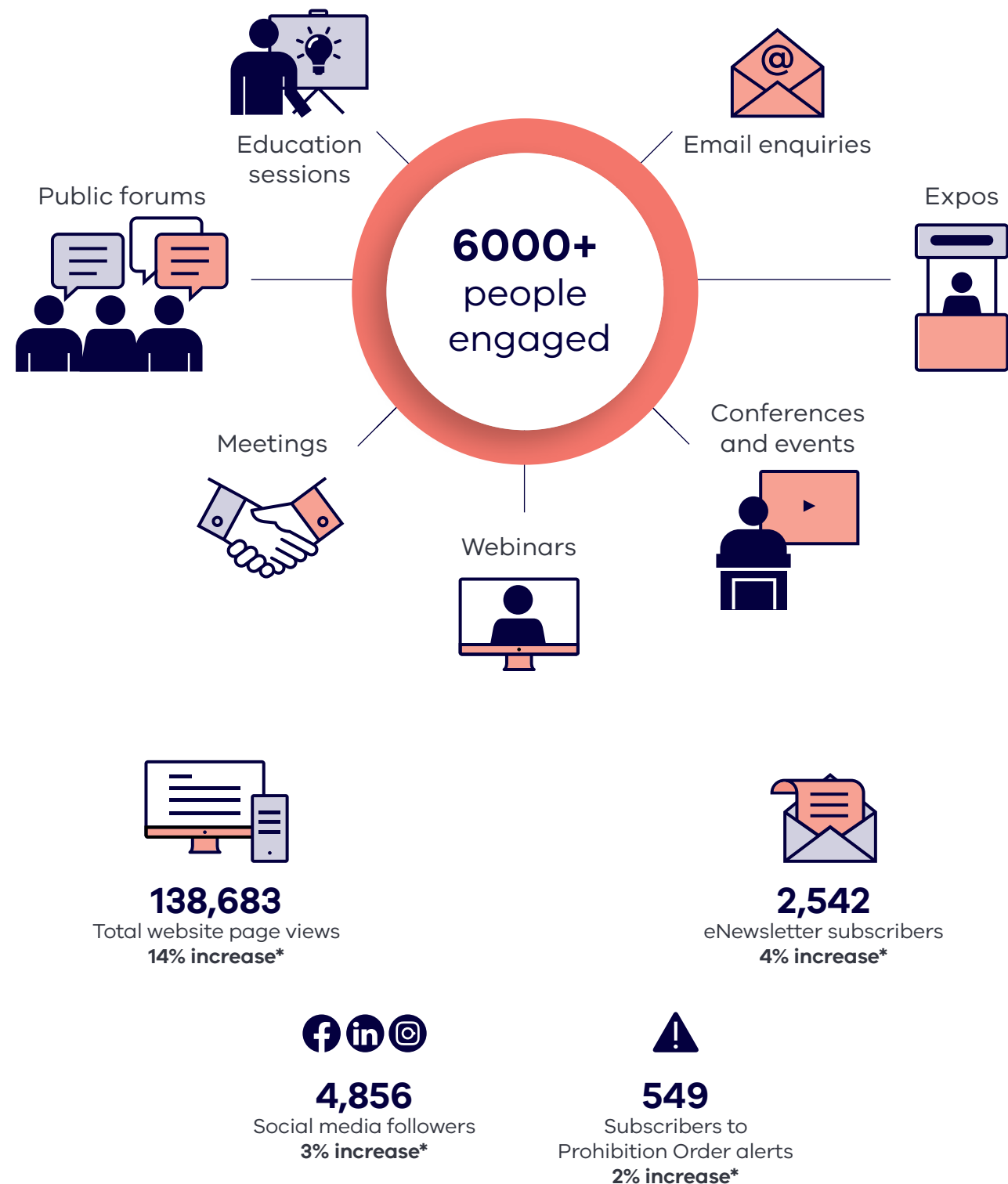
A high-quality workforce through disability worker registration



*increase on previous year

Year in review 2025–26

Awareness and education about disability worker regulation



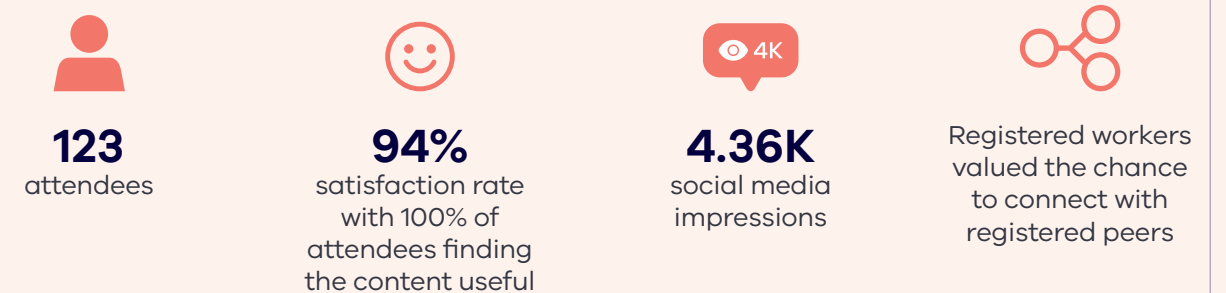
*increase on previous year

Improving disability worker capability to deliver safe, quality services

During the year, the Commission hosted key events to assist disability workers to provide quality support and promote compliance with registration standards and the Disability Service Safeguards (DSS) Code of Conduct.

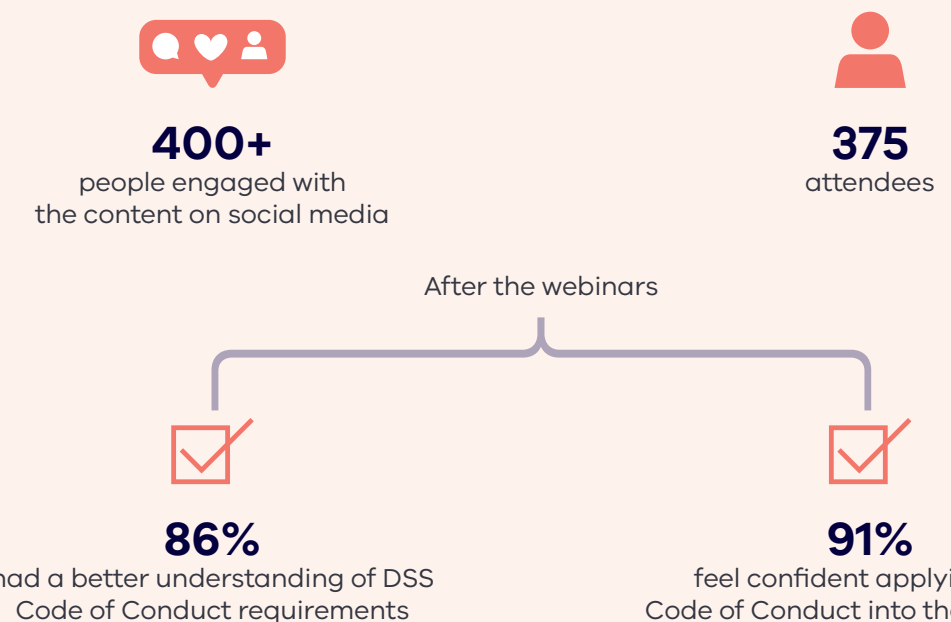
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) event for registered workers

An event providing specialised training to assist registered workers in complying with CPD requirements was held in March 2026.



Disability Service Safeguards Code of Conduct webinars for disability workers

A series of webinars on elements of the Code of Conduct were held in April, May and June 2026.



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.

By being a registered disability worker, these workers show they have met the Board's registration standards to deliver quality, safe services, providing confidence to people with disability and their families.

These worker's stories demonstrate the breadth and skill of disability work across the state, and the value of being a registered disability worker.

Mischa is a 65-year-old **registered disability support worker** from regional Victoria. He has a Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) and works at a Supported Independent Living provider.

What inspired you to become a disability worker?

I wanted a change of career and I liked the aspect of caring for individuals. Friends working in the disability sector suggested I would make a good disability worker.

What's your favourite part of the job?

Supporting participants by nurturing the individual, undertaking diverse tasks throughout the day, and working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

How does being a registered disability worker benefit you?

Having the opportunity for online training.

Salvatore is a 24-year-old **registered disability support worker** from north west Melbourne. He has experience as a Learning Support Officer and Education Support Officer, Physical Education teacher and is self-employed.

What inspired you to become a disability worker?

My inspiration came from teaching and personal experience with disability close to home. I saw kids excluded because of mainstream programs and I was inspired to make physical activity more accessible for kids who need it most.

What's your favourite part of the job?

Seeing a child realise they can do something they thought was out of reach, and watching their confidence grow. I love building strong relationships with families and hearing how much the sessions mean to their child.

How does being a registered disability worker benefit you?

It gives families confidence that I'm qualified, vetted, and committed to providing safe, professional support. It's helped me build trusted relationships with schools, allied health teams, support coordinators and families.

Di is a 56-year-old **registered disability support worker** from regional Victoria. She has a Certificate III in Individual Support and provides personal care, meal preparation, medication assistance and community access.

What inspired you to become a disability worker?

My inspiration comes from my lived experience as a parent of a child with autism. Supporting her showed me the importance of compassionate, reliable support, and inspired me to become the person individuals and families can depend on.

What's your favourite part of the job?

Building genuine relationships and seeing people gain confidence, independence, and achieve their goals. Knowing I've made a positive difference in someone's day, no matter how big or small, is incredibly rewarding.

How does being a registered disability worker benefit you?

Being registered demonstrates my commitment to providing safe, high-quality, person-centred support. It gives participants and their families confidence that I meet professional standards and allows me to support people who require services from a registered provider.

Chelsea is a 34-year-old **registered disability practitioner** from northern Victoria. She has a Master of Specialist Inclusive Education and experience as Disability Inclusion Leader and Student Inclusion Coordinator.

What inspired you to become a disability worker?

I'm passionate about supporting people with disability to improve their wellbeing, independence, and quality of life. My interest in neuro-affirming and trauma-informed support inspired me to work in the disability sector and advocate for respectful, person-centred care.

What's your favourite part of the job?

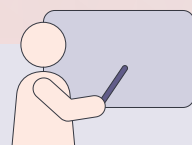
Building strong relationships and seeing small changes lead to greater confidence, independence and wellbeing. I enjoy working alongside families and support teams to create practical and compassionate solutions.

How does being a registered disability worker benefit you?

It's strengthened my professional knowledge, accountability and confidence in practice. Registration reinforces the importance of safe, ethical, and evidence-informed support within the sector.

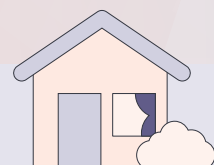


Types of work that disability workers do across Victoria



Schools

includes focused support from education support officers



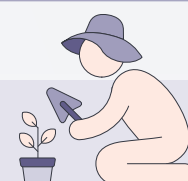
Home

includes preparing meals, household tasks, shopping, budgeting



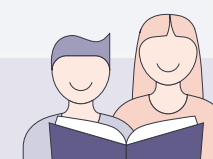
Personal care and medical

includes self care, self management and assisting with medical related matters



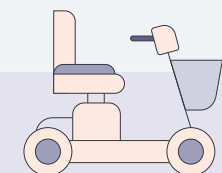
Community participation

includes recreational, learning and leisure activities



Learning

includes tutoring and training



Mobility

for example, training and instructions on how to use equipment

Case studies

The following case studies show types of matters the Commission responded to in 2025–26. 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

Disability workers protecting the privacy and dignity of clients

Under the DSS Code of Conduct, disability workers must demonstrate respect for the privacy and dignity of the person with disability who they are providing services for.

A majority of matters received by the Commission take place in in-home support settings, and respect for the privacy and dignity of people with disability is often a central theme, along with adhering to professional boundaries when providing disability supports. The DSS Code of Conduct and the Commission's rights-based approach to complaints aim to ensure disability workers deliver quality services in this setting.

This case study describes an example of the types of concerns that people bring to the Commission. It highlights the importance of safe, quality practice, and of disability workers obtaining clear and informed consent when delivering support services.

What happened

Trina, an unregistered disability worker provides disability supports to 15-year-old Adam in his home. Adam does not use speech to communicate and prefers to use an iPad to write messages and use pictures. His uncle Murray is his appointed guardian for decisions around health and daily supports.

Trina supports Adam to get ready in the morning by helping him with personal hygiene, choosing his clothes, making his bed and having breakfast, before Adam attends community participation programs.

Before Adam's morning bathroom routine, Trina asked Murray where the beard trimmer was located. She did not explain why she needed it.

During Adam's morning bathroom routine, Trina shaved Adam's head using the beard trimmer.

What we did

Murray contacted the Commission and explained his concerns, and how Adam showed he was upset by the incident using a picture of a person who was angry.

We spoke to Trina, who told the Commission that she shaved Adam's head because his hair was untidy and she believed that it would make Adam feel more comfortable and easier to look after.

We found the worker failed to follow Adam's personal support plan and had not appropriately communicated what she intended to do or gained consent from Adam or Murray.

We spoke to Trina about her obligations under the DSS Code of Conduct, including the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, respecting bodily autonomy and ensuring consent is informed, specific and clearly understood before undertaking intimate or personal care tasks.

Outcome

The Commission determined that Trina's conduct did not meet the expected professional standards under the DSS Code of Conduct.

We counselled Trina on her obligations to conduct her work with dignity and respect, appropriate consent practices and the importance of following support plans when delivering personal care.

Case study

Providing a connected safeguarding approach

The Commission acts to consider risks in disability worker conduct, irrespective of how the particular disability service is funded. This is particularly important when disability workers may support people with disability in receipt of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding, and those same workers may support people with disability who receive funding from state or private sources.

The Commission received a referral from the NDIS Commission about a Victorian disability worker who was subject to a banning order under the NDIS Act. The NDIS banning order meant the worker was banned from providing NDIS funded services.

The disability worker was employed to do an active night shift with the person with disability in their own home. The person with disability had a diagnosis of severe epilepsy and required hourly monitoring throughout the night.

During the night, the person with disability had a significant seizure and fell from their bed to the floor. The disability worker on shift was asleep, and did not check on the person with disability for over 4 hours. The person with disability required emergency health treatment and had sustained a significant fracture.

The Commission conducted an investigation into the worker's conduct. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Commissioner made a permanent Prohibition Order, stopping the disability worker from providing any form of disability support service in Victoria. This action occurred alongside that of other regulators: the NDIS Commission, WorkSafe Victoria as well as action by the employer. This outcome ensures greater safety for people with disability across Victoria as the worker can no longer deliver disability services outside of the NDIS.

Case study

Working cooperatively to address risk

The Commission worked with the Social Services Regulator (SSR) to address poor practice and conduct concerns at a supported residential service.

The SSR had been conducting site visits at a supported residential service as part of compliance monitoring. The SSR investigated the service provider for compliance with the Social Services Standards and issued the provider with improvement notices. The SSR also referred concerns about conduct of an individual disability worker to the Commission.

The Commission investigated the disability worker's alleged conduct and found the worker had not complied with their obligations to provide safe, quality services under the Code of Conduct. The disability worker was formally counselled on their obligation to comply with the Code.

The Commission and the SSR worked to address the issue of concern in their regulatory remit and through sharing key information, were able to secure safe social and disability services in the community.



Commission prosecutes disability worker for breach of Interim Prohibition Order

The Commission issues Interim Prohibition Orders (IPOs) when the conduct of a disability worker is posing a serious risk to the life, health, safety or welfare of a person or the health, safety or welfare of the public.

In 2025–26, the Commission undertook its first prosecution under the DSS Act after an unregistered disability worker continued to provide disability services in breach of an IPO.

This action demonstrates that the Commission will take action when workers fail to comply with the law.

The IPO had been imposed to address immediate risk to the safety and wellbeing of a person with disability while the Commission progressed an investigation. Despite the order being in effect, information received indicated the worker had continued to provide disability supports.

The Commission commenced enquiries to determine whether the worker had breached the IPO. Investigators gathered and analysed documentary and physical evidence, obtained witness accounts and conducted interviews with relevant parties. During the investigation the disability worker acknowledged they had continued to work as a disability worker while the IPO remained in force.

The Commission commenced a prosecution under the DSS Act for failing to comply with an IPO.

The disability worker pleaded guilty in the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria to breaching the IPO. The Court recorded a criminal conviction against the disability worker and the worker was ordered to pay a fine of \$15,000.

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.

Acknowledgement of lived experience

We acknowledge people with disability and disability workers whose lived and professional expertise informs our work. We recognise the time, knowledge and experiences they contribute to strengthening disability services, safeguards and worker practice across Victoria.

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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