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## Disability groups and networks

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### Summary

- Getting to know other people who have the same disability as you can be a good way to get informal advice and support and to make friends.
  - Many national and state-based disability organisations run local support groups and self-advocacy groups.
  - You can find out about disability support groups and networks online.
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Connecting with other people who have a disability and their families can be a good way of getting informal advice and support. You can get to know other people with disabilities through local support groups, disability organisations or online disability forums.

### Disability networks, support organisations and groups for people with disabilities

Contacting an organisation or community group that supports people with your specific disability can be a good way of meeting people, getting advice and sharing experiences.

Many national and state-based disability organisations run regular support group meetings and social activities. Some may also be active on social media and have online discussion forums where you can chat to other people with the same disability. Many also offer support for families.

Self-advocacy groups are run by people with disabilities who have joined together to have their voices heard and support each other. They work together to make sure people with a disability have the same rights, choices, and opportunities as anyone else. Investigating these disability groups online can be a good place start.

### Networks and advocacy for people with disabilities

The following organisations provide networks or advocacy for people with disabilities:

- **Able Australia** – offers support to people living with multiple disabilities
  - **Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities** (ADEC)– offers assistance to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living with a disability and their carers and family
  - **Arts Access Victoria** – creates opportunities for people with a disability to participate in and experience the arts
  - **Association for children with a disability** – offers free information and support, training and NDIS funded supports.[link to service profile](#)
  - **Belonging Matters Inc.** – offers education and support to help people with a disability to live fulfilling lives in the community
  - The **Disability Advocacy Resource Unit** – offers a directory of disability advocacy organisations based on geographic location
  - **DisAbility Connections** (Victoria)– a network of more than 1000 people with disabilities and their families or carers
  - **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) disability services** page provides information for people with a disability
  - **First Peoples Disability Network Australia** – the national peak organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability and their families
  - **National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders** -NOFASD Australia - offers telephone and online support, including referral to local services, for parents, carers and individuals with FASD.
  - **Women with Disabilities Victoria** – advocates for the rights of women with disabilities
  - **VALID**-The Victorian League for Individuals with a Disability is an advocacy group for adults with intellectual
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disabilities and their families.

### Self Advocacy Groups

- **Self Advocacy Resource Unit** (SARU) - provides support and information for self advocacy groups in Victoria.

### Organisations for people who are blind or visually impaired

- **Blind Citizens Australia** - provides a united voice of Australians who are blind or vision impaired
- **Guide Dogs Victoria** - provides orientation and mobility services to Victorians who are blind or vision impaired
- **Vision Australia** - provides blindness and low vision services.

### Organisations for people who are deaf or hearing impaired

- **Better Hearing Australia** (Vic) - an independent not for profit hearing service
- **Deaf Australia** - an advocacy and information organisation for Deaf people who are bilingual – using both English and Auslan
- **Deaf Children Australia** - works to remove barriers to the personal development and social inclusion faced by children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- **Deaf Sports Australia** - facilitates and supports the participation of deaf Australians in all levels of sport
- **Deaf Victoria** - a non profit organisation that provides information and referrals about deaf and deafness issues
- **vicdeaf** - provides information, programs and education to deaf and hard of hearing adults through its diverse range of services

### Organisations for people who are deafblind

- **Able Australia** – offers support to people living with multiple disabilities

### Organisations for people with intellectual disability

- **VALID** - Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID) is an advocacy group for adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. VALID also supports a number of groups and runs the annual 'Having a Say' conference that connects people with intellectual disability.
- **Reinforce** - self-advocacy group for people with an intellectual disability.

### Organisations for people with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

- **arbias** - provides support services to people with an ABI
- **BrainLink** - provides support and services for people with an ABI and their families and carers
- **Brain Injury Matters** - a self advocacy group for people with an ABI.

### Organisations for people who have a mental health illness

The following organisations provide support for people with mental health issues:

- **Dementia Australia (Victoria)** - advocates for the needs of people living with all types of dementia and provides support services, education and information
- **Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria** - provides help and support for anxiety and depression, including "grass-roots" support, information, and resources
- **beyondblue** - provides information and support for people with mental health issues
- **Mental Health Foundation of Australia** (Victoria) - aims to promote mental health and attitudes to mental health and to encourage mental health research
- **Mind Australia** - is a leading provider of community mental health services
- **SANE Australia** - is a national charity helping all Australians affected by mental illness.
- See our **Mental Health Services section**.

## Organisations for people with communication difficulties

The following organisations provide support to people with communication difficulties:

- **Amaze** (formerly Autism Victoria) - the peak body for people on the autism spectrum and their supporters in Victoria.
- **Aspergers Victoria** provides information and support to those living with Asperger Syndrome
- **Autistic Family Support Association** (AFSA) - assists and supports individuals with ASD by providing emotional and practical support for parents, carers and families
- **BrainLink** - support for people with acquired brain disorders
- **Communication Rights Australia** - is a human rights advocacy and information organisation for people with little or no speech
- **Huntington's Victoria** - supports and assists people affected by Huntington's Disease (HD)
- **Laryngectomy Association of Victoria Inc.** - is a support group for people who have laryngectomies and those with similar vocal conditions
- **Parkinson's Victoria** - provides information and resources to people with Parkinson's, their family, carers and health professionals
- **SCOPE Communication Resource Centre** - recognises and promotes businesses and services where people with communication difficulties are heard and understood
- **Yooralla Communications Devices Scheme** - provides quality, sustainable and flexible services
- **Speech Pathology Australia** - is the national peak body for the speech pathology profession in Australia.

## Organisations for people with education and training difficulties

The following organisations support people with education and training difficulties:

- **Down Syndrome Victoria** - works to empower individuals with Down syndrome for a lifetime of meaningful inclusion in the community
- **Dyslexia Victoria** - provides awareness and teaching solutions
- **SPELD Victoria** - provides support for people with dyslexia or other learning disabilities.

## Organisations for people with physical disabilities

The following organisations provide support for people with physical disabilities:

- **AQA** - support for people with a spinal cord injury.
- **Arthritis Australia** - provides support and information about arthritis
- **Musculoskeletal Australia** - represents Victorians living with arthritis and many other musculoskeletal conditions
- **Australian Leukodystrophy Support Group** - raises funds to provide counselling, support and information to families
- **Cerebral Palsy Support Network** - provides information and support services
- **Cystic Fibrosis Victoria** - promotes research and awareness of cystic fibrosis as well as education, support and advocacy
- **Epilepsy Foundation** provides services to people living with epilepsy and works to raise awareness of the condition
- **MND Australia** - support for people with motor neurone disease
- **MND Victoria** - support for people with motor neurone disease
- **MS** - support for people with multiple sclerosis
- **Muscular Dystrophy Australia** - provides a range of resources including information, programs and research information
- **National Stroke Foundation** - raising awareness, preventing stroke, facilitating research, improving treatment for stroke survivors
- **Physical Disability Australia** - works to remove barriers through systematic advocacy to government and

promotes rights

- **Polio Australia** - Polio Australia is a not-for-profit organisation supporting polio survivors living in Australia.
- **Scope**- supports people with physical, intellectual or multiple disabilities.
- **Spina Bifida Foundation Victoria**
- **Stroke Association of Victoria** - support service for people re-entering their lives after having a stroke
- **Yooralla** - supports people with physical, intellectual and multiple disability.

See also: **A-Z of service profiles.**

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