

ECIA VIC/TAS Submission (November 2022)

Introduction

ECIA VIC/TAS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to developing a Guide to the Guiding Principles of Australia's Disability Strategy (the Strategy).

ECIA VIC/TAS is the peak body for early childhood intervention in Victoria and Tasmania. We represent over 600 professionals and organisations providing specialised support and services for infants and young children with disability and/or developmental delay to promote development, well-being and community participation. Our vision is for young children of all abilities to fully participate in family and community life.

ECIA VIC/TAS members are ECI professionals working in community organisations, disability services, specialist ECI organisations, children's services, and government departments – all of which reflect the diverse ways in which services are provided to young children and their families.

ECIA VIC/TAS acknowledges the important role the Strategy plays in protecting, promoting and realising the human rights of people with disability. We are particularly pleased to see Guiding Principle No 8. in the 2021-2031 Strategy, with a focus on the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and their right to preserve their identities.

In this submission ECIA VIC/TAS highlights issues and provides recommendations for the Guide to the Guiding principles to support government, business, and the community in their efforts to ensure that every child with a disability or developmental delay can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community, in line with the vision of the Strategy.

Feedback and recommendations

Issues	Recommendations
Principles 1-7	
It is encouraging to see the Strategy aims to recognise intersectionality. In relation to children, Principle No 8 addresses the intersection of disability and age. However, there is a risk that the needs of children with disability and developmental delay and their families will be overlooked in the other seven Principles without explicit prompts in the Guide.	Provide examples through a prompt about age intersectionality. For example, in Principle no 2. ‘How should intersectional factors be considered in order to better understand discrimination?’ (e.g., children with a disability or developmental delay)
The definition of inclusion in participation in the Key Principles and Principle No 3 is welcome. However, it would be useful to have a prompting question related to issues of inclusion and participation for children because of the particular barriers and enablers across environments for children. (e.g. school, early childhood education and care)	Add a prompting question such as ‘What does effective participation and inclusion look like for children?’ or ‘What are the barriers and enablers for successful inclusion and participation for children?’
Principle 8	
The current document indicates that the Principles are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) ¹ . Principle No 8 also relates to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ² . This is not explicit in the document, only referred to in the key terms in relation to respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and for their right to preserve their identities. In order to ensure an understanding of the particular needs of children with disability and developmental delay in the Guidelines, the CRC must be referenced alongside the CRPD. It is worth noting that the CRC and CRPD have been written to operate in tandem. ³	Make explicit that the Guidelines are based on both the CRPD and the CRC where appropriate.

¹ United Nations (2007) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

² United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child

³ McCallum, R. (2020). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: An Assessment of Australia’s Level of Compliance. Retrieved from: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/united-nationsconvention-rights-persons-disabilities-assessment-australias-level-compliance>

<p>The principle demonstrates an understanding that children learn and develop over time, by using the phrase ‘evolving potential’. However, it fails to recognise that children grow and develop within the context of their family.</p>	<p>Recognise the central role families have in their child’s life by adding ‘and their family’ after ‘children with disabilities.’</p>
<p>The principle is based on children with disabilities. Given that young children’s developmental needs are emerging over time in this critical period of development, it is important to recognise those children with developmental delay or who may be at risk of developmental disability.</p>	<p>Recognise the emerging developmental needs of young children by adding ‘and developmental delay’ after ‘children with disabilities.’</p>
<p>The first current prompting question is about children being treated equally to other children. Whilst equality is the terminology used in the CRPD and the CRC, current thinking and subsequent terminology is about the need for equity, as described by the Australian Human Rights Commission.</p>	<p>Reword Principle 8 to reflect the need for equity for children with disability or developmental delay.</p>
<p>Overarching recommendations</p>	
<p>Accessibility of the guide will be paramount. ECIA VIC/TAS would be pleased to support the development of materials and provide case studies from the sector that are focussed on children with disabilities and developmental delay and their families.</p>	<p>Ensure the guide is supported by multi-platform accessible videos, case studies, tipsheets and self-reflection assessment tools that are sharp, simple and clear.</p>



Sarah Riches
CEO