

# "Skills & Self Value Drop Like a Brick!"

Mainstream Australians have access to good further education through smart University and TAFE courses taking them well above regular school education. In total contrast, education for many Australians with an intellectual or multiple disability often declines after they leave secondary or special school education in Victoria

With few exceptions, all children in Victoria receive formal education within the guidelines and regulations of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) - the "Education Department".

Children with an intellectual or multiple disability will, dependent on their capacity, receive their formal education from a mainstream school with support, from a Special School, or from a Special Developmental School.

When children leave school at 18 years, they move as adults to University, TAFE, or Employment. Those with insufficient capacity to attend University, TAFE, or have employment, have little choice but to attend an ATSS (Adult Training and Support Service/Day Centre), or similar. Or to have an individualised "Support & Choice Package". Unlike most mainstream adults, these adults have a very uncertain future when leaving school as a legal adult.

Day Centres are often little more than a minder service in comparison with special or special developmental schools. They are often under-funded, under-regulated and under-supervised by the Department of Human Services, Disability Services, (DHS).

Mum worries about her regular three year old going to kinder - Are they doing more than minder care, mum asks herself. Yet the little-one can tell mum! Whereas, the 33 year old with no meaningful communications can't! And mum worries much more! This is especially so where the ATSS/Day Centre has a policy to keep parents out, and provide no regular progress reports on the grounds their clients are legally adults.

Certainly, there are individual support packages being offered by the DHS, allowing educational activities to be purchased and organised by parents/families. But not all parents/families have the time and energy to properly manage these packages.

Although these packages are good for many, they should not be seen by the DHS as a means to avoid ensuring ATSS/Day Centres are first class - not a massive drop from Education Department standards.

Although most ATSS/Day Centres have so called independent accreditation, this is often quite ineffective in ensuring meaningful and consistent quality of life activities for the clients each day. Most accreditation places emphasis on administration and regulatory procedures. And accreditation reports are often not available for public scrutiny.

In comparison with the Education Department's well qualified teaching staff, ATSS/Day

Centre staff often do not have formal teaching qualifications, and these centres struggle with the poor DHS funding in comparison with that of the Education Department.

Britain's Prime minister, David Cameron, opened a new hydrotherapy pool at the Jack Tizard special school in Hammersmith, West London, late last year. Jack Tizard is a day school for pupils aged two to 19, with severe learning difficulties.

Mr Cameron said that schools such as Jack Tizard played a hugely important role. He said: "Our special schools are incredible places. You have a child, like we did, you worry like mad you are never going to find somewhere where he is happy, where there is great teaching where there is love and great compassion. And when you find that place, like we did with Jack Tizard, your heart lifts."

The principal of Jack Tizard says the major concern of the school, as of parents, is the very uncertain future for students when they leave Jack Tizard at 19 years.

The needs of those with autism and special needs change little or nothing with age. The high level of active support, interaction, developmental and social activities, provided by special and special developmental schools, needs to continue in adult life - in adult education centres (ATSS/Day Centres), in family homes and in group homes.

### **Victoria's Australian of the Year says major parties have failed on disability support services**

Victoria's 2011 Australian of the Year, Simon McKeon, said the chronic level of underfunding in disability services state-wide had been ignored by both Labor and the Coalition in the lead up to the State election.

Mr McKeon, who is also NDS Victoria's Ambassador, said both major parties had failed to commit urgently required funding for the besieged disability services sector.

A minimum injection of \$70 million is immediately required to address a growing crisis in disability services in Victoria, Mr McKeon said.

It's hard to fathom how this issue can continue to be ignored by the major political parties. Community organisations which provide disability services have been chronically underfunded for the past 15 years.

Mr McKeon said disability support services provide the fabric of daily life for people with a disability.

These services continue to function because of their dedication and they have shielded those who use their services as far as possible from the consequences of this funding neglect. But it can't continue.

We urgently need extra funding for **day-support services**, respite services and therapy services, he said.

All political parties have a responsibility to ensure that funding covers the real cost of service delivery and that everyone who needs disability support receives it.

**LISA Comment:** It is of great relief for future generations that the Education Department (DEECD), with its qualified and dedicated special education teachers, is going from strength to strength to ensure their special needs students become as close as possible to the best mainstream students - giving them a good start in life.

We need to stop this "good start in life" being eroded when special high support needs adults leave school to attend DHS under-funded, under-regulated and under-supervised ATSS/Day Centres, by having all adult further education and training at a similar level and quality to that of the best special developmental schools. See "[Disability Standards for Education](#)" Review

**Extra 1:** [ABC's Ramp-Up Website](#)

**Extra 2:** [Landmark Victory - UK Autism Act](#)

**Extra 3:** Disability Service Commissioner (Complaints) Victoria. [NEWSLETTER](#)  
Note: Newsletter contains interstate equivalent information.

**Extra 4:** [National Carers Strategy](#)

**Extra 5:** [Disability fails to rate a mention in public survey](#) - in Melbourne

**Extra 6:** [Quality of Life Active Support Avenues](#) - Help expand our list, please!  
**Note:** "Home" can mean anything from the family home to a group home.

**Extra 7:** ["Through the Maze"](#) - Children's Services in Victoria (3.5MB download)

**Extra 8:** [Disability Connections Victoria](#) - [See their new Website!](#)

**Extra 9:** [Special Disability Trust Petition](#) - Needs your Support!

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