

I support SAFETY IN DISABILITY



Authorised by Paul Healey, HACSU State Secretary, 7 Grattan Street, Carlton

HACSU

The Disability Union.



SAFETY IN DISABILITY

One sector. United.

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LETTER FROM PAUL HEALEY AND KATE MARSHALL



Dear member,

2020 is drawing to a close. It has been a year that no one foresaw; a year of extraordinary challenges and hardship that we hope will never be repeated.

2020 also brought out the very best in HACSU. We are in awe of HACSU's team of nearly 7,000 specialist disability workers. Your hard work, commitment and integrity kept thousands of Victorians with disability safe and supported throughout the darkest of times. You told us when things were unsafe in your worksites, and we escalated your concerns to the very highest corridors of power, and to the front pages of national newspapers.

We found out this year that Victoria's disability sector isn't strong or safe enough to protect all its workers or clients. The Royal Commission report on the experience of people with disability during the COVID-19 pandemic recently set this out in stark terms: "During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic the Australian Government did not provide disability support workers priority access to PPE, thereby exposing both the workers and the people with disability whom they supported to an increased risk of infection".

This isn't good enough and must never be repeated. From PPE shortages, to clumsy and uncoordinated responses between different levels of government, it fell on HACSU and our members to demand and enforce basic occupational health and safety standards.

We are proud to have led HACSU's political and industrial efforts this year. We ensured that you were rightly treated as essential frontline healthcare workers, and together we kept our sector safe and unified. But more needs to be done. That's why, throughout 2021, HACSU will be campaigning for permanent and meaningful improvements to safety standards in your worksites. Government and employers need to do more, and HACSU will drive this change. You are entitled to it, and together we will enforce it.

We're writing to you today to announce the launch of our 2021 Safety in Disability campaign. This campaign will run for two years, or until we've ensured all Victorian disability homes are acceptably safe. Our campaign priorities have been set by our delegates and members, and our evidence base comes from the more than 900 HACSU members who took part in our Safety Audit in September. On the opposite page, you'll find a quick snapshot of the issues we'll be campaigning to fix.

We want you to be an active part of this campaign. Throughout 2021, we'll be out visiting worksites again (as well as meeting members on Zoom, where it's more convenient for them). We'll be ensuring union trained health and safety representatives in all worksites, and reporting regularly and publicly on those employers who are working with us to keep Victorian disability workers safe, and those that aren't.

As we enter what we hope will be a 'COVID-normal' summer, facemasks may be a feature of life in indoor settings in Victoria for some time to come. Inside is a HACSU facemask, that I hope you will wear with pride. On the back page of this brochure is our Safety in Disability pledge. If you'd like to be a part of our social media campaign, please take a selfie of yourself holding up this pledge card- wearing your HACSU facemask, if you like- and text it (with your name) to HACSU's campaigns team on 0499.777.387.

Now more than ever, we are immensely proud to lead your union. You are an essential Victorian worker, and our community owes you a debt of gratitude for what you've done in 2020.

We wish you, your families and loved ones a happy and peaceful holiday season. You've earned it. If you need HACSU over the holiday period, we're a phone call away.

In unity,

Paul Healey and Kate Marshall
State Secretary and Assistant State Secretary, HACSU

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SAFETY IN DISABILITY



What we found out in 2020

HACSU received 932 Responses to a 19 question survey. It was the largest survey we've conducted as a union, and we'll be repeating the survey in 2021.

- Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) are represented in only 54% of your worksites.
- 22% of you worked in homes where there were no specific COVID-Safe plans as at the date of completing the survey.
- 59% of you have become specialist cleaners in 2020, undertaking deep cleans of your worksites once or multiple times per shift.
- 2020 has had a deep mental health impact on our members. The overwhelming majority of you report anxiety, fatigue, depression, and stress directly relating to the impacts of COVID-19 on their work.
- Poor communication exacerbated OH&S concerns throughout the second wave of COVID-19, and contributed to the significant mental health impacts on the workforce. Major concerns identified:
- Poor information flow between management, employers, and workers.
- Inability of DSWs to access official public health guidance and directives.
- Lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of the NDIS.

What HACSU will be doing in 2021

- Ensuring union trained health and safety representatives (HSRs) in every worksite.
- Creating public 'report cards' for all Victorian disability employers- scoring them on their safety standards, and letting our members and the wider public know the results.
- Supporting HSRs and workers to ensure that employers understand their legal and OH&S obligations.
- Developing online and in-person OH&S training resources for disability support workers.
- Working with regulatory bodies to ensure greater oversight and scrutiny of employers and worksites.
- Campaigning for structural improvements to the NDIS funding model.
- Bringing public visibility and media attention to the vital work that our members do.

What you can do to get involved now

- Support HACSU's Safety in Disability social media campaign. Take a selfie of yourself holding the pledge card on the back of this brochure and text it, together with your name to 0499.777.387. We'll feature you across our social media channels.
- Keep in touch with your workplace delegate or organiser, and let them know immediately if there are OH&S concerns in your place of work.
- Come along to a Safety in Disability Virtual Town Hall Meeting. We'll be running these monthly throughout 2021, and we'd love to see you there. Our first meeting for 2021 will be on Thursday January 28th at 7pm. Check your emails nearer the time for registration and login details.

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