LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport

Living with Disability RESEARCH CENTRE

FINAL REPORT

April 2019

Strategies to Support People with Intellectual Disabilities to Participate in Voting

Professor Christine Bigby, Ms. Sophia Tipping, Dr. Emma Bould & Ms. Rebecca Thiele

ENQUIRIES
Prof. Christine Bigby
Director
La Trobe University

T 03 9479 1016
E c.bigby@latrobe.edu.au
latrobe.edu.au/lids

Acknowledgements

This study was funded by Australian Electoral Commissions mentioned below, led by the Victorian Electoral Commission. Research assistance was provided by Dr William Crisp and Julia Van Vuuren. We thank the staff of various disability support organisations and people with intellectual disabilities who participated in the various phases of the study and the leaders of the two organisations who participated in the capacity building initiative. We would also like to acknowledge the support of staff from the VEC and Inclusion Melbourne.

Research Partners

Victorian Electoral Commission VEC

inclusionmelbourne

Supporting Partners

AEC Australian Electoral Commission

electoral commission NSW

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN Electoral Commission

Elections ACT

ECQ ELECTORAL COMMISSION QUEENSLAND

ECSA Electoral Commission SA

Suggested Citation

Bigby, C., Tipping, S., Bould, E., Thiele, R. (2019). *Final report: Strategies to support people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting*. Living with Disability Research Centre, La Trobe University: Bundoora, VIC.

Electronic copies are available from the La Trobe University Research Repository

http://hdl.handle.net/1959.9/563636

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 4

Phase 1 – Perceptions of staff in the disability sector about voting 6

Phase 2 - Experiences of people with intellectual disabilities about voting 19

Phase 3 – Stakeholder advisory group 33

Phase 4 – Process and outcome evaluation of the VEC capacity building initiative 38

Summary and conclusions 59

Recommendations 63

References 64

Appendices 66

Tables

Table 1. Online staff survey types of organisation where participants worked 10

Table 2. Online survey positions occupied by participants 10

Table 3. Online survey staff attitudes to voting in general 11

Table 4. Online staff survey attitudes towards people with mild to moderate intellectual disability and voting 12

Table 5. Online staff survey attitudes towards people with complex support and voting 13

Table 6a. Online staff survey barriers prior to voting for people with intellectual disabilities 15

Table 6b. Online staff survey barriers during voting for people with intellectual disability 16

Table 6c. Online survey barriers following voting for people with intellectual disability 16

Table 7. Online staff survey experience of direct support staff of supporting people with intellectual disability to vote 17

Table 8. Online staff survey experience of indirect staff of supporting people with intellectual disability to vote 18

Table 9. Location and number of participants in each focus group (FG) 22

Table 10. Focus group participant characteristics 23

Table 11. Participants' participation in civil and political participation other than voting 24

Table 12. Voter and non-voter characteristics 25

Table 13. Program logic of VEC initiative 50

Table 14. Staff online survey participant characteristics at Time 1 and Time 2 53

Table 15. Characteristics of face to face survey participants with intellectual disabilities at Time 1 and Time 2 54

Table 16. Comparisons between Time 1 and Time 2 of enrolment, certainty and voting status of people with intellectual disabilities 56

Table 17. Description of support received by people with intellectual disabilities 59

Table 18. Process evaluation data sources 66

Executive Summary

Voting is an important part of political citizenship. International research suggests that people with intellectual disabilities have low participation rates in voting. There is, however, little knowledge about the participation of this group in Australian elections. The study reported here was commissioned by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), conducted by the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University and supported by almost every electoral commission in Australia.

The aim was to explore the barriers and facilitators of voting for people with intellectual disabilities in order to understand how to best support their participation. The views of staff in the disability sector and the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities were sought using surveys and focus groups.

Barriers to voting for people with intellectual disabilities

- limited support from staff in disability organisations and family members
- little attention given to issues of voting by disability organisations or lack of encouragement to their staff to provide support
- low expectations from staff and family
- uncertainty of disability support staff about the legitimacy of some types of voting support they might provide
- doubts by staff and families about the capacity of people with more severe intellectual disabilities to understand and participate in voting.

Facilitating factors

- support from family members for voting
- staff willingness to provide some types of support for voting
- staff acknowledgement of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

Evaluation of the capacity building initiative

A capacity building initiative (the Initiative) was designed in collaboration with a stakeholder advisory group and implemented, by the VEC, in the lead up to the November 2018 Victorian State election. The Initiative aimed to up-skill staff in two disability organisations, increasing their awareness of voting and assistance to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote. The Initiative was evaluated from the perspective of both staff and people with intellectual disabilities using a range of indicators of change.

The Initiative led to some positive changes among the group of 45 people with intellectual disabilities who were surveyed.

- the number people who had voted increased from 21 (45%) to 24 (51%)
- the number of people enrolled increased from 17 (36%) to 22 (47%)

- the number of people who were certain about their enrolment status increased from 31 (66%) to 42 (89%)

Staff were very positive about the resources and educational sessions designed to increase their capacity to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote. There were significant increases in:

- staff knowledge about voting rights
- staff awareness of the relevant voting resources
- staff who felt support for voting was endorsed by their organisation

The willingness of staff to provide support was high before the Initiative and remained so after it. Staff attitudes about voting for people with intellectual disabilities remained fairly neutral and staff confidence in supporting this group to vote did not change. Some staff remained uncertain about whether all people with intellectual disabilities should be supported to vote, and boundaries between support with practical aspects of voting and decisions about who to vote for.

Interviews with staff from the VEC and the two disability organisations after the Initiative reflected on its process. They identified:

- the need for dedicated resources and a longer time frame to build relationships with senior organisational leaders in disability organisations and for multiple site visits to ensure all staff are engaged
- the need to further explore avenues for reaching out and engaging with families of adults with intellectual disabilities about voting
- the lack of guidelines for staff and families about the application of provisions that can deny enrolment to people with intellectual disabilities on the basis of “unsound mind, is incapable of understanding the nature and significance of enrolment and voting” (Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918 s.93(8)(a); Constitution Act, 1975 s.48(2)
- the lack of accessible information about current affairs and party-political platforms available to people with intellectual disabilities and their supporters that acts as a catalyst for talking about political platforms and deciding who to vote for.

Recommendations

1. Electoral commissions continue to promote strategies to build the capacity of disability organisations and their staff to support people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting and political debates.
2. That future capacity building strategies take account of the lengthy period required and the significant commitment of staff time needed to effectively resource and implement such initiatives.
3. That strategies to engage families in education about voting rights and support be explored by electoral commissions and/or other bodies with an interest in equal rights to participation.
4. That peer education is further explored and piloted by electoral commissions as a strategy to build the individual capacity of people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting.
5. The role that law reform may play in removing supporters' uncertainties and doubts about who has the right to vote and legitimate types of support be noted by electoral commissions and other relevant government bodies.
6. The significance of clear and accessible information for people with intellectual disabilities about political platforms and public affairs be noted by electoral commissions and non-government bodies with a view to generating further exploration of strategies to produce and disseminate this type of information.

Introduction

The report details a study that was conducted by La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre in collaboration with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and Inclusion Melbourne. The study explored, for the first time in Australia, the voting experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and the type of support needed to facilitate their participation. It had four phases:

1. A survey of staff in the disability sector about their attitudes and experiences of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote.
2. Focus groups and a face-to-face survey with people with intellectual disabilities about their experiences of voting.
3. Design of a capacity building initiative delivered by the VEC in the lead up to the November 2018 State election.
4. Evaluation of the outcomes and processes of the capacity building initiative.

A project reference group of representatives from the VEC, Inclusion Melbourne, and the Living with Disability Research Centre guided the project. The group was expanded in phase three to include other stakeholders. The research was approved by the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee (HEC17-025). All data has been de-identified, to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and organisations involved, with the exception of the VEC.

A collaborative action research approach was used. Action research has dual goals of generating practitioner or citizen-driven knowledge and action to address immediate issues and inform development of best practise guidelines (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). The research process is iterative, emergent and involves partnerships with practitioners and stakeholders throughout – from identifying the problem to implementing solutions (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993). The research partners, the VEC, Inclusion Melbourne and the Living with Disability Research Centre shared perspectives about the importance of people with intellectual disabilities realising their right to vote but recognised the absence of evidence available to inform any new initiatives.

Background

The right to participate fully and effectively in society is a key principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The right to vote, inherent in the Convention, is a core element of political citizenship in Australian democracy. International research suggests, that people with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from voting on the grounds of capacity and those enrolled have lower rates of voting compared to the general community (James, Harvey & Hatton, 2018; Keeley, Redley, Holland & Clare, 2008; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014). There is evidence to suggest however, that some people with intellectual disabilities are interested in political participation and want to have their voice heard and make a difference in society (Agran, MacLean & Kitchen, 2016; Bell & Horsler, 2003; Frawley & Bigby, 2011).

Primary barriers to voting for people with intellectual disabilities identified in the literature are the negative attitudes of others around them, such as family members and disability support staff, and legal provisions that exclude or excuse them from voting (Agran, MacLean, & Kitchen, 2016; Agran & Hughes, 2013; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014; Redley, 2008; Ryan, Henderson, & Bonython, 2016; Savery, 2015). Enabling factors have been identified as education and access to understandable information about voting, and support and encouragement from others to vote (Agran et al., 2016; Friedman, 2018; Friedman & Rizzolo, 2017; James, Harvey, & Hatton, 2018; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013; Keeley, Redley, Holland, & Clare, 2008). Notably, there is no published Australian research about voting and people with intellectual disabilities, meaning their rates of voting, and the barriers and enablers more specific to our context, have not been explored.

Making adjustments to facilitate voting for people with intellectual disabilities involves more than addressing physical access or modes of communication. A report of a study-tour documented various initiatives to support voting of people with intellectual disabilities from Canada, Sweden and the UK (Despott, 2017). Most were small scale with little evidence about effectiveness.

Phase 1 – Perceptions of Staff in the Disability Sector about Voting

The research question in this phase was: what do staff in the disability sector perceive as barriers and facilitating factors to voting participation of people with intellectual disabilities? An online survey was used to explore the attitudes of staff from across the disability sector about the voting rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their experiences providing support.

Phase 1 - Data collection and analysis

59-item online survey with open-ended and closed questions was designed to be completed by staff across the disability sector (see appendix A). The survey items were informed by the international literature and sought information from participants about their:

- experiences of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting
- perspectives about people with intellectual disabilities voting, including barriers they confronted and potential strategies for providing support
- reflections on any programs or initiatives to support voting by people with intellectual disabilities that they had been involved with.

The survey also sought socio-demographic information, such as age, gender, qualifications, and years of experience in the disability sector. Staff from the VEC and Inclusion Melbourne reviewed the draft survey and it was piloted with a small group of staff from the disability sector. Feedback from the pilot was compiled and incorporated into the final survey.

Information about the survey was distributed through the networks of the VEC, Inclusion Melbourne and the Living with Disability Research Centre, and included in newsletters of various disability service providers, peak organisations and advocacy bodies. This method of distribution meant that it was not possible to know how many staff in the sector received the survey and were invited to participate.

All quantitative data were entered into SPSS 21[1] and analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions were transferred to a spreadsheet and analysed thematically.

[1] This is a computer package for statistical analysis in the social sciences produced by IBM

Phase 1 – Participants

One hundred and fifty-seven people began the survey and 102 completed it. The majority of participants were female, (83, 78%), aged between 50-59 years (31, 29%), had completed some form of post-school qualification (62, 58%) and had more than 15 years experience in the disability sector. Tables 1 and 2 show the types of organisations participants worked for and positions they occupied.

Table 1. *Online staff survey types of organisation where participants worked*

	n	%
Non-government organisation	117	75%
(Disability support)	(97)	(62%)
(Advocacy)	(11)	(8%)
(Peak body)	(2)	(1%)
(Charitable)	(2)	(1%)
(Health)	(2)	(1%)
(Not specified)	(3)	(2%)
Government	29	18%
Education sector	4	3%
Other	7	4%

Table 2. *Online staff survey positions occupied by participants*

	n	%
Executive management	37	24%
Direct support worker	34	21%
Front line management	31	20%
Case manager/Care coordinator	15	10%
Educator/Trainer	11	7%
Project officer	10	6%
Allied health professional	5	3%
Advocate	5	3%
Administration	3	2%
Other	6	4%

Table 1 shows that the majority of participants worked in non-government disability support organisations. Just over half of participants (63, 57%) worked directly with people with intellectual disabilities rather than indirectly through managerial, advocacy or policy development activities (Table 2).

Phase 1 – Online survey findings

Staff views about people with intellectual disabilities voting

Three aspects of staff attitudes were measured. Attitudes to voting in general (Table 3), people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities voting (Table 4) and people with severe to profound intellectual disabilities voting (Table 5).

Table 3. *Online survey staff attitudes to voting in general*

	Strongly Agree/Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I never vote in elections	4	4%	2	2%	99	94%	105
I think voting in elections is important	99	94%	4	4%	2	2%	105
I am not interested in politics	15	15%	20	19%	69	66%	104
I regularly discuss political issues or voting with others	65	62%	18	17%	22	21%	105

Table 3 shows the majority of participants voted in elections themselves, thought elections were important and had some interest in politics. Participants were generally supportive of participation in voting by people with intellectual disabilities, but also recognised some barriers to voting.

Table 4. *Online staff survey attitudes towards people with mild to moderate intellectual disability and voting*

	Strongly Agree/Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree /Disagree		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
People with mild to moderate intellectual disability DO NOT have the right to vote	1	1%	4	5%	75	94%	80
People with mild to moderate intellectual disability should have the same right to vote as everyone else	75	94%	2	2%	3	4%	80
People with mild to moderate intellectual disability are able to understand (either alone or with support):							
- some political issues	70	90%	7	9%	1	1%	78
- how to vote	62	79%	13	17%	3	4%	78
- the impact of voting	64	82%	11	14%	3	4%	78
Voting is too difficult for people with mild to moderate intellectual disability	5	6%	13	17%	60	77%	78

Note all percentages have been rounded up.

Table 5. *Online staff survey attitudes towards people with complex support needs and voting*

	Strongly Agree/Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
People with complex support needs DO NOT have the right to vote	0	0%	2	4%	50	96%	52
People with complex support needs should have the same right to vote as everyone else	45	86%	5	10%	2	4%	52
People with complex support needs are able to understand (either alone or with support):							
- some political issues	23	49%	14	29%	10	22%	47
- how to vote	24	51%	13	28%	10	21%	47
- the impact of voting	21	45%	14	30%	12	26%	47
Voting is too difficult for people with complex support needs	12	25.5%	12	25.5%	23	50%	47

Note all percentages have been rounded up.

As Tables 4 and 5 show, a majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that people with intellectual disabilities, irrespective of the severity of their disability, had the right to vote. Whilst a majority agreed that people with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities would be able to understand voting with support, this was not the case in respect of people with complex support needs. Just over a quarter of participants (25.5%) agreed with the statement that ‘voting is too difficult for people with complex support needs’, and 51% thought this group would have difficulties, even with support in understanding how to vote. This suggests that some participants perceived capacity as an obstacle to participation in voting for people with complex support needs

Staff views about barriers to voting

Staff perceptions of barriers to voting were also measured. Results are shown in Table, 6a, 6b and 6c. Consistent with previous literature, participants recognised barriers to voting other than capacity. The most prominent barriers were perceived as:

- a lack of information
- lack of support to make voting-related decisions
- a lack of voting experience
- the attitudes of others
- lack of support on the day to vote.

Some of the comments in the open-ended questions about barriers highlighted the impact of community attitudes on participation in voting by people with intellectual disabilities. For example, one participant wrote,

> There is a community presumption that people with intellectual impairment should be exempt from voting. This is an indication of a lack of value and understanding that people with disability can be informed about politics and voting and have the same rights as everyone else.

The multiplicity of barriers to voting for people with intellectual disabilities was summed by one participant who commented, “it’s not the easy read that needs to change – it’s the complicated process of voting.”

Table 6a. *Online staff survey barriers prior to voting for people with intellectual disabilities*

	Strongly/Agree		Neutral		Strongly/Disagree		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Lack of previous experience or practice voting	107	89%	10	8%	4	3%	121
Fear, anxiety or nervousness about voting	76	63%	21	17%	24	20%	121
Limited opportunity to discuss politics & voting	96	79%	16	13%	9	8%	121
Not having people around with an interest in voting or politics	86	71%	22	18%	13	11%	121
Limited access to accessible information about politics	108	89%	10	8%	3	3%	121
Limited access to related formal education or training	106	88%	11	9%	4	3%	121
Limited access to support related to decision making	107	88%	9	8%	5	4%	121
Limited access to groups or advocacy related to voting or political issues	102	84%	12	10%	7	6%	121
Disability support organisations not seeing voting support as part of their role	89	74%	15	12%	17	14%	121
Laws that impact on voting or enrolment	28	23%	82	68%	11	9%	121
The attitudes of, or lack of encouragement by, others	88	74%	14	12%	16	14%	118

Note all percentages are rounded up.

Table 6b. *Online staff survey barriers during voting for people with intellectual disabilities*

	Strongly/Agree		Neutral		Strongly/Disagree		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Limited appropriate support from polling staff	77	69%	18	16%	16	15%	111
Limited appropriate support from family members	70	63%	24	22%	17	15%	111
Limited appropriate support from paid disability support staff	58	52%	30	27%	23	21%	111
Limited prompting to vote	73	66%	19	17%	19	17%	111
Limited access to support at voting centre/polling place	85	76%	14	13%	12	11%	111
Limited access to accessible voting materials such as how to vote cards from political parties or the ballot	86	77%	15	14%	10	9%	111
Limited physical access to voting centre/polling place	57	52%	27	24%	27	24%	111
Limited access to alternative means of voting	61	55%	20	18%	30	27%	111
Limited or no support to understand and complete the voting process	83	75%	17	15%	11	10%	111
Limited or no access to transportation to the voting centre/polling place	67	60%	22	20%	22	20%	111

Note all percentages are rounded up.

Table 6c. *Online survey barriers following voting for people with intellectual disabilities*

	Strongly/Agree		Neutral		Strongly/Disagree		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Lack of support to access information or understand the election results and its implications	83	75%	19	17%	9	8%	111
Lack of emotional support/debriefing following voting	69	62%	32	29%	10	9%	111

Note all percentages are rounded up.

Minimal experience of supporting voting

Tables 7 and 8 give an overview of staff experiences of providing direct and indirect support to voting. Despite supporting the right to vote of people with intellectual disabilities, few staff had any experience of supporting this group in recent elections.

Table 7. *Online staff survey experience of direct support staff of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote*

	Yes		No		Unsure		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Have you ever supported people with intellectual disabilities to vote?	22	35%	40	63%	1	2%	63
Did you provide support to anyone with intellectual disabilities in the lead up to, during or following any of the below elections?	17	27%	39	62%	7	11%	63
- The Federal election on July 2016	12	19%					
- The Victorian State election on the 29th of November 2014	11	17%					
- The local council elections (October 2016 except for Greater Geelong)	7	11%					
Have you been provided with guidance from your organisation about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?	16	25%	39	61%	8	13%	63

As Table 7 shows, only 22 staff (35%) whose work involved direct support had ever supported a person with intellectual disability to vote and a majority had received no guidance about this from their organisation.

The types of support that direct support workers had provided in the lead up to elections included:

- reminders and encouragement
- completion of enrolment paperwork
- advocacy about an individual's capacity or right to vote
- conversations about how to vote, political issues, candidates, the right to vote and its significance.

On election day, the support they provided had been primarily concerned with the actual processes of voting:

- being marked off the roll
- completing and submitting the ballot paper
- reminders about voting
- transport to the polling place
- encouragement.

After the election, support took the form of assistance to understand the results. One participant suggested that a person was more likely to get voting support if it was a goal in their support plan saying:

> … often [voting] not being a goal for individuals with intellectual disabilities is a barrier in itself that I feel needs to be explored further.

As Table 8 shows, 40% of participants (14) who indirectly supported people with intellectual disabilities, said their organisation had not taken any specific initiatives to support participation in voting. However, 54% (19) said the issues had been discussed.

Table 8. *Online staff survey experience of indirect staff of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote*

	Yes		No		Unsure		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Have you or your organisation discussed or given thought to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?	19	54%	8	23%	8	23%	35
Has your organisation implemented any initiatives related to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?	14	40%	14	40%	7	20%	35
Has your organisation implemented any initiatives for any of the below elections?	6	18	11	31%	18	51%	35
- The Federal election on July 2016	7	20%					
- The Victorian State election on the 29th of November 2014	5	14%					
- The local council elections (October 2016 except for Greater Geelong)	2	6%					

The voting support initiatives that had been instigated were educational programs, or the development and dissemination of information about how to vote and voting rights targeted at staff, people with intellectual disabilities and/or their families. A small number of organisations had been involved in policy work and systemic advocacy around voting for people with intellectual disabilities or promoting their understanding about political issues. Most participants who had been involved in voting initiatives thought they had not been very successful. The main reasons given by participants that organisations had not taken any initiatives about voting were: lack of funding, time, or uncertainty about how best to deliver voting support.

A majority of participants were not confident about the way their organisation supported voting. Only 12 (11%) thought most of the people they supported were enrolled and 11 (10%) that they had been supported to vote. Despite the limited attention to voting by organisations, more than three-quarters had some mechanisms for involving people with intellectual disabilities to have a say about the quality of services they received from the organisation.

Staff uncertainty about support and influence

Responses suggested that some staff were uncertain whether they should support people with intellectual disabilities to vote and thought voting was too difficult for people with complex support needs Few staff felt they had been given any guidance about how to provide voting support. Responses to open-ended questions illustrated staff's concerns. They said for example:

> we receive information around the rights of people with disabilities to vote, this information is discussed with all individuals, however we can never know if the person has understood the information presented.
>
> A lot of people with complex disabilities will have little or no comprehension of the voting process and its implication on their lives.

More than half of participants felt that people with intellectual disabilities, regardless of their level of impairment, were at risk of being unduly influenced about whom they should vote for. Participants noted for example:

> None of our residents with profound disabilities vote as they are unable to communicate that they understand protocols or the voting system- if they were to vote it would be the carer who would do it on their behalf and depending on the carer you would run the risk of undue influence.
>
> Often people with an intellectual disability are unable to provide informed consent and are very easily influenced.

Participants also thought that few people with intellectual disabilities had confidence in their own ability to vote and make decisions about who to vote for. Several described how some people with intellectual disabilities internalised the negative attitudes of others in the community and believed themselves to be incapable of voting, saying:

> People's general life experience often reinforces an identity and self-belief that their opinion does not count, and they have little to offer. If this was remediated, meaningful participation in not only voting, but other aspects of civic life could be improved.
>
> It is in the minds of the people I currently support, that they do not have the background knowledge or understanding of politics and therefore voting is not a thing that they do. I have tried.

Many respondents were familiar with information about voting tailored for people with intellectual disabilities. Almost half knew about the VEC's Easy English guide (30, 47%). Thirteen (43%) of those who knew about the guide had used it and emphasised the value as

a catalyst for conversations about voting. They said for example, that they had “sat with them [person with intellectual disabilities], read through and explained”, “used [it] to explain to individuals,” that the words were, “still too complex, [and it] requires a lot more face-to-face work with the use of tools”. Some comments suggested the guide was more useful for people with mild than severe intellectual disabilities. Notably, 96% of participants had not heard of the Voters Voice iPad application. Other resources staff had utilised were Easy English guides put together by advocacy groups or state government departments, pamphlets and other media, such as the news, YouTube videos and local newspapers.

Phase 1 - Conclusions

Findings of phase one suggested that staff across the disability sector supported the right of people with intellectual disabilities to vote, but had little experience of providing support to vote. The few organisational initiatives around voting support that were mentioned were judged as having had little success. Some participants were uncertain about overcoming the difficulties voting posed for people with high support needs and about the legitimacy of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote and how to do so. These findings suggest a need for staff in the disability sector to have greater clarity about issues of capacity, undue influence, and their potential roles in supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

Phase 2 - Experiences of People with Intellectual Disabilities of Voting

The research question in phase 2 asked "what are the barriers and facilitating factors to voting participation experienced by people with intellectual disabilities?" Focus groups and a brief face-to-face survey were used to explore the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities about voting.

Phase 2 - Methods

Eight focus groups, with between 2-9 people with intellectual disabilities, were conducted in Melbourne and regional centres. In total 45 people participated in the groups. Participants were recruited through disability service and advocacy organisations which circulated the information about the project. In most groups, participants knew each other, and, in some instances, pre-existing groups were invited to be one of the focus groups. Table 9 shows the location and number of participants in each group.

Table 9. *Location and number of participants in each focus group (FG)*

	Number of participants	Location
FG.1	9	Inner metro
FG.2	4	Outer metro
FG.3	8	Outer metro
FG.4	8	Regional
FG.5	2	Regional
FG.6	4	Inner metro
FG.7	4	Inner metro
FG.8	6	Inner metro
Total	**45**	

The groups explored participants' perspectives about political participation and their experiences of voting. A topic guide, based on the issues identified in the literature and the phase 1 online survey, was used to facilitate the discussion, and where relevant images, were used to prompt discussion. Topics included:

- awareness of voting processes
- experiences of voting
- perspectives on voting-related issues and politics.

All focus groups were facilitated by the second author and a research assistant with experience of working with people with intellectual disabilities. In some groups, a support worker who knew participants was also present to assist with communication. Focus group sessions lasted between 40 minutes and one hour and ten minutes, and were all audio

recorded. Prior to or following each focus group, participants completed a short face-to-face survey to collect data of a factual nature about their individual characteristics and pattern of voting (see Appendix B).

The audio recording of each focus group was transcribed and de-identified. Data were analysed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each transcript was read twice and coded line by line, to identify broad topic areas and themes across the groups. Data from the survey were entered into SPSS21 and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Focus group participants

Table 10 shows the characteristics of the 45 people with intellectual disabilities who participated in the focus groups. Just over half were male (24, 53%) and 56% (25) were aged under 40 years old. The most common place of residence for focus group members was living with parents (19, 42%). A majority of participants were not in paid employment (35, 78%).

Table 10. *Focus group participant characteristics*

		n	%
Gender			
	Male	24	53%
	Female	21	47%
Age			
	Under 20	2	4%
	20-29	12	27%
	30-39	11	24%
	40-49	6	13%
	50-59	4	9%
	60-69	4	9%
	Missing data	6	13%
Employed			
	Yes	9	20%
	No	35	78%
	Missing data	1	2%
Currently studying		11	24%
Living environment			
	Group home	15	33%
	Independent living	10	22%
	With family	19	42%
	Missing data	1	2%

Phase 2 - Findings

Quantitative data from face-to-face survey

Just under half of all participants (21, 47%) had voted, and of these 14 (67%) had voted at least twice. Some participants had taken part in the other forms of civil and political participation described in Table 11, most commonly volunteering (24, 53%) and membership of self-advocacy groups (21, 47%).

Table 11. *Participants' participation in civil and political participation other than voting*

	n	%
Member of self-advocacy group	21	47%
Member of other political groups	5	11%
Member of government advisory committees	9	20%
Member of organisational governance committee	2	4%
Member of another type of organisational committee	9	20%
Attendance at local community meetings/consultations	5	11%
Participation in protests/rally/demonstrations	7	16%
Contacting politicians or local members	1	2%
Volunteering	24	53%

Of the 24 participants who did not vote, 11 (50%) said they had no interest in voting, 6 (27%) said they did want to vote and one person (2%) was unsure. Table 12 compares the characteristics of those who had voted with those who had not. A visual inspection suggests there are few differences between these two groups, and a statistical test of difference (chi-square) indicated there were no statistically significant differences.

Table 12. *Voter and non-voter characteristics*

	Voter *n*=21 (%)	Non-Voter *n*=22 (%)	Total *n*=45 (%)
Gender			
Male	13 (62)	11 (50)	24 (53)
Female	8 (38)	11 (50)	21 (47)
Age			
Under 39	13 (62)	12 (55)	25 (56)
Over 40	6 (29)	8 (36)	14 (31)
Unknown/Missing data	2 (10)	2 (9)	6 (13)
Employed			
Yes	6 (29)	3 (14)	9 (20)
No	15 (71)	19 (86)	35 (78)
Missing data	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)
Living environment			
Group home	4 (19)	10 (45)	15 (33)
Independent living	7 (33)	3 (14)	10 (22)
With family	10 (48)	9 (41)	19 (42)
Missing data	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)
Other political participation			
Self-advocacy group membership	13 (62)	8 (36)	21 (47)
Member of other political groups	3 (14)	2 (9)	5 (11)
Government advisory committees	3 (14)	3 (14)	6 (13)
Other organisational committee	2 (10)	7 (32)	9 (20)
Protests/Rally/Demonstrations	5 (24)	2 (9)	7 (16)
Volunteering	12 (57)	12 (55)	24 (53)

Qualitative findings from focus groups

Frames of reference for voting

Various life experiences had given participants frames of reference for voting. Some had voted themselves, observed others voting by going along with them to the voting centre, or had voted in other types of elections such as committees or training sessions. Participants said for example:

> I have not voted but I've been to places where we have to vote …. I've never voted personally. I've actually been with family when they've voted. (FG.4)

> I've seen this [ballot] at work. Maybe somebody at work… [What were they voting for?] I don't know. A committee or something. (FG.1)

Participants' experiences gave them some familiarity with the process of voting in elections and the way preferences had to be recorded on ballot papers:

> [P1] They hand them out to you [how to vote cards] actually before you vote and they tell you what to vote for when you actually get it [Ballot paper] and they do it with a big white piece of paper…Yeah, the top one, you choose one, the bottom one, you can do so many so I do know... [P2] It's actually quite interesting because you walk in and you've got three booths and I think you've got 10 minutes to answer the questions and then fold it and put it in the box. (FG.4)

Some participants were clear about the purpose of voting and likely outcomes of elections. They said for example:

> We are voting for the Labor Party or the Greens or the Liberals. That does make sense. Of who's going to win and who's going to win the next election. (FG.7)

Voting as a collective experience

Voting was perceived as a collective experience, connected to community places. Participants talked, for example, about voting as something that was done in the company of others, such as housemates or family members rather than alone, even in the case of postal voting:

> Well, I lived in a DHHS house and my other housemate votes too, so we both go along, and we go and vote down at [Name of] School which is just on the corner of [Street name], just on the corner near a road. We go over and we vote over there. (FG.6)

> Yes, I have been voting before. I've been voting a lot. And I have voted with my parents. (FG.7)

The comment from one participant who was obliged to do a postal vote because of access issues reinforced the sense that voting was a collective experience. She said:

> I just find that I guess it is better doing it from home, but it would be nice to be able to [go] into that area and say so and so is here for voting. (FG.8)

Participants were very familiar with the places that turned into voting centres at election time, and associated voting with those places. This familiarity helped to affirm the collective nature of voting and its connection to local communities:

> [Mum] used to vote at the town hall, she used to vote there, or at my primary school. (FG.1)

> I remember voting in a few places around Melbourne: in the church and in the school; I remember doing that. (FG.7)

Some regarded voting as important, alluding to it as part of their social responsibility. Participants said for example:

> And voting is very important to take part in. So, I mean, we have to vote every year, so we have to vote to see who's going to win the next campaign at election and win the next election next year… I'm saying it's always very important to vote every year. (FG.7)

> I think it is important because… they want to get the government altogether to make some place like better for everyone. (FG.6)

Some perceived personal benefits of voting. One participant said for example that he found voting " helpful, so then I know who's going to become the prime minister and what they're talking about. That's why". (FG.7)

Diverse political perspectives

Participants' views ranged across the spectrum of political perspectives. They identified many topics they thought were important and warranted political action. These included foreign affairs, equality, homelessness, discrimination, the economy, infrastructure, safety and health. They said for example:

> To me I'd like to change the world to have peace in the world because in Iraq in the war there's too much fighting going on, too many people getting killed. (FG.6)

> I think with the homeless-thing, we should go and help to find them a home. And like, we can pay their, I don't know, bills and gas and all that. (FG.2)

Reflecting various political perspectives, participants' views about the responsibilities of the State differed. Some saw the State's role as benevolent, ensuring peoples' basic needs were met, some thought that it had more of a law and order role, while others thought that the State should have a charitable role in caring for community members:

> The government should sort the money out so…they give the money to the people that live out in the street and give them a house, so we can go and help them. (FG. 2)

> And same with some people in the world, some people got no water, no food, no nothing. Again, the government maybe should help more, you know what I mean. (FG.6)

Like many other community members, participants' political views had been influenced by their families. They said, for example:

> This was funny. When I was doing it [voting] he goes - he grabs my forearm. He goes, "Whatever you do, don't grab anything from the [name of political party] because I don't want you to vote for [leader of political party]"… And I'm like, why? Because he's against - anything he does, he hates [leader of political party], too. [Do you think the same way? Or did you change your mind from your dad?] No. I was just like - I agree with him. Like, the [name of political party] - I'm like - yeah. I don't like [leader of political party]. (FG.8)

> Well, I did, yeah, because I always pick the [name of political party], always… Because my brother and he [works] there and he's the first person who got me inspired by voting for the [name of political party]. (FG.6)

Perspectives on political participation - interested, apathetic or disgruntled

Participants' perspectives about political participation fell into three distinct groups. One group were very interested, politically engaged or curious about politics and current affairs. They said for example:

> She [name of politician] is my favourite because - now she's actually writing a book about herself and about working in the government. Yes, because I find it interesting. (FG.8)

Some of this group had ideas for change and ways of influencing government policy. They suggested for example:

> You can write a letter to the government. But you wouldn't know who to speak to, so you can just put, "To whom it may concern." (FG.5)

> Ask the government online or… If you see them in person, ask them. The person, if they're in the town. (FG.3)

> I reckon the government should make a policy to stop all the violence that's going on, so have a campaign saying, "Stop violence and all the bullying around the place." … Because I reckon it's so bad that when people bully people and people violence people it's just the thing that government will need to stop. (FG.6)

Another group were apathetic or disengaged from politics and current affairs, feeling that these things did not impact directly on their lives and anyway they could have little influence on the big issues in society. For example, they said:

> [P1] My dad and mum watch the news but I never have watched the news… It's all about bad news. [P2] It's all bad news. (FG.7)

> I'm not - I know there's a few people that's high in politics, but I'm just in the low interest, really. I'll vote when I need to. But when it comes to other personal tie-ins and going through politics and reading about them in the paper and Facebook and newspaper and radio, all that social media type thing, I don't tend to look at it that much. (FG.5)

A third group were unhappy with the current political environment and questioned the inequities of power among different groups in society. They felt excluded from politics and were distrustful of politicians. They said, for example:

> [P1] Why can't they get more females to do with female issues like domestic violence, sexual assault, mental harm?... And the men don't care about raising the issues like domestic violence against women, sexual harassment in the workplace and sexual assault because there's not many places where people can go for crisis accommodation, people are homeless. Why don't they open more buildings and make them into shelters for people? [P2] Sometimes I think us people like me and [other participant] who can't read and that, we get left out. We get left out by the government because we don't get that much money from the government, do we…?[P3] I just wanted to say one thing, I reckon that they should tell the truth. There's some of them that don't tell the truth at all. They say what they're going to say and then they don't do it. (FG.4)

"It's not easy to vote"

Although many participants were familiar with voting, they perceived it as being difficult and challenging from a procedural point of view and the expectations placed on them. Those who had voted talked about how hard it had been for them, and said for example:

> And it's not easy to vote, it's very hard. (FG.1)

> [P1] It was alright, I think. But it was a little bit hard, though. [P2] I guess, the whole voting system, for me, is a bit advanced and confusing. (FG.5)

Aspects that participants had found difficult were interactions with voting centre staff and understanding voting papers, particularly those for upper house elections. They said for example:

> Like if you confuse the colour, like white or green, you have to get somebody to show them how to do it, and pick the colour side, white or green. (FG.3)

> Well the white one [upper house ballot], I was like struggling to read the whole thing, to see what numbers I can put in, in each one. I was reading the whole thing and oh my god, it's so hard. I did the green one [lower house ballot] instead of the white one. (FG.2)

Some participants talked about the stress from feeling under pressure to complete the voting process quickly, and that voting constituted some sort of test they had to get right. Their comments suggested that they felt ill prepared to vote:

> [P1] You don't want to be in there for too long, otherwise people will get probably agitated because it's such a big, long line behind you... It's kind of hard because we didn't really talk about it beforehand, so I just thought of something on the spot, really. [P2] It was hard that you've got to tick it. You've got to pick who you choose.

> The thing that I found really hard and difficult to understand is how in the hell can I vote for one to eight or one to 60 when I don't know them from a bar of soap and I've never met them so it's really hard. It makes it difficult to know how you're going to vote and sometimes, crikey, one, two, five, six, nine, eight, three, two, I'm damn finished but I didn't know what I was doing. (FG.4)

Perceptions about the difficulties had deterred some participants from voting. They said for example:

> Why I don't want to vote is it's a bit hard and it's all complicated. (FG.5)

> At one stage I thought about voting, but that's when I heard them say it's very hard because you've got to choose very carefully. And once you've chosen, well, you have to agree that the person you chose does a good thing. But if they don't, well then, you wish you hadn't chosen that person. (FG.8)

Some participants were disturbed by the level of aggression displayed in the media by some politicians. They also found it difficult to comprehend the stance of the different political

parties from campaign materials which were poorly adapted to people with low literacy. For example, participants said:

> [P1] I'd seen a few things on TV… I've heard people say this one does that, that one does that. It's still confusing to me, but I don't know. [P2] I guess, it would make it easier if they stopped going against each other by, "You should vote for us because we do this and you shouldn't vote for them because we are better than them." [P3] I don't like the - the conflict between each other. Like, putting down one team and saying that they are better than there is. (FG.8)

> I usually get a bit spaced out when it comes to the voting, especially going to the booth. You get all this paperwork... I would rather - wish they'd put the key points of the things that they want to achieve, rather than having a big life story about them... Once I know what they want to go for, I find it a lot easier. Then you can just choose what you want. (FG.5)

Obstacles to voting

One of the more tangible barriers to voting experienced by participants were voting centre staff who had not been prepared to accommodate their support needs. They said for example:

> [P1] …it was the first time voting as well [the polling centre staff member said] Still, you can't have your parents' vote...I got into a full-on argument with him… I was like, so you're not going to let me vote with my parents there with me? And he was like "Nup. It's the government…I have not ever done this before and yet you're not going to let me do it? So yeah, that was really frustrating for me at the time. [P2] That is why I've done a postal vote…that's why I've never gone down to one of the schools, because of that same reason. Because the guards there won't let no one - won't let my mum or my dad come help me. That's why I have always done a postal vote. (FG. 8)

> Voting is compulsory if you're 18 unless you're in an institution or you're sick in hospital or whatever and you can prove that you were there at the time of voting. If voting is also a private thing, then… I can't understand why there can't be some other form or some other way that would allow them to do that… When we got to the polling booth, I was asking can I support my wife? They said it's got to be one of the people, like the

> volunteers that walk around. That person supported her but she wanted me to do it. (FG. 4)

Unhelpful attitudes by polling centre staff was by no means a universal experience, suggesting inconsistency between staff's approach to people with intellectual disabilities. For example, one participant talked about how helpful staff at the polling centre had been:

> And first I walked past it and then I walked straight in and I just said, "Now, I've got to stand on my own two feet and do this." And so, the bloke came and he asked me, "Can you read?" And I said, "No, I can't read". Well, he helped me. (FG.4)

The influence of families was evident in the comments of participants who had not voted, and some participants had been given little choice in the matter. They said, for example:

> [P1] I wanted to vote but mum said, "You wouldn't understand it." So, she said, "It's not worth it." And she said, "You wouldn't understand what they're talking about so we're not going to be here"…I haven't voted since.
> [P2] I turned around and I said to her when we went to the voting place, I said, "What's all this about, Mum?" And she said, "That's none of your business. That's got nothing to do with you. You don't need to worry about it… You can't read, you can't write, you can't spell, you're too dumb"… So, in a way, I was told never to vote. (FG. 4)

Sources of support for voting

Support for voting had been given primarily by family members, and most participants were satisfied with how this had been provided. Several suggested, however, that disability support services could be more proactive in providing support to vote. They said:

> So, I'm at the part that my mum reads out. What they're going to do once they get in. So, once I know, I will get my pen or my pencil and I'm like, okay, one on that one, two on that one, three on that one, four on that one, and so on and so on. Once I have done that, I can just copy off there, of what numbers I have picked… as soon as I hear some things, I put a number one against one… One of them is if they're going to support the NDIS. That's one thing that I would like them to focus on. If they're going to be good things for the NDIS, that those pretty much at number one for me. Being a good supporter of the NDIS. (FG.8)

> I think we should let [Disability support organisation] know that they should just try and learn how to vote, let everyone know that you can vote. (FG.6)

From participants' comments it was clear that supporters influenced the way they voted. However, no participants raised any concerns about the influence of supporters. They said:

> My mum tells me what to tick with a pencil and what numbers to put down in the right order [Do you get to choose who to vote for?] My mum helps me, tells me which boxes to tick and what is to be ticked and who's going to become… Prime minister. (FG.7)

> [P1] Well, I got to choose which ones for this part [Lower house ballot]. But for the big white part [Upper house ballot], my mum has had to help me with [that] part...So I only got help with that. [P2] [Mum] just went through it with me. And then I did it on my own, she didn't see it. (FG.8)

Participants had some ideas about ways of making electoral processes less stressful and campaign materials more useful and accessible. They said for example:

> Well, if they sent those pamphlets to people who are on the list - a few weeks or a month prior, at least, before the actual voting day, people would be able to read from them properly and then make a decision beforehand. So, they can go straight in, knowing what they want - who to vote - and that sort of knowledge, that would be very helpful… Instead of on the spot like it usually is… That's why I get stressed about it every time. (FG.5)

> Maybe for the easy read for the ones that don't know how to do voting and tick boxes, to make it smaller [numbers of] candidates and make it easy for them to vote. (FG.6)

Conclusions - Phase 2

The findings from phase two suggest that people with intellectual disabilities have diverse political views and experiences. Although only 47% of participants had voted, a larger proportion were involved in civic or political participation through membership of self-advocacy groups and volunteering. Some were disengaged from politics and others had been actively discouraged from political participation. The three main themes from the focus groups were that people with intellectual disabilities:

- had frames of reference about voting gained through their life experiences
- perceived voting as a collective activity
- held diverse political views and were concerned about a range of public issues, but few had any formal political affiliations
- had perspectives about political participation and social change that fell into three groups: interested, apathetic, and unhappy

- could be stressed about voting
- were often deterred from voting by the attitudes of family members
- experienced inconsistent responses to their need for support from polling staff
- appreciated and were untroubled by the support they received to vote which often also influenced the way they voted
- had ideas to simplify voting procedures and about the need for more accessible information to help with political decision-making.

The data above reflect the perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities about voting and the support they received rather than providing objective indicators about the quality of that support. Similar to findings from overseas, this small study showed that people with intellectual disabilities had a lower rate of voting compared to the general population. For example, 47% of participants had voted in an election compared to 91% of the general community who voted in the 2016 Federal election (Australian Electoral Commission, n.d.).

The findings suggest that low rates of voting by people with intellectual disabilities may be due to limited support for voting, low expectations of others, and doubt about their capacity to understand voting processes. Despite lower rates of voting, the engagement in other forms of civic or political participation by people with intellectual disabilities was comparable to the general population (Evans & Stoker, 2016). Also similar to the general population people with intellectual disabilities had little knowledge about the workings of government and family, particularly parents, played a significant role in shaping political persuasion (McAllister, 2011).

Recommendations for strategies to support participation in voting

These findings suggest the need to increase the knowledge of people with intellectual disabilities about voting and the capacity of their supporters, be they staff or family members, to support and encourage voting. It may be that low rates of voting are symptomatic of the broader social exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and social processes that are not well designed to accommodate their needs. Strategies to adjust the organisation of voting, change supporters' attitudes, and improve the skills and knowledge of both supporters and people with intellectual disabilities will help to increase participation in voting and combat social exclusion. Five potential strategies to support voting for people with intellectual disabilities were recommended at the end of phase two.

1. **Peer outreach by self-advocates**

Supporting and resourcing self-advocacy groups to conduct outreach programs to provide encouragement and information to people with intellectual disabilities about voting. This may complement the work of self-advocacy groups, bringing voting into a sharper focus and add to their resources.

2. **Capacity building of disability services**

Increasing the confidence and willingness of disability organisations and their staff to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote, and to develop educational programs about voting for the people they support.

3. **Family member capacity building**

Educating family members about the political rights of people with intellectual disabilities and equipping them with strategies to support participation in voting and other forms of civil or political participation.

4. **Review electoral staff training and policy**

Revising electoral staff training to include information about the types of support people with intellectual disabilities are likely to need in order to vote without undue stress. This will also help to ensure consistent practice by staff across the State in accommodating the individual needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

5. **Developing more accessible information about voting and political issues**

Ensuring information about voting and forms produced by the VEC are in formats more accessible to people with intellectual disabilities who may not have good literacy skills, and who may need to talk through written material with a supporter. Encouraging political parties, candidates, and the media in general to present information about political platforms and current political affairs in clearer and more accessible formats.

Phase 3 – Research Stakeholder Advisory Group

The VEC was committed to an Initiative to increase voting participation of people with intellectual disabilities in the lead up to the 2018 Victorian State election. A research stakeholder advisory group was convened in the third phase to provide advice about the nature of the Initiative. The group workshopped the five recommendations from phase 2 and prioritised strategies. The final decision rested with the VEC, which also had to consider feasibility and the scope of its responsibility.

Phase 3 - Process

The project reference group (staff from VEC, Inclusion Melbourne and La Trobe University) was expanded to include people with lived experience of intellectual disability, staff from disability services, and a communication specialist. Two workshops were held in early 2018 to discuss the research findings and each of the recommendations arising from them. All people who were not attending as part of their employment were paid for their time and travel costs. Strategies to maximise participation of all members were:

- preparation of Easy English resources and meeting notes
- individual briefings prior to the meetings
- pre-recording input
- prompting members to clarify the meaning of jargon or complicated language
- use of small group discussions

Points from discussion of five potential strategies

Peer outreach by self-advocates

Research advisory group members agreed on the value of using self-advocacy groups as a way to build understanding about voting rights among people with intellectual disabilities. In particular that peer-led training might create community support networks around voting, which could have flow on effects of building social connections between people with intellectual disabilities. Positive aspects about this approach discussed were:

- scope to combine with capacity building strategies for staff in disability services or family members
- peer outreach to people supported by disability services may help to recruit new members to self-advocacy groups
- might increase the visibility of people with intellectual disabilities in the community and contribute to shifting attitudes of community members
- Ambassadors with intellectual disabilities could be included in the VEC's 'Democracy Ambassadors' peer education program which was piloted in a previous election. (This is a program that employs community members from culturally and linguistically

diverse communities to provide information about voting and democracy to their own communities.)

- potential to create opportunities for dialogue beyond electoral processes to political issues as well as linking self-advocacy groups and local political figures.

Some of the challenges discussed included:

- access and costs of transport as the strategy would require travel across the state
- effective support for self-advocates undertaking outreach work
- resources for co-production of high quality materials for a peer-led educational program
- logistical difficulties that might be solved by matching a Democracy Ambassador without intellectual disability with a person with intellectual disability to co-facilitate sessions
- incorporating discussion about broader political issues in peer outreach goes beyond the scope of the VEC whose staff cannot give partisan information.

Capacity building of disability services

To be effective an initiative to shift attitudes and build the capacity of staff in disability services to provide support for voting should include staff at all levels of an organisation, including executive managers, middle managers and direct support staff. The discussions suggested that an initiative of this type might include:

- educating staff about the political rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their rights to be supported
- developing guidance about how the role of disability organisations and their staff in supporting voting might align with existing standards used for auditing and funding services
- empowering disability staff and managers to engage in dialogue about politics and democracy
- skills training for staff in support for voting
- supporting staff and organisations to model democratic processes by incorporating representative or advisory structures involving people with intellectual disabilities into organisational operating models
- combining with capacity-building strategies targeting families or people with intellectual disabilities
- contributing to changes in organisational culture and longer-term changes in community attitudes.

The challenges discussed for this strategy included:

- targeting all staff across an organisation and tailoring the strategy to differently structured organisations would be a complex undertaking
- changing organisational culture is a long-term proposition requiring significant investment over time
- 'one-off' engagement with organisations would not be sufficient, follow-up sessions and support would need to be put in place
- may be beyond the scope of the VEC, especially given the episodic nature of its work.

Discussions suggested ways these challenges could be overcome:

- limiting the pilot to a number of small to medium-sized organisations
- selecting organisations with an existing interest in self-advocacy, community participation or civic participation
- working with organisational leadership to ensure commitment
- providing a strong rationale to senior leaders in organisations that supporting political citizenship is a part of the organisation's role
- VEC providing advice on mapping support for voting to existing standards to incentivise the practice of providing voting support
- emphasising how voting support aligns with directions in disability policy, legal and human rights frameworks.

Family member capacity building

This type of initiative would target family members of people with intellectual disabilities. Although with similar aims as other capacity building strategies a differing approach may need to be taken to raising awareness about the political rights of people with intellectual disabilities and improving support skills. The issues discussed were:

- training or outreach should include both people with intellectual disabilities and their family members to ensure involvement of all parties in discussions about rights
- content would need to be tailored to the various roles that families play in supporting a relative with intellectual disability
- a marketing campaign could be a mechanism for raising awareness and delivering information to family members and their relatives with intellectual disabilities
- new resources could be developed, for example a short checklist with an accompanying video showing ways of providing assistance and encouragement to people with intellectual disabilities with voting

- a resource might also provide information about common concerns such as capacity to vote, returning to the electoral roll and responding to formal letters about failure to vote
- videos designed for people with intellectual disabilities to clarify their right to vote, provide tips about returning to the electoral roll, responding to formal letters or fines and modelling conversations with supporters about enrolling and voting.

Challenges and potential strategies for overcoming these issues discussed were:

- difficulties accessing families, and starting points might be through disability support services, particularly those providing respite or day services, and peak bodies representing families and carers
- many people with intellectual disabilities do not have involved family members so this initiative should be done in conjunction with building the capacity of disability support services
- this type of initiative is difficult to generate or evaluate from the perspective of electoral commissions, given the limited data available on demographics and disability gathered during electoral enrolment.

Review electoral staff training and policy

An internal review of VEC electoral staff training, already underway is likely to address the issues identified in the research. Although there is no face-to-face training for election staff specifically about disability awareness. Information about the support needs of people with intellectual disabilities or low literacy is incorporated into training manuals and staff online training. The development of these materials was overseen by the VEC's Electoral Access Advisory Group. It was suggested that membership of this group be expanded to include people with lived experience of intellectual disability and/or expertise in supporting this group. It was suggested that the research stakeholder advisory group could be involved in reviewing any new training materials.

Developing more accessible information about voting and political issues

Improving the accessibility of various types of information was discussed, including:

- ballot papers, especially those for the Legislative Council
- how to enrol/check enrolment and why to vote
- other media and information that supports decision making associated with voting
- production of information specifically for people with intellectual disabilities and those who support them as well as tailored information for people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds or who require adjustments to ensure physical access in addition to cognitive access

- strategies to address this issue may be better undertaken by non-government organisations.

Research stakeholder advisory group conclusions

The group saw value in all of the recommendations and noted how they could form an integrated set of actions to improve access to voting for people with intellectual disabilities. Building the capacity of staff and family members to include some form of peer support was prioritised.

Phase 4 – Process and Outcome Evaluation of the VEC Capacity Building Initiative

The Initiative decided upon by the VEC reflected the conclusions of the research stakeholder advisory group and aimed to build the capacity of staff and supporters, associated with two disability organisations, to support people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting. The theory of change was that:

> If the VEC built the capacity of the supporters of people with intellectual disabilities in disability organisations, including executive managers, direct support staff and front line managers, as well as other supporters such as family members who are external to the organisations, then enrolment, voting and supported voting will increase among people with intellectual disabilities; and there will be greater commitment to staff capacity building related to voting support by the targeted services.

Table 13 outlines the program logic for the Initiative, highlighting the program activities and anticipated outcomes.

Inputs

The Initiative was funded by the VEC through the Communication and Engagement division, by allocating staff time to design, manage and implement the project. The VEC Disability Electoral Inclusion Officer (referred to as the Project Officer) planned and implemented the Initiative which was overseen by the Manager, Education and Inclusion.

The VEC had considerable experience of building capacity of people with disabilities, their supporters, and other minority groups to participate in voting from its previous work. It had delivered information sessions to disability organisations, dealt with specific enquiries about voting for people with disabilities, created information/educational resources about voting and people with various types of disabilities, and developed the Democracy Ambassadors program. VEC staff were also able to draw on the knowledge developed from working with the Electoral Access Advisory Group. In addition, the Project Officer brought significant practice knowledge to the Initiative from having worked in the disability sector for many years.

Two disability organisations were recruited, which had not previously utilised the VEC's voting education services. One organisation was located in metropolitan Melbourne (metro) and provided supported employment, transition to employment and social and community support services for people with disabilities. It had nine sites, approximately 200 staff, 50 volunteers and an annual revenue of around $9.5m. The second organisation was located in a regional centre (regional). It offered a similar range of support services to the metro

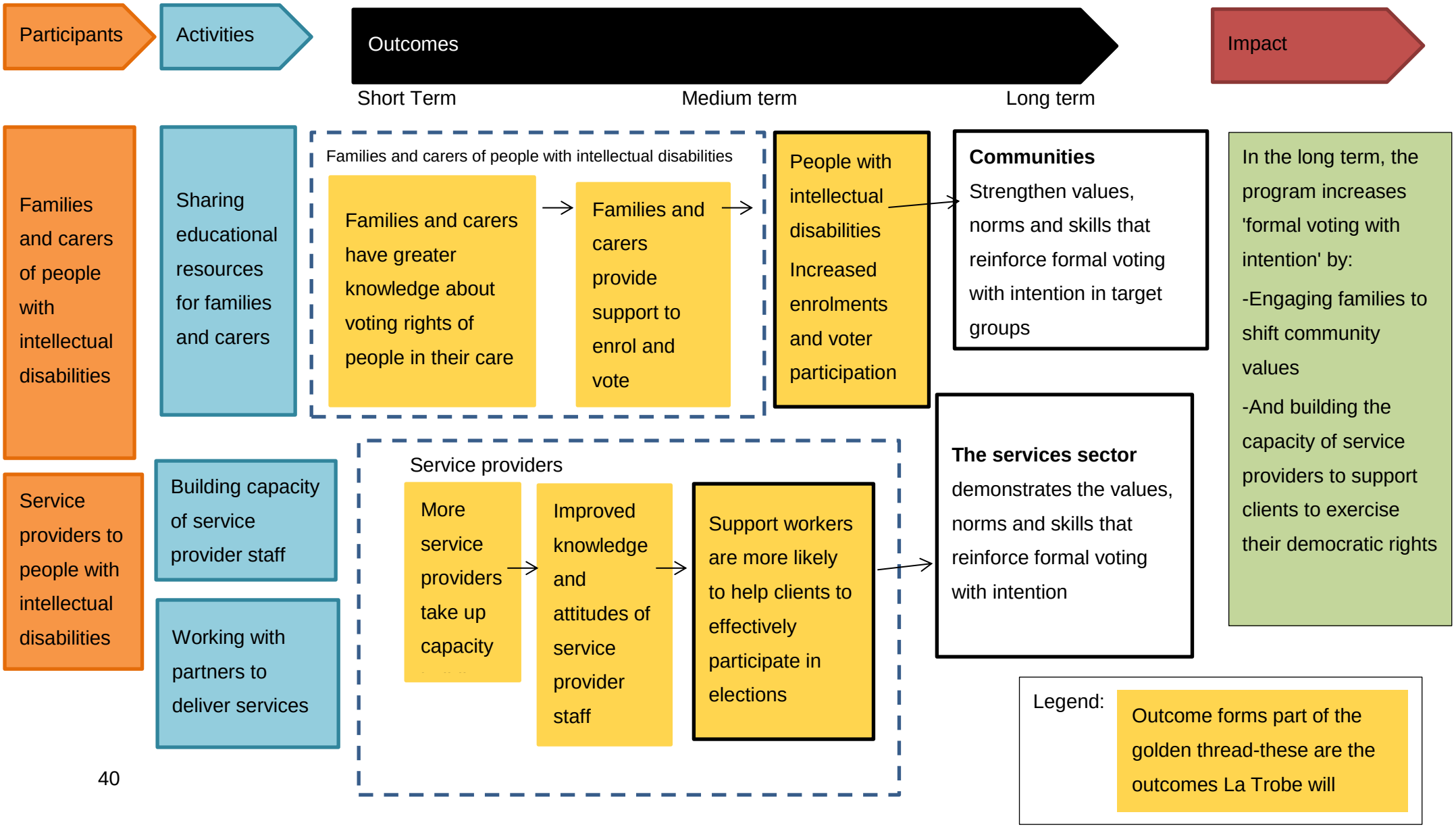
organisation with the addition of supported accommodation. It operated from six sites and had an annual revenue of around $5m.

Activities of the capacity building initiative

Activities were designed to upskill staff in both organisations about voting and the assistance available to people with intellectual disabilities. The Project Officer trained staff and management, and provided an array of educational resources to assist them to provide education sessions to people with intellectual disabilities to enable them to learn about voting. To complement the educational work of staff in the organisations, the Project Officer assisted staff to run voter education sessions and mock elections with their service users.

Across the metro organisation, 4 staff/management sessions occurred that included a total of 25 staff. Across the regional organisation, one staff session was run attended by 41 staff. In both organisations five voter education sessions and mock elections for people with intellectual disabilities were held across various sites.

Table 13. *Program logic of VEC Initiative*



Outcome evaluation

The Initiative was evaluated against the intended outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities, families and carers, and disability service organisations:

1. Increased enrolment and voter participation of people with intellectual disabilities.
2. Increased knowledge of families and carers about voting rights and provision of more support for people with intellectual disabilities to enrol and vote.
3. Increased knowledge of staff in disability organisations and more positive attitudes toward participation in voting by people with intellectual disabilities.
4. Increased support for voting provided by support workers in disability organisations.

Methods

A repeated measures design was used to investigate change following the Initiative. An online survey was used to measure changes in staff behaviour and attitudes, and a face-to-face survey and focus groups were used to measure changes in voting experiences of people with intellectual disabilities. Data were collected twice, at Time 1, pre the Initiative and Time 2, after Initiative in the two months post the election. Participants were recruited through the two organisations who took part in the Initiative. Information about the Initiative and the evaluation was circulated to staff, service users and family members inviting them to participate. Staff and family members supported service users to understand the information and decide whether or not to participate.

Online staff survey

An adapted version of the phase 1 survey was used to gain the perspectives of staff in the organisations about support for voting (see Appendices C and D). The survey had 32 items, with a mix of 5-point Likert scale questions, yes/no and open-ended questions. Wording in the Time 1 survey was slightly different from Time 2, to reflect the passage of time. For example, at Time 1 item 16 was “Have you ever supported a person with intellectual disability to vote in an election?” and at Time 2 “During the 2018 Victorian State election, did you support a person with intellectual disability to vote?”. Additional questions were included in the Time 2 survey about experiences of the Initiative. Post the Initiative an email with a link to the Time 2 survey was sent to all Time 1 participants.

Twenty-eight staff completed the survey at both Time 1 and Time 2. Table 14 shows their characteristics were comparable at the two time points. No family members completed the survey although the information and an invitation to participate was sent to those for whom the services had contact details.

Table 14. *Staff online survey participant characteristics at Time 1 and Time 2*

	Time 1 (*n*=57)		Time 2 (*n*=28)	
	n	%	*n*	%
Gender				
Male	10	17.5%	6	21.4%
Female	47	82.5%	22	78.6%
Age (yrs)				
Under 20	2	3.5%	1	3.6%
20-29	9	15.8%	2	7.1%
30-39	13	22.8%	5	17.9%
40-49	21	36.8%	11	39.3%
50-59	8	14.0%	6	21.4%
60-69		7.0%	3	10/7%
70+	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Highest qualification				
Secondary school	3	5.3%	1	3.6%
Certificate 3/4	25	43.9%	10	35.7%
Diploma	14	24.6%	6	21.4%
Bachelor	10	17.5%	7	25.0%
Post-graduate	5	8.8%	4	14.3%
Duration working in sector				
Less than 6 months	2	3.5%	0	0.0%
6-12 months	6	10.5%	2	7.1%
1-2 years	5	8.8%	1	3.6%
3-5 years	6	10.5%	3	10.7%
6-10 years	16	28.1%	8	28.6%
11-14 years	7	12.3%	5	17.9%
15+ years	15	26.3%	9	32.1%
Type of position				
Executive/Management staff	5	8.8%	5	17.9%
Front line staff	52	91.2%	23	82.1%
Organisation				
Metro	28	49.1%	13	46.4%
Regional	29	50.9%	15	53.6%

Face-to-face survey and focus groups of people with intellectual disabilities

The face-to-face survey used in phase 2 was adapted for the evaluation, by removing some items and adding outcome related items (see Appendix E). The survey had 15 items that included open-ended and closed questions. The same face-to-face survey was used at Time 1 and Time 2. To ensure accessibility the exact wording for each item was adapted to suit individual communication needs. Some participants had a support person present to aid

comprehension and communication. Fifty people with intellectual disabilities completed the face-to-face survey at Time 1 and 47 at Time 2. Table 15 shows their characteristics at both time points were comparable.

Focus groups with people with intellectual disabilities from the two organisations were conducted at Time 1 and at Time 2. A similar topic guide about voting experiences was used at both times with some additional questions at Time 2 about what had changed. Image prompts were utilised to generate discussion. Forty-four people with intellectual disabilities participated in a focus group at Time 1 and 28 at Time 2.

The second author spent a number of hours over a total of seven weeks in the disability service organisations whilst organising and facilitating the focus groups. She took field notes of observations or conversations that were relevant to issues of voting.

Table 15. *Characteristics of face-to-face survey participants with intellectual disabilities at Time 1 and Time 2*

	Time 1 (*n*=50)		Time 2 (*n*=47)	
	n	%	*n*	%
Gender				
Male	31	62%	29	61.7%
Female	19	38%	18	38.3%
Age (yrs.)				
Under 20	4	8%	3	6.4%
20-29	25	50%	25	53.2%
30-39	13	24%	11	23.4%
40-49	6	12%	5	10.6%
50-59	2	4%	2	4.3%
60-69	0	0%	0	0%
70+	0	0%	0	0%
Unsure	1	2%	1	2.1%
Living Circumstances				
Rented/Owned house with support	3	6%	1	2.1%
Live with family	38	76%	37	78.7%
Group home/Supported Accommodation	8	16%	8	17%
Other	1	2%	1	2.1%
Organisation				
Metro	32	64%	31	66%
Regional	18	36%	16	34%

Data analysis

Data for participants who completed surveys at both Time 1 and Time 2 (staff *n*=28, people with intellectual disabilities *n*=47) were entered into SPSS21 and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Differences between Time 1 and Time 2 were explored about:

- number of people with intellectual disabilities who were enrolled or voted
- number of supporters who provided enrolment and/or voting support
- supporters' awareness of resources about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote
- supporter attitudes about, willingness to, and confidence in supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote

- supporters' knowledge regarding the rights of people with intellectual disabilities to vote
- staff supporters' agreement that their organisation provided them with encouragement to support clients with intellectual disabilities to vote and guidance on how to do so.

Depending on level of measurement and whether other parametric assumptions were met, paired sample *t*-tests, Wilcoxon signed rank and McNemar tests were used to judge the significance of differences in these items between Time 1 and Time 2.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically using the framework of the online staff survey questions. These data were used to add detail, context and description to the quantitative results.

Outcomes of the Initiative

Changes to enrolment and voting

The number of people who had voted increased from 21 (45%) to 24 (51%). As Table 16 shows however this increase was not statistically significant. The number of people enrolled increased from 17 (36%) to 22 (47%). Notably at Time 2 more participants reported having voted than reported being enrolled. The number of people who were certain about their enrolment status increased from 31 (66%) to 42 (89%), which was a statistically significant increase.

These results suggest that Initiative increased participants' understanding about the need to be enrolled in order to vote. The qualitative data illustrates this change. For example, at Time 1 one participant talked about his interest in voting and the reasons he had not voted, and at Time 2 he seemed more aware of the difficulties of getting enrolled. He said:

> [Time 1] No but I've been to one [election] but I never voted, only mum and dad … One year I went with but after that I never go back… Think I was about 16, 15, back then… I didn't see the point at that time… It didn't look that hard. It looked pretty easy the only thing you had to do was pick a box, fold it, put it in the next box…. [What about now?] Maybe now because as you know with NDIS like the others said maybe we should be able to tell them what we think. And then see what they can do after that. (Time 1, Metro, FG.13)

> [Time 2] The voting bit, I understand. It's not that. I think it is me being on the list is the hard part. I don't know if I'll be able to be on it... I don't know why they do it that way anyway. For all families, they should be - if you have four people in the house, they should put the whole four no matter what. They don't do that. [You think it should be automatic?] Yeah. That's

> right. If you're normal or not normal, it should just - but they don't do it that way so one thing for this, one thing for that. I think they should just do it as one thing. It would have made it easy. (Time 2, Metro, FG.13)

Another participant said that it had felt “good” getting support from the VEC Project Officer to “sign up to vote” (Time 2, Regional, FG.16).

Table 16. *Comparisons Time 1 and Time 2 of enrolment, certainty and voting status*

	Time 1 (*n*=45)		Time 2 (*n*=45)		Statistical Comparisons
	n	%	*n*	%	
Enrolment status					
Yes	17	36.2%	22	46.8%	*p* = 0.302
No / Unsure	28	59.6%	24	51.1%	
Certainty of enrolment					
Yes	31	66.0%	42	89.4%	*p* = 0.006
No / Unsure	14	29.8%	4	8.5%	
Voting					
Yes	21	44.7%	24	51.1%	*p* = 0.250
No / Unsure	26	55.3%	23	48.9%	

Reasons for not voting and desire to vote

The influence of others on whether or not participants voted did not change over time. Being told not to vote was the most common reason for not voting at both Time 1 and Time 2 (7, 28%). Almost three-quarters (18, 72%) of non-voters said that they wanted to vote. However, the qualitative data suggests there were some mixed feelings about this. Talking about why they hadn’t voted participants said for example:

> [what would have to be different to get you to vote?] My mum to be on board… Yeah but maybe might need more convincing maybe… Just to let her know that I'm capable of doing it…Yeah… She was like - she said that she doesn't like voting but I should be allowed to if I want to vote. [how do you feel about all that?] A bit upset because I'd love to vote. (Time 2, Metro, FG.13]

> [what made you decide not to vote?] Mum… Mum said we don’t need to vote… [what did you think about that?] Fine. (Time 2, Regional, FG.15)

There was a small but non-significant decrease in the number of participants who expressed a desire to vote between Time 1 (16, 69%) and Time 2 (14, 60.9%). This indicates that the educational sessions they received either from staff or from the VEC Project Officer may not have been intensive enough to help participants explore and resolve their doubts about their capacity to vote or the value of voting. For example, one person talked about still feeling unprepared, saying:

> I did not vote. Reason being is that for me, I don't know a lot about politics. I tend not to get into the politics only because it just - I sit there and I think to myself, 'I'm glad [of the result]. That would've been my preference,' but watching the ads, having one ad for [political party] and one ad for [political party] and I was like, "One guy is willing to make changes whereas the other one's wanting to destroy our country," and it was like, "Mate, you need to work out what you really want to do."**…** For me, it's just because my reading is not great, I would find it very hard. (Time 2, Metro,13)

However, another explanation is that the Initiative helped participants to resolve and consolidate their doubts about voting. For example, this field note captured two participants who described, with some certainty, their choice not to vote at Time 2:

> I saw [Participant 1], who was in another focus group in the first round but could not attend the second. I said hello and she said to me that, "I'm okay not voting. It's my choice. I don't mind not voting but I'm glad that other people with disability vote. I'm happy that they do but I'm happy not to." I also saw [Participant 2], who was in [a focus group in] the first round. I did the survey with him and he said something similar. He said he hasn't voted before. He only did a fake one and he doesn't vote because his parents didn't want him to and he doesn't mind that either. He made that clear. (Field note)

Other comments suggest that some participants had missed being engaged with any of the activities about voting that had been generated by the Initiative in their service. For example, they said:

> [what's changed since the last group? [P1] Nothing. [P2] Nothing's changed really... [Were more people talking about voting or the same?] [P3] Probably the same. [Did anyone new come and talk to you about voting?] [P3] No, no-one new. No… [2] I don't know... No. [Had you spoken to your parents about voting before I met you?] [Participant nods]

> [was the conversation with your parents the same or different this time?]
> [P2] The same. (Time 2, Regional, FG.15)

Changes to voting support

Receiving support

The number of people who had voted and had received support to vote remained high (20, 95.2% at Time 1 and 19, 79.5% at Time 2). As Table 17 shows, the types of support they received remained similar, with the most common, support to complete the ballot paper. Parents remained the largest group of supporters although the number of siblings providing support increased at Time 2. For example, one participant said, in answer to the question who he voted with:

> My dad and my mum voted. My sister helped me out a bit… I told her which one I wanted, and she just pointed it out for me and then I picked that. (Metro, Time 2, FG.13)

Table 17. *Description of support received by people with intellectual disabilities who voted*

	Voters Time 1 (*n*=21)		Voters Time 2 (*n*=24)	
	n	%	*n*	%
Support received				
Yes	20	95.2%	19	79.5%
No	1	4.8%	5	20.8%
Supporter				
Parent	19	90.5%	11	45.8%
Sibling	2	9.5%	6	25%
Support worker	1	4.8%	2	8.3%
Other family member	0	0%	1	4.2%
Other	3	14.3%	3	12.5%
Type of support				
Transport	4	19%	3	12.5%
Reading voting materials	3	14.3%	2	8.3%
Completing the ballot paper	10	47.6%	6	25%
Navigating the voting place	6	28.6%	3	12.5%
Decision making support	4	19%	4	16.7%
Telling/showing how to vote	4	19%	4	16.7%
Providing information	1	4.8%	0	0%
Emotional support	0	0%	1	4.2%
Other	3	14.3%	1	4.2%

All three first time voters at Time 2 had been supported to vote, two of them by a direct support worker and a volunteer at the polling centre. One said:

> Someone drove me… [name of support worker from supported accommodation service] He helped me out - helped to vote… [I prefer] Having someone there, yeah… Something to help… One of the - one of the volunteers helped me [know where to put the numbers]… Volunteer who was there... [They said] Which one to put in - which box to put [the ballot paper] in. [Did they ask you which one of the parties you liked best- showing party logos?] Yeah. (Regional, Time 2, FG.16)

At Time 2 one participant had been confident to vote without support, whereas in the past his mother had supported him. He said:

> Oh, it was easy… Because I numbered them. I used my head to think about it.… I did it on my own. [would you want someone to help you?] Oh. On my own, actually. [in the past, did you do it on your own?] My Mum. (Regional, Time 2, FG.16)

A staff member described accompanying one of the people she supported to the voting place, suggesting that he was confident to cast his vote without further support:

> Client was confident and did not want assistance at the booth as the client had voted several times before, so my support was with transport. (Regional, Time 2, DSW)

Staff provision of voting support

There was no change to the number of staff who supported people with intellectual disabilities to enrol (2) and a slight increase in number of staff who had provided other types of support with voting (2 to 3). The qualitative data showed that the Initiative had encouraged staff to give support for voting through various means that had been effective for some people with intellectual disabilities. One participant who had been to an an education session at the metro organisation and then went with the group to vote, said he was no longer reliant on support from his parents to help him vote. Another participant said he now knew where to search for information about the candidates:

> Yeah… I went with them and I did my voting with them [group from the service]… It was different because I went with my parents [before] and then this year it's like, I was with Organisation 1 voting. (Metro, Time 1, FG.9)

> [P1] We used the VEC website to search for the candidates…I searched online. [P2] Yeah, that's what we all did. Going to VEC… Website. We all did. [P1] Yes, in class [P2]. We all did it. (Metro, Time 2, FG.10)

Capacity building and willingness of staff to provide support

The willingness of staff to provide support for voting was high at Time 1 and did not change (M=4.08, SD=.51 vs M=4.03, SD=.64). As discussed further in the next section some staff remained uncertain about the type of support they were able to provide.

The survey data from organisational leaders showed the Initiative generated considerable organisational interest and activity about voting. At Time 1, none of the five leaders had been involved in activities or provided guidance to staff about if or how to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote. At Time 2, three of the five reported that their organisation had been involved in such activities and all five that their organisation had provided staff guidance about supporting people to vote. Staff data supported these assertions by organisational leaders and at Time 2 more staff felt providing support for voting was endorsed by their organisation. At Time 1, ten (43.5%) staff agreed that their organisation encouraged them to provide voting support and one (4.3%) that their organisation provided guidance on how to do so. At Time 2 this increased significantly to 19

(86.4%) ($t(20)=2.65$, $p = 0.016$, $d = .57$), and 16 (72.7%), ($t(20)=5.26$, $p = 0.001$, $d = 1.75$) respectively. These are both large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988).

Changes to staff attitudes, confidence and knowledge

The attitudes of staff about voting for people with intellectual disabilities remained fairly neutral (*M*=3.17, *SD*=0.49 Time 1 vs. *M*=3.26, *SD*=0.51 Time 2) and there was no change in their confidence in supporting voting (pre *M*=3.33, *SD*=.82 vs. post *M*=3.15, *SD*=.64).

Comments in open ended questions indicated that some staff remained uncertain about issues of capacity, and whether voting was too difficult for some people with intellectual disabilities. They said for example:

> Opportunity should be available to everyone; severely disabled should be able to avoid fine if not able to vote practically. (Metro, Time 2, Staff)
>
> Right for everyone; some may not be able to in practice. (Metro, Time 2, Staff)
>
> I believe every person with or without a disability should have the same right to vote, however, I understand that not everyone with a disability has the capacity to vote or understand how/why to vote. (Regional, Time 2, Staff)

The qualitative data suggests that some staff had difficulties reconciling competing paradigms about rights and capacity. For example, in these quotes staff refer to the person's right to choose to be removed from the electoral roll. This can only occur on the grounds of lack of capacity to understand voting. At the same time however, staff refer to the right of the person to make the decision to be removed, which they are unlikely to fully understand if they meet the criteria for removal:

> They should have the option to be removed if it is their wish. (Regional, Time 2, Staff)
>
> In the instances where the person is unable to understand the voting process, there may be some grounds for them not to be enrolled, due to possible influences of others not reflecting their wishes, however they should still be provided with the opportunity to decide for themselves, and where possible have assistance to exercise their rights to vote. (Metro, Time 2, Staff)

There was continuing concern about the type of support that it was appropriate to give, and staffs' need to avoid influencing how people voted:

> We can assist in the education about voting and elections, but it may not be practicable to facilitate the actual voting. (Metro, Time 2, Staff)

> It is a good idea to support a person with a disability to decide who to vote for, but care must be taken to not influence that person in who to vote for. (Regional, Time 2, Staff)

Staff knowledge about voting rights increased. The change from Time 1 to Time 2 was statistically significant, (Z = 155, p = 0.01, r=*.33*) with the median rating increasing from 3.0 (*SD*=1.52) at Time 1 to 3.88 (*SD*=1.37) at Time 2. There was also a statistically significant increase in the number of staff who were aware of relevant resources (Z = 164, p = 0.001, r=*.51*). Just six (21.4%) of the 28 front-line staff were aware of resources at Time 1 compared to 23 (82.1%) at Time 2. This latter change was illustrated by comments of staff:

> [The VEC] providing information about the process, where to find information and what to do in supporting participants. (Metro, Time 2, Staff)

> Electoral officer; phone options; large print; audio info I heard about these from [Project Officer] from the VEC. VALID, Lifeskill programs La Trobe (Metro, Time 2, Staff)

> VEC training provided great resources on choice making and options for support on each site. (Regional, Time 2, Staff)

Comments from participants with intellectual disabilities indicated that supporters were actively using their increased knowledge of about resources in their work. As two focus group participants said,

> [P1] We used the VEC website to search for the candidates. [P2] Yeah, that's what we all did. Going to VEC… Website. We all did. [P1] And she actually sent resources to look at. Like, the cards with the issues, small posters, how to vote. There's actually a DVD which was about voting as well…Yeah, it was good… It was pretty good resources to learn from. (Metro, Time 2, FG.10)

Unanticipated outcomes

Data from the process evaluation suggested a number of unanticipated outcomes. The staff training sessions helped to increase their knowledge about the electoral system that was useful in other spheres of their lives, as citizens and parents. The resources were also potentially useful to other minority groups with low levels of literacy. The intensive work with the two organisations provided a springboard for the Project Officer to extend the VEC's reach into other networks and organisations. This was particularly the case in the regional town where she also delivered educational sessions for the TAFE college work education students. Importantly too, the initiative and particularly the direct involvement of people with

intellectual disabilities in the research stakeholder advisory group, acted as a catalyst for building the VEC's knowledge about the specific inclusion and access needs of people with intellectual disabilities vis a vis other groups.

Summary of findings about outcomes from the Initiative

There were small but positive increases in the number of people with intellectual disabilities who voted or were enrolled to vote after the Initiative, and significantly more people were certain about their enrolment status than they have been previously. Voting rates among participants, however remained low at around 50%.

More staff provided support for voting than previously, and there was a greater awareness about voting rights among staff and more encouragement by organisation leaders for staff involvement in voting support or educational programs. The findings suggest the Initiative was successful in educating staff about voting rights and resources, and that this knowledge was used by staff. However, some staff remained uncertain about capacity of people with intellectual disabilities to vote and concerned about unduly influencing who they might vote for.

Although there was some outreach to family members through the two organisations involved in the Initiative, none completed the online survey so there was no data about any change in knowledge, attitudes or support provided by family supporters.

Process Evaluation

Method

The process evaluation provided an opportunity to reflect on the Initiative and learn from what was done and how it was done. The research question asked “what can be learned from the process of implementing the capacity building initiative?” The program logic model (see Table 13) provided the framework to reflect on the activities and identify some of the challenges encountered.

Table 18 shows the various data sources. These were documents associated with the Initiative and semi-structured interviews conducted with the Project Officer and her manager. Survey and focus group data from Time 2 were also reviewed to identify comments about Initiative and how it was implemented. Data were analysed thematically using logic model as a framework

Table 18. *Process evaluation data sources*

Data source	Type of data
Interview with Project Officer and manager	Interview
Process journal	Document
Pilot project planning meeting slides	Document
Correspondence with Director 1	Correspondence
Correspondence with Director 2	Correspondence
Text for conversion to online staff training module	Document
Correspondence with Project Officer 1	Correspondence
Correspondence with Project Officer 2	Correspondence
Phone call with project officer	Field note
Letter to families	Document
Education training plan	Document
Handout- How to vote & what questions are asked at the voting centre	Document

Process evaluation findings

Inputs - resources

The Initiative was resource intensive, requiring staff time from participating organisations as-well-as the staff time and the disability related expertise held by the VEC. At the same time as the Initiative was being delivered the VEC’s Democracy Ambassadors (a peer education program), was being implemented. For the first time this program included an Ambassador focussed on people with intellectual disabilities. The two programs worked in parallel, with the Ambassador program absorbing some of the Project Officer’s normal work load, freeing her up for the Initiative.

The Initiative took more staff time than had been anticipated. Forming relationships with participating organisations required more intensive engagement than that needed for delivery of one-off educational programs. The manager reflected on the tensions about use of resources and weighing up the costs and benefits of having a high impact on few organisations versus lower impact on a greater number.

The Project Officer had significant knowledge of the disability sector, which lent credibility to her role and was influential in gaining the confidence of senior staff in participating organisations. Senior VEC staff were strongly committed to the Initiative and the inclusion of a non-metropolitan organisation. The VEC had prior experience about issues of accessibility for minority groups and people with disability more generally, had well developed networks across the state, and resources developed from earlier work. These included advice from the Electoral Access Advisor Group members and the Voting is for Everyone Facilitators guide. However, reliance on one Project Officer for most of the Initiative's activities posed a risk of having a single point of failure as she would have been very difficult to replace had she become ill during the Initiative.

Inputs - time frame

The State election in November 2018 posed an immoveable end point for the Initiative. A number of things prevented a quick start and early momentum. Identifying the right type of organisation to be involved, recruiting and 'on-boarding' took longer than had been anticipated. The pace of change across the disability sector with the roll out of the NDIS made it difficult for senior managers to commit to the Initiative. It meant negotiating involvement took time and did not always end successfully. Once the two organisations were recruited, the need to gain ethical approval and collect Time 1 data delayed the commencement of the activities.

The tight time frame meant the VEC staff did not have time to create resources from first principles or seek the advice of the reference or the research stakeholder advisory groups which meant opportunities for input from experts with lived experience, knowledge of the literature and communication were missed. However, previously designed resources were able to be utilised for the Initiative.

The short time available affected what the Project Officer could offer to the regional organisation. For example, only making one visit limited her reach compared to what she had achieved through multiple visits to the metro organisation. Overall it was evident that this type of capacity building with disability organisations requires considerable time to engage if it is to change underlying attitudes and culture.

Activities of the Initiative

The primary activity was the design and delivery of educational sessions about voting rights, for different groups of participants, organisational leaders, staff, and people with intellectual disabilities. All the sessions were run by the Project Officer with a similar format. They provided information about voting rights and processes and staged a mock election that involved role plays. There was an implicit agreement too that this initiative would form part of an ongoing relationship with the two organisations. Time constraints and logistical difficulties meant that fewer staff sessions were held in the regional organisation, and there was no dedicated session for the leadership group. Despite families being a group at whom the initiative was targeted, they proved difficult to engage and no dedicated sessions for them were delivered at either organisation.

Staff focussed

The staff sessions introduced a range of resources designed for people with intellectual disabilities that staff could use to support individuals or groups in their organisation. The Project Officer also offered to be available for one-on-one phone mentoring for staff unable to attend a session or to answer any queries from staff. Ccomments in the Time 2 staff surveys gave positive feedback about the sessions and the resources made available. They said for example:

> [Project officer] from VEC came to our service to provide us with information and resources. The 'Voting is for Everyone' resource is amazing. Thank you! (Time 2, Staff)
>
> VEC training provided great resources on choice making and options for support on each site (Time 2, Staff)

One participant suggested that the sessions might involve more information for staff about voting in general and its importance as staff often did not understand the Australian political system.

It was challenging to engage with all staff in the two organisations given the part- time employment of many of them. The VEC had anticipated that some staff would be unable to attend sessions and gave organisations hard copies of the staff voter education session and its accompanying notes, to make available to staff. The VEC also created a short online module for organisations but there was very little take up. The reasons for this are worth exploring further with staff and organisations.

Some staff were sceptical about the value of the educational sessions and engaging them took a degree of determination from the Project Officer. Staff were particularly concerned about how rights to vote applied to people with higher support needs and responding to the attitudes of families.

People with intellectual disabilities focussed

The Project Officer's informal approach and the inclusion of an activity based mock election exercise helped to get over the hesitation of some people with intellectual disabilities and ensure the sessions were lively and engaging. Staff attendance at the sessions for people with intellectual disabilities gave the Project Officer an opportunity to model delivery of an educational session and ways of incorporating voting practice into day-to-day activities.

As already discussed, it was clear from some of the comments in the Time 2 focus groups that participants with intellectual disabilities found the sessions and learning resources useful in understanding voting. One person did comment however, that he thought the material had been too difficult for one of the other participants.

Family and other informal supporters focussed

Engaging with families proved difficult, despite the intention to have specific education sessions for them or provide individual phone mentoring with the Project Officer. Information about the Initiative was included in newsletters and other forms of communication from organisations to families. A brief summary of voting rights and the content of sessions was given to people with intellectual disabilities to pass on to family members. However, a lack of interest meant that no family or informal supporter sessions were held. As this group did not participate in the online survey there was no feedback from them about reasons for their lack of interest. Staff from both the VEC and participating organisations were concerned about the lack of family involvement and saw finding ways of engaging with families as important in future work.

Summary of process evaluation

In summary, the process evaluation identified a number of challenges in implementing an Initiative of this nature and lessons for future work. The Initiative was resource intensive in terms of the staff time required from the VEC and participating organisations. Having a dedicated Project Officer with no other duties maybe something to consider in the future. The disability sector was hesitant to take on the additional work the Initiative entailed, given the major reforms that mean many organisations are very stretched for staff time. This may continue for some time. The context of the Initiative as part of an action research project created the tight time frame that caused difficulties. One clear lesson was the need to conduct capacity building initiatives such as this over a much longer period. While the optimal timing of educational sessions may be close to an election a longer lead time is required to recruit, establish organisational relationships and plan sessions.

The underlying educational approach and targeting sessions and information to different audiences appeared to work well. However, greater investment in finding ways to connect

with families is clearly necessary and perhaps a different model of education for them may be worth exploring.

Summary and Conclusions

Voting is an important part of political citizenship. This study explored the barriers and facilitators of voting for people with intellectual disabilities in order to understand how to best support their participation. The findings show that some people with intellectual disabilities do have political opinions, are interested in voting and have had experiences which help them understand voting processes. Many of the participants saw voting as connected to local places and a collective rather than individual endeavour. Despite their relatively positive orientation to voting only around half of all the people with intellectual disabilities across the various phases of the study had voted, and many were unclear about their enrolment status. Many talked about families making various types of decisions about voting. These were both enabling and restrictive decisions. The barriers to voting for people with intellectual disabilities identified were similar to those found overseas:

- limited support from staff in disability services and family members
- low expectations from staff and family; little attention to issues of voting by disability organisations or to their encouragement of staff to provide support
- uncertainty of disability support staff about the legitimacy of some types of voting support they might provide
- doubts by staff and families about the capacity of people with more severe intellectual disabilities to understand and participate in voting.

On the other hand, facilitating factors were:

- support from family members for voting
- staff willingness to provide some types of support for voting
- staff acknowledgement of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

The learnings from the first two phases of the project suggested multiple strategies were needed to tackle the identified barriers to voting and empower people with intellectual disabilities to participate more fully in decisions about voting. It was apparent that the focus should be on building the capacity of different groups:

- families and disability support staff and organisations to provide support for voting
- people with intellectual disabilities to participate in processes of voting
- political parties and the media to produce material about political platforms that are accessible to people with intellectual disabilities and help in deciding who to vote for.

This research project has helped in recognising the relative neglect of voting access issues for people with intellectual disabilities and in finding strategies to address these issues. The Initiative, informed by phases one and two of the research and developed with the research stakeholder reference group, was implemented over a period of seven months in the lead up to the November 2018 Victorian State election. The initiative provided more intensive

educational input to staff at two disability organisations compared to the standard one-off sessions delivered more widely to groups of people with disabilities. Tailored educational sessions were delivered to organisational leaders and disability support staff with follow up mentoring opportunities, new resources were developed, and small group sessions around an activity based mock election exercise were run for people with intellectual disabilities. The original aim of involving families of service users proved more difficult than expected and no family members were involved directly in educational sessions.

The outcomes of the capacity building initiative were promising and much has been learned from the process of its implementation to inform the future work of the VEC and other electoral commissions. The qualitative data suggests that staff enjoyed the sessions and valued the new resources, as did the people with intellectual disabilities. The quantitative data shows small but positive changes, in the number of people who were enrolled, who had voted and were certain about their enrolment status. More staff were aware of voting rights of people with intellectual disabilities, had provided some form of support in the November election than previously, and felt support for voting was endorsed by the leadership of the organisation and thus more clearly part of their role. Importantly however, the evaluation suggested that some staff remained uncertain about whether all people with intellectual disabilities should be supported to vote, and the boundary between support with practical aspects of voting and decisions about who to vote for.

This research has helped to draw out the multiple interacting layers of social processes that need to be addressed to increase participation in voting by people with intellectual disabilities. The influence of family and staff on decisions about voting was evident, as was the influence of individual skills and knowledge. The study suggests there is significant scope to make change here. The whole of organisational approach, with explicit endorsement from leaders, that delivered staff education and provision of resources appeared to be a promising strategy. It began to raise awareness and build organisational capacity to support voting. It helped to increase staffs' knowledge and skills to provide individual support with voting and conduct educational programs for service users with intellectual disabilities. The study suggested this type of strategy requires dedicated resources and a sufficiently long-time frame to enable relationship-building with senior organisational leaders and multiple visits to a service by the VEC to ensure involvement of all staff. Over time, a strategy of building capacity of disability organisations, may reduce the need for electoral commissions to deliver educational sessions directly to service users with intellectual disabilities.

The difficulties experienced in engaging with families around issues of voting suggested a need to explore further avenues for reaching out and engaging with families of adults with intellectual disabilities about voting. This might be achieved through family advocacy

organisations, carers associations or, particularly in regional towns, local community organisations. Given that the findings of the study pointed to the importance of families as both facilitators and barriers to voting exploring strategies to build their knowledge and capacity as supporters should be a key priority of future work by electoral commissions.

Voters' individual knowledge and skills influences their participation. The Initiative tested the provision of education about voting rights and processes, and production of accessible aids as a way of increasing skills and confidence to vote. The approach relied on well designed and engaging interactive sessions, led by experienced and knowledgeable facilitators. However, relying on disability organisations as the conduit for reaching out to people with intellectual disabilities has limitations, which are likely to be amplified in the future as support becomes more individualised and less centre or group based. Alternative strategies for building individual voting capacity through peer mentoring programs such as the Democracy Ambassadors, and education through self-advocacy or other organisations of people with intellectual disabilities should be explored further to gain insights into the efficacy and resourcing requirements of such approaches.

The study also provided some insights into the hidden social processes that influence voting by people with intellectual disabilities. These lie in the political realm of legislation, outside the mandate of electoral commissions, and are therefore more difficult to tackle.

Provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918 s.93(8)(a) and Constitution Act, 1975 s.48(2) can deny enrolment to people with intellectual disabilities (and others) on the basis of "unsound mind, is incapable of understanding the nature and significance of enrolment and voting". These provisions inevitably raise questions for supporters about the cognitive capacity needed to participate in voting, contributing to their doubts about whether all people with intellectual disabilities can or should vote. The lack of guidelines available to assist supporters to understand these provisions, help to compound uncertainties about to whom, when and why they should be applied, which are difficult to shift. The legislative provisions reflect a very different paradigm from that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, which discards the concept of capacity and asserts that all people with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life. The tensions between the right to vote and capacity to vote embedded in Australian electoral law that contributes to uncertainties for supporters, are part of broader debates about decision making for people with cognitive disabilities.

Finally, other social processes that influence voting are the production and accessibility of information about current affairs and party-political platforms. Many of the participants with intellectual disabilities involved in this study raised this issue, and increasing access to information about political platforms was one of the strategies recommended by the research stakeholder advisory group. Like legislative reform, access to partisan information

is beyond the remit of electoral commissions, but nevertheless it requires some action. Non-government organisations such as Inclusion Melbourne have begun to pilot work in this arena through for example, the ‘Icanvote’ project which supported candidates to record key messages about their platform in clear and simple language. Plain English information is often not sufficient to ensure access for people with intellectual disabilities who need support to understand key concepts. It is however, an important first step that provides the catalyst for talking about political platforms with supporters and peers, and deciding who to vote for. Although leadership and action around accessibility of political material must lie with the non-government sector, it will be important that the VEC and other electoral commissions draw attention to the barriers that poor access to such information poses to participation in voting by people with intellectual disabilities.

Recommendations

1. Electoral commissions continue to promote strategies to build the capacity of disability organisations and their staff to support people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting and political debates.
2. That future capacity building strategies take account of the lengthy period required and the significant commitment of staff time needed to effectively resource and implement such initiatives.
3. That strategies to engage families in education about voting rights and support be explored by electoral commissions and/or other bodies with an interest in equal rights to participation.
4. That peer education is further explored and piloted by electoral commissions as a strategy to build the individual capacity of people with intellectual disabilities to participate in voting.
5. The role that law reform may play in removing supporters' uncertainties and doubts about who has the right to vote and legitimate types of support be noted by electoral commissions and other relevant government bodies.
6. The significance of clear and accessible information for people with intellectual disabilities about political platforms and public affairs be noted by electoral commissions and non-government bodies with a view to generating further exploration of strategies to produce and disseminate this type of information.

References

Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (2013). "You can't vote-you're mentally incompetent": Denying democracy to people with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 38*(1), 58-62.

Agran, M., MacLean, W. E., & Kitchen, K. A. A. (2016). “My voice counts, too”: Voting participation among individuals with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 54*(4), 285-294.

Australian Electoral Commission (n.d.). *Voter turnout: 2016 House of Representatives and Senate elections*. Retreived from https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/research/files/voter-turnout-2016.pdf

Australian Law Reform Commission (2014). *Equity Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws.* Retrieved from https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/equality-capacity-disability-124-summary

Beckman, L. (2014). The accuracy of electoral regulations: The case of the right to vote by people with cognitive impairments. Social Policy and Society, 13(02), 221-233.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (1918). *Commonwealth Consolodated Acts.* Retrieved from https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00259

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioural sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Despott, N. (2017). Electoral Inclusion: Rights, Barriers and Global Campaign Strategies for Voters with Intellectual Disability. Melbourne: Inclusion Melbourne.

Evans, M., & Stoker, G. (2016). Political participation in Australia: Contingency in the behaviour and attitudes of citizens. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 51*(2), 272-287.

Friedman, C. (2018). "Every vote matters:" Expereinces of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the 2016 United States General Election *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal, 14*(1).

Friedman, C., & Rizzolo, M. C. (2017). Correlates of voting participation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation, 16*(3-4), 347-360.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2006). *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, USA: SAGE Publications.

Holter, I. M., & Schwartz-Barcott, D. (1993). Action research: what is it? How has it been used and how can it be used in nursing? *Journal of advanced nursing, 18*(2), 298-304.

James, E., Harvey, M., & Hatton, C. (2018). Participation of adults with learning disabilities in the 2015 United Kingdom General Election. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, *23*(1), 65-71.

Keeley, H., Redley, M., Holland, A. J., & Clare, I. C. H. (2008). Participation in the 2005 General Election by adults with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 52*(3), 175-181.

Kjellberg, A., & Hemmingsson, H. (2013). Citizenship and voting: Experiences of persons with intellectual disabilities in Sweden. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 10*(4), 326-333.

Matsubayashi, T., & Ueda, M. (2014). Disability and voting. *Disability and Health Journal, 7*(3), 285-291.

McAllister, I. (2011). *The Australian voter: 50 years of change*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press

Redley, M. (2008). Citizens with learning disabilities and the right to vote. *Disability & Society, 23*(4), 375-384.

Ryan, T., Henderson, A., & Bonython, W. (2016). Voting with an'unsound mind'?: A comparative study of the voting rights of persons with mental disabilities. The *University of New South Wales Law Journal, 39*(3), 1038.

Savery, J. (2015). Voting rights and intellectual disability in Australia: An illegal and unjustified denial of rights. *Sydney Law Review, 37*, 287-300.

Then, S., Carney, T., Bigby, C., Douglas, J. (2018). Supporting decision-making of adults with cognitive disabilities: the role of Law Reform Agencies – recommendations, rationales and influence. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry.*

Appendices

Appendix A: Phase 1 Online Supporter Survey

1. **What type of organisation do you work for?**
2. **What is your current job title?**
3. **What is your phone number?**
4. **Which of the following statements best describe the MAJORITY of people with intellectual disabilities you (or your organisation) work with?**
    - People with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (people with some literacy skills who communicate using language in sentences or words)
    - People with complex support needs or severe to profound intellectual disabilities (people who communicate non-verbally and require support in many areas of daily living)
    - Unsure

This section will ask you about your views on voting by people with intellectual disabilities. Please answer based on your general experience working with people with intellectual disabilities.

5. **Think about the people with (severe and profound/mild to moderate/generally) intellectual disabilities you work with or support. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
People with intellectual disabilities have the right to vote						
People with intellectual disabilities are able to understand some political issues (either alone or with support)						
People with intellectual disabilities are able to understand how to vote (either alone or with support)						
People with intellectual disabilities are able to understand the impact of voting (either alone or with support)						
Voting is too difficult for people with intellectual disabilities						
People with intellectual disabilities should have the right to have their voices heard in elections						
People with intellectual disabilities are at risk of undue influence by family, staff or political players						

6. Please use the space below to provide further comment.

We think people with intellectual disabilities don't vote as much as other people in Australia. The next section is about the things that get in the way of voting for people with intellectual disabilities at different stages of the voting process.

You can answer these questions from either your specific experience supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote or your general experience of working with people with intellectual disabilities.

7. Think about preparation BEFORE voting/election day. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following are barriers to voting for people with intellectual disabilities:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Lack of previous experience or practice voting						
Fear, anxiety or nervousness about voting						
Limited or no opportunity to discuss politics, voting, parties or candidates						
Not having people close to them with an interest in voting or politics (i.e. family members, friends)						
Limited or no access to accessible information related to politics (i.e. easy English, pictorial, face-to-face explanation)						
Limited access to formal education or training related to voting						
Limited or no access to support with decision making about who to vote for						
Limited or no access to groups (e.g. self-advocacy groups) or advocacy (e.g. individual or systemic advocacy targeting policy or laws) related to voting or political issues						
Disability support organisations not seeing voting support as part of their role (e.g. voting support is not included in people with intellectual disabilities support plans)						
Laws that impact on voting or enrolment (please explain or give examples below)						
Other (please specify)						

8. How much attention do the following aspects of voting require in support initiatives for people with intellectual disabilities to vote?

	No attention required	Requires a Little Attention	Requires a Lot of Attention	Unsure
The right to vote/Laws on voting				
Why voting is important				
The result and impact of elections				
The voting process and how to vote				
Who to vote for				
Political issues related to voting (e.g. health policy or services, workers rights)				
Other (Please specify)				

9. Please use the space below to provide further comment.

10. Think about preparation BEFORE voting/election day. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
The attitudes of, or lack of encouragement by, others gets in the way of voting for people with intellectual disabilities.						

11. The attitudes of which of the following groups of people get in the way of voting for people with intellectual disabilities? Please select all that apply

- Family members
- Paid support staff or carers
- Managers of disability services
- Politicians, political candidates or political parties
- Electoral staff
- General community members
- Other (Please specify)

12. Think about DURING voting or on election day. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following get in the way of people with intellectual disabilities voting:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Limited or no appropriate support from polling staff						
Limited or no appropriate support from family members						
Limited or no appropriate support from paid disability support staff						

Limited or no prompting/reminders to vote						
Limited or no access to support at voting centre/polling place (e.g. where to go, dealing with political party campaigners and how-to-vote cards)						
Limited or no access to accessible voting materials such as how to vote cards from political parties or the ballot (i.e. in easy English, pictorial, face-to-face explanation)						
Limited or no physical access to voting centre/polling place (e.g. ramps)						
Limited or no access to alternative means of voting (i.e. postal votes, electronic voting, telephone voting)						
Limited or no support to understand and complete the voting process (e.g. supporter accompaniment through registering, accessing and completing the ballot paper)						
Limited or no access to transportation to the voting centre/polling place						
Other (please specify)						

13. Think about AFTER voting/election day. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following get in the way of people with intellectual disabilities voting:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Lack of support to access information or understand the election results and its implications						
Lack of emotional support/debriefing following voting						
Other (Please specify)						

The next section is about you or your organisation's specific experience of supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
Most people with intellectual disabilities who are supported by our organisation are enrolled to vote						
Most people with intellectual disabilities who are supported by our organisation vote						

Other (Please specify)						

15. Which of the following best describes the main tasks of your role?

- Working directly with people with intellectual disabilities (for e.g. support worker, front line manager, day program/group facilitator, case worker/manager, care coordinator, individual advocate, community development worker, etc.)
- Management, advocacy or development of policy or programs related to people with intellectual disabilities (for e.g. CEO, general manager, program manager, department manager, systemic advocate, policy advisor/developer, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

16. (Direct workers only) Have you been provided with guidance from your organisation about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote? (for e.g. policy guidance, training, instruction, informal discussion)

- If yes, what sort of guidance was provided and how was it provided?

17. (Direct workers only) Have you ever provided support to people with intellectual disabilities during an election?

18. (Direct workers only) Think about the last Federal, State and Local government elections listed below. Did you provide support to anyone with intellectual disabilities in the lead up to, during or following any of the below elections? Select all that apply

- The Federal election on the 2nd of July 2016 (when the Turnbull government was elected)
- The Victorian state election on the 29th of November 2014 (when the Andrews government was elected)
- The local council elections (October 2016 except for Greater Geelong)
- I have never provided support related to voting in the lead up to, during or following any of the above elections
- Unsure

19. (Direct workers only) Approximately how many people with intellectual disabilities did you support to vote in the lead up to, during or following any of the below elections?

- The Federal election on the 2nd of July 2016 (when the Turnbull government was elected)
- The Victorian state election on the 29th of November 2014 (when the Andrews government was elected)

- The local council elections (October 2016 except for Greater Geelong)

This section will ask about your experience supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote including the types of supports you provided at different stages of the voting process.

20. (Direct workers only) What support did you provide to a person or people with intellectual disabilities related to voting BEFORE the election/s?

Having casual conversation or supporting someone to access and understand information related to voting, specifically about... (please select all that apply)

- The impact of voting or voting rights
- How to vote
- Who to vote for
- Political issues (e.g. government policies about health), political parties and candidates
- How the political system works
- Candidates or political parties
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify)

21. (Direct workers only) What other supports did you provide to a person or people with intellectual disabilities BEFORE voting... (please select all that apply)

- Support filling out enrolment forms to vote
- Emotional support (e.g. encouragement, talking through nerves)
- Facilitating or running groups to discuss issues related to voting or political issues (e.g. self-advocacy groups, discussion groups, peer support groups)
- Individual advocacy (e.g. relating to voting access, capacity to vote)
- Accessing alternative ways of voting (e.g. postal votes, telephone voting)
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify)

22. (Direct workers only) What other supports did you provide to a person or people with intellectual disabilities BEFORE voting... (please select all that apply)

- Prompting or reminding the person to vote
- Getting to the voting centre/polling place (e.g. transport)
- Supporting or accompanying the person at the voting centre/polling place (e.g. where to go, dealing with political party campaigners and how-to-vote cards)
- Emotional support (e.g. encouragement, talking through nerves)

- Support to understand and complete the voting process (e.g. registering, getting the ballot paper, completing the ballot paper)
- Not applicable
- Other (Please specify)

23. (Direct workers only) What support did you provide to people with intellectual disabilities AFTER the election/s? Please select all that apply

Support to access and understand information about the election result and its impacts

- Emotional support/debriefing following voting
- Support responding a letter from the electoral commission about failing to vote
- Not applicable
- Other (Please specify)

24. (Direct workers only) Think about a time when you have supported a person with intellectual disabilities to vote. Please describe what support you provided

25. (Direct workers only) What challenges did you experience?

26. (Direct workers only) What worked well?

27. (Direct workers only) Which of the following are reasons why you have not supported a person with intellectual disabilities to vote? Please select all that apply

- Not a priority/no time
- Lack of support or encouragement from organisation to provide this support
- Lack of funding to provide this support
- Don’t know how to provide this support
- Don’t want to influence the person with intellectual disabilities vote
- Other (Please specify)

28. (Indirect workers only) Have you or your organisation discussed or given thought to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?

29. (Indirect workers only) Has your organisation implemented any initiatives related to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?

30. (Indirect workers only) Think about the last Federal, State and Local government elections listed below. Has your organisation implemented any initiatives for any of the below elections? Select all that apply

- The Federal election on the 2nd of July 2016 (when the Turnbull government was elected)

- The Victorian state election on the 29th of November 2014 (when the Andrews government was elected)
- The local council elections (October 2016 except for Greater Geelong)
- I have never provided support related to voting in the lead up to, during or following any of the above elections
- Unsure

31. (Indirect workers only) What was the nature of the voting related initiative/s implemented by your organisation and what group were they targeted to? Please select all that apply

	People with intellectual disabilities	Family members	Direct support workers or front line managers	Managers or decisions makers in disability services	Politicians, political candidates or policy makers	Electoral staff	General public	Unsure
Designing or implementing related organisational policy (e.g. policy around supporting people to vote)								
Education or training programs (e.g. on voting rights, how to vote or how to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote)								
Developing related information resources (e.g. creating Easy English guides, writing reports and/or doing research)								
Facilitating or initiating groups related to voting (e.g. self-advocacy groups, discussion groups, peer support groups)								
Systemic advocacy related to voting and people with intellectual disabilities (i.e. campaigning for legal or government policy change)								
Community development activities (e.g. wider community awareness programs)								

32. (Indirect workers only) What part of the voting process by people with intellectual disabilities did the initiative(s) developed by your organisation target? Please select all that apply

- The right to vote/Laws on voting
- Why voting is important or the impact of voting
- How to vote
- Who to vote for
- Political issues related to voting (e.g. health policy and services, workers rights)
- Unsure/Not applicable
- Other (please specify)

33. (Indirect workers only) Think about one example of an initiative implemented by your organisation related to voting for people with intellectual disabilities. Describe the program aims and implementation process.

34. (Indirect workers only) What challenges did you or your organisation experience in implementing this initiative?

35. (Indirect workers only) How successful was the initiative?

36. (Indirect workers only) Which of the following are reasons why you have not provided support for a person with intellectual disabilities to vote?

- Not a priority/no time
- Not relevant to organisations mission/values
- Lack of funding to do this work
- Don’t know how to provide this support
- Don’t want to influence people with intellectual disabilities vote
- Other (Please specific)

37. Have you ever been involved in getting a person with intellectual disabilities removed from the electoral roll?

38. Have you heard of the Victorian Electoral Commissions’ (VEC) “Voters Voice” iPad application?

39. Have you heard of the VEC’s Easy English guides (e.g. “Vote in Local Council Postal elections”, Vote in Victorian State Elections”)?

40. Have you used the VEC’s Easy English guides to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote?

41. How did you use the VEC Easy English guides? (For example, told people about the guides, distributed the guides, sat down with people to explain the guides)

42. How useful have you found the VEC Easy English guides?

43. What could be done to improve the VEC Easy English guides?

44. Please describe any resources (e.g. manuals, guides, teaching tools, communication tools, technology, etc) you have used to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

45. Describe how you used these resources:

46. How useful were these resources?

47. Do you or other staff support people with intellectual disabilities to have a say (positive or negative) in your organisation in any of the following ways? Please select all that apply:

- People with intellectual disabilities sit on organisational governance boards or in leadership positions
- People with intellectual disabilities are consulted regularly in service design and organisational policy (e.g. co-design processes or client committees)
- People with intellectual disabilities are employed as workers and deliver some of the services of our organisation
- People with intellectual disabilities are regularly invited to give feedback about the support or other services we provide
- People with intellectual disabilities are active in choosing the care and services they receive
- Our organisation asks people with intellectual disabilities what they think of services when we are audited or when programs are evaluated
- People with intellectual disabilities are listened to if they give casual feedback about the support they receive
- Not sure
- None of the above
- Other (Please specify)

48. You can use the space below to describe what you or your organisation have done to support people with intellectual disabilities to have a say:

49. In your opinion, what could be done to better support people with intellectual disabilities to vote and whose responsibility should it be?

This section is about the future and asks your views and ideas about what could be done to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.

50. What, if anything, would help your organisation to support people with intellectual disabilities to cote (e.g. training, knowledge, funding, etc)?

51. Please describe any ideas for programs that would support people with intellectual disabilities to vote?

This section is about your own voting behaviour and views about voting. All of these questions are optional and can be skipped if you would prefer not to answer them.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
I never vote in elections						
I think voting in elections is important						
I don't understand how the Australian political system works						
I want to make a difference in society and be heard						
I am not interested in politics						
I think voting in elections makes a difference						
I regularly discuss political issues or voting with others						
Other (Please specify)						

52. What is your age?

53. What is your gender?

54. What is the highest level of education you have received?

55. Please specify the post high-school qualification/s you hold:

56. How long in total have you worked in the disability sector or with people with disabilities?

57. What are the core activities of your organisations? Please select all that apply

- Direct service provision
- Advocacy
- Policy
- Other (Please specify)

58. For whom does your organisation provide services? Please select all that apply

- People with intellectual disabilities
- People with physical/sensory disabilities
- Family members/carers
- Not specific to disabilities or another option (Please specify)

Appendix B: Phase 2 Short Survey of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Name _____ Focus group no.: _____

Date of birth _____

Gender Male / Female / Another option: _____

Do you have a job? No / Yes

If yes, what is your job? _____

Do you study? No / Yes

If yes, where & what do you study? _____

Who do you live with? Independently / Independently with drop in support / Family / Group home /

Unsure / Other: _____

Have you ever voted? Yes / No / Unsure

If yes, how many times? _____

If no, do you want to vote? Yes / No / Unsure

Are you enrolled to vote? Yes / No / Unsure

Have you ever received a fine because you did not vote? Yes / No

Are you:
- ☐ A member of a self-advocacy group
- ☐ A member of another group (i.e. union, political party, advocacy group)

Do you:
- ☐ Sit on a committee or advisory board (i.e. government, council)
- ☐ Help run an organisation (i.e. sit on a governance board)
- ☐ Give advice to organisations or govt about how they can do better
- ☐ Go to other community or political meetings or consultation
- ☐ Go to protests/rallys
- ☐ Write letters or call up politicians
- ☐ Volunteer work

If so, where do you volunteer? _____

Appendix C: Phase 4 Online Supporter Time 1 Survey

1. **What is your name? (Surname is optional)**

2. **What is your email address?**

3. **What is your phone number?**

4. **What is your relationship to [org. name]?**
   - Senior managerial staff of [org.name]
   - Front line and supervisory staff of [org. name]
   - Family member of a person with intellectual disability who uses [org. name]
   - Paid staff member of another organisation that supports someone who uses [org. name]

5. **(Family only) What is your relationship to your relative with an intellectual disability?**
   - Parent
   - Sibling
   - Aunt/uncle
   - Grandparent
   - Cousin
   - Foster parent
   - Other

6. **(All staff only) What is your job title?**

7. **(All staff only) How long have you worked at [org. name] for?**
   - Less than six months
   - 6-12 months
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-14 years
   - 15+ years

8. **(All staff only) How long in total have you worked in the disability sector or supported people with disabilities?**
    - Less than six months
    - 6-12 months
    - 1-2 years
    - 3-5 years
    - 6-10 years
    - 11-14 years
    - 15+ years

9. **(Managerial staff only) Have you or your organisation ever been involved in activities to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

10. **(Managerial staff only) For which elections were you involved in activities to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote? Select all that apply:**
    - Federal election 2nd June 2016 (when the Turnbull government was elected
    - Victorian state election 29th November 2014 (when the Andrews government was elected)
    - Local council elections (October 2016 except Greater Geelong)
    - Unsure
    - Other elections in the last 5 years (please specify)

11. **(Managerial staff only) For each election, describe the activities you were involved in.**

12. **(Managerial staff only) How successful do you think these activities were?**

13. **(Managerial staff only) Have you or your organisation ever provided guidance to staff about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

14. **(Managerial staff only) What type of guidance was provided? Select all that apply:**

- An organisational policy on voting support
- Formal instruction about how to provide voting support
- Informal direction to staff about voting support
- Training to staff about voting support
- Other

15. (Managerial staff only) Please describe the policy, instruction or training that was provided to staff:

16. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) Have you ever supported a person (/your relative) with intellectual disability to enrol to vote?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

17. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) Have you ever supported a person (/your relative) with intellectual disability to vote in an election?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

18. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) Think about the last federal, state and local elections listed below. Did you provide support to anyone (/your relative) with intellectual disability in the lead up to, during or following any of the below elections?

(Front line and supervisory staff only) Please enter the approximate number of people with intellectual disabilities you supported to vote in each of the following elections (enter 0 if you did not support anyone to vote in that election).

- Federal election 2nd June 2016 (when the Turnbull government was elected)
- Victorian state election 29th November 2014 (when the Andrews government was elected)
- Local council elections (October 2016 except Greater Geelong)
- Other elections in the last 5 years (please specify)

19. (Front line and supervisory staff only) What is your relationship to people with intellectual disabilities you supported to vote? Select all that apply.

- Family member

- Friend
- Client
- Other (please specify)

20. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) At what point during the election process did you provide support? Select all that apply.

- Before/in the lead up to the election
- During the act of voting
- After the act of voting

What was the nature of the support you provided at each point?

21. (Front line and supervisory staff only) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
My organisation encourages me to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.						
My organisation has provided me with guidance on how to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.						

The next section will ask about your views on voting and people with intellectual disability. There are no right or wrong answers

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
All people with intellectual disabilities should have the right to have their voices heard in elections						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who should not have the right to have their voices heard in elections						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to vote (either alone or with support)						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to vote (either alone or with support)						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to understand how to vote (either alone or with support)						

There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to understand how to vote (either alone or with support)						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to understand why we vote (either alone or with support)						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to understand why we vote (either alone or with support)						
Voting is too hard for many people with intellectual disabilities						
All people with intellectual disabilities should have the same right to vote as everyone else						
There may be some people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who should not have the same right to vote as everyone else						
The risk of undue influence is too high to allow some people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
The risk of getting a fine for not voting is too high to allow some people with intellectual disabilities to enrol to vote						
If a person with an intellectual disability is unable to fully understand how and why to vote they should not be enrolled						
If a person with an intellectual disability is unable to fully understand how and why to vote they should be removed from the electoral roll						

The next section will ask about your views on your role in providing voting support to people with intellectual disabilities. There are no right or wrong answers.

23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
It is part of my role to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
It is not a priority to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
There is no funding to provide voting support to people with intellectual disabilities						

24. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure

I am unsure about how to provide voting support to people with intellectual disabilities						
I know where to find appropriate information about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
I understand how the Australian democratic system works						

25. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to decide who to vote for						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to find information about political issues, candidates and parties						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to work out what political issues are important to them						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to understand information about political issues, candidates and parties						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to complete the enrolment process						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to complete the ballot paper with their choice in the voting booth						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability with transport to the voting centre						
It is a good idea to raise awareness of the voting rights of people with intellectual disabilities with their family members, friends and other supporters						

26. Are you aware of any resources about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote? (including resources at the polling centre, within your organisation, online, etc).

- Yes
- No

If so, describe the resources and how you heard about them.

27. The next section has a series of statements about the current voting situation for people with intellectual disabilities in Victoria. Please indicate whether you believe the following statements are true or false, or you are unsure.

	True	False	Unsure
People with intellectual disabilities have the right to vote in Australia			
A supporter cannot help a person with intellectual disability in the voting booth			
If a person with intellectual disability is unable to understand the nature and significance of voting, another enrolled person with a medical certificate can seek to have them removed from the electoral roll			
Polling staff cannot help a person with intellectual disability complete the ballot paper			
I can support someone to vote at an Early Voting Centre in the weeks leading up to election day			
A person who cannot write can still enrol and vote by enrolling using a special form, then a supporter can complete a ballot on their behalf (with the person's choice)			

28. Please select your age

- Under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

29. Please select your gender

- Male
- Female
- Another option

30. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Secondary school
- Certificate 3/4
- Diploma
- Bachelor
- Post-graduate
- Other (please specify)

31. (If answered Cert 3/4 or higher) Please specify the post high school qualification/s you hold.

32. Please verify your contact details

Email:

Phone number:

Appendix D: Phase 4 Online Supporter Time 2 Survey

1. **What is your name? (Surname is optional)**

2. **What is your email address?**

3. **What is your phone number?**

4. **What is your relationship to [org. name]?**
   - Senior managerial staff of [org.name]
   - Front line and supervisory staff of [org. name]
   - Family member of a person with intellectual disability who uses [org. name]
   - Paid staff member of another organisation that supports someone who uses [org. name]

5. **(Family only) What is your relationship to your relative with an intellectual disability?**
   - Parent
   - Sibling
   - Aunt/uncle
   - Grandparent
   - Cousin
   - Foster parent
   - Other

6. **(All staff only) What is your job title?**

7. **(Managerial staff only) In the lead up to or during the 2018 Victorian state election, were you involved in activities to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

8. **(Managerial staff only) For the 2018 Victorian state election, describe the activities you were involved in.**

9. **(Managerial staff only) How successful do you think these activities were?**

10. **(Managerial staff only) During the 2018 Victorian state election, did you or your organisation provide guidance to staff about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

11. **(Managerial staff only) What type of guidance was provided? Select all that apply:**
    - An organisational policy on voting support
    - Formal instruction about how to provide voting support
    - Informal direction to staff about voting support
    - Training to staff about voting support
    - Other

12. **(Managerial staff only) Please describe the policy, instruction or training that was provided to staff:**

13. **(Front line and supervisory staff and family only) In the lead up to the 2018 Victorian state election, did you support a person (/your relative) with intellectual disability to enrol to vote?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

14. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) During the 2018 Victorian state election, did you support a person (/your relative) with intellectual disability to vote?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

15. (Front line and supervisory staff only) Approximately how many people with intellectual disability did you support during the 2018 Victorian state election?

16. (Front line and supervisory staff only) What is your relationship to the person/people you supported to vote? Select all that apply:

- Family member
- Friend
- Client
- Other (please specify)

17. (Front line and supervisory staff and family only) At what point during the election process did you provide support? Select all that apply.

- Before/in the lead up to the election
- During the act of voting
- After the act of voting

What was the nature of the support you provided at each point?

18. (Front line and supervisory staff only) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
My organisation encourages me to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.						
My organisation has provided me with guidance on how to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote.						

The next section will ask about your views on voting and people with intellectual disability.

There are no right or wrong answers

19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
All people with intellectual disabilities should have the right to have their voices heard in elections						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who should not have the right to have their voices heard in elections						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to vote (either alone or with support)						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to vote (either alone or with support)						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to understand how to vote (either alone or with support)						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to understand how to vote (either alone or with support)						
All people with intellectual disabilities are able to understand why we vote (either alone or with support)						
There may be some people such as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who are unable to understand why we vote (either alone or with support)						
Voting is too hard for many people with intellectual disabilities						
All people with intellectual disabilities should have the same right to vote as everyone else						
There may be some people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities who should not have the same right to vote as everyone else						
The risk of undue influence is too high to allow some people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
The risk of getting a fine for not voting is too high to allow some people with intellectual disabilities to enrol to vote						
If a person with an intellectual disability is unable to fully understand how and why to vote they should not be enrolled						
If a person with an intellectual disability is unable to fully understand how and why to vote they should be removed from the electoral roll						

The next section will ask about your views on your role in providing voting support to people with intellectual disabilities. There are no right or wrong answers.

20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
It is part of my role to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
It is not a priority to support people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
There is no funding to provide voting support to people with intellectual disabilities						

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to decide who to vote for						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to find information about political issues, candidates and parties						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to work out what political issues are important to them						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to understand information about political issues, candidates and parties						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to complete the enrolment process						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability to complete the ballot paper with their choice in the voting booth						
It is a good idea to support a person with intellectual disability with transport to the voting centre						
It is a good idea to raise awareness of the voting rights of people with intellectual disabilities with their family members, friends and other supporters						

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
I am unsure about how to provide voting support to people with intellectual disabilities						
I know where to find appropriate information about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote						
I understand how the Australian democratic system works						

23. Are you aware of any resources about supporting people with intellectual disabilities to vote? (including resources at the polling centre, within your organisation, online, etc).

- Yes
- No

If so, describe the resources and how you heard about them.

24. The next section has a series of statements about the current voting situation for people with intellectual disabilities in Victoria. Please indicate whether you believe the following statements are true or false, or you are unsure.

	True	False	Unsure
People with intellectual disabilities have the right to vote in Australia			
A supporter cannot help a person with intellectual disability in the voting booth			
If a person with intellectual disability is unable to understand the nature and significance of voting, another enrolled person with a medical certificate can seek to have them removed from the electoral roll			
Polling staff cannot help a person with intellectual disability complete the ballot paper			
I can support someone to vote at an Early Voting Centre in the weeks leading up to election day			
A person who cannot write can still enrol and vote by enrolling using a special form, then a supporter can complete a ballot on their behalf (with the person's choice)			

25. Were you aware of a VEC initiative to increase voting participation of the people with intellectual disabilities who use [org. name's] services?

- Yes
- No

26. What activities related to the VEC initiative were you involved in and how?

27. How useful did you find the VEC initiative?

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not so useful
- Not at all useful

28. What worked well about the VEC initiative?

29. What could be improved about the VEC initiative?

30. Finally, we ask you to verify your contact details

Email address:

Phone number:

Appendix E: Phase 4 Survey of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Circle one: PRE or POST NOV election

Name _____ Date: _____

Date of birth _____ Organisation: _____

Gender Male / Female / Another option: _____

Living circumstances? Rented or owned / home with drop in support / With parents / or family of origin / Group / home / Unsure / Other: _____

Have you ever voted? Yes / No / Unsure

**If yes,

How many times? _____

Did someone support you to vote? _____

Who supported you? *(e.g. worker, parent, friend)* _____

How did they support you? *(e.g. getting info, choosing who to vote for, learning how to vote, transport, at the poll station)* _____

**If no,

Why not? *(e.g. too hard, no support, nervous)* _____

Do you want to vote? Yes / No / Unsure

Are you enrolled to vote? Yes / No / Unsure

Have you ever received a fine because you did not vote? Yes / No

---

Are you:

☐ A member of a self-advocacy group

☐ A member of another political or advocacy type group *(i.e. union, political party, advocacy group)*

Do you:

☐ Sit on a committee or advisory board *(i.e. government, council)*

Try asking if they ever go to meetings. If so, ask what the purpose of the meetings are/what they talk about in the meetings.

☐ Help run an organisation *(i.e. sit on a governance board)*

☐ Give advice to organisations or govt about how they can do better *(i.e. reply to consultation requests, sit on advisory board/consumer group at in organisation)*

☐ Go to other community or political meetings or consultation

☐ Go to protests

☐ Write letters or call up politicians

☐ Volunteer. If so, where? _____