



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION  
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Miss Laura Nuttall MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Member)

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Disability Inclusion Bill 2024

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# Disability Inclusion Bill 2024

## Cultivating Confidence for all Students

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Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. You can visit our website at [www.masterelectricians.com.au](http://www.masterelectricians.com.au)

MEA supports the *Disability Inclusion Bill 2024* (the Bill) and its legal implementation of the social model of disability in law. Whilst we appreciate the bill is focused on establishing a framework to allow for strategies that improve inclusivity of those with disabilities and establishing the Disability Advisory Council (DAC), MEA has taken the opportunity to emphasise a key policy that should be prioritised when strategies are being developed.

We advocate DAC should give primary focus towards implementing and integrating Vocational Education Training in Secondary Schools (VETSS) curriculum with an equal weighting to Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) which will likely assist in achieving key priorities listed under cl 8(1)(b). VETSS will cultivate early exposure to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) trades, allowing all students to become exposed to, and skilled in, VET courses regardless of their physical or mental ability. MEA believes this will truly assist in sustainable systemic and societal change towards workplace and educational inclusion of all individuals, regardless of background.

We sincerely believe this will assist in achieving core principles listed under cl 9(2) including-

- Promoting disability inclusion (cl 9(2)(b))
- Reduce, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility (cl 9(2)(b))
- Address ableism (cl 9(2)(b))
- Include information for non-government entities about ways to support the disability inclusion strategy, including how to make a disability inclusion plan (cl 9(2)(d)).

### Vocational Education Training in Secondary Schools (VETSS)

#### Education and Learning (cl 8(1)(b))

We strongly advocate for VETSS to be integrated into the secondary school curriculum with an equal weighting to ATAR. This will expose all students, regardless of their physical and mental ability, sexuality and gender identities, cultural and linguistic heritage and socioeconomic background (as listed under cl 10(2)) to STEM skill development. This policy aims to incentivise students to pursue thriving careers in STEM fields.

MEA argue that improved VETSS programs will create the necessary systemic and societal change to improve disability inclusion both throughout education and in the workforce, as these individuals would become empowered to cultivate skills which suit their abilities in a supportive and educational environment and better work towards a prosperous career. Comparatively, the current secondary school curriculum is heavily focused on ATAR which essentially excludes those who are unwilling or unable to conform.

#### Employment and Financial Security (cl 81(b))

VETSS is likely to be a long-term sustainable solution to remedy the skills shortage crisis as it develops a pool of confident students with disabilities and diverse backgrounds that may not have otherwise believed they were suitable for STEM trades. It is time to change the narrative and begin emphasising the benefits and inclusiveness of STEM trades, with the ACT Government well-placed to champion this through its social model of disability. Without cultivating this change at a young impressionable age where VET participation by students of all abilities is normalised, we cannot expect to see a more inclusive society.

Moreover, we anticipate that the transformative shifts in systemic and societal dynamics will extend to workforce recruitment strategies. This will be driven by an increased engagement of a broader spectrum of individuals with disabilities in STEM trades, coupled with a growing awareness of inclusivity among employers due to generational changes.

