

Part 1: Preliminary

1. Do the objects, principles and definitions in the Act better reflect human rights and inclusion?

Yes. The proposed Disability Inclusion Bill marks an important step in supporting the broader Tasmanian community to be more inclusive of people who live with a disability and helping them to stay safe from abuse. It is important that the bill recognises and supports all people with a disability. Currently the bill notes the importance of supporting the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of all people. It needs to go further to also include 'communication development'. In Australia, 1 in 7 people live with some kind of communication disability (Speech Pathology Australia, 2014). This equates to 1.2 million Australians. In addition, 44% of Australians are not able to read well enough to read everyday information. According to the ABS (2015) there are 1 in 200 Tasmanians who have a communication disability. Communication disability impacts the ability of many Tasmanians to understand messages and get their message across. This may lead to social isolation and further marginalisation of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Part 2: Disability Inclusion Planning

2. Will the Disability Inclusion Planning requirements contribute to the advancement of human rights and inclusion?

Yes. It is important that Tasmanians make a strong commitment to recognise the human rights of all Tasmanians, including those who live with a disability. People in the Tasmanian community live with a range of disabilities, and it is important that these are considered when planning for inclusive practices. For many, 'visible' changes to the environment (e.g. ramps, interpreters, visual supports) can have a big impact on how well a person is included. However, when planning for change, it is also important to consider other the less obvious ways we can support people with disability such as a communication disability and how we relate to them. We need to build in appropriate 'invisible' supports to ensure that people with a disability are treated with respect. This may mean giving them more time to deliver a message or being open to the diverse ways that people may communicate. To achieve these changes significant education programs are required within the broader community.

Part 3: Disability Inclusion Advisory Council

3. Are there any changes you would make to the proposed functions or the structure of the Disability Inclusion Advisory Council?

Establishing a disability inclusion advisory council, with members who have lived experience of disability, is an important step in helping to create a more inclusive Tasmanian community. It is important that a people with a diverse range of disabilities are included in the make-up of the council, including people with a communication disability who make use different ways to communicate. Alternate forms of communication may be seen as a barrier to inclusion on such groups and they can be slow and difficult for others to understand. However, if this council is to be authentic, it is important that all voices contribute and are heard.

Part 4: Tasmanian Disability Inclusion Commissioner

4. Are the proposed functions and powers of the Disability Inclusion Commissioner sufficient to promote inclusion and improve quality and safeguarding protections?

It is important that a Tasmanian Disability Inclusion Commissioner position is established in Tasmania to bring us in line with other Australian states. This is a role that holds a great deal of responsibility towards Tasmanians with a disability.

Part 5: Disability Services Standards

5. Is it important to retain a requirement for all providers to follow the National Standards for Disability Services and is it clear who these standards apply to?

Yes, this is of great importance as many service providers do not have professional regulatory bodies. All practitioners should follow the national standards outlined. It is also important to go further and to consider what can be done to ensure that all practitioners have sufficient skills and training to provide a high-quality service in line with evidence-based practice.

Part 6: Senior Practitioner, Part 7: Regulation of Restrictive Practices, Part 8: Appointed Program Officers and Part 9: Independent Persons

6. Will the authorisation of restrictive practices process, and roles and functions of the Senior Practitioner, Appointed Program Officers and independent persons provide better quality, protections and safeguards for people with disability?

The role of the senior practitioner is an important step in safeguarding the most vulnerable members of our community from abuse. There are some concerns about how this will be achieved given the shortage of allied health professionals and appropriately qualified practitioners available to support people with disabilities. For instance, there is a requirement that the senior practitioner must approve the use of restrictive practices based on behaviour support plans. However, with a shortage of service providers in the state who can write these plans, there are concerns about how this process will be managed.

Part 10: Funding

7. Are the conditions for the Minister to fund activities in relation to the objects of this Act clear?

No response provided

Part 11: Authorised Officers

8. Do you think the role, functions and provisions made for Authorised Officers are clear?

No response provided

Part 12: Appeals, Part 13: Offences and Part 14: Miscellaneous

9. Are there any provisions made in Parts 12-14 that require further clarification?

No response provided

10. If you have any other comments, suggestions, or concerns about the Bill please let us know.

No response provided
