

To: The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission

How to deliver the outcomes of the National Disability Strategy (NDS)

This submission is being made by the ten members of the volunteer All Abilities Consultative Committee (AACC) of the Mornington Peninsula Shire. One in four residents (37,500 people) live with some sort of disability or impairment on the Mornington Peninsula (in 2013). The AACC advises on issues relating to access and inclusion for people with disabilities, their families and carers, residing in or visiting the Mornington Peninsula. The purpose of the AACC is to promote and advocate for improved access and equity to both Council and the wider community, irrespective of age, type of disability, gender, or cultural background and to consult/collaborate with the Shire on related matters. We are members of this Committee due to our deep interest in advocating on behalf of people with disabilities. Our membership is a mix of those with disabilities and those who represent people with disabilities and their carers. We are committed to the delivery of the NDS outcomes, as they will directly impact those on the Mornington Peninsula of Victoria who we represent.

We would like to propose the following issues in relation to the submission's term of reference:

(a) Planning, design, management and regulation of:

(i) Built Environment, including commercial premises, housing, public spaces & amenities.

- More careful planning guidelines to ensure that all commercial and public premises are easily accessible including addressing issues such as:
 - **heavy glass doors which are difficult to open for people in wheelchairs and walking aids** – *replace with automatic sliding doors;*
 - **counters being too high for people in wheelchairs to access easily** – *ensure guidelines for counter height are appropriate;*
 - **high-level of noise which impacts with hearing issues** – *mitigation through the use of ceiling cladding, carpeting etc.;*
 - **lack of available and appropriate disabled parking** - *ensure that the disabled parking is safe, secure and disabled use is enforced; perhaps institute a system of annual coloured coded permits for temporary disability parking permits to eliminate abuse of this system; ensure universally accessible disabled parking to ensure that the size of the spaces accommodates all requirements; ensure adequate number of parking spaces on a ratio basis e.g. 15% (given that one in four people in the population has a disability);*
 - **provision of accessible public toilets including changing places toilets** - *our Committee has successfully lobbied for changing place toilets at a new tourism facility on the Mornington Peninsula – The Eagle; and another to be built in the township of Mornington. Changing Places allow people with high support needs to access the community like everyone else, and to use the toilet in a dignified and hygienic manner;*
 - **need to ensure a clear distinction is made between in signage for toilets** – *separate out Ambulant Accessible, Wheelchair Accessible, Super Toilet (changing places);*

- **more accessible toilet roll holders for people with limited mobility or use of limbs** – *new toilet roll holders have been developed that make it easier to access the paper, and are located at a reachable height*
- **lack of awareness and affordability of Master Locksmiths Access Keys (MLAK)** – *better communication of source and availability and provide funding to ensure that they are affordable;*
- **poorly lit and uneven pathways, lack of wheelchair accessible pathways, and lack of access to the natural environment** - *our Committee has successfully advocated for beach matting at a popular local beach, and there is a high demand for footpaths (either new or upgraded) for people with mobility issues – particularly mobility ‘scooter’ users who are increasing in number as the population ages.*
- **lack of access to the attractions that the Mornington Peninsula (and similar areas) are known for** – *for example many of the wineries in our area have poor access, particularly those that were built before recent Australian building guidelines came into being - funding could be made available to retrofit older buildings for example to institute ramps as an alternative to steps in entry ways. We propose that there be a requirement for all public access buildings built prior to the Australian Building Guidelines to have an Access Consultant appraisal or audit by 2025;*
- **lifts which are not easily accessible** – *ensure accessibility is considered in all new construction and provide funding to retrofit existing buildings where needed, and that accessible emergency exits are available as an alternative to lifts in the event of fire;*
- **poor and inadequately signed accessible entrance and egress for all commercial and public buildings** – *ensure there are clear signs to notify the disabled of alternative options;*
- **lack of involvement of committees such as ours in the planning stages of new public infrastructure** – *establish such committees for all councils, allocate them greater resources and included them more in the planning processes and decision-making for commercial and public facilities;*
- **not enough all ability playgrounds** - *ensure that all newly planned playgrounds cater to all abilities plus make amendments to existing playgrounds to ensure that they have at least some areas/facilities which cater to all abilities;*
- **not enough housing options for those with both mental, intellectual and physical disabilities** – *have guidelines introduced for large scale housing developments to ensure there are some such options available in their master plans.*

(ii) Transport services and infrastructure

- Greatly improve access and availability of public transport particularly in areas out of the metropolitan area;
- Have comprehensive on-line and printed information on public options and private provision of standard and multi-purpose taxi services, buses and trains, which includes disability access information;

(iii) Communication and information systems, including Australian electronic media, and the emerging Internet of things.

- Ensure all local written media, radio, television and on-line platforms have multi modal accessible options/formats that may be used in combination to assist people with varied communication needs; provide education and supports to all government organisations to be compliant with WCAG 2.0 guidelines;
- Provide resources to all health care providers on the Mornington Peninsula to enable the effective use of E-health and Tele-health technology;
- Have people with disabilities represented on local committees, boards and in local government, and include training on how to do this (such as the SARU/NDIS 'Voice at the Table' resources) – *most of the members of the AACC are also representatives on other community boards and committees, which allows them to bring a broad range of knowledge and views to the workings of our committee, and strengthens the understanding and advocacy of these groups for people with disabilities;*
- Provide community and local business education on disability awareness and communication; *this needs to be ongoing, easy to access, and built into every business plan;*
- Promote to businesses the value of large fonts on menus, adequate accessible signage, positive staff attitudes, etc. as a way to be inclusive of disabled customers;
- Develop and promote "Good Access is Good Business" – for example MetroAccess in victoria has developed a range of videos and an online training tool to promote inclusion: www.kingston.vic.gov.au/services/Disability/YouMeUs;
- Provide comprehensive and easily accessible information in a range of formats in regard to accessibility in each area including accommodation, transport and activities etc., either as stand alone instruments or included in standard tourism products;
- Develop a nationally centralised information bank for the sharing of successfully implemented ideas and projects;
- Utilise public libraries as a repository of information on disability access so that the information can be accessed by those with disabilities without on-line access or capability;
- Use emerging technology such as virtual tours to provide easily accessible visual representation of available disability access to, for example, changing places toilets and their surrounding areas; tourist attractions; shopping centres; etc. to allow people with disabilities to pre-plan their journeys and assistance requirements;
- Develop improved and consistent audio description facilities at arts and cultural events on a national basis, as availability is inconsistent from state to state.

b) Potential barriers to progress or innovation and how these might be addressed.

- **Lack of consultation with people with disabilities before new infrastructure/service delivery plans are made** – *ensure in-depth consultation with committees such as ours.*
- **Lack of understanding of the benefits of universal design by the general public, property developers, and the business community** – *again ensure in-depth consultation with committees such as ours and promote and disseminate any positive business development and growth that results through the incorporation of universal access design principles. Also need to look at the stages of planning and development of the built environment, and ensure that access standards and universal design are better incorporated at each stage.*

- **Business owners viewing adapting local facilities to accommodate people with disabilities as an “inconvenience” or “necessity” rather than as an opportunity.** *For example, there is a need for a hydrotherapy pool on the Southern Mornington Peninsula, as the nearest one is at Frankston. The development of such a facility, or the expansion of current facilities to include one, would broaden the use of the pool by a much larger number of local residents in area with a large older population. This could be viewed as an opportunity to make the Peninsula a mecca for older people as well as those for people with disabilities.*

It is key that business owners are educated that any investment in disability access has the potential to lead to significant business growth. Their businesses will be made much more attractive to people with disabilities, as well as their carers, family, friends and wider social circle. Providing accessible facilities will make businesses and regions more competitive to this significant portion of the customer base.

c) The impacts of restricted access for people with a disability on inclusion and participation in economic, cultural, social, civil and political life.

- **Emotional, physical and mental health impacts** including: isolation, frustration, embarrassment, stress, anxiety, depression; physical difficulties and Occupational Health and Safety issues caused by lack of appropriate, close bathroom facilities; overly noisy environments; poorly lit, uneven walkways, entrances, lack of lifts, appropriate disabled parking etc. *Solution: Provide more funding for psychological support to those coping with the impacts of living with a disability.*
- **Economic impacts:** Loss of business from customers with disabilities due to access issues and/or lack of awareness of appropriate service requirements of such customers; loss of economic activity conducted by those with disabilities due to lack of support services; lack of motivation from people with disabilities to establish and participate in local businesses, as a result of the barriers with which they are faced.
- **Social impact:** Loss of societal growth, which occurs through embracing diversity: if there are limited opportunities for inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life they will continue to be marginalized. Non-disabled members of society then also lose out on the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and understanding of different perspectives and lifestyles.
- **Informational impact:** Loss of input from a whole section of society into the planning of economic, cultural, social, civil and political issues.

d) Other related matters.

Our other general recommendations include:

- Have funding provided to open up opportunities for disability staff to support people to attend the gym, go to the movies etc., (which they could not otherwise afford).
- Provide more supported employment for those with disabilities.
- Provide more training for support workers in the ‘new world of the NDS’.

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