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## Pilot Project to Explore New Ways for Disability Voices to be Heard

**Disability Voices Tasmania** is a new and exciting pilot project funded by the Department of Communities to find out how people with disability can develop a strong, collective voice on interests and issues that affect them.

The first stage of the **Disability Voices Tasmania** project is to ask people with disability what a collective voice might look like and, what training and resources will give them more choice and control over their lives and empower them to contribute actively within their communities.

Geraldine Robertson, an autistic woman and recent past Chair of Autism Tasmania said, "The value of a collective voice is that it enables people with disability to have a permanent and skilled presence on issues affecting them and the community as a whole."

Disability Voices Tasmania has already started talking to Tasmanians with disability and their allies (families, carers, and community organisations) about the different ways it can create a collective voice.

Fiona Strahan, a short-statured woman and Project Officer for Disability Voices Tasmania, said, "We are asking people with disability to come together to identify our common issues and discuss how we can best raise them with government, service providers and the broader community."

"During this formative stage of the project, we want to engage as many people with disability and their allies as possible in this conversation," said Fiona. "We are very interested in any ideas people may have about the way a collective voice might develop and what it might look like."

Disability rights advocate, and wheelchair user, David Cawthorn, said, "It is often hard for the individual voice of a person with disability to be heard - sometimes we feel our views and experiences are not listened to or don't lead to change. I am hopeful this project will find new ways for people with disability to come together around issues that affect all of us in the community."

Tasmanians with disability and their allies are encouraged to give their views in a short survey available on its website [www.disabilityvoicest Tasmania.org.au](http://www.disabilityvoicest Tasmania.org.au), or Facebook page, or by talking directly to Project Officer, Fiona Strahan.

## ABOUT DISABILITY VOICES TASMANIA

**In 2017**, the **Department of Health and Human Services** funded a project to collect the views of people with disability and their allies on how Tasmanians with disability could have a strong and collective voice.

A common experience reported by people with disability is that their views and opinions are not listened to or don't lead to change.

A collective voice is when a group of people come together equally and speak together on issues that affect them as individuals and as a group.

A collective voice of people with disability in Tasmania will need to include people with disabilities who;

- have a wide range of disabilities
- have diverse views and experiences
- have different genders
- have diverse sexuality
- come from across Tasmania
- are Aboriginal
- come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**In 2018**, some people with disability and members of several community organisations including **Speak Out**, the **Association for Children with Disability**, **Autism Tasmania**, **Epilepsy Tasmania**, **Brain Injury Association of Tasmania**, **Advocacy Tasmania** and **Carers Tasmania** asked the **Department of Communities** to fund a project to do more work on the ideas collected. The Department of Communities agreed to fund a project for 1 year.

The project has appointed a Project Officer, Fiona Strahan and a Reference Group will help guide the project.

*(In this project the word 'allies' means parents, families, carers, advocates and community disability organisations promoting the rights of people with disability.)*

### The project will work on 4 things:

1. Find out what people with disability and their allies think needs to be done to ensure people with disability have a strong and united voice.
2. Look at ways in which people with disability and their allies can work together on issues that affect the rights of people with disability.
3. Look at what training and/or resources people with disability feel they need to develop their skills and experience to have more choices in, and control over, their lives and to contribute to their community.
4. Connect people with disability in different parts of Tasmania to relevant training and/or resources.

In 2019, the Disability Voices Tasmania project wants to talk to as many people as possible to discuss ideas they may have about what it is doing.

Diversity will be the strength of a collective voice of Tasmanians with disability and their allies.

**Disability Voices Tasmania has created a survey** to help it collect views on how people with disability and their allies can come together to build a strong collective voice.

The survey can be completed on its website ([www.disabilityvoicestasmania.org.au](http://www.disabilityvoicestasmania.org.au)) or downloaded and completed on paper. People who don't want to fill in this survey, but have ideas about this project are encouraged to contact Project Officer, Fiona Strahan, on 0429 488 151 or email her at [info@disabilityvoicestasmania.org.au](mailto:info@disabilityvoicestasmania.org.au).

Fiona can also visit and talk with groups about this project and complete the survey together.

**Further Information:**

Fiona Strahan, Project Officer

Disability Voices Tasmania

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