



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

# National Disability Strategy

## Position Paper

July 2020





# Foreword

## Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services

Australia's National Disability Strategy (2010-2020) has helped achieve many positive outcomes that have improved the lives of people with disability.

It saw the first ever commitment of governments at all levels to take a national approach and work together and that shared commitment remains in place as we start to plan the next 10 years.

We must ensure that we continue to work toward our goal for an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.

The new Strategy will build on the achievements of the past decade, which included the National Disability Insurance Scheme, a world leading development.

In particular, the new Strategy will emphasise the continuing need for a whole of society approach to implementing disability inclusive policies.

But we recognise that Governments alone cannot drive all the changes we need to reach our goals.

Collaboration and engagement with people with disability, their families and advocacy organisations will be at the heart of the new Strategy.

The Position Paper has been drawn up to help inform the new Strategy. It takes into account the results of consultations already held with people with disability and has been developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the states and territories.

Important proposals in the Position Paper include commitments to the public reporting of performance, policy and program evaluations plus a strengthened approach to implementation.

There are approximately 4.4 million people with disability in Australia.

The new National Disability Strategy is an opportunity to shift outcomes for all people with disability.

I encourage you to read the Position Paper and have your say on how the new Strategy can ensure that its principles and practices are embedded in all aspects of policy making and community life as we move forward.

I look forward to your feedback.



Anne Ruston  
Minister for Families and Social Services



# Introduction

Diversity is one of Australia's greatest strengths and we have much to gain from the full participation and inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of Australian society.

In 2018, almost one-in-five Australians reported having a disability<sup>1</sup> and the average Australian can expect to live one-fifth of their life with some level of disability.

Australia's first National Disability Strategy was signed in 2011. The Strategy is a 10 year agreement which commits all governments to a unified, national approach to 'an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens'.

## **The Strategy seeks to promote and guide action and reform across all Australian governments, private enterprises and the broader community.**

As we work together towards a new National Disability Strategy to replace the current Strategy, we can reflect on, and recognise, the changing disability landscape.

In particular, it's important to recognise the significant events which have recently impacted the Australian community. The 2019-20 bushfires, followed by the unprecedented challenge the COVID-19 pandemic presents, have and continue to be especially challenging. Both the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the ongoing need for a strategy such as the National Disability Strategy, to guide governments in making sure all their policies, programs and services consider the needs of people with disability, remove barriers to inclusion and ensure people with disability are involved in development and implementation processes.

In addition, since the last Strategy was introduced, service and support systems for people with disability have changed significantly with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and disability reform across all levels of government. The NDIS provides funding to support individuals with permanent and significant disability, which is approximately 10-15 per cent of all people with disability. This is a world leading program and a significant investment by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, which will continue to be a key action area under the new Strategy.

The current Strategy is the primary mechanism through which Australia implements its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). The new Strategy will continue to uphold Australia's commitments under the UN CRPD.

The new Strategy will also continue to recognise the vital role carers play in providing care, support and assistance to people with disability in order to reach their full potential.

There are approximately 4.4 million people with disability and the new National Disability Strategy is governments' key opportunity to shift outcomes for all people with disability.

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<sup>1</sup> Survey of Community Attitudes towards People with a Disability, University of Melbourne, 2018.



# A Position Paper to inform a new National Disability Strategy

A number of important inputs will inform the future strategic direction of the new Strategy. These include:

- the Senate Inquiry report into the delivery of outcomes under the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* to build inclusive and accessible communities (2017)<sup>2</sup>
- the Social Policy Research Centre's independent review of the implementation of the current Strategy (2018)<sup>3</sup>
- the Productivity Commission Review of the National Disability Agreement (2019)<sup>4</sup>
- the Australian Government report and the Civil Society report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Committee's Concluding Observations (2019).

Broad consultation on developing the new Strategy was undertaken in the first half of 2019 with key stakeholders, including people with disability, their families and carers, the disability sector, advocates and service providers.<sup>5</sup>

The reviews, along with ongoing consultation, have identified areas of the current Strategy that are working well and should be retained as part of the new Strategy. These areas include the current vision and six outcome areas. The reviews also identified areas that need to be strengthened in the new Strategy. In particular, a greater focus on accountability and implementation of policies and programs that will improve outcomes for people with disability.

The new Strategy is intended to be an aspirational, living document with long-term plans, indicators and measures that are relevant across the life of the Strategy. The new Strategy is the key mechanism for engaging all parties to commit to the continued systemic reform of disability policy in Australia. It provides an over-arching coordinated approach to achieving outcomes from programs, policies and initiatives.

The purpose of this Position Paper is to provide an overview of the proposed architecture of the new Strategy. It does not provide a list of initiatives governments propose to implement over the life of the new Strategy. Rather, it is an important step in setting out key elements that will guide investment in disability policy over the next decade. To provide this overview, the Position Paper is structured as follows:

- Core components of the existing Strategy that are working well and are proposed to be adopted as part of the new Strategy.
- Additional elements to be adopted as part of the new Strategy to enhance outcomes for people with disability.


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2 [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/AccessibleCommunities/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/AccessibleCommunities/Report)

3 [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/04\\_2019/review-implementation-national-disability-strategy-2010-2020-final-report.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/04_2019/review-implementation-national-disability-strategy-2010-2020-final-report.pdf)

4 <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-agreement/report>

5 <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-a-new-national-disability-strategy-reports/right-to-opportunity-consultation-report-to-help-shape-the-next-national-disability-strategy-full-report>



This Position Paper has been developed in collaboration with state and territory governments and forms the basis for a second round of consultations on the new Strategy. This consultation process will be guided by the principles of meaningful engagement as it seeks to hear the voices of people with disability.

The new Strategy will be person-centric in that the policy architecture should revolve around creating the structures and practices through which people with disability can understand and exercise their rights across all domains. It will be accountable in that any outcomes for people with disability should be measurable and reported on.

Feedback is sought on the architecture of the new Strategy and ideas on how the new Strategy can deliver better outcomes for all people with disability. The new Strategy will be published following agreement from all levels of government.

Governments acknowledge the challenges people with disability are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the time taken to provide feedback on the positions outlined in this paper.

**The Government invites all Australians to have their say in the design and implementation of a new National Disability Strategy. Please see the last page of this paper to find out how. Submissions close on 30 September 2020.**



# 1. What should we carry forward from the current Strategy into the new Strategy?

## Vision

An aspirational objective is required to guide the direction of disability policy in Australia. This objective should be broad and cover all people with disability. The vision outlined in the current Strategy was based on extensive consultation as part of the Shut Out report (2009). Recent consultations have highlighted that it continues to be relevant today.

It is proposed that the existing vision is retained in the new Strategy. However, it is also proposed that the word 'citizen' in the existing vision is changed to 'members of the community'.

The vision under the new Strategy is therefore proposed as:

**An inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.**

## Outcome areas

The previous inputs referred to in the introduction and public consultations have all told us that the six outcome areas of the current Strategy are still the right outcome areas to focus on in the new Strategy. These are:

1. Economic security
2. Inclusive and accessible communities
3. Rights protection, justice and legislation
4. Personal and community support
5. Learning and skills
6. Health and wellbeing

Based on feedback from stage one consultations, it is proposed that the existing outcome areas are retained as part of the new Strategy.

### Question 1:

**During the first stage of consultations we heard that the vision and the six outcome areas under the current Strategy are still the right ones. Do you have any comments on the vision and outcome areas being proposed for the new Strategy?**



## 2. What improvements are we going to make to the new Strategy?

A coordinated effort is required from the community as a whole to remove barriers, support economic participation and promote social inclusion. It is proposed that the new Strategy will include a set of guiding principles for the development of policy and design of programs and an increased focus on community attitudes.

### Guiding principles

An agreed set of principles and questions could be used to guide the development of policy and design of programs by all levels of government and non-government organisations. In addition to the principles set out in Article 3 of the UN CRPD, these principles could include:

- **Involve and engage:** has the policy process or program design engaged with and listened to people with disability at all stages of planning and implementation and provided accessible information and opportunities for feedback?
- **Design universally:** have the principles of universal design been applied where possible and has the project taken advantage of accessible and assistive technology where available?
- **Engage the broader community:** how has the broader community been informed of, involved in and been made responsible for removing barriers and supporting the inclusion of people with disability?
- **Address barriers faced by priority populations:** how have the priority populations noted by the National Disability Strategy been identified and what action has been taken to specifically address the barriers they may experience?
- **Support carers and supporters:** how have the needs of the family, carers and circles of information and formal support for the person with disability been considered in the development of the policy or program?

#### Question 2:

What do you think about the guiding principles proposed here?

### An increased focus on community attitudes

There is a widespread understanding of the need to ensure people with disability are able to fully participate in society. Changing community attitudes is a pre-requisite for overcoming the barriers to participation faced by people with disability in their daily lives. None more so than in the context of finding and retaining meaningful employment, with a recent study showing that fewer than half of the survey participants agreed that workplaces are accepting of people with disability.<sup>6</sup>

All levels of government (Commonwealth, state and territory, and local governments), and all sectors of the community, share the responsibility to work together to remove barriers and shape attitudes so that people with disability can fully participate as equal members of the community. A key focus of the new Strategy will be to facilitate and foster ongoing attitudinal change so that we harness the rich contribution that people with disability make to our society.

<sup>6</sup> Survey of Community Attitudes towards People with a Disability, University of Melbourne, 2018.



### Question 3:

**What is your view on the proposal for the new Strategy to have a stronger emphasis on improving community attitudes across all outcome areas?**

## Strengthening Accountability

All levels of government (Commonwealth, state and territory and local governments) have a key role in driving change. It is proposed that the new Strategy seeks to enhance government accountability by:

- clearly describing the roles and responsibilities of government, including that of the NDIS
- measuring outcomes
- reporting on outcomes
- committing to the collection of relevant data to enable effective monitoring and reporting
- having a coordinated approach to the evaluation of policies and programs.

### Clearly describe roles and responsibilities

The new Strategy presents an opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of various levels of government in disability policy and service delivery. The new Strategy will also seek to clarify the important role of the sectors outside government in improving outcomes for people with disability, including removing barriers to participation and shaping community attitudes.

It is proposed that the new Strategy will:

- Link to relevant publicly available information which summarises the role of the NDIS and outlines the roles and responsibilities that have already been agreed between governments.
- Link to the Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and Other Service Systems and accompanying Applied Principles and Tables of Service (APTOS). These set out the roles and responsibilities in Commonwealth, state and territory governments for providing supports to NDIS participants through both the NDIS and mainstream service systems such as health, education, justice and transport.
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of all levels of Government in disability-specific and mainstream services.
- Outline the important role of the non-government sector in improving outcomes for people with disability.

### Question 4

**How do you think that clearly outlining what each government is responsible for could make it easier for people with disability to access the supports and services they need?**



## Question 5

**How do you think the Strategy should represent the role that the non-government sector plays in improving outcomes for people with disability?**

**(Examples of the non-government sector include big, medium and small businesses, community organisations, employees of these businesses, private research, investment organisations and individuals.)**

### Measuring outcomes

One of the main objectives of the new Strategy is to have a real impact on improving the lives of people with a disability. Reviews and consultations on the current Strategy have consistently suggested that to do this, the new Strategy needs to provide a clear and consistent approach across all levels of government to measuring the effectiveness of disability-specific services and supports, as well as the provision of mainstream services for people with disability.

Measuring outcomes for people with disability in key areas of their lives – such as employment, housing, health and education – will help track progress over time to determine whether the lives of people with disability are improving. Regular reporting against outcomes will provide better and more evidence-based guidance on how to prioritise and target investments.

The new Strategy will include an outcomes framework as a mechanism to hold governments and service providers to account for the outcomes being achieved by programs and services they are delivering to people with disability. To do this, the mechanism will articulate outcomes, indicators and measures to track change over time.

### Reporting

Public reporting is fundamental to government transparency and accountability. Various reviews and consultation feedback have highlighted concerns about the current approach to reporting, noting it has been ineffective in ensuring action or accountability.

Previous reviews and consultation on the current Strategy have posed different views around the frequency of reporting. For example, the Productivity Commission recommended that a National Disability Report be tabled in Parliament every two years.<sup>7</sup> During the first stage of consultation on the new Strategy, stakeholders favoured annual reporting. There have also been suggestions for a staggered reporting process.

Some reporting options may include:

- The responsible Ministerial Council release an annual, public statement outlining government policy commitments to lift outcomes for people with disability.
- A progress report to be published every two years. This report would analyse progress towards outcomes against the outcomes framework and identify the contribution of government policies/programs towards achieving these outcomes.

## Question 6

**What kind of information on the Strategy's progress should governments make available to the public and how often should this information be made available?**

<sup>7</sup> Productivity Commission 2019, *Review of National Disability Agreement*, Study Report, Canberra, p. 78.



## Collecting Data

Data will be essential for measuring outcomes and tracking progress. The new Strategy will contain a commitment to collecting relevant data to enable effective monitoring and reporting and to drive change.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Australian Data and Digital Council agreed to establish a National Disability Data Asset (NDDA), which, once developed, will help inform service choices by people with disability and their carers. The NDDA will bring together, for the first time, de-identified Commonwealth and services data, NDIS data, and service system data from states and territories. The integrated and shared data will provide a better understanding of how people with disability are supported through services, payments and programs across multiple service systems.

Once established, the NDDA will link routinely collected data for policy and resource purposes, to improve outcomes for all people with disability by better understanding their needs, service usage and service delivery. It will be integral to informing the outcomes framework.

## Evaluating Policy and Programs

Policy and program evaluation is critical to understanding the effectiveness of government policies and programs. The information and results received from evaluation can be used to inform the refinement or cessation of existing policies and programs and the construct and design of future policy and investment initiatives.

It is proposed that the new Strategy will include a commitment from governments to undertake policy and program evaluations. The detailed arrangements, to be set out in the new Strategy, may include elements such as a timetable for evaluation and protocols for undertaking the evaluation.


## Putting policy into action to achieve outcomes for all people with disability

The success of the Strategy will ultimately depend on the actions that governments, not-for-profits and the private sector take to make real improvements to the lives of all people with disability. The development of policy and programs under the new Strategy can be assisted by a stronger approach to implementation.

It is proposed that the new Strategy seeks to put policy into action by developing a new approach to implementing the Strategy which includes:

- guiding principles for policy development and program design (outlined above)
- Targeted Action Plans
- an Engagement Plan.

The reviews that have been used to inform the new Strategy noted that implementation has been inconsistent between jurisdictions and difficult to measure under the current Strategy. Better coordination across all jurisdictions and at all levels of government is needed to make the delivery of disability services more equitable.



Rather than producing periodic 'Implementation Plans' as has been done under the current Strategy, it is proposed that the new Strategy outline a coordinated approach in pursuing the goals of the new Strategy. This would be achieved through better connecting the activities undertaken by governments and other organisations with the outcomes framework, and subsequent evaluations, to facilitate a more cohesive implementation approach. Further details on outcomes framework and evaluations are at pages 9 - 10. In addition, all governments could work toward aligning the timeframes of their disability inclusion plans to allow for a nationally consistent approach to implementation, reporting and review.

## Promoting and Communicating the Strategy

During the most recent consultation undertaken at the start of 2019, almost half of respondents to a survey had not heard of the current National Disability Strategy. This needs to change. A greater effort needs to be made to explicitly embed the principles and aspirations of the new Strategy in all areas of policy-making and community life, and at all levels of government, including at the local level.

## Targeted Action Plans

Targeted Action Plans are proposed to better facilitate improved outcomes for all people with disability over the life of the new Strategy. They will articulate and focus the attention and efforts of governments and private, community, and not-for-profit sectors.

As an action-oriented approach to implementation, Targeted Action Plans would allow a more intensive focus on achieving specific deliverables to drive real change within shorter timeframes.

These plans can be developed as required and the focus can also be tailored to respond to the changing disability policy landscape over time. Targeted Action Plans will make the new Strategy more responsive and adaptable to the changing needs of people with disability.

### Question 7

**What do you think of the proposal to have Targeted Action Plans that focus on making improvements in specific areas within a defined period of time (for example within one, two or three years)?**

## Engagement Plan

It is proposed that the new Strategy include an Engagement Plan that articulates governments' commitment to ensure that people with disability can actively participate in shaping future disability policies, programs and services.

### Question 8

**How could the proposed Engagement Plan ensure people with disability, and the disability community, are involved in the delivery and monitoring of the next Strategy?**



## Workforce development

The Productivity Commission stated that “a ready and capable workforce is essential to providing high quality services and improving the wellbeing of people with disability.”<sup>8</sup>

The Commonwealth, in conjunction with states and territories are currently developing a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) National Workforce Plan, which will outline a national approach to disability workforce development. The project aims to set out a cohesive, focused, national approach to developing the NDIS workforce and the care sector more broadly.

## Conclusion

The new National Disability Strategy is a key opportunity for governments, private sector and the whole community to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for all people with disability. To achieve this, it is important to develop the architecture of the new Strategy. This Position Paper draws on findings from previous reviews and broad consultation conducted in the first half of 2019, to outline the proposed architecture of the new Strategy.

The Position Paper seeks to retain parts of the existing Strategy for the new Strategy, including the current vision and the six existing outcomes. The new Strategy will continue to be the main mechanism for meeting Australia’s obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This Position Paper also proposes new features to be included in the new Strategy, which will enhance accountability and improve implementation. These include:

- an outcomes framework with a comprehensive set of performance indicators to measure progress against the six existing outcomes
- a commitment to the collection of data and to public reporting of performance
- a commitment to undertake policy and program evaluations
- a strengthened approach to implementation.

Feedback is sought to ensure the new Strategy can deliver better outcomes for all people with disability. Targeted consultations are being conducted following the publication of this paper to inform the development of the new Strategy. The new Strategy will be released following the agreement from all levels of government.

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<sup>8</sup> Productivity Commission 2019, *Review of National Disability Agreement*, Study Report, Canberra, p. 79.



## How you can provide feedback

### Send us a written submission

You can send a submission in writing to:

National Disability Strategy Governance  
and Engagement Section  
GPO Box 9820  
Department of Social Services  
Canberra, ACT 2601

### Web

Via the consultation website at [DSS Engage](#)

Download the Position Paper

Download an Easy English version of the Position Paper

Enter or upload a written submission

Watch an Auslan video

Make a video or audio recording: if you want to send a video or audio recording of your submission, please visit [DSS Engage](#) to find out how.

If you upload your submission online, including via the online template, you will be asked to specify whether you would like your submission to be published on the DSS website.

If you send your submission via email or standard post, please specify whether you would like your submission to be published online.

Questions about the consultation process can be directed to

[disabilityreform@dss.gov.au](mailto:disabilityreform@dss.gov.au)

You can also call the Department of Social Services on **1800 334 505**

**THE CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

