

NDSS DV Advocacy Annual Report Summary

2022-2023

Introduction

Diabetes Victoria (DV) is the leading charity and peak organisation representing all Victorians affected by diabetes and those at risk. Above all, we value and respect the lived experience of Victorians affected by diabetes. This is at the core of everything we do.

Diabetes Victoria's advocacy service aims to improve the social and emotional health outcomes for people with diabetes. We achieve this by collaborating with people with lived experience of diabetes when they:

- Face stigma and discrimination, while at work and other areas of public life.
- Need help to secure their rights.
- Want help to say what they want to say.
- Ask for action to improve services and policies.

This report documents the problems people with diabetes asked for our help to address and resolve between 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

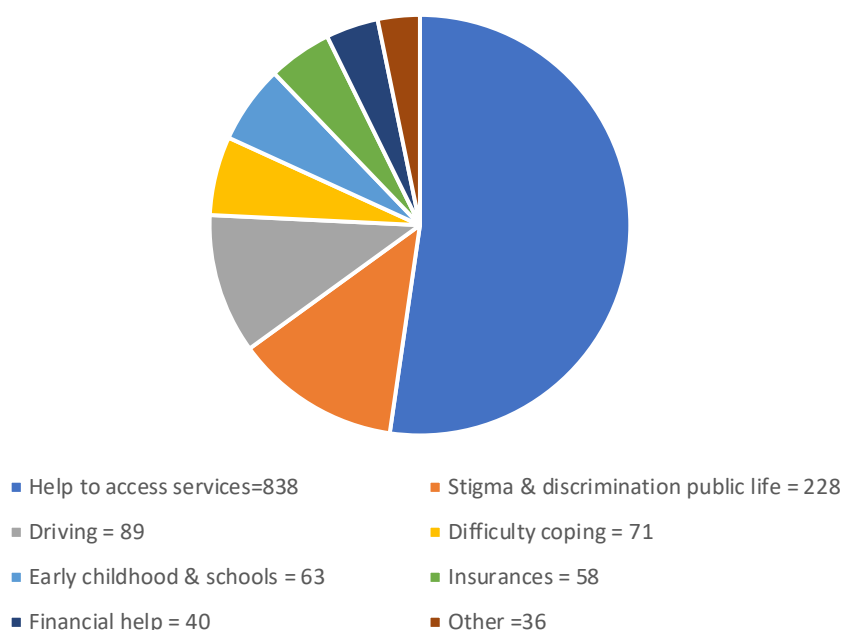
Across the year, 330 new cases presented to the service requiring 1,093 follow up contacts to progress and resolve problems. This was an increase of 57 new cases or 17 per cent compared to the previous year.

Last fiscal year the DV advocacy team had a total of 1,423 contacts. This was a 22.9 per cent decrease (n=425) in the number of total contacts to the service compared to the previous year.

92 per cent of contacts (n=1,305) to the service were from people with type 1 diabetes and 118 contacts or 8 per cent were from those with type 2 diabetes.

The reasons people with diabetes contacted the advocacy service are listed in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1 Presenting problems



While the reasons people with diabetes requested our help have remained consistent across the last 5 years the overall number of contacts decreased by 425 contacts compared to last year. This enabled the advocacy team to conduct more community presentations, complete ideas briefs and progress actions to re dress diabetes stigma and discrimination. For example, extending Centrelink Health care cards access to 18-25 year olds with type 1 diabetes, helping Red Cross Life blood to improve the language used to advise people with diabetes about complications on blood donation, Road Safety messages campaign for DV social media channels, updating our website information on FIASP, travelling, floods, and the new road rules on driver distraction, preparing articles for Circle magazine and The Loop, presenting on emotional health at all NDSS Living Well events in rural and metro Melbourne, and undertaking professional development tasks to upskill all team members.

Needing help to access services, affordable insurances, financial help and NDSS subsidised continuous glucose monitoring based on extenuating circumstances = 936 contacts

Those needing help to access services made up close to 70 per cent of all contacts. People with diabetes and their family members needed help to access:

- in home practical help
- information about affordable social and emotional community-based services
- reconnect with diabetes health professional close to their home
- services able to accommodate people with complex social health needs
- Current information about access to diabetes medicines, supplies, and technologies
- transport to health appointments and travelling for leisure post COVID-19, navigating complex systems i.e., My Aged Care and National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Fifty-eight contacts came from people with diabetes looking for affordable insurances i.e., international students planning to study in Victoria looking for health insurance. Plus, Victorians wanting life, income protection and increasingly domestic and international insurance products.

Our team had forty contacts from people with diabetes asking for money to pay for food, rent, diabetes medicines, diabetes equipment and costs of daily living. These people were connected to emergency relief and material aid organisations.

This year we were successful in securing access to NDSS funded diabetes technologies based on extenuating circumstances submissions endorsed by the person with diabetes and their medical team.

Contacts for help to access needed services decreased by 21 per cent compared to last year.

Diabetes stigma and discrimination in area of public life = 228

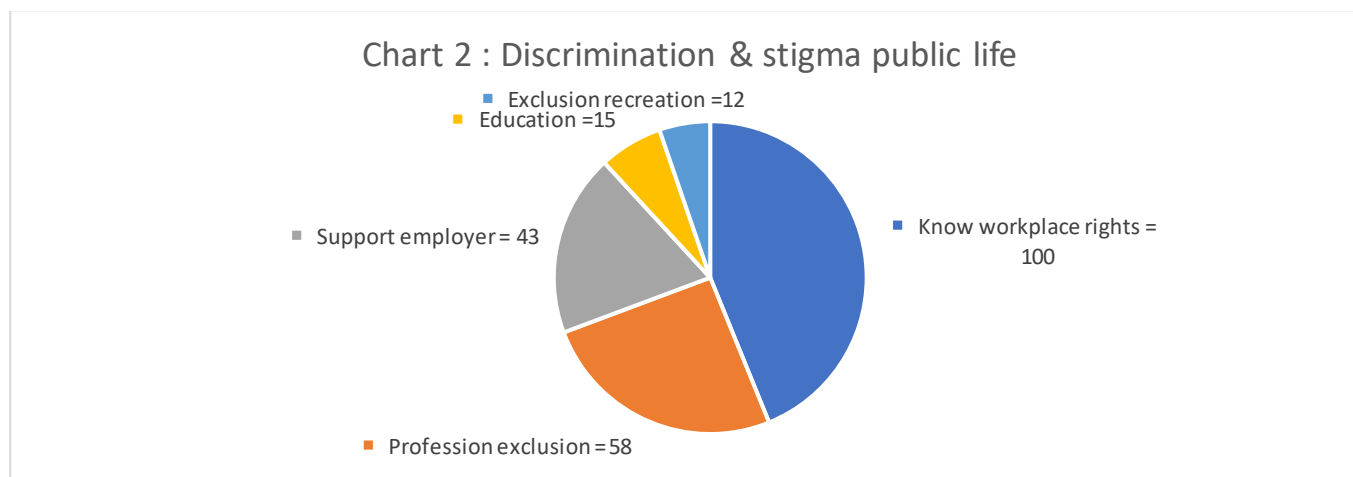


Chart 2 above presents the areas of public life where people with diabetes faced direct and indirect discrimination and stigma i.e., at work, wanting to enter a chosen profession, undertaking education and attending pubs, clubs and concerts. Our team were able to provide information and resources on workplace rights, assisted employers with information and practical help to enable staff to undertake their work and address diabetes self-care tasks. Career firefighters with type 1 diabetes continue to face uncertainty about entry and continuing in this profession.

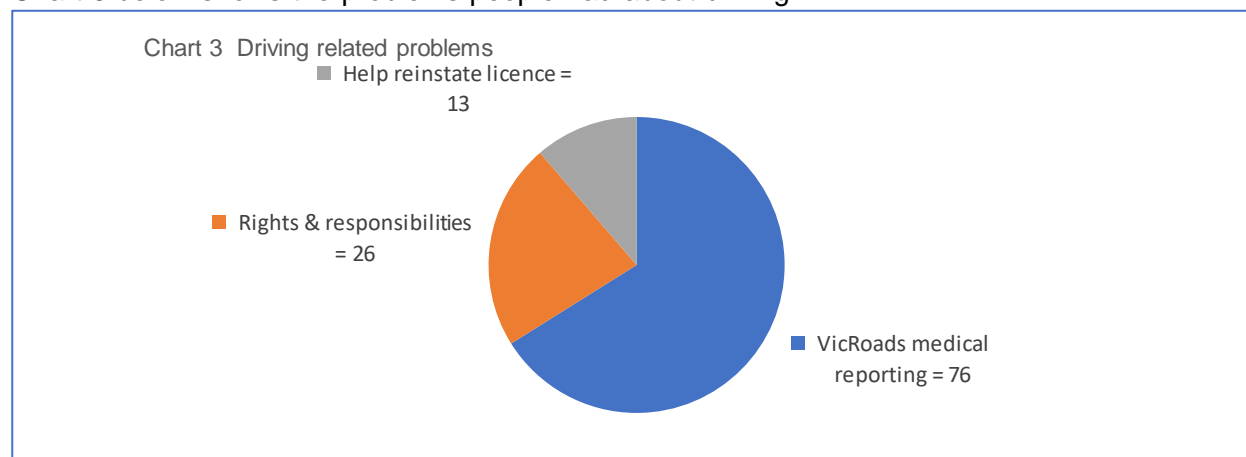
These problems decreased by 10 per cent compared to the previous year.

Problems about driving = 89 contacts

Eighty-nine or 7 per cent of contacts were about driving. Our team were able to help drivers know their rights and responsibilities regarding providing current fitness to drive medical reports, have the latest information on the new road rules regarding avoiding driver distracting and use of diabetes technologies while driving as well as maintaining productive relationships with the manager of VicRoads Medical Review and other stakeholders.

This was a 58 per cent decrease in contacts relating to driving compared to last year.

Chart 3 below shows the problems people had about driving.



Difficulty coping with emotional/mental health and wellbeing = 71 contacts

Diabetes related emotional distress remain common in those contacting our service. People with diabetes and their family carers told us repeatedly about long waiting lists to consult mental health professionals in person and virtually along with the increasing out of pocket costs.

The NDSS information sheets on mental health remain a valuable resource.

Contacts in this area decreased 40 per cent compared to last year.

Early childhood and schools problems = 63 contacts

All contacts related to type 1 diabetes in early childhood settings and schools.

Working alongside the DV schools program staff, parents reported school leaders actively encouraging enrolment at other schools for children with type 1 diabetes. Regrettable bullying by peers continues to happen and parents remain emotionally distressed while advocating for their child. The need for additional teaching aide support staff for foundation year students and children attending early childhood settings remains a gap in service.

Contacts to our services decreased by 47 per cent.

Other = 36 contacts

All contacts were for once-off interesting problems and requests. For example, help to fund and train hypo awareness dogs, wanting a run down on Australia's health care system for people intending to migrate to Australia, and asking if DV staff could come and mow lawns.

This report formed the basis of the workplan and ISO procedures for the Diabetes Victoria Advocacy team for 2023/2024.

For more information about the work of the Diabetes Victoria Advocacy team visit Diabetes Victoria website: <https://www.diabetesvic.org.au/Social-and-emotional-wellbeing?bdc=1>

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