



INQUIRY INTO SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

GUIDE TO SUBMISSIONS & PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. OVERVIEW

The Family and Community Development Committee has been asked by the Victorian Parliament to inquire into services for people with autism spectrum disorder.

This Guide is intended to assist organisations and individuals who want to make a written submission to the Committee.

Submissions close on **FRIDAY 22 APRIL 2016**.

The Committee will hold public hearings in 2016. Public hearings provide an opportunity for the Committee to meet members of the public – including individuals and organisations that have made submissions – and discuss key issues. If you would like to talk to the Committee at a public hearing please indicate this in your submission. Once the locations and times for the public hearings have been confirmed the Committee will publicise these on its website.

2. THE INQUIRY – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Family and Community Development Committee has been asked to inquire into, consider and report, on services for people with autism spectrum disorder in Victoria, including but not limited to —

- a) the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder in Victoria;
- b) the availability and adequacy of services provided by the Commonwealth, State and local governments across health, education, disability, housing, sport and employment services;
- c) the adequacy of services to be provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
- d) evidence of the social and economic cost of failing to provide adequate services; and,
- e) the projected demand for services in Victoria.

3. MAKING A SUBMISSION

All interested parties can make submissions to the Inquiry. The Family and Community Development Committee is seeking submissions from both individuals and organisations relating to the terms of reference for the Inquiry.

There is no single way for any person or organisation to approach a submission. The Committee understands that people will want to approach their submissions differently.

Your submission can take the form of a letter, an email or a longer document. Submissions can be provided in either hard copy or by email to the Committee Secretariat.

Your submission must relate to at least one of the terms of reference.

Please include your contact details in your submission, including an address and phone number.

Electronic submissions should be sent via:

- The eSubmission form on the Committee's website:
<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc>
- Or by email to:
fcfdc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Hard copy submissions should be sent to:

Family and Community Development
Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

All submissions are treated as public, unless otherwise requested. The Committee can receive written submissions on a confidential basis or can withhold names where this is requested and agreed to by the Committee. Please indicate if you want your submission treated as confidential or your name withheld and provide a brief explanation.

5. PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

A submission to a Committee becomes a Committee document once the Committee formally decides to accept it as a submission. A Committee may decide not to accept a submission as evidence if it is not relevant to the Terms of Reference, or is offensive.

Once the Committee has authorised the release of a submission, any subsequent publication of it by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that what you say in your submission cannot be used in court against you.

Parliamentary privilege only extends to submissions that are published by the Committee. If a submission is published in another form or for another purpose, that publication will not be protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you should not reproduce the submission in another format or context. You can, however, refer others to your submission on the Committee's website, or advise them to contact the Committee directly.

It is against parliamentary rules for anyone to try to stop you from making a submission by threats or intimidation. It is also a breach of these rules for anyone to harass you or discriminate against you because you have made a submission, and Parliament can take action against this behaviour.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Committee will be holding public hearings in Melbourne and throughout regional Victoria. Public hearings are an opportunity for the Committee to meet with individuals and organisations to discuss the Inquiry's key issues.

The Committee decides who will be invited to give evidence at a public hearing. Generally, the Committee will invite individuals and representatives of organisations that have made submissions.

If you do not wish to make a submission but still want to talk to the Committee at a public hearing, please contact the Committee to request this.

In general, all submissions and transcripts of evidence given at public hearings are public documents. This means that the evidence may be published on the Committee's website and quoted in the Committee's report to the Parliament. However, in special circumstances, the Committee may decide to hear evidence in private (in camera). If you wish to present all or part of your evidence confidentially, you must ask the Committee in advance.

More information about public hearings is available on the Parliament's website:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/committees/get-involved/giving-evidence>

7. SCOPE OF INQUIRY

The Inquiry into services provided for people with autism spectrum disorder is a major inquiry, with a broad frame of reference. The Committee is particularly interested to hear from people with autism spectrum disorder and their families and carers, concerning their experiences of the sector.

The Inquiry will examine the federal, state and local levels of government service provision, in the areas of health, education, housing, employment, sport and disability services. The Committee will investigate the prevalence of autism in Victoria, the adequacy of services that will be provided under the NDIS, the costs of failing to provide adequate services in both social and economic terms, and projected levels of demand.

The Committee wishes to hear from all stakeholders who have an interest in this Inquiry. These include:

- People with autism spectrum disorder
- The carers and families of people with autism
- Organisations, departments and agencies that provide services to people with autism
- Groups and individuals who advocate on behalf of people with autism
- Local councils and government bodies
- Peak bodies and representative groups
- Academics and experts in autism spectrum disorder
- Employers of people with autism

The Committee will report its findings to the Parliament and make recommendations to the State Government.

8. SOME KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The questions that follow below provide a further guide to the Inquiry's investigations. They are designed to help you think about issues for your submission. However, please note, that **you are not required to answer any of these questions in order to make a submission.** So long as your submission relates to at least one of the terms of reference the Committee will receive your submission.

Accessing services and quality of service

What is the experience of people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their families and carers in accessing services, information, advice and support?

What is the quality of these services, the standard of advice and the reliability of information given on ASD, and the support provided?

Health services

Does the health system provide adequate access, information and support to people with ASD and their families in Victoria? What is the accessibility and availability of quality

assessments and diagnoses of people presenting with ASD?

Services in rural and regional Victoria

Are there particular issues with service access and quality of service in rural and regional areas of Victoria? What is the accessibility and availability of services that are age appropriate?

Integration across governments and services

How well are services across the different levels of government integrated? Is there collaboration and appropriate linking up between service providers, particularly in relation to transitions from one area of the sector to another?

Disability service providers

Does the disability service sector provide sufficient and quality tailored services to people with ASD? What is the level of unmet demand for these services? How well do these services perform in meeting the expectations of their clients?

Education and housing

What is the accessibility to, and quality of the education services provided to people with autism? How inclusive is the education sector, at all levels, to people with ASD? What are the resource limitations?

Are the accommodation needs of people with ASD being met? What models of housing represent best practice, and how developed is the sector in providing sufficient and appropriate housing options?

Workforce issues

How well equipped is the workforce across the sector in providing informed, compassionate, and professional service to people with ASD? What are the training needs and qualifications necessary to ensure a skilled workforce?

Impact of NDIS

What will be the impact of the roll-out of the NDIS on services, and choice of service, for people with ASD and their families? Are there likely to be gaps in service emerging as a result? How will the different levels of government service provision be changed or impacted?

Research into ASD and its prevalence

How well developed is research into ASD in Victoria? What are the current limitations to knowledge, and the dissemination of knowledge, in this area, and how can this be addressed? Is there an accurate picture available on the prevalence of ASD?

Community participation

What programs exist to facilitate the participation of people with ASD in the community and in employment? How available, accessible and successful are employment services for people with ASD?

How inclusive are the state's sports programs of people with ASD? What are the opportunities for participation in sport and recreation?

9. EASY READ GUIDE

The Committee is developing an Easy Read Guide to assist stakeholders to the Inquiry. Please contact the Committee Secretariat for further information and to obtain a copy.

10. NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service. You will need to provide them with our number, 03 8682 2843. For more information, visit www.relayservice.com.au

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions please contact the Committee Secretariat on:

- Email: fcdd@parliament.vic.gov.au
- Phone: 8682 2843
- Website: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdd>