



Peak body for independent disability advocacy in Victoria

ABN 15 557 421 367

## **Submission to the Employment and Education Committee**

### **BETTER AND FAIRER SCHOOLS (FUNDING AND REFORM)** **BILL 2024**

24 October 2024

## **Introduction**

### About Disability Advocacy Victoria

Disability Advocacy Victoria is the peak body for independent disability advocacy agencies in Victoria. We represent Victorian disability advocacy organisations working in communities across rural, regional and metropolitan Victoria.

Education is a key social and cultural right that plays an important role in reducing poverty, promoting democracy, peace, tolerance, development and economic growth. The education of students with disabilities has been an area requiring significant work from Victorian disability advocacy agencies for decades.

We understand that the Commonwealth are not entirely responsible for the education of Victorian students, however we make this submission in relation to the proposed Better and Fairer Schools (Funding and Reform) Bill 2024 ("the Bill"), noting the important contribution the Commonwealth does make to state education systems.

## **Our Position**

Funding for students with disabilities in Victoria is drawn from specific disability funding (for some students only), and general school funding. The experiences of disability advocacy agencies in Victoria suggests that the funding accessible to students with disabilities has never been adequate, and despite changes to disability funding criteria and equations, continues to be inadequate.

Taking into account the long and current history of mainstream schools "gatekeeping" students with disabilities out of their schools, we invite you to assume that rather than ill will on behalf of the relevant staff, the issue is their ability to provide the supports required to adequately educate such students, despite their legal requirement to do so.

Given the constant requirement for advocacy for students with disabilities in schools, we suggest to you that Victorian schools are not just underfunded by a little, but grossly underfunded. While again we accept that the Victorian Government has responsibility in this area, we strongly believe that a School Resource Standard funding amount of 22.5% is insufficient to stop the systemic discrimination occurring in schools against students with disabilities.

Given the economic advantages to the Commonwealth Government of as many students as possible leaving school with a robust education that allows them to undertake tertiary studies, and become employees and taxpayers, the broader picture would indicate that putting more money into education saves government money down the track, for example, through the provision of the Disability Support Pension.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that a School Resource Standard funding amount of 25% be the minimum amount contributed to by the Commonwealth to ensure that all Australian students can obtain an education.

Disability Advocacy Victoria  
24 October 2024