

MetroAccess

Building inclusive communities

What is MetroAccess?

MetroAccess is a key initiative of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 that aims to build the capacity of local communities across metropolitan Victoria so that they are more welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities.

MetroAccess represents a new approach for Disability Services, where the community is the primary focus. MetroAccess is being implemented in partnership with local government, who will be funded for positions.

Why do we need MetroAccess?

Over the past two decades government policy has focused on supporting people with disabilities to participate more in community life. However, despite a stronger presence in the community, the extent to which people with disabilities are seen as active members of their community is varied.

In 2000, Disability Services implemented RuralAccess which proved to be a highly successful strategy in addressing the issues of disadvantage and exclusion experienced by people with disabilities in rural and regional Victoria. Building on the success of RuralAccess, MetroAccess provides an area-based community building strategy targeting people with disabilities across metropolitan Victoria.

The emergence of a community building approach in Disability Services also provides an important contribution to the government's Growing Victoria Together agenda through promoting the citizenship

rights of people with disabilities and enhancing their participation in all aspects of community life.

How will MetroAccess work?

MetroAccess has been designed to provide a comprehensive response to the key issues experienced by people with disabilities in local communities. Based on the principles of community building, MetroAccess works to bring together the strengths, resources and creativity of individuals, communities and government to enhance the community membership and participation opportunities for people with disabilities.

To achieve this, MetroAccess will:

- work to increase community awareness about the needs and aspirations of people with a disability
- bring together a broad range of stakeholders in supporting change in local communities
- focus on local area planning and development to address issues of disadvantage and exclusion experienced by people with disabilities
- develop partnerships and projects that respond to local needs and priorities
- create more opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of community life
- play a pivotal role in promoting stronger co-ordination of effort between disability support providers, local and state government, community organisations and local communities.

MetroAccess is based on a developmental approach that seeks to build long-term, sustainable change in local communities. The aspirations, issues and opportunities that exist within each local community provide the driver for the work of MetroAccess.

How is MetroAccess being implemented?

MetroAccess is being implemented in partnership with local government. This builds on the strengths of local government to promote equal access and inclusion of people with disabilities. MetroAccess provides the opportunity for state government, local government and the non-government sector to create a joined up effort in building capacity and supporting change in local communities for people with disabilities.

MetroAccess is being implemented in three phases. The first phase commenced in 2003 with the establishment of MetroAccess across four local government areas. The second phase is currently underway and involves MetroAccess extending its coverage across a further 14 local government areas. In the future, it is anticipated that MetroAccess will be extended to cover all 31 local governments across metropolitan Victoria.

At a local level, funding has been allocated for local governments to employ a project officer to work across all areas of community infrastructure such as health, housing, education, employment, transport, community services and leisure, to plan and develop opportunities for greater participation and inclusion.

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