

# Towards an all abilities Queensland

Consultation report  
July 2017



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# Introduction

The Queensland Government is committed to building inclusive and welcoming communities where Queenslanders with disability can access and take up the educational, economic, political and social opportunities our state has to offer.

To shape and inform the plan, the Queensland Government undertook extensive consultation with over 1000 people from a cross-section of the community between August 2016 and April 2017. This report provides an overview of the key themes that emerged from the consultation, which have helped us identify how we can work together to build an all abilities Queensland.

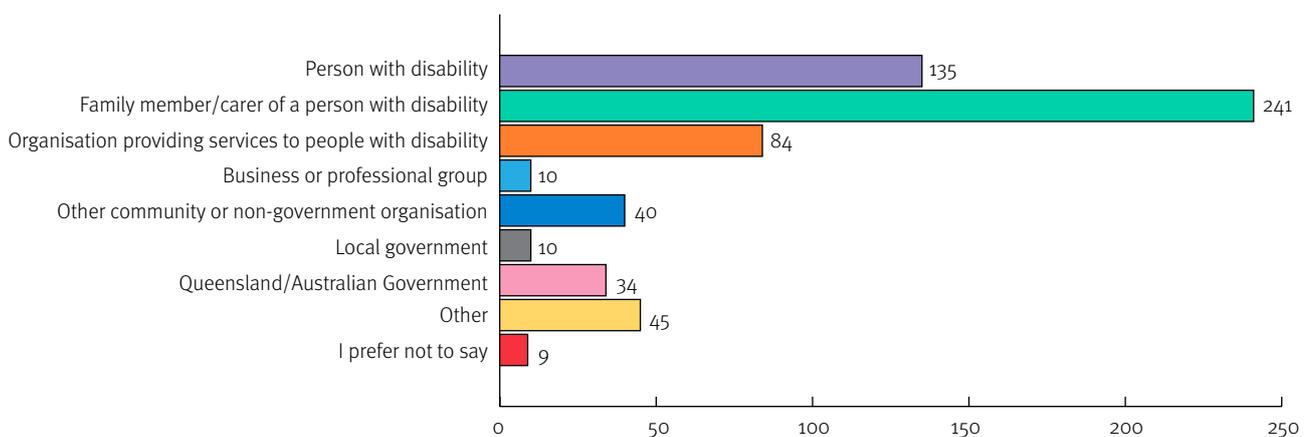
The consultation highlighted that while we have some way to go to being a fully inclusive and accessible community, we are on the journey towards achieving this and there are many individuals and organisations leading the way.

## Who contributed to the consultation?

A total of 543 submissions were made to the Towards an all abilities Queensland consultation paper. The majority of these submissions were made by people with disability (135 submissions) and family members and carers of people with disability (241 submissions). Submissions were also received from organisations including disability service providers and advocacy organisations, non-government organisations, local governments, peak bodies from the education, recreation, housing and universal services sectors, professional groups, academics and universities, religious organisations, unions, businesses, advisory bodies and statutory authorities.

Input was also received from across the state — from urban, regional, rural and remote areas — and from Queenslanders of all ages.

**Figure: Number of submissions by sector**



*Note: Of 543 submissions, 493 selected one sector, and 50 selected more than one sector.*



Over 250 people from state and regional advisory councils, Queenslanders with Disability Network local support groups across Queensland and other key stakeholder organisations and groups participated in discussions.

The Honourable Coralee O'Rourke MP, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland, personally met with representatives from business and industry to discuss collaborative ways to make Queensland more inclusive for people with disability:

- Kmart, Coles and Target (Wesfarmers Limited)
- Police Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC) Queensland
- Northern Australia Regional Performing Arts Centres Association (NARPACA)
- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Australia Post
- TAFE Queensland
- Housing Industry Association
- Queensland Performing Arts Centre
- Electoral Commission Queensland
- State Library of Queensland
- Health & Community Services Workforce Council
- Carers Qld Inc.
- Small Business Association Australia
- Local Government Association of Queensland.

Responses arising from consultations are reflected under each of the consultation paper's priority areas, to give a flavour of respondents' diverse views.

## Responses to the proposed priority areas

The consultation paper proposed a vision that 'Queenslanders of all abilities can live the life they choose' and five priority areas for a new state disability plan. The five proposed priority areas were:

1. Personal and community relationships
2. Recreation and tourism
3. Working and learning
4. Key services
5. Leadership and contribution.

Feedback overwhelmingly identified negative attitudes, stigma and a lack of understanding within community and the workplace as well as inaccessibility as key barriers for people with disability participating in activities across all priority areas. Feedback also identified the need to develop



positive attitudes, raise awareness and improve accessibility for people with different types of disability, as positive attitudes, awareness and accessibility were identified as key enablers of participation across all priority areas.

The following section outlines specific feedback about each of the proposed priority areas in response to three questions:

- a) What is working well in relation to the priority area?
- b) What barriers have you faced in relation to the priority area? and
- c) What more could be done in relation to the priority area?

## **Priority 1: Personal and community relationships**

Respondents identified the importance of feeling accepted, welcomed and valued within the community and that being treated with dignity and respect helps people to build personal and community relationships.

Respondents also commented on the importance of drawing on their own resilience, strength and determination and having willingness and courage to participate in the community. Support services, and support from family, friends, carers and other support groups also help people to build personal and community relationships.

When people do not have the support or services they need, or places and facilities are not accessible, they can experience barriers to building personal and community relationships. Participants identified social isolation is a particular issue in rural and remote places.

***Community engagement and the supports I receive through the community [help] me to overcome the loneliness and isolation ...***

Information about events is important to assist people to participate. When information is not accessible, people's ability to participate in the community is diminished. Access to information about what is available and how to get there is critical in supporting people to participate in the community.

Some people identified that fears and concerns about their own health, safety and risks of discrimination prevented their participation in the community and impacted on their ability to form relationships.

***Not all venues have accessible toilets which can limit the places to meet friends and family members.***

Where people with disability are supported, accepted and respected, engaging with other people and the community becomes easier and their ability to build relationships is improved.



*Be open and accepting of all people.*

*More education [is needed] for everyone ... a lot of people fear people with disability if they don't understand them and have not had the opportunity to spend time with them.*

## Priority 2: Recreation and tourism

In this priority area, respondents were also asked to identify what recreational and tourism activities were important to them. Going out to socialise with family and friends is important to everyone. Respondents identified the importance of holidays and participating in sport, music, arts and cultural festivals and events. Young children want to be able to play in all abilities playgrounds.

Participation in recreation and tourism works when people with disability have access to accessible transport, and, for some people, support from family, friends and a carer was important.

Ensuring tourism and recreational facilities are accessible to people with disability goes a long way to facilitating participation by people with disability. Partnering with organisations to provide support, services and public advocacy for people with disability, such as beach access for wheelchairs, also helps participation.

*A Companion Card has made access much more financially accessible.*

The cost of recreational and tourist activities can make it difficult for people to participate, however, some schemes, such as the companion card and sports and recreation vouchers, help people to participate in these endeavours. Sometimes participation is limited because of a lack of support, or policies or restrictions around risk, or because organisers may not know how to include people with disability in activities.

*I ceased Outrigger Paddling [membership] because the cost of becoming a member was too great.*

*Ability to have access to all events. We put risk measures in place that prevent inclusion. Very few times do they allow a person to be completely involved, there is the saying "Just in case, we won't be able to go" ... Let people have the chance to be involved and make mistakes ... Just the excitement of having a go can allow a person to become part of the community.*



Better promotion of local community and recreational events and accessible information in multiple formats would help people with disability to participate in recreational and tourist activities. The provision of disability awareness training and relevant information to staff to better engage people with disability in activities would also improve participation.

***More diversity in the advertising of events.***

The importance of accessible toilets and changing places suitable for adults with high physical support needs was also raised as important in expanding opportunities for people with disability and their families to participate in community life.

Arts and cultural organisations were enthusiastic about opportunities to increase the participation of people with disability in arts, as audience members, performers and employees. Organisations were partnering with disability organisations to adapt theatre performances specifically designed for patrons, including children on the Autism Spectrum or other sensory, social or learning disabilities. Organisations also raised that many performing arts venues are located within buildings that may present access challenges and retrofits to improve accessibility can be a challenge for organisations to navigate.

## **Priority 3: Working and learning**

### **Working**

Workplaces can provide particular support to staff with disability through workplace adjustments and flexible work arrangements. Relationships and support of colleagues is also important in relation to work goals. These supports will assist people with disability to fulfil their potential as contributing members of the workforce.

Accredited training and ongoing mentoring is just as important for people with disability as for those without. Disability inclusion and accessibility policies were also identified as important for all workplaces.

***Willingness of the company I work for to accommodate my needs. They are a disability organisation and understand the need for flexibility and physical access.***

Employment opportunities for people with disability could be improved by increasing awareness among the business sector and employers about benefits of employing people with disability and how to support them. Providing workplace support, adjustment and mentoring to people with disability to enter and maintain employment including starting own business could also help people with disability access employment.

Increasing the collaboration between the government, industry, educational institutions and employers would increase work experience opportunities and future employment pathways for



students with disability. Additionally, the application of flexible recruitment processes and a focus on the abilities of people with disability would increase or improve employment opportunities.

***People with disability need to have flexible work options, such as part-time work, working from home, working flexible hours in order to participate equitably in the labour market.***

A lack of opportunities for employment or work experience can create a barrier to employment for people with disability. This was identified as a particular issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in discrete Indigenous communities and people in rural and remote areas.

Inflexible recruitment processes, lack of access to workplace modifications and reasonable adjustments also create barriers to employment for people with disability. Respondents identified a lack of support from employment agencies to assist with job search and skill development as a particular barrier.

***When I applied for a job with a mainstream employment service provider, I was advised I had to use a Disability Employment Service (DES) provider. ... They forced me to consider working in the disability sector which I didn't want to do.***

***Some job ads have requirements like driving a car that exclude some people with disability from being able to apply.***

The business sector told us that a number of organisations had developed access, inclusion and diversity plans to increase the proportion of people with disability in their workforce. Organisations had also made changes to their recruitment practices to focus more on the abilities of the individual, matching individuals to work environments, and building inclusive and disability-confident organisational cultures.

## **Learning**

Support from family, friends, carers, support workers and teachers was important to helping people with disability achieve their education and work goals.

Skilled educators and accessible educational materials with reasonable adjustments to curriculum, course requirements and assessment also helped people with disability achieve their education goals.

Positive partnerships and trusting and open communication between families and schools also sets people up to achieve their potential at school.

Financial assistance and scholarships may also be beneficial for some people.



***I had to be very persistent to assist my son to achieve his education goals. Ultimately finding wonderful committed educators at ... has been the key. Having a strong partnership approach with these schools and keeping open and honest communication has been very important. This has allowed me to trust them and be confident that they could support my son.***

For some respondents, stigma associated with disability made achieving educational goals difficult. A lack of educational opportunities for adults with disability, especially in rural and remote areas, was also identified as an issue.

Particular needs for specialist after-school, vacation care and school holiday programs for children with disability was identified as a clear gap. Inflexible and unsupportive schools and educators and the sometimes high cost involved in learning created other barriers for some respondents.

***The school [my son] attended was non-supporting and unwelcoming. They were not willing to allow [parents] to assist them to make adjustments for his schooling.***

Working with parents to increase their awareness and involvement in decision-making about their children's learning will help improve educational outcomes for children. Providing supportive learning environments and ensuring educators will help students with disability to achieve in learning. Having access to a range of learning opportunities from early childhood to schooling, training and higher education and beyond should continue to be a focus.

***I believe that this inclusion and support at a school level can have long-term positive impacts that may assist that child access higher education and employment later on in their lives also.***

Feedback also identified that working and learning should be separated so that there is a specific focus on each of these important areas.



## Priority 4: Key services

Generally, ensuring services are affordable and available is important to facilitate access. Services such as wheelchair taxis, National Relay Services and mobility maps help people with disability access everyday services.

Services should ensure face-to-face engagement with people with disability to facilitate trusting relationships. Locally based services and service provider networks will also help people with disability feel comfortable to access these services. Services need to have skilled staff who have an understanding and awareness about people with disability and in particular an understanding of diversity of people with disability.

***[It is easier] when there are skilled professionals employed to assist with the process of accessing services.***

Accessibility issues, including non-compliance of buildings and services with minimum accessibility standards, no or poor wheelchair access at public places like train stations, loud TV or music in waiting rooms, cost of internet and phone access, can all create barriers for people with disability accessing services other people use every day. A lack of information available in other languages — including Auslan, outdated information, inaccessible formats, and poorly designed websites prevent people with disability from even knowing what services are available.

Respondents reported a lack of culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. A lack of accessible services, particularly in rural and remote areas and after hours or on weekends, also creates barriers for people with disability.

***Some buses won't stop for visually impaired people who can't hail the bus, so they miss out on meeting up with friends.***

***High employee turnover is a negative in the disability services industry.***

The following suggestions were made to improve affordability and access to services for people with disability:

- flexible service models and times of service availability
- increasing availability of interpreters and accessible information
- better collaboration between service providers.



Access to transport could be improved by consideration of end-to-end journey needs for people with disability including audio announcements at stations and on buses for people with vision impairment, safety equipment for electric wheelchairs on public transport, low stimulus rooms or waiting areas and more accessible toilets in public and private facilities.

Information access could be improved with the implementation of easy-to-navigate websites with effective search functions, providing information in various formats and languages and having information hubs available in the community.

Providing staff with professional development opportunities, including disability and cultural competency training, will increase accessibility of everyday services for people with disability.

***Having services available locally in rural Queensland helps, not just a random visit with no follow-up.***

***If physical access is provided, and staff are trained, [it will be] non-problematic.***

***Technology needs to be disability accessible to be able to use it. It also needs to be readily available and affordable.***

Respondents addressing this priority area highlighted the need to rethink the title of the priority to ensure it is meaningful for everyone. Other options for the name of this priority included: everyday services, and essential services.

Industry groups suggested opportunities for government and industries to partner to promote best practices to improve accessibility for each area of key services.



## Priority 5: Leadership and contribution

Respondents identified personal attributes and commitment helped facilitate their participation in leadership and making their contribution to community. Support from family, friends, peers, role models, networks and employers was also important. Representation on panels, committees and boards ensured broader opportunities for influence.

A lack of confidence, anxiety with public speaking and health issues were all identified as barriers to participation for people with disability. A lack of opportunity to contribute and engage in decisions and leadership roles created another barrier. Time because of care responsibilities and lack of access to respite created other barriers for people.

*[I] have not been confident enough to do so.*

*No recognition for being a carer with no formal education.*

Respondents identified including people with disability and carers in planning and development of projects, initiatives and services, on committees and boards would result in better opportunities for participation and break down barriers to access. Providing alternative ways to engage people with disability in the decision-making process — for example, via Skype, online meetings, webinars and multiple mechanisms to vote will facilitate participation in civic activities and leadership opportunities.

Empowering and supporting people with disability to develop and enhance leadership skills and get involved in the decision-making process will benefit everyone, not just people with disability.

*[Need] access and inclusion advisory committees in local government areas [and] more consultation [with] people with disabilities by all areas of the community.*

A business discussed with us how they could explore opportunities to work with their members to increase opportunities for leadership development and roles for people with disability.



## Other priority areas and inclusion tools

In achieving a more inclusive Queensland, respondents recommended a greater focus on upholding the rights of Queenslanders with disability and discussed issues such as complaint and mediation mechanisms, protection of freedom, dignity and safety.

Submissions also outlined tools that could help people with disability and organisations to be more inclusive, including:

- ongoing advocacy, awareness and community education to promote positive attitudes about disability, including acknowledgment of accessible and inclusive organisations
- improved quality data collection and accountability of meeting commitments
- tools to help organisations plan, measure and assess their inclusion targets.

## How this information has been used

Information received through the consultation process has informed the development of the new state disability plan for Queensland.