

7.2.1 SUBMISSION TO STATE DISABILITY PLAN AND AUTISM PLAN 2027–2031

Responsible Manager:	Fee Harrison, Manager Community Strengthening
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RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses Attachment 1 ‘Monash Council – Submission to the Disability Plan and the Victorian Autism Plan 2027- 2031’ for submission to the Victorian Government public consultation.

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Government is developing the next State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plan (2027-2031) and is seeking feedback on priorities for inclusion in both these plans.

This feedback will help shape both plans to meet the needs, rights and goals of people with disability for more information visit: [State Disability Plan and the Victorian Autism Plan 2027 – 2031 | Engage Victoria](#)

It is proposed that Monash Council make a submission into this consultation which reflects feedback from multiple departments across Council, community members, and networks including Council’s Disability Advisory Committee and Pathways for Carers group. This feedback prioritises collecting our community’s diverse perspectives and includes evidenced considerations as feedback to the consultation.

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A healthy, safe and connected community

A community where all people have the opportunity to experience enhanced levels of social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government is developing the next State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plan. As part of this process, the Victorian Government is undertaking public consultation and seeking feedback from people with disability, autistic people, families, carers and advocates, community organisations as well as local government.

The purpose of the State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plans are to:

- Improve the lives of people with disability
- Make Victoria more inclusive.

The feedback engagement paper explains the objectives of the State Disability Plan and the Victorian Autism Plan and highlights that as Victorians we all -

- have the same rights
- want access to the same opportunities; and

- share many common goals for our lives.

The engagement paper and subsequent plans acknowledge the societal and systemic barriers to full participation in community life for people with disability and autism and propose priority pillars to address these barriers. The state disability plan groups priorities and actions under four pillars or outcome areas:

1. Inclusive communities
2. Health, housing and wellbeing
3. Fairness and safety
4. Opportunity and disability pride.

Monash Council has a long history of working towards improving equity, diversity and inclusion and supporting people with a disability, children, families and carers. As the tier of government closest to the community, we have an important role in advocacy, particularly in elevating the voices of our community and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing on the State Disability Plan & Victorian Autism Plan 2027–2031.

DISCUSSION

Monash Council plays a key local role in disability services by promoting inclusion, ensuring accessible spaces and infrastructure, and connecting residents with information, programs and supports. Council advocates for the needs of people with disability, works with service providers and community networks, and supports participation in civic, cultural and social life. We are a critical connector, enabler and advocate for the 12% of Monash residents who are carers and 5.8% in Monash who report needing help in their day to day lives (ABS, cited in Profile.id 2021).

Officers have consulted with our community groups and networks to contribute to this submission including Council’s Disability Advisory Committee and Pathways for Carers Group. Officers have also utilised existing data collected from community feedback through the Monash Health & Wellbeing Plan and local service providers and recommend that the 2027–2031 plans:

- Include clear, measurable outcome targets (not just actions)
- Establish independent monitoring and public reporting
- Measure success based on lived experience indicators such as employment participation rates, housing stability, service accessibility and wait times

Below is a summary of the recommendations outlined in the submission.

Number	Recommendation
1	Establish guaranteed foundational supports and provide access to services regardless of NDIS eligibility.

2	Improve service navigation, create simpler, more coordinated entry points across housing, health and disability systems, including reducing gaps between NDIS and state-funded supports. Provide advocacy and support for navigating systems.
3	Fund local governments to better support community organisations to make local places, events, and services more inclusive and embodying inclusive Universal Design Principles. This should include a strong focus on sensory accessibility and autism-inclusive design in public spaces and community services such as Access Keys and Social Stories. Monitor and report on service access outcomes.
4	Ensure services are accessible, inclusive, and culturally appropriate Reduce wait times, set maximum wait time targets.
5	Set clear housing targets for accessible and affordable housing, including specific targets for people with disability. Embed universal design and mandatory accessibility in all new housing and developments.
6	Address systemic barriers to ensure equitable access and full participation in community life.
7	Expand supported housing options and flexible living models to suit individual needs.
8	Set measurable disability employment targets across Victoria, including within the Victorian public service.
9	Make inclusive recruitment and workplace adjustments standard practice, supported by incentives and compliance measures.
10	Strengthen pathways and long-term supports by expanding open employment opportunities, funding job retention, and targeting support to priority cohorts.

The full details of the recommendations including the rationale are attached to Council’s draft submission. Through the submission, Council can both amplify the voices of our community and consider ways Council can address barriers identified in the submission and continue to advocate for systemic reform.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are currently no financial implications.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The submission is consistent with Council’s Monash Health & Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, particularly under Pillar 5: *Promoting and Supporting a Fair and Inclusive Community*.

CONSULTATION

In preparing this submission, consultation was undertaken internally with multiple departments across Monash Council, community members, and Council’s Disability Advisory Committee and

Pathways for Carers Group. Those consulted assisted in identifying barriers impacting people with disabilities across the four identified pillars.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our commitment to access and inclusion helps us to meet our obligations and commitments, including but not limited to those under the *Disability Act 2006*, *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025- 2029, and LGBTIQ+ Action Plan. Council recognises the intersecting differences in experiences of accessing care, services and activities for full participation in community life and believes it is of vital importance that as a community we work towards improvement.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed submission does not limit, restrict or interfere with an identified human right. To the contrary, the aim of the submission is to advocate for a more inclusive community for people with disabilities.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A GIA was not completed because this agenda item is not a 'policy', program' or 'service'.

CONCLUSION

Monash Council has prepared a submission for the State Disability Plan & Victorian Autism Plan 2027–2031. Council has an important role in advocacy, particularly in elevating the voices of our community and welcoming the opportunity to provide feedback. This submission includes clear barriers to accessing support, services and other parts of community life and is based on lived experience of our community and contains a list of recommendations for Council and others to consider in the development of the new State Plans. It is recommended that Council endorse Attachment 1 which will then be submitted to the Victorian Government for consideration.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. FINAL DRAFT State Disability Plan and Autism Plan 2027 2031 [7.2.1.1 - 14 pages]



Submission to the Victorian Government State Disability Plan & Victorian Autism Plan 2027–2031

Prepared by City of Monash

Date: May 2026

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Introduction

The City of Monash welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing on the State Disability Plan & Victorian Autism Plan 2027–2031.

Monash Council has a long history of working towards improving equity, diversity and inclusion and supporting people with a disability, children, families and carers. As the tier of government closest to the community, we have an important role in advocacy, particularly in elevating the voices of our community.

Our commitment to access and inclusion helps us to meet our obligations and commitments, including but not limited to those under the *Disability Act 2006*, *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Council Plan 2025-2029, Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025- 2029 and LGBTIQ+ Action Plan. Council recognises the intersecting differences in experiences of accessing care, and services for full participation in community life and believes it is of vital importance that as a community we work towards improvement.

The Municipality of Monash City Council

The Monash Community Vision is to be the most liveable city in Victoria by 2040 (Monash Council, 2025). The role of local government has expanded over time to include a strong focus on community care, health, and welfare services, all of which contribute to achieving this vision.

As local government, we play an important local role in disability service provision by promoting access and inclusion across community life, planning and ensuring accessible community facilities, public spaces, libraries, recreation services, footpaths, parks and local infrastructure. Council also assists residents to connect with information, community programs and local supports. Council advocates for the needs of people with disability, works with service providers and community networks, and supports participation in civic, cultural and social life. We are a critical connector, enabler and advocate for the 12% of Monash residents who are carers and 5.8% in Monash who report needing help in their day to day lives (ABS, cited in Profile.id 2021).

Council achieves this through its Monash Grants and Partnerships program, a number of which directly benefit people with disabilities. This commitment is further reflected structurally through a dedicated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team, which includes a specific Access and Inclusion portfolio. The Access and Inclusion portfolio is responsible for supporting Council and community to improve access for people with disabilities and their carers in all parts of community life. This portfolio also coordinates Monash’s Disability Advisory Committee, and is a conduit for strong connections with local social enterprises, education settings, local business, health services and community based setting such as neighbourhood houses. Monash council has a broad range of service provision from Early Childhood Services through to Age Care Services and runs a number of disability support programs and inclusive initiatives, all assisting Councils informed approach to advocating for people with disabilities.

As community diversity, equity and inclusion professionals, and as a local government, we have consulted with our community groups and networks to contribute to this submission.

This submission reflects feedback from multiple departments across Monash Council, community members, and networks, including our Pathways for Carers group and Disability Advisory Committee to reflect our community’s diverse perspectives and ensure evidenced considerations in providing feedback to the inquiry.



Response to the Plan

Pillar 1: Inclusive communities

There is a greater understanding across all levels of government, community services and organisations and community that inclusion is everyone's responsibility. There is better understanding of disability rights, more community consultation, and better access in some local places and programs. People understand that accessibility and inclusion are shared responsibilities and people with disabilities are being actively consulted and involved in codesign.

Barriers to inclusive communities

People with disabilities can and often experience barriers to community life through infrastructure design. Without early consideration and implementation of Universal Design principles, new and existing infrastructure and built environments create a significant barrier not only for community with disability, but also for carers, increasing the likelihood of social isolation, reduced sense of place and disconnect from community.

The Access and Inclusion portfolio at Monash Council responds directly to access concerns within the municipality. The Monash community often cite building design, signage, communication of access information, noise and lights, crowds, as barriers to accessing libraries, community events and new buildings and environments. These barriers affect not only those with physical disabilities but also people with sensory sensitivities, cognitive disabilities, psychosocial disability, and neurodivergent conditions such as autism.

"As a neurodivergent person it is so welcoming when someone offers alternative ways of communication, being able to apply to the committee over the phone and not just via all the application forms made all the difference" – member of the Disability Advisory Committee

Moving beyond minimum compliance in design, communication, and planning requires consideration of real access needs from the outset of all policies, projects, programs, service delivery, and funding decisions. Universal design principles should be embedded in new buildings, open spaces, transport links, and digital services. Early integration of these principles not only improves usability for people with disability but also reduces costs associated with retrofitting and reactive accessibility modifications. With the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2019) reporting significantly lower employment rates among people with disability (48%) compared to those without disability (80%), it is imperative that the Victorian Government and relevant authorities further communicates and mandates the early implementation of Universal Design Principles to lessen barriers to actively participating in community, with cost compounding the impact of other intersecting systems of discrimination that impact people with disabilities and their carers.

Carers are also likely to experience barriers to participation in social and community life activities when attending with the main recipient of their care. Together, these factors limit equitable participation for people with disabilities and carers in community life.

These impacts are greater for people facing intersecting disadvantage, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In Monash, where more than 50% of residents were born overseas, unfamiliar systems and



infrastructure, hard-to-read signage, and the cost of participation can increase the risk of social isolation and loneliness for people with autism and other disabilities (Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW, 2024). To reduce these barriers, inclusive planning and the application of Universal Design Principles must reflect the community's diverse and intersecting needs to support equitable participation for all.

Recommendation for the next state disability and next autism plan

The next state Disability Action Plan and Autism Plan should clearly describe what an inclusive community looks like and how government will make it real. It should be mandated that Universal Design Principles are considered early and accessibility goals for public spaces, buildings, transport links and community infrastructure, and accessible communication made standard across government.

The plans should give local governments funding to better support community organisations to make local places, events, and services more inclusive and embodying inclusive Universal Design Principles. This should include a strong focus on sensory accessibility and autism-inclusive design in public spaces and community services such as Access Keys and Social Stories. The City of Monash has already shown how helpful this can be through initiatives such as Sensory Swim sessions at our aquatic centres and Sensory Santa at our libraries for Christmas which create more welcoming and accessible experiences for autistic people and their families. With the right funding, local councils could build on programs like these and help more organisations create inclusive spaces that meet the needs of their whole community. For example, Active Monash is one of the only aquatic centres that provide one-on-one swim sessions for people with a disability at the same price as group sessions. This makes a huge impact to the lives of participants and their families to learn basic swim skills given the high rates of drowning particularly for autistic children. However, financial support from the State Government is required to ensure these programs can continue.

The plans must also work for diverse communities, including people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, First Nations communities, women, children and young people, and people who are not eligible for the NDIS.

"Its so important for our first nations students to take part in community" - local specialist setting teacher at Councils Reconciliation Week Event

Pillar 2: Health, housing and wellbeing

Monash Council recognises that full participation in community life requires a well-rounded, coordinated approach across services. The Monash Community are cited as using support from a mix of services, including health services, community organisations and social housing providers with "wraparound services" like mental health, clinical care and disability support, which help people manage navigate other health care needs and housing (City of Monash 2020).

"In our work, we frequently observe financial barriers that families face in trying to obtain a formal diagnosis. Additionally, limited knowledge and understanding of neurodivergence among school staff and parents can further hinder both diagnosis and access to appropriate services. The absence of a formal diagnosis, or situations where young people fall between service eligibility gaps can also create significant



barriers to accessing specialist and NDIS-supported services, where a diagnosis is often required for eligibility.” -Local Youth Services Provider

Social Housing

Barriers to suitable housing

People with disability face significant and substantial additional barriers to accessing safe and affordable housing and are disproportionately represented in homelessness and social housing statistics.

Ensure social housing is accessible and providing greater opportunity to people with disability on where they live and who they live with is critical to ensuring that people well-connected and supported. It is well reference in Public Health the challenges of not only securing housing but also social housing being developed in areas that can come the cost of increased social isolation and reduced wellbeing. Often, social housing is implemented in areas with no accessible transport, limited NDIS providers, or reduced access to healthcare.

“[...] being a carer is so lonely, especially after your child leaves school, that’s why it’s so important to have groups like this”- Pathways for Carers Participant

Monash Council has identified through the Pathway for Carers Program that people with disability often face challenges in forming social connections. Carers, both paid and unpaid also experience significant barriers to social connection, particularly within already time-limited and, at times, emotionally demanding environments.

These challenges can be further compounded when social housing is located away from established social networks, familiar supports, and culturally appropriate services. In these circumstances, opportunities to build and maintain social connection are significantly reduced, which can disrupt relationships, limit access to support, and impact continuity of care.

Among the City of Monash’s network, we hear on a regular basis the concern around the limited access to affordable and social housing. The housing market is acknowledged to be competitive however for those with disabilities, the long waiting lists across and difficulties navigating services and systems present as a significant challenge.

Increasing the supply of affordable and accessible housing with clearer pathways to services and better integration across systems and measurable targets for accessible and affordable housing and Service gaps for those not eligible for the NDIS.

“I am scared of losing my accommodation as it took me so long to find this place and if I found a place that is accessible, I can’t compete with everyone else” – Monash Community member



Recommendation for the next state disability plan and autism plan

The next state disability plan and autism plan should align housing, health, and disability services and reduce gaps between NDIS and state-funded housing supports, it should include clear housing targets, more accessible and affordable homes. It should fund service navigators; to ensure people with disability and carers are supported to navigate a very complex housing system. Additionally, more consideration needs to be made to ensure that new social housing is in areas that support connection, participation, and access to essential services. This includes proximity to accessible public transport, healthcare, community infrastructure, and a sufficient supply of disability and NDIS providers. Location decisions should also be provided to people with disabilities and those in the caring industry for improved access to social networks, culturally appropriate services, and opportunities for daily participation such as employment, education, and recreation. Without these connections, housing can inadvertently contribute to isolation, reduce independence, and disrupt continuity of care.

Healthcare

Barriers to suitable healthcare

People with disabilities and carers need easier access to services. Monash networks and Monash’s Children Youth & Family Services team, such as Preschool Field Officer’s, Maternal and Child Health Services and Youth Services often report long wait times, and that supports and services are not-person centred.

“A faster and more accessible diagnosis is important but it’s also reducing the cost as for an ASD diagnosis. We were \$3,500 out of pocket after Medicare.”- Parent of a person with a disability

Faster and more accessible diagnosis is critical, not only for earlier support but also to reduce financial barriers. Currently, an autism assessment can cost up to \$3,500 out of pocket, making timely diagnosis out of reach for many individuals and families.

Wait times are longer for those that require specialised and gender-specific care due to gendered safety concerns and for cultural reasons.

The current health care system for people with disabilities do not take an intersectional approach, meaning the overlapping identities and experiences of an individual is not considered when designing health care systems and services. Monash Council acknowledge that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are less likely to receive early intervention or specialist support. People with autism who also experience cultural, linguistic, geographic, or socioeconomic disadvantage often face additional barriers to diagnosis and support.

“I’m broken, the paperwork for the NDIS is killing me, I can’t keep up. I couldn’t wait any longer I had to pay to get my son assessed, I am still paying my credit card off. I have money for supports but can’t find supports to take my son because of his behaviour”- Pathways for Carers participant

Positive experiences when accessing services are essential in enabling full social and economic participation of people with disability. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2024), one in six people (17%) with disability reported that they believe they would have been treated better by service workers if they did



not have a disability. This highlights the increased likelihood of discrimination within healthcare settings. These experiences are often intensified for individuals with intersecting identities such as those related to culture, language, gender, or socioeconomic status who may face more frequent and more severe forms of systemic discrimination.

Recommendation for the next state disability plan and autism plan

The next plans should provide lifelong autism support, along with faster, more timely and affordable diagnosis. This includes expanding access to adult services and improving and streamlining pathways to early intervention through integrated service delivery. Strong, state-funded supports should also be available and easy to access, regardless of NDIS eligibility. Together, these changes would help ensure people receive consistent, appropriate, and equitable support throughout their lives.

Pillar 3: Fairness and safety

While there has been progress in ensuring people with a disability are provided family violence services that are, safe, accessible and responsive, 16% of people with a disability still experience discrimination and are at an enhanced risk of family violence and sexual violence (AIHW 2024). The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023) found widespread violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and made 222 recommendations for reform.

Many residents of Monash Council report disability advocacy services and complaint handling systems hard to navigate, hard to trust, or hard to get support. In turn, many cases of abuse go undetected.

Safety and fairness experiences

Monash Council has a long history and strong commitment to enhancing safety of our community and preventing gendered violence. Monash Council dedicates significant resources to enhance feelings of safety and fairness. Council works towards developing relationships among community groups, connecting community to relevant services, enhancing accessible information, and having a dedicated access and inclusion portfolio for community to connect with concerns and queries. This portfolio is responsible for advocating and supporting our community who are carers and who have a disability. Council have committed these resources to the community as it is well established knowledge that people are more likely to feel safe and treated fairly when they have trusted relationships, responsive services, and someone who can advocate on their behalf. These factors combined mean that carers and people with a disability in the Monash municipality feel a strong sense of safety and justice when engaging with Monash Council and connecting to referred services through the access and inclusion portfolio.

However, evidence from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2021) shows that disability remains a leading ground for discrimination complaints across Victoria, highlighting the need for further investment in systems that are safe, inclusive, and respectful. Fair treatment should be consistent and not dependent on where a person goes or who they interact with.

Monash Council, through our advisory committees and pathways for carers program have received feedback of state level systems of reporting that cite indicate that the pathways to reporting could be simpler, more accessible and better known.



People also need independent advocacy, interpreters, communication support and confidence that they will be taken seriously. The Disability Royal Commission and Victorian advocacy services both show that many people need support to understand their options, challenge poor treatment and stay safe. Speaking up is much harder when information is confusing, systems are fragmented, or people fear negative consequences.

Recommendations for the next state disability plan and autism plan

The next plans should prioritise consistent, timely, and affordable access to support, with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention. This includes strengthening safeguards and increasing access to independent advocacy so people with disability and carers can understand their rights, navigate systems, and safely raise concerns.

Complaint pathways must be simple, accessible, and well-known, supported by culturally safe practices, interpreters, and inclusive communication. Clear accountability across services is essential to prevent harm, alongside improved workforce capability and trauma informed, autism inclusive approaches.

Further investment should be made into the primary prevention of family violence and those organisations that research and advocate for prevent of violence against people with disabilities. Success should be measured by whether people feel safer, respected, and able to exercise their rights consistently across all services.

Pillar 4: Opportunity and disability pride

There is stronger recognition that people with disability should have the same opportunities as everyone else to learn, work, contribute and belong. Some employers and education providers are improving access through flexible work and study options, workplace adjustments, accessible communication and a better understanding of neurodiversity and disability inclusion. Community based supports outside the NDIS are becoming more inclusive and accessible.

What needs to change

There is a gap between policy intent and everyday experience. Monash Council acknowledges that our community still experience inaccessible employment systems, low employment opportunities that are disability inclusive, long waits for reasonable adjustment and supports in workplaces and educational institutes. Additionally, Monash Council are aware of and are working towards stronger pathways between education to fair paid employment. Community services and supports must be easier to find, easier to access and available to people who are not eligible for the NDIS.

“It’s hard for anyone to get a job and keep it these days, it’s even harder for me” – Person with Acquired Brain Injury

By creating better opportunities for people both within and outside the NDIS, where disability status is often narrowly defined, it shifts the focus away from disability being seen as an individual limitation. Instead, it reinforces



that barriers to participation arise from systems and environments that fail to embed accessibility and inclusion. In this way, disability is understood not as a problem of the individual, but as a reflection of societal and structural shortcomings.

Ableism, stigma and negative assumptions get in the way of disability pride. People are less likely to feel proud when they are excluded, underestimated or made to feel like a burden. Greater opportunities and shifting from the medical model to disability social model thinking ignites strong systemic change required to strengthen disability pride. Systemic change leads to greater opportunity. Seeing people with disabilities in leadership, employment, public life and community decision-making helps challenge stereotypes and creates a stronger sense of belonging, identity and possibility. Inclusive and accessible community services, strong peer support, advocacy, carers, genuine flexible workplaces, accessible education settings and welcoming local spaces all work towards fostering a greater sense of disability pride and a sense of belonging and inclusion. This supports more inclusive communities and greater opportunities for participation in everyday life.

I love having my voice heard and having a say, its important – Previous member of Disability Advisory Committee. I'm going to be a Mayor one day” – Student participant of a leadership program

Barriers to accessing education, work, economic opportunities, and community participation

People with disabilities continue to face barriers, physical and non-physical, across the full pathway to economic participation. From educational settings to employment, it is well acknowledged that career and sense of purpose of an individual can be impacted with a lack of accessible classrooms and training environments, and limited career opportunity and guidance. Often, community report feeling low employer confidence, discrimination in recruitment, and experience inadequate workplace adjustments and transport barriers. Many people are channelled into insecure, low-paid or segregated work rather than fair paid employment in open and inclusive settings.

People do not just experience their education and employment in isolation to the broader systems they interact with. Experiences in educational and workplace setting are often carried into community and recreational settings. These setting can often present additional barriers to participation such as; inaccessible buildings and public spaces, poor transport connections, cost of activities, lack of accessible information, limited support workers or community supports, and programs that are not designed with disability inclusion in mind. People can also be excluded by attitudes, lack of cultural safety, limited communication access and sensory environments that are overwhelming or unpredictable. When community services and supports are fragmented or hard to navigate, people may miss out on social connection, volunteering, recreation, civic participation and everyday belonging.

These experiences are known to impact an individual and communities' aspirations and a sense of pride. All inaccessible systems and settings that generate a sense of exclusion is known to impact on an individual's study, employment relationships and personal goals and aspirations. Opportunity depends on having the practical conditions that make aspiration possible.

Through the Integrated Practical Placement Program at Active Monash, providing young people with a range of intellectual disabilities and/or cognitive impairments the opportunity to have meaningful workplace experiences, we have seen not only a confidence growth in the participants technical skill, but connection to others, sense of pride and achievement and individual growth outside of the workplace too. With over 20 students participating in



the Holmesglen Integrated Practical Placement program over the last 5 years, we have seen a 100% graduation rate, as well as approximately 85% of students gain secure and meaningful employment at the end of the studies - both inside Monash and out.

"I love my job and I am very good at it" – Supported employment participant

Recommendation for the next state disability plan and autism plan

The next plans should make education and employment opportunities practical, measurable and accountable. They should include clear targets for fair paid employment, stronger transition pathways from education to work, public reporting on disability employment outcomes, and incentives and accountability for inclusive hiring and workplace adjustment practices. They should commit to strong community services and supports, including foundational supports for people outside the NDIS, local navigation, peer support, advocacy and inclusive community participation programs. The plans should encourage and support schools, tertiary education settings, the employment sector and disability support providers to work together and have strong transition programs in place for students exiting education settings.

Systemic reforms

Monash Council has a strong position that disability inclusion must be embedded within mainstream systems. There is growing recognition that accessible community infrastructure, inclusive communication, and local partnerships must be considered as standard and mainstream practice, rather than an additional response. When healthcare, housing, and community services are designed in an integrated way and accessibility embedded on all system levels, this can have a collective impact on participation and wellbeing. Embedding accessibility and inclusion across these systems is essential to ensure people with disability can participate fully in community life.

Barriers to accessing government services and systems

The most significant barriers are system complexity, inconsistency, and poor coordination. People are often required to navigate multiple systems with different eligibility criteria and entry points, particularly when seeking support across community participation, healthcare, housing, education, and employment. Services can be difficult to find, understand, and access—especially for those not eligible for the NDIS or whose needs fall between systems.

Navigating the NDIS itself can also be challenging. Families are often required to emphasise deficits rather than strengths to secure funding, and those with stronger advocacy skills or support networks are more likely to achieve better outcomes. This creates inequitable access to supports for children, families, and individuals. This concern has been reflected and recoded among the Monash community in light of the Thriving Kids program. The upcoming NDIS changes and the transition to the Thriving Kids program has generated an amounting level of concern, especially in our educational settings.

For many young people and their families, this transition is creating significant uncertainty around future eligibility, continuity of supports, how individual needs will be assessed and addressed, and the availability of appropriate



post-school pathways and support options for students transitioning into adulthood. This uncertainty is already having a tangible impact on Monash residents, with many families experiencing increased stress and anxiety as they attempt to plan ahead, advocate for their children's future support needs, and navigate decisions relating to education, community participation, and post-school opportunities. Specialist Schools across Monash are also experiencing heightened concern among students, families, and staff regarding how these changes may affect access to essential supports, transition programs, and post-school services that many young people rely upon to participate fully in education, employment pathways, and community life.

Without change, people will continue to face uncertainty, stress, and unequal access to support. Addressing these systemic barriers is essential to ensure equitable access and full participation in community life.

Recommendations for the next state disability plan and autism plan

The next State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plan should make the system easier to understand and easier to use. This means creating simpler, more connected services, funding supports for people outside the NDIS, making accessibility a standard part of all government services, and making sure people with disability, autistic people and carers help design and guide the changes. The plans should also include clear targets and public reporting so government can be held accountable for real improvement.



Overarching Themes

Based on feedback from our community, including members of our Disability Advisory Committee, Pathways for Carers group and data collected from community feedback, Monash Health Plan and local service providers, we recommend that the 2027–2031 plans:

- Include clear, measurable outcome targets (not just actions)
- Establish independent monitoring and public reporting
- Measure success based on lived experience indicators such as employment participation rates, housing stability, service accessibility and wait times

Recommendations Section

Number	Recommendation
1	Establish guaranteed foundational supports and provide access to services regardless of NDIS eligibility.
2	Improve service navigation, create simpler, more coordinated entry points across housing, health and disability systems, including reducing gaps between NDIS and state-funded supports. Provide advocacy and support for navigating systems.
3	Fund local governments to better support community organisations to make local places, events, and services more inclusive and embodying inclusive Universal Design Principles. This should include a strong focus on sensory accessibility and autism-inclusive design in public spaces and community services such as Access Keys and Social Stories. Monitor and report on service access outcomes.
4	Ensure services are accessible, inclusive, and culturally appropriate Reduce wait times, set maximum wait time targets.
5	Set clear housing targets for accessible and affordable housing, including specific targets for people with disability. Embed universal design and mandatory accessibility in all new housing and developments.
6	Address systemic barriers to ensure equitable access and full participation in community life.
7	Expand supported housing options and flexible living models to suit individual needs.
8	Set measurable disability employment targets across Victoria, including within the Victorian public service.
9	Make inclusive recruitment and workplace adjustments standard practice, supported by incentives and compliance measures.
10	Strengthen pathways and long-term supports by expanding open employment opportunities, funding job retention, and targeting support to priority cohorts.



Conclusion

In the development of the plan the City of Monash strongly encourages co-design with a broad representation of people with disabilities at all stages of policy development. Ensuring people with disability are paid for their expertise.

People with disability in the City of Monash continue to face significant barriers to employment, housing, and community participation. Barriers are not just physical but are attitudinal, lack of accessible communication/digital exclusion, and sensory awareness.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

- Invest in sustainable systems beyond the NDIS
- Prioritise employment, housing, community support and access
- Ensure genuine co-design and accountability



References

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