

RIAC'S 2026 STATE ELECTION PRIORITIES

Independent disability advocacy is an essential regional safeguard

Who we are

RIAC is an independent disability advocacy organisation supporting people with disability across regional Victoria, with offices in Bendigo, Mildura, Shepparton and Geelong.

We stand alongside people who are navigating disability services, the NDIS, housing, health, education, transport, justice, discrimination, complaints and other complex systems. RIAC helps people understand their rights, make informed decisions, communicate their concerns and work towards fair outcomes.

Why advocacy matters now

Disability systems are changing. NDIS reforms, foundational supports and the next State Disability Plan will reshape how people find and receive assistance, with the State Government playing a larger role.

The NDIS is one part of a much wider disability support system. Many people with disability rely on state and mainstream services, family, community organisations and local supports. When pathways are unclear, people can be passed between services, left without help or forced to wait until a problem becomes a crisis.

The risks are greater in regional communities, where transport is limited, services are fewer, distances are longer and people often have limited or no choices when a system fails.

What independent disability advocacy changes

- People can understand their rights, options and decisions.
- Concerns can be raised and addressed before they escalate.
- People can find a practical pathway through complex services.
- Government and service providers hear directly where systems are failing.
- People with disability can participate in decisions affecting their lives and communities.

RIAC is seeking practical commitments that ensure regional people with disability can get independent help, navigate changing systems and have a meaningful say in the decisions affecting their lives.

The need in numbers

- Around 1.1 million Victorians live with disability.
- Many Victorians with disability rely on services and supports outside the NDIS.
- In Greater Bendigo, 8,639 people reported needing help with core daily activities in 2021.
- The equivalent figures were 4,932 in Greater Shepparton, 4,245 in Mildura and 17,726 in Greater Geelong.

RIAC'S THREE ELECTION PRIORITIES

1. Strengthen the regional disability support system, including independent advocacy as a key element

People need somewhere independent to turn when services fail, decisions are unclear or they do not know what to do next. Independent advocacy helps people understand their rights, raise concerns, resolve problems early and stay connected to their communities.

RIAC is asking candidates and parties to support:

- recognition of independent advocacy as an essential regional safeguard
- secure, indexed and multi-year funding
- funding that reflects regional travel, outreach and workforce costs
- support for early intervention, not only crisis response

Commitment sought: Acknowledge and sustainably support independent disability advocacy as an essential part of Victoria's regional support system.

2. Create a stronger regional safety net so people do not fall through the gaps

As the NDIS, foundational supports and state services change, people must not be bounced between systems or left with information they cannot use. A 'no wrong door' principle must lead to practical help.

RIAC is asking candidates and parties to support:

- clear, accessible and locally relevant information
- independent advocacy and one-to-one assistance
- warm referrals, with help to make the connection
- regional service mapping and follow-up
- safeguards for people who are not eligible for the NDIS but still need support

Commitment sought: Establish a regional disability safety net so no person is left without information, advocacy or a clear pathway to support.

3. Put regional people with disability at the centre of decisions and accountability

The next State Disability Plan must do more than acknowledge regional disadvantage. Regional people with disability should help shape what is delivered, how progress is measured and what happens when commitments are not met.

RIAC is asking candidates and parties to support:

- genuine regional participation by people with disability in planning and implementation
- practical regional actions and measurable outcomes
- transparent public reporting
- stronger links between disability, housing, health, transport, education and justice
- a clear role for independent advocacy in identifying barriers and holding systems accountable

Commitment sought: Embed regional participation, measurable outcomes and public accountability in the next State Disability Plan.

Contact Us

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