



12 July 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

Amaze and ACD Welcome Victorian Government Announcement

Autism peak Amaze and the Association for Children with a Disability (ACD) have welcomed the new measures announced this morning by Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews in relation to arrangements for school students with a disability as Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire schools move to 'remote and distance learning'.

Students with a disability or with special needs who attend mainstream schools will be able to attend school in person and learn under the supervision of teaching staff and education support staff. This applies to students in all year levels, regardless of whether they have PSD funding. This is a major change from the previous "remote and distance learning" directive implemented in Term 2.

Students attending special schools will be also be able to attend school from tomorrow.

"We commend the Victorian Government for listening to students with disabilities and their families about the significant challenges they faced in Term 2," said **Fiona Sharkie**, Chief Executive of Amaze, which provides support for autistic people and their families.

"COVID-19 magnified pre-existing issues in education," she said. "Students with disability and their families were disproportionately impacted.

"We appreciate the Victorian Government's commitment to better address the needs of students with disability and special needs in this second phase of school disruptions," said Ms Sharkie.

Karen Dimmock, Chief Executive of ACD echoed the sentiments, reiterating that access to appropriate support was critical. "For parents of students with disability who choose not to return to school it is vital that they are well supported to learn from home. For those with NDIS plans, accessing in home support can make a real difference.

"It is important that all students with disability and special needs – regardless of whether learning at school or from home – have access to tailored curriculum and personalised support. It is also critical that Individual Learning Plans be updated to reflect the current context and that Student Support Groups continue to meet," said Ms Dimmock.

Amaze and ACD will continue to work with the Victorian Government to inform how best to support students with disability during Term 3 and ensure that implementation of the measures delivers the anticipated benefits.

- **Ends** -

About Amaze

Amaze is the peak body for autistic people, their families and supporters in Victoria. Operating for over 50 years Amaze provides quality information on autism; undertakes research and develops policy to improve the lives of autistic people. During the COVID-19 crisis Amaze conducted a Pulse Check survey of nearly 300 families with school aged children – over 90% of respondents were attached to mainstream government schools. Our channels – including the Autism Connect line – experienced a surge of school related engagements.

About Association for Children with a Disability

Association for Children with a Disability is the leading advocacy service for families of children with disability in Victoria. A not-for-profit organisation led by and for families of children with a disability, ACD have supported families across Victoria and advocated for children with all types of disabilities for 40 years. During the COVID-19 crisis ACD heard from more than 500 families of students with disability, and experienced a 25% increase in education related calls to their Support Line.

For further media information, or to talk to Fiona Sharkie (Amaze) or Karen Dimmock (ACD), please contact:

Matthew Mahon, RoyceComm, matthew@royce.com.au or ph 0413 101 860