

Media Statement

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New investigation and inspection powers for the Disability Services Commissioner

From today, the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) has been empowered with additional oversight powers to improve the safety and wellbeing of Victorians with a disability.

Mr Laurie Harkin AM, the Disability Services Commissioner, says “The *Disability Amendment Act 2017* recognises the need to build a strong culture of zero tolerance to abuse in Victorian disability services.”

“These enhanced oversight powers for my office will help to strengthen safeguards for people with a disability and improve their safety and wellbeing.”

The *Disability Amendment Act 2017* allows for new investigation and inspection powers for DSC. These include the power to:

1. Conduct own initiated investigations into allegations of abuse and neglect of an individual or systemic nature
2. Investigate any matter referred by the Minister or the Secretary that relates to service provision, complaints, or abuse and neglect
3. Visit and inspect certain premises of disability services without a warrant
4. Provide education and information about preventing and responding to abuse

These changes allow DSC greater powers to investigate and direct service providers to take action to make service improvements for the benefit of people with a disability.

Mr Harkin says, “People with a disability have the right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. For too long, this has not been the case. This is abhorrent and cannot continue.”

“Using these new powers, I am committed to working with people with a disability, their family and friends, service providers, and other regulatory bodies to build stronger and safer disability services.”

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Media Enquiries

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About the Disability Services Commissioner

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) is an independent oversight body for the Victorian disability services sector. The *Disability Act 2006* empowers the DSC to handle complaints about disability services, conduct investigations into disability services, inspect disability services, and have oversight of critical incident reports and reports of deaths in disability services.