National Disability Strategy   
2010–2020

Progress report to the Council of Australian Governments 2014

Entire report (including appendices)

ISBN 978-1-925007-76-3

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**DSS 1494.01.15B**

National Disability Strategy 2010–2020

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Council of Australian Governments

2014

Entire report (including appendices)

# A word from disability ministers

Australia’s disability ministers summarise their jurisdictions’ actions and achievements from 2011 to 2014 under the National Disability Strategy

Australian Government

The *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* represents a shared national vision for improving the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers. We want to ensure that all of our fellow citizens — including the one in five who live with disability — have fair and equal access to the full range of mainstream programmes and services available, whether employment, healthcare, education, transport, or public facilities and infrastructure. Reforming our mainstream systems will provide greater opportunity for participation, as well as an essential foundation for gradually rolling out the National Disability Insurance Scheme. There is a strong commitment to the strategy across each level of government, but it will require a collaborative effort by all of us to provide people with disability with the freedoms, dignity and choice that all Australians expect.

Although only in its first stage of implementation, we are already seeing significant progress under the strategy towards the creation of a more inclusive Australia. Ours is a country where the principles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* are an inherent part of the way in which we support all people within our community. The reform of disability services through the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is testament to this approach. We want to create a society where every citizen has the opportunity to have a good education, to choose a place to live, to find and maintain a job, to socialise with friends and be part of everyday community life. As the strategy advances towards 2020, our ultimate goal is for people with disability to be able to fulfill their dream of equal participation in all aspects of society.

**The Hon Christian Porter MP**

**Minister for Social Services**

New South Wales

The NSW Government is committed to full community inclusion for all people with disability. On 3 December 2014, the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (the Act) officially commenced in NSW. The Act enshrines the rights of people with disability into NSW law during and beyond the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and aligns with the United Nations *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Central to the *Disability Inclusion Act* is the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan. The Plan is a whole-of-government approach to planning of services to make them more accessible and communities more inclusive – all in consultation with people with disability.

This work is in addition to the National Disability Strategy NSW Implementation Plan 2012-2014. I am pleased to say that many of the actions have been completed, and there have been significant steps taken by the NSW Government to increase access to mainstream services for people with disability.

I am honored to be part of a government that is working to deliver the best outcomes for people with disability across NSW. I am excited by what we have achieved so far, but I know there is more to do. I look forward to continuing to work with people with disability, all stakeholders, and the community to ensure full inclusion in our society.

**Hon John Ajaka MLC**

**Minister for Ageing**

**Minister for Disability Services**

Victoria

The Victorian Government is committed to increasing the social inclusion of people with a disability and reducing barriers to their participation. People with a disability have a right to decent and fulfilling lives where their efforts and their achievements, not their disabilities, will be their defining features. Implemented in Victoria through the State Disability Plan, the National Disability Strategy is one important way we can achieve this.

Victoria is contributing over $300 million of existing and new funding for services for people with a disability in the Barwon Area over the three year NDIS trial period.

Our focus in Victoria is working together to provide people with a disability with the services and support they need to participate in the community in the same way as people without a disability.

A recent Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability has highlighted what we already know — that people with a disability face barriers to employment, education, housing, service provision, civic participation and other areas. The inquiry has confirmed the *Victorian Disability Act 2006* and the current State Disability Plan provide a strong basis for our social inclusion agenda.

We are going to continue to draw on the expertise of people with a disability, their families, carers, the disability sector and others to achieve our vision for people with a disability.

**Hon Martin Foley MP**

**Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing**

Queensland

The new Queensland Government sworn in February 2015 is committed to the outcomes of the National Disability Strategy. These share much in common with Queensland’s own 10-year blueprint, *Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability*, released in 2011.

The milestones noted in this progress report are given effect through Queensland Government departmental disability service plans, required under the *Disability Services Act 2006*, introduced by a previous Labor government. The intent was to provide a coordinated approach in Queensland to making government services more accessible and responsive. Like those before us, the new Labor government will work towards achieving a more inclusive society. Most importantly, we will seek a more inclusive economy — one which provides more employment opportunities for people with disability, as well as long-term carers re-entering the workforce.

As one of the original supporters of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), our priority in coming months will be working towards its successful implementation in 2016. The NDIS represents one of the great social reforms of our lifetime. To ensure its smooth roll-out, we will establish an NDIS launch prior to the national roll-out that will provide vital information about how the NDIS will work in a local context.

**Hon Coralee O’Rourke MP**

**Minister for Disability Services**

**Minister for Seniors**

**Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland**

Western Australia

Western Australia is committed to the National Disability Strategy and actively pursues important public policy changes to address the challenges faced by people with disability, their families and carers. The State’s *Count Me In* strategy continues to be the primary vehicle through which the National Disability Strategy is delivered in Western Australia. The Disability Services Commission works in partnership with people with disability, service providers and community representatives and there is a particular focus on access, inclusion and participation across government and in communities across the state.

**Hon Helen Morton MLC**

**Minister for Disability Services**

South Australia

A major reform agenda for South Australians with disability and their families is well underway. This is underpinned by *Strong Voices: A Blueprint to Enhance Life and Claim the Rights of People with Disability in South Australia (2010-2020).* Our reforms aim to bring people with disability to the forefront in determining how they live their lives, pursue aspirations and contribute to our society.

As Minister for Disabilities, I am committed to ensuring people with disability have opportunities to participate in the ongoing development of government policy, programmes and delivery of services. I established the South Australian Disability Register, a database of individuals who agreed to be consulted on particular disability-related topics. I have personally led a number of community engagement roundtables. This led to the development and passing of the *Disability Services (Rights, Protection and Inclusion) Amendment Act 2013* and addressed employment opportunities for people with disability.

I am particularly proud that our disability agenda is occurring in mainstream policy areas across the whole sphere of state government. This includes in health, housing, transport, education, employment, justice and the arts. This work is complementary to the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is transforming the way services are delivered to people with disability.

**Hon Tony Piccolo MP**

**Minister for Disabilities**

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government is committed to providing leadership to achieve a fully inclusive and participatory society in which people with disability are valued and respected as equal and contributing members of our community.

The *Disability Framework for Action 2013–2017* sets out how, in collaboration with the Tasmanian community, we will ensure that the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* is implemented in this state and what we will do to build a better Tasmania for people with disability.

People with disability, through the Premier’s Disability Advisory Council and the Minister’s Disability Advisory Council, continue to partner with us — contributing to a strong agenda for change and taking a key role in monitoring the Tasmanian Government’s action in this area.

I am genuinely proud of our recent achievements including supporting the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, guaranteeing greater protection for the rights of people with disability through a new *Mental Health Act 2013* and delivering improved experiences for students with disability in Tasmanian schools.

Of course there is more to do. During 2014, each Tasmanian Government department has developed a new four-year disability action plan detailing what it will do to ensure that there are better opportunities for people with disability to work, learn, access the services they need and to participate in social, recreational, cultural and political life.

**Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP**

**Minister for Human Services**

**Minister for Women**

Australian Capital Territory

*Future Directions: Towards Challenge 2014* is the ACT Government’s five–year policy framework for achieving positive outcomes for people with disability. Focusing on collaborative action across the ACT Government and the business, sports, arts and community sectors, it is the ACT’s translation of the objectives of the National Disability Strategy. Launched in 2010, Future Directions ended in December 2014 which has provided us with a great opportunity to reflect on achievements and future action.

We have come a long way to ensure people with disability have the same opportunities as others to work and participate in the community. Under Future Directions, we have delivered real and tangible outcomes for people with disability, families and carers across the six outcome areas of the National Disability Strategy as highlighted in this report. Some notable examples include a curriculum resource for schools about inclusion, creation of innovative housing options and increasing transport options for people with disability.

The ACT will be the first jurisdiction to accept all eligible residents into the National Disability Insurance Scheme. An estimated population of 5,075 people will transition into the scheme by July 2016. The ACT is committed to the implementation of the National Disability Strategy to create inclusive communities where people with disability can fully participate and engage in the life of the community as equal citizens.

Our commitment to the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* will continue through the development of an ACT Inclusion Statement that will be created in partnership with the community in 2015. This will reinforce our commitment to the National Disability Strategy and assist in our transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

**Hon Joy Burch MLA**

**Minister for Disability**

Northern Territory

In 2014, the Northern Territory Government created the first dedicated ministerial portfolio for Disability Services. This has enabled disability to be recognised as its own area of government responsibility in the Territory and receive the focus of a dedicated Minister.

Work has commenced on the development of a whole-of-government Disability Strategy. This strategy takes advantage of the increased focus on disability at both a community and government level which is being driven by the National Disability Strategy and reforms occurring as part of the NDIS.

A Disability Scholarships Programme was established in 2014, aimed at building the capacity of the disability services sector in the Northern Territory. Scholarships are awarded to employees and staff working in the disability services sector currently enrolled or intending to enrol in a course that is relevant to the strategic workforce directions of the disability services.

The Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability Reform was also established in 2014, to provide strategic advice to Government on the issues facing Territorians with disability, their carers and families. The council has a particular focus to advise government on the current trial of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Barkly region.

The trial in the Barkly region has raised significant expectation for people with disability, the disability service sector and the broader community in the Northern Territory regarding increased services and choice. It is vital that the lessons from this trial serve to build an equitable and effective remote service delivery model within the frameworks and principles of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We must ensure that remote clients are not disadvantaged either by access, eligibility challenges or service delivery which do not fully address the market challenges or the special needs of the client group.

**Hon John Elferink MLA**

**Minister for Disability Services**

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# Executive summary

The *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* sets out a ten-year national policy framework for improving the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers. This report is the first of four two-yearly progress reports to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The report provides a high-level view of progress under the strategy based on reporting from Australian Government, and state, territory and local government agencies on the implementation of policies and programmes which will contribute to achieving the strategy’s vision for:

‘An inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.’

This report is an important means of communicating progress to people with disability, their families and carers, governments and the wider community. The National Disability Strategy is a ‘living’ policy framework and progress reports will inform the further development and implementation of the strategy over its ten-year life span. Achievements may not be immediately measurable because of the strategy’s long-term focus; however, a key feature of this progress report is the inclusion of baseline population trend data to monitor and track national progress against the strategy’s six policy outcome areas:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities

2. Rights protection, justice and legislation

3. Economic security

4. Personal and community support

5. Learning and skills

6. Health and wellbeing

Other evidence of progress is provided through reporting from the Disability Reform Council about key achievements, as well as feedback from Disability Champion Ministers who have been working to progress the objectives of the strategy. States and territories have developed disability plans consistent with the strategy and are reporting on these within their jurisdictions. Importantly, the views of people with disability, their families and carers, and their representative organisations have provided invaluable insight on progress and how the strategy is making a difference and where there is a need to renew focus.

Since the strategy was launched in 2011, achievements have been made across each key policy area. Highlighted in this report are positive actions by each level of government, and the community as a whole, towards creating a more accessible and inclusive environment. This has been enhanced by improved adherence to planning and regulatory systems such as the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* and *Disability Standards to Accessible Public Transport 2002*. An increased awareness and application of universal design principles across housing, transport and public infrastructure such as inclusive playgrounds, has brought with it positive improvements for people with disability.

While there is more work to be done to ensure that information and communication material is accessible to everyone, in June 2014 the Australian Government made a significant contribution to this goal by signing the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled* in Geneva. Work is currently underway towards ratification of the Treaty through Federal Parliament. The treaty will come into effect following ratification by 20 countries and will ultimately provide millions of people with vision impairments around the world access to more books published in accessible formats — including large print, braille or audio.

The strategy is an important mechanism for meeting Australia’s obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities*. In October 2013, following an appearance by the Australian delegation before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva, the Committee released its concluding observations which commended Australia for the adoption of the National Disability Strategy and the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The development of the NDIS is a significant achievement under the strategy and the most influential means of personal and community support for people with disability, their families and carers. While the NDIS represents a positive step forward for many people with disability, the strategy remains the key to achieving improvements in access to mainstream services and support for all people with disability. These mainstream reforms are an essential element in the successful introduction of the NDIS, both for participants in the scheme and for the many people with disability who may not be participants.

In terms of economic security, efforts to increase employer demand for people with disability and to provide better support to assist people with disability to remain in employment continue to progress, while the Disability Support Pension (DSP) will continue to provide a safety net for those unable to work. Recent reforms to DSP, focusing particularly on people below the age of 35, will also ensure that young people with disability have the best opportunity and support to get back into the workforce. The Wage Connect initiative proved successful, together with the Social Enterprise Development and Investment Funds (SEDIF), an initiative designed to help support social enterprises to develop, grow and sustain their work and impact by providing an avenue of tailored finance.

Improving access to quality education is an essential preparation for employment and the ability to live independently. The Australian Government and state and territory governments have sought to improve access to a quality education and appropriate training and support for people with disability through both mainstream and disability specific policies and programmes. The Higher Education Disability Support Programme has assisted in removing barriers to education for students with disability, and the National Disability Coordination Officer Programme (NDCO) has enhanced access to tertiary education and subsequent employment. The *Students First* approach is a means by which the Australian Government is working successfully with states and territories to focus on the key areas of school autonomy, quality teachers, an effective curriculum, and increased parental engagement to make a real difference for all students.

Finally, in the area of health and wellbeing, actions undertaken under the strategy have sought to address the barriers to mainstream health services and supports for people with disability across a number of areas, including through the provision of better training and education for medical and allied health professionals; improved assessment tools to identify complex needs; placing more people with disability in health advisory roles; better data collection; and improved networking, leadership and sharing of best-practice models across and within a range of health and lifestyle services.

Over the coming years, the strategy will be evaluated progressively using the information gathered in this report and subsequent two-yearly progress reports. This approach to evaluation will allow governments to learn from past experience and, if needed, review and amend the approach taken. This means that each implementation stage can be designed accordingly. A final evaluation report will use the evidence gathered through the two-yearly progress reports and will draw on the findings from evaluations of related government initiatives. It will also assess the strategy’s performance in terms of its vision, the six policy outcomes, and the overall purpose of the strategy.

# Introduction

Endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2011, the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* outlines a ten-year national approach to improving outcomes and whole-of-life opportunities for people with disability in Australia.

The strategy aims to influence the planning, design and delivery of mainstream policies, programmes, services and infrastructure, as well as the specialist disability services system, so that people with disability can participate as equal citizens in all areas of Australian life.

The strategy is structured under six broad policy outcome areas:

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

These six outcome areas were developed in consultation with people with disability and reflect the principles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to which Australia is a signatory.

All governments remain committed to driving change as outlined in the strategy. Implementation of the strategy is to be guided by three separate implementation plans over its ten-year life span. The first implementation plan, *Laying the Groundwork 2011–2014*, established the foundations to drive reform in the planning and delivery of both mainstream and disability-specific policies and services. It also established the basis for reporting and evaluation of the strategy.

This report is the first of four two-yearly progress reports to COAG required under the strategy’s reporting framework. It offers a high-level reflection of progress under the strategy provided from a range of sources including Commonwealth Government agencies, and state and territory and local governments that have had oversight of a range of measures and activities designed to further the objectives of the strategy. Disability Champion Ministers have also shared their experiences in promoting a mainstream response within their respective fields of influence.

People with disability, through their representative organisations, were also invited to comment on the first phase of the strategy’s implementation; outlining if and how it had impacted their lives, and informing the development of the second implementation plan *Driving Action 2015‑2018.* Their feedback is reflected in this report.

## Laying the groundwork

Implementation of the strategy in this first phase focused on six main actions to achieve results. These actions were designed to influence and enable improvement across all service systems and eliminate barriers for people with disability in all areas of life. The six actions were:

1. Influencing the mainstream support system by ensuring that when National Partnerships and National Agreements are periodically reviewed, consideration is given to how these agreements might be amended to better respond to the needs of people with disability
2. Appointing ministers from a range of mainstream portfolios to take a strong national leadership role to support the implementation of the National Disability Strategy and to act as champions for disability issues within their portfolio areas
3. Improving the evidence base — acknowledging that the more we know and understand, the better we can respond to the needs of people with disability
4. Developing, reviewing and implementing state and territory government disability plans and/or initiatives that complement the objectives of the National Disability Strategy
5. Involving people with disability in the development and implementation of government policies and programmes
6. Maintaining a commitment by governments to work together to realise the objectives of the National Disability Strategy

### State and territory disability plans

In addition to embracing national efforts across the strategy’s six outcome areas, state and territory governments have direct responsibility for delivering the majority of public services that are essential for all people to participate in their communities, including people with disability. These services range from health, hospitals and education to housing and transport, and they are found across all of the policy areas identified under the strategy.

Accordingly, each jurisdiction has its own individually tailored disability plan to translate the strategy’s vision into improvements that are based on the circumstances and priorities relevant to each state or territory. These plans align with the objectives of the strategy.

A select number of activities covered in the state and territory disability plans have been included in this high-level report. A comprehensive account of the progress made by each state and territory can be found in their individual reports.[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### Local government

Local government plays an important and unique role in driving the objectives of the strategy. Local councils are responsible for delivering a range of federal, state and territory government policies and programmes. Being so close to the communities they serve, they often engage more comprehensively to identify barriers to access and inclusion and can respond more sensitively to the expressed and specific needs of their communities.

An increasing number of local councils have developed and worked to disability access and inclusion plans. This has resulted in the implementation of a range of innovative and practical measures to improve outcomes for people with disability.

#### New South Wales

The *National Disability Strategy NSW Implementation Plan 2012–2014* is a whole-of-government outline of the state government’s initial priorities and actions to be undertaken between 2012 and 2014. The NSW plan aligns with the strategy and *NSW 2021*, and is referenced against theUnited Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. It complements reforms made to the specialist disability system through *Stronger Together*, which set a new direction for disability services from 2006 to 2016, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NSW plan was based on targeted strategy-related communication and consultation initiatives that took place between October 2011 and April 2012. These were primarily with peak consumer organisations and existing disability consultative groups to inform the priorities and actions for NSW. The plan was also based on feedback from extensive consultations conducted by Ageing, Disability and Home Care on *Stronger Together 2* and person-centred approaches that were reviewed to identify priority issues relevant to the National Disability Strategy.

The NSW Plan is available at the [NSW Government Family & Community Services, Ageing, Disability & Home Care website](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/about_us/strategies/national_disability_strategy/nds_nsw_implementation_plan)[[2]](#footnote-2).

In 2013, Local Government NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services commissioned a report to better understand current planning by NSW councils to support access and inclusion for people with disability. The research found that the majority of councils are planning for inclusive and accessible communities.

The report is also available at the [Local Government NSW website](http://www.lgnsw.org.au/policy/disability)[[3]](#footnote-3).

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW) (the Act) commenced on 3 December 2014 and requires the NSW Government to develop a four-year State Disability Inclusion Plan to guide how the whole-of-government will work towards the inclusion in the community of people with disability and improve access to mainstream services and community facilities.

The Act also requires NSW Government departments, local councils and some other public authorities to develop and implement their own Disability Inclusion Action Plans. The plans must be consistent with the State Disability Inclusion Plan and include strategies to increase access and participation. In developing and reviewing their plans, departments, councils and other public authorities must consult with people with disability.

The NSW Department of Families and Community Services and Local Government NSW have also reviewed local council disability access and inclusion planning and identified a number of excellent projects being undertaken at a local level to increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of communities for people with disability.

#### Victoria

The Victorian Government is committed to listening to people with disability, their families and carers and taking the actions needed to improve their lives at home, play, school and work.

The *Victorian state disability plan 2013–2016* involves work across government and the community sectors to make it possible for people with disability to use mainstream services such as health, education and transport — in the same way and in the same places as everyone else.

Victoria has long been at the forefront of increasing independence and choice for people with disability and is continuing to reform disability services to increase independence and choice. The Victorian Government is committed to monitoring and reporting back on progress against the plan while developing a new state disability plan for launch in 2017. The current plan is available at the [Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/statedisabilityplan)[[4]](#footnote-4).

#### Queensland

The Queensland Government is committed to enabling people with disability to have greater choice and control over disability care and supports, and to providing social and economic opportunities for people with disability.

In September 2011, the Queensland Government released *Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability* – an action plan to build an inclusive Queensland. The ten priorities of the action plan complemented the aims of the National Disability Strategy:

1. Rights and responsibilities
2. Inclusive communities
3. Accessible information, places and spaces
4. Health lives
5. Technology and innovation
6. Lifelong learning
7. Valued roles in the community and in employment
8. Strong natural networks
9. Responsive and effective disability support
10. Partnerships.

The *Queensland Disability Plan 2014–19: Enabling choices and opportunities* (QDP) was released in December 2013, building on the ground-work provided by *Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability* and the range of activities that had been underway since 2011. The QDP was a blueprint to prepare Queensland for the NDIS and to continue to deliver the Queensland Government’s commitments under the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* to improve access and inclusion across Queensland communities.

The QDP is a call to action that outlines the key roles business, industry and community partners can play in achieving the plan’s aims. The seven priorities of the QDP are:

1. Support people with disability and communities to be well-informed and confident about what the NDIS means for them.
2. Support people with disability, their families and carers to exercise choice and take up opportunities.
3. Support non-government disability service providers to operate in a competitive market-based environment.
4. Develop a skilled and strong workforce.
5. Prepare Queensland Government departments to transition disability funding and services to the National Disability Insurance Agency
6. Enhance mainstream services and facilities to enable genuine choice and participation in all areas, including education, employment, health, justice services and housing.
7. Promote genuine participation in the community.

The QDP is available at [Queensland Government, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/reform-and-renewal/disability-services/queensland-government-disability-plans/queensland-disability-plan-2014-19) website[[5]](#footnote-5).

Queensland’s commitment to the National Disability Strategy and the *Queensland Disability Plan 2014-19* will be delivered through actions set out in the disability service plan of each Queensland Government department. The development of a disability service plan is a legislative requirement under Queensland’s *Disability Services Act 2006*. All Queensland departments or agencies develop a disability service plan to provide a coordinated approach to improving access to government services and responses to the needs of people with disability, their families and carers. This approach takes into account partnerships with all levels of government, business, industry, people with disability, their families, carers and the community sector.

Disability service plans of agencies are available at [Queensland Government, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/reform-and-renewal/disability-services/queensland-government-disability-plans/queensland-government-disability-service-plans) website[[6]](#footnote-6).

#### Western Australia

The *Count Me In* initiative guides implementation of the National Disability Strategy in Western Australia. *Count Me In* is a change agenda to improve access, inclusion and participation across local communities, local and state government and the disability sector. Its key themes are ‘economic and community foundations’, ‘participation and contribution in all aspects of life’ and ‘personalised supports and services’.

The *Count Me In* strategy is underpinned by 240 state government agencies and local governments that are required by law to develop and progress disability access and inclusion plans which cover seven key outcome areas. Many of the policy directions within *Count Me In* and the National Disability Strategy are also informing the state trial of the WA NDIS. This forms part of the national trials through a national partnership agreement.

*Count Me In* has been widely welcomed across the state. It increased community awareness and capacity to respond to people with disability. It proved an important way to increase choice and control and to improve outcomes on behalf of people with disability through ensuring collaboration continues with mainstream agencies, including local governments.

The Western Australian *Disability Services Act 1993* requires state government authorities and local governments to develop and implement a disability access and inclusion plan. Disability access and inclusion plans are a formal mechanism for public authorities to identify and remove barriers preventing access by people with disability to services, events, information, buildings and facilities, and employment. Public authorities, including local government bodies, are required to report on progress in their annual reports and to the Disability Services Commission, which collates an annual progress report for parliament.

Progress reports of the disability access and inclusion plans, and information about *Count Me In* activities, are available at [Western Australia Government Disability Services Commission website](http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/)[[7]](#footnote-7).

#### South Australia

South Australia’s disability plan, Strong Voices — a Blueprint to Enhance Life and Claim the Rights of People with Disability in South Australia (2012-2020), was developed through intensive consultation with people with disability, their families and supporters. *Strong Voices* aligns with objectives of the National Disability Strategy and its actions reflect the South Australian context.

Highlights to date under *Strong Voices* include:

* new disability legislation, the *Disability Services (Rights, Protection and Inclusion) Amendment Act 2013,* which came into operation in South Australia in December 2013 to ensure greater choice, control and rights protection for people with disability
* development and funding of the *Disability Justice Plan 2014–2017* to safeguard the rights of all people with disability in their interactions with the criminal justice system
* greater protection for people with disability who require support workers through expanding screening provisions for volunteers and support workers through South Australia’s *Disability Services (Assessment of Relevant History) Regulations 2014*; these new provisions create a national benchmark for the comprehensive assessment of foreseeable risk.
* introducing disability access and inclusion plans across state and local government
* progressive implementation of individualised funding for South Australians with disability.

*Strong Voices* is available at [South Australian Government Department for Communities and Social Inclusion](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/disability-sa/disability-sa-publications/plans-and-reports/strong-voices) website[[8]](#footnote-8).

#### Tasmania

The *Disability Framework for Action 2013-2017* set out the Tasmanian Government’s vision for a fully inclusive and participatory society in which people with disability are valued and respected as equal and contributing members of our community. The strategy includes 71 actions to be undertaken by the state government. These relate to the six outcome areas of the National Disability Strategy and a commitment to achieve better outcomes for Tasmanians with disability through working collaboratively with the Australian Government, local government, as well as with industry and community organisations.

During 2014, all Tasmanian Government departments developed disability action plans that identify how the state’s framework will be implemented. Performance under the framework is monitored by the Premier’s Disability Advisory Council. This is chaired by the Premier of Tasmania and includes people with disability, carers and people with disability expertise.

State Government agencies report annually to the council about their progress against the framework and the council provides an annual report to state cabinet, including recommendations for action for the following year. Heads of agency make personal presentations biannually to the council.

The strategy is available at [Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet website](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csrt/for_and_about/people_with_disability)[[9]](#footnote-9).

#### Australian Capital Territory

*Future Directions: Towards Challenge 2014* is the ACT Government’s policy framework to improve outcomes and opportunities for Canberrans who have a disability. The six strategic priorities of Future Directions align with the National Disability Strategy. They focus the efforts of government, community and business towards making a positive difference in the lives of people with disability and their families.

Future Directions is underpinned by the vision expressed by Canberrans with disability that:

‘All people with disabilities achieve what they want to achieve, live how they choose to live and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community.’

Publication of the Future Directions finalisation report coincided with the 2014 International Day of People with Disability. The report celebrates, through first-person accounts, the outcomes and achievements of the framework over the past four years to promote a more inclusive Canberra community.

The report provides a solid platform on which to build the ACT Government’s new ACT Inclusion Statement in the first quarter of 2015. Broad community consultation will be invited in developing this statement.

Future Directions and the finalisation report are available at the [ACT Government Community Services website](http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/disability_act/policies_and_publications)[[10]](#footnote-10).

* [ACT Government, Future Directions - Five year policy framework [PDF 83.5KB]](http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/79872/final_policy_framework_PUBLISHED.pdf)[[11]](#footnote-11)
* [ACT Government, Future Directions - Five year policy framework [Word 135KB]](http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0007/314593/final_policy_framework_PUBLISHED.doc)[[12]](#footnote-12)

#### Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Disability Strategy is a whole-of-government initiative to guide the future direction of the Disability Services portfolio. It set outs actions for the Northern Territory Government to carry out from 2015 to 2019 to address the priorities for people with disability — in line with the National Disability Strategy.

The Territory’s strategy will ensure key disability reforms remain a firm focus alongside the roll out of the NDIS. It will also ensure a high priority for programmes and initiatives for people with disability in the Territory.

Several more initiatives drive disability reform in the Territory:

* The portfolio of Minister of Disability Services was set up in February 2014 — the first time this portfolio has existed in the Territory, bringing it in line with other jurisdictions.
* The Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability Reform (MAC) was set up in February 2014 to give the Northern Territory Government strategic advice on key disability reform issues. MAC members include disability service providers, and consumers of disability services from throughout the Territory.
* Disability Service Scholarships were created by the Northern Territory Government in March 2014 to boost the skills and career opportunities of people who work in the disability service sector. The scholarships encourage employees in the sector currently enrolled, or intending to enrol, in a course relevant to the strategic workforce directions of disability services. This underpinned a highly trained and competent workforce in disability services.
* On 1 July 2014, the National Disability Insurance Scheme trial was launched in the Barkly region. As the only remote trial in the nation, it is distinctly different from other trials currently underway in Australia. More than 100 Barkly residents with significant and profound disabilities will have their needs assessed under the trial, and most of the participants are Indigenous.

### Disability Champion Ministers

The appointment of Disability Champion Ministers from mainstream portfolios is one of the six key action areas identified in the National Disability Strategy. The role of Disability Champions is to actively promote the mainstreaming objectives of the strategy within their portfolio areas, such as education, health and transport, at a national level.

Since the implementation of the strategy in 2011, the appointment and retention of Disability Champions has been challenging, due to changes in government portfolio responsibilities, state and territory elections, and a streamlined COAG ministerial council system. The absence of a housing and homelessness ministerial council has meant there has been no forum for appointing a Disability Champion for housing and progressing this agenda. Recent Disability Champions have represented health; regional Australia; accessible transport and infrastructure; school education and early childhood development; tertiary education, skills and employment; law and justice; and local government.

There have been varying levels of engagement from Disability Champions to progress improvements for people with disability under their mainstream portfolio areas. There have been some excellent initiatives undertaken by Disability Champions to raise awareness of the strategy and encourage reform. In particular, the Local Government Disability Champion has undertaken a range of activities to raise awareness and encourage local councils to identify and respond to barriers faced by people with disability. This includes using speaking engagements to promote the strategy’s goals and objectives, encouraging all councils to develop a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan for their community, and initiating nominations for state and territory level Local Government Disability Champions.

Disability Champions have also undertaken a number of other national and state‑based reform initiatives which promote the core principles of the strategy. For example, education Champions have encouraged reforms to the education sector to improve access to support services for people with disability, including the development of e-resource materials and nationally consistent data collection policies. Most Champions have also played an active role in establishing state‑based disability plans that align to the strategy under their respective portfolios.

As part of the design of the NDIS, Champions have encouraged consideration of disability specific issues in their respective areas, and have used various conferences and committee meetings to give visibility to the strategy. All Champions have worked to advance the objectives of the strategy through their individual efforts.

#### Disability Champion for Local Government

An important part of the role of Disability Champion for Local Government is to raise awareness of the National Disability Strategy and to speak to councils about the importance of identifying and overcoming barriers faced by people with disability. Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis was Disability Champion for Local Government from 2012 to 2014. In her role as President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and as Mayor of Marion, she regularly used speaking engagements to promote inclusive communities. These included state and national local government conferences and events, as well as ALGA's National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra in June 2013, involving more than 1,000 local government representatives and elected officials.

As Disability Champion for Local Government, Mayor Lewis urged all councils to develop a disability access and inclusion plan for their community; to review their practices and policies; and to continue their work on building inclusive and accessible communities. She encouraged councils to share innovative projects and solutions with each other to promote the goals and aims of the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*.

The creation of a new disability category in the National Awards for Local Government in 2014 was a significant achievement and a direct result of the efforts of Mayor Lewis in her role as Local Government Disability Champion. In her words, ‘the role of disability champion is one of leadership and involves setting the right examples for our young people and others in the community. Leading by example is of critical importance in promoting inclusivity.’

Table 1 Recent Disability Champions

| Portfolio | Recent Disability Champions |
| --- | --- |
| Accessible transport and infrastructure | The Hon Terry Mulder MP (October 2012 – November 2014) |
| Health | The Hon Michelle O’Byrne MP (July 2013 – March 2014) |
| Housing | Minister Karen Struthers (December 2010 – March 2012) |
| Law, crime and community safety | The Hon Brad Hazzard MP (November 2014 – April 2015) |
| Local government | Mayor Felicity-Ann Lewis (April 2012 – November 2014) |
| Police and emergency management | The Hon Jennifer Rankine MP (July 2012 – March 2013) |
| Regional Australia | The Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP (July 2012 – November 2014) |
| School education and early childhood development | The Hon Mark Dixon MP (January 2012 – November 2014) |
| Tertiary education, skills and employment | The Hon Peter Collier MLC (February 2012 – July 2012)  The Hon Murray Cowper MLA (December 2012 – February 2013)  The Hon John-Paul Langbroek MP (September 2013 – January 2015) |

### National Partnership Agreements

Ensuring that people with disability are considered in the review of national agreements and related national partnerships is an important part of the mainstreaming objectives of the strategy. National agreements and national partnerships, agreed by COAG, are central to achieving government service delivery improvements and reforms.

Under the strategy, all governments have agreed to use the review points of relevant agreements to assess their consistency with the strategy. In effect, governments have agreed to consider the inclusion of additional strategies and performance indicators to ensure they address the needs of people with disability. This is a long-term initiative that will go some way towards embedding disability issues into everyday policy making and programme development.

In December 2012, the *Short Guide to Reviewing National Partnerships* was updated to reflect governments’ agreement under the strategy, and now refers to COAG’s commitment to using the review points of national agreements and related national partnerships to consider the inclusion of strategies and performance indicators to ensure they address the needs of people with disability. This document is available at the [Council on Federal Financial Relations website](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/guidelines_for_new_nps.aspx)[[13]](#footnote-13).

#### Streamlining the COAG council system

In December 2013, COAG agreed to streamline the council system and refocus priorities over the next 12 to 18 months. The previous 22 councils were replaced with the following eight:

* Federal Financial Relations
* Disability Reform
* Transport and Infrastructure
* Energy
* Industry and skills
* Law, Crime and Community Safety
* Education
* Health.

Discussions regarding relevant national agreements and national partnerships are being held between various Australian Government departments and agencies, and future work on this action will reflect any changes in federal-state relations. While the development of an overarching statement for inclusion in all new partnership agreements has proved an effective means of ensuring new partnership agreements make reference to both the National Disability Strategy and the needs of people with disability, work is nevertheless progressing with responsible agencies to ensure people with disability are considered in the development of strategies and performance indicators.

### Community engagement

Governments are required under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to consult with and actively involve people with disability, including children, through their representative organisations. In the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020: Report to the Council of Australian Governments 2012*, it was agreed that the voice of people with disability would be embedded in the implementation of the strategy at three main levels:

1. providing advice and feedback to governments about the development and progress of each implementation plan through representative organisations of people with disability and government advisory bodies
2. encouraging government agencies to adopt protocols that ensure people with disability and their representative organisations have the opportunity to contribute to policy and programme development
3. ensuring the experiences of people with disability are reflected in the progress reports to COAG and in the evaluation of the strategy.

The following outlines a number of high level mechanisms that have been implemented to ensure people with disability have the opportunity to engage with government on issues and policies that affect their lives. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the practical measures that have been put in place at all levels of government to provide opportunities for people with disability to influence policies and programmes.

#### Australian Government funding of national disability organisations

The Australian Government supports national disability organisations, which helps to ensure government disability policies, programmes and services are informed about disability issues appropriately and effectively. National disability organisations advise the Government on how policies and programmes will affect the lives and experiences of people with disability, carers and service providers. These organisations are well placed to provide the Government with the perspectives of people with disability they represent and convey information between government, their membership and the broader community on social policy issues.

The Australian Government provided secretariat funding of about $2.5 million in 2013–14 and 2014-15 to national disability organisations to contribute to policies about issues affecting people with disability, their families and carers. The disability peak bodies represent many types of disabilities, as well as the interests of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and their communities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disability.

National disability organisations have provided advice to government on the National Disability Strategy and the NDIS during the reporting period of the past two years. They also advised on issues important to their constituents such as inclusive education, improving employment outcomes for people, improving access to transport, promoting independent advocacy and eliminating incidences of abuse, violence and loss of rights, and inequality faced by people with disability.

Following an open and competitive tender process in mid-2014, the Government announced the establishment a new disability peaks funding model from 2015, representing the interests and views of all people with disability, which will provide advice to the Government on breaking down barriers and improving social and economic participation. The new funding model for the disability peak sector is focused on providing the best framework to effectively represent the interests and views of all people with disability.

The new model is a major shift in the way the disability representative sector is organised – a move from a medical model of disability to a social model of disability. The new model will represent all people with disability within the one framework that recognises that disability is more a reflection of social barriers and discrimination, rather than a person’s medical condition or impairment. The social model of disability is consistent with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the National Disability Strategy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

#### Protocols for Australian Government agencies to engage with people with disability

Australian Government agencies were asked to consider protocols to inform and guide their staff on their obligations to actively involve people with disability — to ensure policies and programmes are inclusive and relevant to people with disability, their families and carers. Agencies with direct portfolio responsibility to develop and administer public policy subsequently developed disability engagement protocols to guide their public policy and programme development.

#### State and territory government engagement

State and territory governments also committed to ensuring the design and implementation of both their disability-specific and their mainstream policies and services were informed by people with disability, their families and carers.

##### New South Wales

The Minister for Disability Services has asked the Disability Council NSW to monitor implementation of the NSW plan. The Council has invited the heads of all NSW Government departments to discuss their progress in implementing actions under the plan, as well as broader issues facing people with disability in accessing mainstream services and employment. The Council also seeks input through consultation directly with disability groups, to obtain their views about how the plan is affecting their experiences. The Minister receives regular updates on the progress of the plan through the Disability Council NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services.

##### Victoria

Throughout implementation of the *Victorian state disability plan 2013–2016,* the Victorian Government sought the views of people with disability, their families and carers about how the plan has worked for them. Their views were sought in 2013 and 2014 through the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, consultations with hard-to-reach groups, targeted interviews with key stakeholders and through progress reports from state departments. In 2014, the Victorian Government also carried out two state disability plan surveys that asked people with disability about their experiences since the state disability plan was launched.

##### Queensland

The Queensland Disability Advisory Council and seven regional disability advisory councils have been important channels for advice to the minister responsible for disability services on regional, state and national disability and related matters that affect the broader community.

The establishment of ministerial advisory councils has a legislative base under the *Disability Services Act 2006.* The councils represent the community and include people with disability, family members, carers and advocacy representatives, as well as members of community organisations, local government and disability service providers.

The Queensland Disability Advisory Council comprises the chairs of the state’s seven regional disability advisory councils and additional members who have specialist expertise or knowledge. The councils are an invaluable consultative mechanism for the Minister and the department to seek representative stakeholder views.

##### Western Australia

In Western Australia, public authorities used disability access and inclusion plans to ensure access and inclusion for people with disability and participation in decision-making processes. State and local government had to report annually on their progress and their plans continued to be a primary driver of change at both the state and local levels.

##### South Australia

The South Australian Government’s Disability Engagement Strategy connected people with disability, their carers and families, the broader community and the non-government sector to the development of government policy, programmes and service delivery. As part of this strategy, the South Australian Disability Engagement Register provided an independent contact list of people with experience of disability who provided advice on issues relating to disability.

##### Tasmania

As mentioned previously, under *State and territory disability plans*, the Premier of Tasmania ensures people with disability, their families and carers are able to inform Tasmanian Government policy at the highest level through the Premier’s Disability Advisory Council. Chaired by the Premier, the Council includes people with disability, carers and people with disability expertise, and has two main functions: to provide strategic advice to the Tasmanian Government on directions, policies and solutions to issues related to the social inclusion and participation of people with disability; and to help monitor the roll out of Tasmania’s whole-of-government disability policy, the *Disability Framework for Action 2013-2017*.

The Council reports annually to the Tasmanian Cabinet on progress relating to the framework’s implementation, and has two subcommittees: the Minister’s Disability Advisory Council and the Sport and Recreation Committee. The Council advises the Minister for Human Services on delivery of specialist disability services. It also holds regional community forums to engage with people concerned with disability.

The Sport and Recreation Committee advises on issues relating to the provision of sport and active recreation opportunities for people with disability. Sport and Recreation Tasmania also explores and shares ideas and initiatives through conducting disability network forums that attract representatives from sport and recreation organisations, disability service providers, people with disability, parents, carers and other community members.

In addition, an NDIS Advisory Group was set up to inform people with disability, their families and carers about the Tasmanian Government’s approach to the launch of the NDIS.

##### Australian Capital Territory

An ACT National Disability Insurance Scheme Expert Panel was established in August 2012 to guide implementation of the NDIS in the ACT. When the Territory’s NDIS trial began on 1 July 2014, the panel broadened its role and responsibility to provide advice and engagement on both the transition to the NDIS and the continuing implementation of the National Disability Strategy. The panel includes people with disability, family members, members from community organisations, business, government, and service providers.

The term of the ACT Ministerial Disability Advisory Council ended on 31 March 2014 and its end-of-term 2011–14 report included recommendations to support development of the next Territory-wide disability plan. Key themes arising from the report will be considered in the implementation of the National Disability Strategy.

##### Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability Reform brought together people with a variety of knowledge and experience. They contribute to the roll out of the NDIS in the Barkly region and the remainder of the Northern Territory by providing strategic advice to the Northern Territory Government through the Minister for Disability Services.

The objectives of the Council are to:

* work in partnership with the Northern Territory Government to identify and recommend potential solutions to presenting issues affecting the Northern Territory’s preparedness for and implementation of the NDIS
* provide advice at the strategic and operational level on Northern Territory Government activities, policies, plans and projects in relation to the NDIS
* provide advice on issues related to the delivery of both government and non-government disability services in the Northern Territory
* provide advice on issues related to the access and delivery of mainstream community services to people with disability in the Northern Territory.

#### Focus group on progress under the National Disability Strategy

From February to May 2014, 13 national disability peak organisations, Carers Australia and People with Disability Australia, were invited to provide a written submission outlining the perceptions and ideas of their members and constituents about progress under the strategy, as well as if and in what way the strategy had impacted their lives.

These 15 disability representative organisations were then invited to take part in a focus group discussion, held on 29 May 2014. The discussion explored observations made by the stakeholders about what had been achieved under the strategy. It also identified opportunities for future effort and focus. The feedback received is reflected in the body of this report and will inform the development of the next National Disability Strategy implementation plan, *Driving Action 2015—2018*.

People at the focus group considered the strategy a powerful indication of government commitment and a high-priority way to improve the lives of people with disability. They also thought strong government leadership, and accountability, were fundamental precursors to achieving the strategy’s outcomes.

All participants thought it was important to raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of priority actions under the strategy across all levels of government. They considered this focus should be maintained throughout the life of the strategy. While they saw establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme as a significant step forward for people with disability and their families, it was thought that the scheme had become the main focus of attention. Actions under the strategy, by contrast, were considered to be less visible. Nevertheless, the participants recognised the long-term nature of the strategy and understood the timeframe that would be necessary for achieving change.

#### Disability Ministers’ National Forum

The Australian Government and state and territory governments are committed under the strategy to hold a Disability Ministers’ National Forum with representatives of people with disability every two years. The first Disability Ministers’ National Forum took place on the 16 February 2015 in Melbourne. State and territory disability advisory bodies and key national disability organisations were represented at the forum.

The aim of the forum was to provide representatives of people with disability with a means of engaging directly with disability ministers from across Australia, and the Australian Local Government Association, about the ongoing implementation of the strategy. The forum also provided an opportunity for participants to discuss what has been achieved in implementing the strategy to date. The forum discussion covered various topics including opportunities for improvement in the areas of employment, transport, housing and education.

#### Formal engagement on the NDIS

Stakeholders contributed to the design and implementation of the NDIS through several formal engagement mechanisms between October 2011 and April 2013. These included:

* the National Disability Insurance Scheme Advisory Group, which included seven members with extensive knowledge and experience in the disability sector who were appointed by the then minister, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP. The group provided independent advice to the Select Council on Disability Reform, which comprises the Australian Government and each state and territory treasurer and disability minister. The advisory group also provided specialist advice to government on the necessary foundations for reform, the overall design of the NDIS and its launch.
* four expert groups, which provided technical advice to the advisory group on core issues that included Choice and Control; Eligibility and Assessment; Quality, Safeguards and Standards; and Workforce and Sector Development. The expert groups included experts from the community and sector, people with disability, carers and service providers.
* the National Disability and Carer Alliance carried out grassroots engagement with people with disability, their families, carers and service providers around Australia under the alliance’s NDIS Engagement Project. This was funded by the former Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
* an online NDIS ‘your say’ forum sought feedback on key questions regarding the NDIS and invited discussion with the advisory group on issues important to NDIS design and implementation.
* workshops exploring the use of collaborative design in the first stage of the NDIS, particularly with regard to the ‘client pathway’. The first of these co-design workshops was staged by the NDIS Launch Transition Agency in September 2012.

Engagement activities like these helped ensure key design elements of the scheme were informed by the views and experiences of the disability sector, people with disability, their families and carers. In turn, they kept stakeholders informed about the latest developments and progress.

This approach also enabled testing and validation of the latest design and technical details of the scheme by a broad diversity of stakeholders. Overall, the engagement activities helped in the design of important elements of the scheme, such as eligibility and assessment, control and choice, and in the quality, standards and safeguards of the NDIS.

#### National Disability Insurance Agency

The agency is committed to providing a range of engagement activities that raise awareness about the scheme, mark significant milestones and involve the disability sector. A director of engagement has been deployed to each trial site to run activities to engage core stakeholders from the sector.

In November 2013, the agency initiated a webinar series to engage key stakeholders regarding the NDIS roll out. Members of the public sent in questions through the internet to be answered by the series panel. Each panel included a person with disability. Other panellists included the Australian Government Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield.

The agency’s first seven webinars attracted a combined audience of more than 120,000. Questions received during the webinars provided useful insights into the public’s understanding of the NDIS and people’s questions and concerns. Each webinar had a particular theme. For example, the *Preparing for the NDIS* webinar included perspectives and experiences of early trial site participants and carers. Another webinar, *Provider Q&A on NDIA Price Changes*, explained the agency’s approach to achieving an ‘efficient price’ for provision of high-quality support services.

The agency learned through the webinars that many of its stakeholders accessed information electronically and appreciated the opportunity to take part in a discussion with the agency. The agency saw that it could reach a much larger audience electronically rather than through face-to-face meetings. It will continue to refine the webinars based on the feedback received. This was in line with what the agency called its ‘learn-build-learn-build’ approach.

#### Collaboration with DSS

The Australian Government Department of Social Services works closely with the agency and, in May 2014, ran a series of information sessions and workshops with its mental health providers. These providers were due to commence, or already operated in NDIS trial sites to deliver either Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) or Mental Health Respite: Carer Support (MHR:CS) programmes.

The workshops helped prepare 2014 NDIS trial site providers in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Western Australia. They also sought feedback from 2013 trial sites in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The workshop participants shared lessons learned, case studies and innovative practices. These were studied by the agency for its continuous improvement.

# Progress and achievements

The following section of the report covers achievements and progress made by governments. These achievements have furthered the main objective of the National Disability Strategy which is to improve the lives of people with disability by driving mainstream reform across all areas of government policy, programme design and service delivery.

Some achievements were identified as national priorities under the strategy and in its first implementation plan, *Laying the Groundwork 2011–2014*, or in state and territory governments’ individual disability plans. Other outcomes may not have been foreshadowed when *Laying the Groundwork 2011–2014* and state and territory governments’ disability plans were drafted. However, they remain clearly aligned with and have advanced the objectives of the strategy. These include initiatives that improved community understanding and attitudes relating to the rights of people with disability to be supported to reach their full potential in life.

Over the life of the strategy, progress towards the six policy outcomes has been monitored using agreed national trend indicators. The trend indicators were reviewed in 2013 to ensure they embody the key national data for this purpose. In this reporting round, baseline data was available from prior to the introduction of the strategy and from its first and second years — 2011 and 2012.

Each outcome in this report includes a brief overview of the key data from the trend indicators. Appendix 2 provides more detailed trend indicator data including, where available, disaggregated data by gender, by Indigenous status and by other factors.

## Outcome 1 Inclusive and accessible communities

People with disability live in accessible and well-designed communities with opportunity for full inclusion in social, economic, sporting and cultural life

This outcome has five policy directions:

* increased participation of people with disability, their families and carers in the social, cultural, religious, recreational and sporting life of the community
* improved accessibility of the built and natural environment through planning and regulatory systems, maximising the participation and inclusion of every member of the community
* improved provision of accessible and well-designed housing with choice for people with disability about where they live
* a public, private and community transport system that is accessible for the whole community
* communication and information systems that are accessible, reliable and responsive to the needs of people with disability, their families and carers.

Of the six policy outcome areas in the overall strategy, the success indicators and achievements of this outcome are most visible in the general community. Community expectations for immediate and tangible improvement are perhaps the highest for this outcome. Removing barriers to the physical environment and ensuring information is accessible opens up access and inclusion to an infinite range of other mainstream opportunities including education, employment, social, sporting and cultural events and activities that promote health and wellbeing.

Since the launch of the strategy, there has been a positive movement at all levels of government, and across communities, towards greater consideration of accessibility and inclusiveness of the physical, sensory and technological environments that Australians enjoy. Measures implemented under the strategy by the Australian Government and state and territory governments under Outcome 1, between 2010 and 2014 are detailed in Appendix 1, Table 1.

Improving accessibility

The accessibility of the built environment and public infrastructure has been improved by greater adherence to planning and regulatory systems such as the *Disability (Access to Premises — Buildings) Standards 2010* and *Disability Standards to Accessible Public Transport 2002*. All states and territories have acknowledged their obligations to these standards in their individual disability plans. Both the building and transport standards are being reviewed and governments will then consider the findings.

Accessibility is starting to become a routine consideration for planners, designers and policy makers, following the widespread promotion of the principles of universal design in private and public housing design, transport services and other fields.

**Universal design**

Universal design principles are enhancing the independence of people who live with disability, as well as Australia’s elderly. Community and industry awareness of universal design is being raised by a comprehensive national voluntary accreditation system developed by Livable Housing Australia.

Standards and accreditation processes such as these lead to the construction of more dwellings that comply with universal design principles — resulting in more private accommodation suitable for people with disability. More suitable community-based accommodation provides tenants with better access to mainstream services. Over time, it is anticipated that both the building industry and the wider community will automatically think in terms of universal and livable design principles and how they can benefit individuals and families throughout their lives.

During the reporting period, states and territories continued to carry out work to include liveable design features in their housing. Livable Housing Australia worked with the ageing, disability community and residential building and construction sectors on its voluntary accreditation process.

In Victoria, more than 450 builders, architects and designers attended 10 information seminars on how to design and build homes that meet the needs of older people and people with disability. These promoted key projects by Livable Housing Australia and were run by the Victorian Building Authority. A universal design awareness strategy has been developed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. This included an industry manual, video and website launched in September 2014 to inform industry about universal design.

In Queensland, designers and builders were required to apply the Livable Housing Design Guidelines to new social housing projects. The Department of Housing and Public Works in Queensland seeks to deliver all new social housing apartments and houses to Livable Housing Gold or Platinum levels.

In Western Australia, new sales staff with the Housing Industry Association WA are now trained about Livable Housing guidelines — encouraging home builders to build accessible homes. This will increase universally designed stock over time. Housing plans for various block sizes are provided online free of charge by leading builders in support of the programme.

The ACT Government is also developing ways to embed universal design in building public and private housing, including:

* consulting with local communities regarding the proposed implementation of a requirement for all new Class 1a detached dwellings to comply with universal design guidelines
* having all new social housing developments meet the Gold standards outlined in the Commonwealth’s Livable Housing Design guidelines
* funding in the 2013–14 ACT Budget to undertake design options to relocate older public housing tenants into more appropriate housing, as well as funding to design culturally appropriate housing for elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Arts for people with disability

Australia’s *National Arts and Disability Strategy* helped improve participation and access to the arts for people with disability. This resulted in greater exposure and support of artists with disability and more opportunities for people with disability to enjoy art and cultural experiences and take part in activities.

**Arts access and participation**

Governments committed to a vision for supporting, encouraging and promoting access to and participation in the arts by people with disability under the *National Arts and Disability Strategy.* The Australian Government, and state and territory governments made the commitment through the Meeting of Cultural Ministers.

Attention was given to improving access to and participation in arts and cultural activities by people with disability during the first three years of the strategy to 2012 — both as audience members and as participants. The *Arts and Disability Strategy* also addressed barriers that prevent emerging artists and cultural workers with disability to develop their practice.

An early evaluation of this strategy, which analysed activity across jurisdictions from October 2009 to December 2012, was finalised in October 2013. The evaluation report included input from the Australian, state and territory governments, following targeted consultation with arts and disability stakeholders.

Some key findings from the evaluation were:

* physical access for people with disability increased, as did the programming, training, exhibitions and information available on websites about access
* a noticeable increase occurred in access to funding programmes and processes for people with disability
* a growth in opportunities for people with disability to present their work.

The evaluation report was endorsed by Australia’s arts and cultural ministers in October 2014. The *National Arts and Disability Strategy Evaluation Report* summarised achievements in all jurisdictions under the strategy from 2009-2012. Further information is available at the [Meeting of Cultural Ministers website](http://mcm.arts.gov.au/working-groups/nads)[[14]](#footnote-14).

Work has since continued on implementing the strategy across all jurisdictions. The Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Government’s principal arts funding and advisory body, recently announced funding of $1 million over three years for artists with disability. This extends a pilot programme established after extensive consultation with the sector.

Applications for the pilot opened early in 2014 and individuals and groups who identified as having disability submitted more than 200 applications from across Australia in all kinds of art. They included high quality applications from artists who had never previously applied to the Council, demonstrating a high demand for such dedicated funding. The funding will be allocated through the Council’s general applications process from 2015, with grants supporting Australian artists with disability to create, develop, present, produce, exhibit or tour their work.

Local governments also played a role in improving arts access. For example, Frankston Arts Centre in Victoria was fitted with ramps, wide automatic doors, a row of removable theatre seats for wheelchairs, recharge power points for mobility devices, and dedicated aisle seats for patrons who need mobility assistance. The centre now provides live-captioned and Auslan-interpreted performances and portable hearing assistance devices.

Frankston Arts Centre’s arts access officer facilitated industry training placements for people with disability, in partnership with Registered Training Organisations. These led to the employment of arts workers, theatre technicians, box office and front-of-house staff. The centre’s arts access programme includes regular art, art therapy and circus activities for people with disability, older people with complex health issues, and socially and culturally isolated young people.

Sport

It is a priority of the Australian Sports Commission to maintain an ongoing investment in sport for people with disability, as part of Australia’s *Winning Edge 2012—2022* strategy. The strategy sets high national performance goals to achieve more than 20 world champions annually, with: top-five finishes for Olympic and Paralympic Games; top-15 at Winter Olympics and Paralympics; and top-one at the Commonwealth Games.

The commission invested $13.3 million in 2014–15 to support Paralympic programmes and $1.25 million in eight national sporting organisations for people with disability. This supports the participation of adults and children with disability by expanding their choice of sport and recreation options. New support arrangements for athletes will provide more funding than ever before directly to Paralympic athletes, in recognition of Australia’s emerging talent.

In 2013, the NSW Government supported the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Games in the Hunter Region. This attracted more than 1,700 athletes with disability from Australia and overseas and demonstrated Australia’s skill in international competition.

Web accessibility

All levels of Australian government — federal, state and local — have embraced the *Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy.* This mandated the adoption of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0).

The National Transition Strategy required all levels of government to apply the internationally-accepted standards for web accessibility — WCAG 2.0 — to all their websites and web applications by the end of 2014. This will help create a more socially inclusive online and digital environment in which people can access information and services and engage with government at their convenience.

Australian Government agencies reported considerable progress at the midpoint of the strategy in applying WCAG 2.0 to their 1.7 million web pages, 1,300 websites and 1,100 web applications. Agencies also reported they had action plans that addressed ongoing accessibility issues, which have been prioritised for future remedial action. At the state level, all states and territories had incorporated WCAG 2.0 into their standards and were actively progressing towards more accessible web environments.

The National Transition Strategy concluded at the end of 2014. The next step for the Australian Government will be to coordinate a new round of formal reporting from all its agencies, as well as from the states and territories. Once that is complete, the Australian Government expects to report on the outcomes of the National Transition Strategy and the overall accessibility status of the Australian Government web environment in 2015.

Existing and emerging technological developments in media, telecommunications and IT devices, programmes and applications will continue to present opportunities to improve access and accessibility for people with disability.

**New TV captioning standards**

All captions on television are required to be readable, accurate and comprehensible for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers under a new Australian captioning standard. In June 2013, the Australian Government Department of Communications introduced a Television Captioning Quality Standard for all television broadcasters. This followed a 13-week trial in 2013 that raised industry and community awareness of audio captioning and identified technical issues to be remedied.

In the same month, the Australian Government Department of Human Services began a High Definition Videoconferencing Pilot as part of a shared-delivery agreement with the Department of Communications. Videoconferencing provides flexibility for customers in their interactions with the department. The pilot aimed to increase access to the department’s managed- and intensive-needs services, in particular for customers facing geographical or disability challenges. People who were being assessed for the Disability Support Pension, and those with hearing impairments, were included in the pilot. The Department of Communications received the first-phase evaluation report about the pilot in November 2014.

Local government

As mentioned in *State and territory disability plans*, local government plays an important role in delivering federal and state government programmes and thousands of councils across Australia engage actively with their communities. An increasing number of local councils have developed and worked to a disability access and inclusion plan with the encouragement of the Local Government Disability Champion, Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis (April 2012 – November 2014). This was reflected in a high number of worthy initiatives that were entered in the 2014 inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Award, under the Australian Government’s National Awards for Local Government.

**National Awards for Local Government: Disability Access and Inclusion Category**

In 2014 the Department of Social Services sponsored the inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Award as part of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development’s National Awards for Local Government.

The new award promotes the objectives of the National Disability Strategy by recognising local governments that applied the principles of the strategy by engaging with people with disability, their families and carers to develop and implement innovative services, practices or policies that provide greater opportunity for people with disability to participate in local community life.

This could include access and inclusion provided by councils in any sphere, such as by:

* removing barriers to participation of people with disability in the community
* strategies and actions that give people with disability a voice in the community and the capacity to influence the design of services, programmes and infrastructure that impact their lives
* greater access to mainstream services and support.

The new category attracted more entries than any other single category in the National Awards for Local Government. This highlighted the important role of local governments in meeting community needs and demonstrated the growing commitment they have to ensuring their efforts are inclusive of all people.

The 2014 award went to the Hume City Council in Victoria for its school holiday programme for Indigenous children with disability. The programme empowered Indigenous families to engage with mainstream support services and to advocate on behalf of their children with disability. The Department of Social Services will sponsor this award again in 2015.

**Mapping more accessible toilets in NSW**

NSW is improving access to accessible toilets in NSW through a partnership with Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and the Department of Social Services – National Public Toilet Map (NPTM). The NPTM provides the locations of more than 16,000 publicly available toilets across Australia and is a tool used widely by people with disability to find an accessible toilet.

The project is improving the availability of accessible toilets — an action under the National Disability Strategy NSW Implementation Plan 2012–2014. It is also improving the quality, quantity and reliability of data on the state’s accessible facilities.

### Trend indicator summary

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to inclusive and accessible communities. The available data covers 2011–2012 — the first two years of the strategy. This is presented alongside 2009 data, from before the strategy was introduced.

#### 1.1 Difficulties in using public transport

People with disability continued to report difficulty using public transport. In 2012, 34 per cent[[15]](#footnote-15) of people with disability reported difficulty with, or needed assistance with, using public transport.[[16]](#footnote-16) The 2012 result was a slight increase on the proportion who reported public transport difficulty in 2003 (30 per cent) and 2009 (32 per cent).[[17]](#footnote-17)

The rate of difficulty with public transport increases along with the level of disability a person has. For example in 2012, 70 per cent of people with profound and severe disability reported public transport difficulty compared to 26 per cent of people with a mild and moderate disability.[[18]](#footnote-18)

#### 1.2 Cultural and recreational participation

The vast majority of people with disability participated in social or community activities on a regular basis according to survey data from 2012. In the last three months from when people were surveyed, 96 per cent participated in these activities at home and 92 per cent participated away from home.[[19]](#footnote-19) The 2012 results were slightly down from the 2009 results of 96 per cent (activities at home) and 91 per cent (away from home).[[20]](#footnote-20)

People were asked questions about their social and community activities, such as visiting friends or relatives; telephone calls with family or friends; church or special community activities; voluntary activities; visiting restaurants or clubs; performing arts group activities; art or craft activities with other people; and other special interest group activities.

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

In May 2014 people with disability, through their representative peak organisations, were asked to provide feedback on the Inclusive and Accessible Communities outcome area and any improvement they may have experienced since the introduction of the National Disability Strategy.

Public perceptions were mixed about the effectiveness of the strategy to drive improvements in access and inclusion. For example, some of their responses suggested positive improvements in public transport through better signage and announcements for people with sensory impairment. However, improvements were not considered consistent across all jurisdictions and all forms of public transport, including taxis. The respondents agreed more work needs to be done to improve the experiences of people with disability who want to access public transport.

Views were also mixed on the accessibility of information across a variety of electronic media. While a few positive initiatives were noted — such as captioning of television and cinema and greater accessibility of some web-based material — stakeholders felt a more comprehensive and consistent effort was needed in this area. Despite the progress made towards accessible communication and information systems, people with disability reported that fully accessible information and communication material is still largely the exception rather than the rule. They believed more needs to be done to ensure compliance with existing accessibility guidelines and in educating other sectors, private business, industry and the wider community about their obligations and responsibilities. This would help ensure their information and communication material was accessible to everyone.

The increasing awareness and application of universal design principles and the increasing number of inclusive playgrounds were noted by stakeholders as positive improvements under this outcome of the strategy.

## Outcome 2 Rights protection, justice and legislation

People with disability have their rights promoted, upheld and protected

This outcome has five policy directions:

* increase awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with disability
* remove societal barriers preventing people with disability from participating as equal citizens
* people with disability have access to justice
* people with disability to be safe from violence, exploitation and neglect
* more effective responses from the criminal justice system to people with disability who have complex needs or heightened vulnerabilities.

The Australian Government, and state and territory governments have implemented a wide variety of measures under this outcome to promote, uphold and protect the rights of people with disability. These range from national and state-based legislative and regulatory reform, to targeted training that promotes awareness of their rights among people with disability, and people whose work brings them into contact with people with disability.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The object of Outcome 2 is central to achieving benefits across each of the other five outcome areas. It is also the primary vehicle for progressing and monitoring Australia’s obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,* which the Australian Government ratified in 2008. The Convention promotes, protects and ensures full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all who have disabilities. It also promotes respect for their inherent dignity.

The Convention requires its signatories to report on the measures they have taken to meet their obligations under the Convention every four years. Australia has now completed one cycle of reporting under the Convention. This involved:

* submitting the first periodic report in December 2010
* responding in writing in July 2013 to a list of issues from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* an Australian delegation appearing before the committee in Geneva in September 2013
* releasing the Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Australia as adopted by the Committee on 24 October 2013. These are available at the [United Nations Human Rights website](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=5)[[21]](#footnote-21).

The committee commended Australia for many actions, including its adoption of the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* and introducing the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The committee also noted extra efforts were needed in some areas. For example, in assisting Indigenous Australians with disability in discrimination law; data availability; funding for disability organisations; and imprisonment or detention of people with disability.

In 2013, the committee provided Australia with a list of issues and processes for its combined second and third periodic reports. In line with this, Australia’s next report will provide answers to a list of questions from the Committee, rather than a full report of Australia’s progress to implement the Convention. The report is due in September 2018.

**Disability justice**

The Western Australian Government has developed legislation to establish the state’s first disability justice centre. The new centre will provide secure accommodation in the community for people with intellectual or cognitive disability who have been charged with an offence, but are unable to plead and have received a custody order.

The centre will address long-standing legal and social justice issues — providing a declared place for people who do not need to be imprisoned, but do require targeted developmental interventions in a secure setting before their release into the community.

The Western Australian Government, through its Disability Services Commission, has also developed a position paper on ‘safeguarding’. This will support changes to the state’s quality system to ensure evaluations focus on individual outcomes, as well as service quality. The paper outlines best practice in the promotion, enhancement and protection of an individual’s human rights, decision-making, choice and control, safety and wellbeing, citizenship and quality of life.

Marrakesh Treaty

To help overcome the barriers that affect the availability of accessible-format works worldwide, the Australian Government signed the Marrakesh Treaty in June 2014. The treaty will be taken to Federal Parliament for ratification and will come into effect following ratification by 20 countries.

The *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled* will bring greater access to published works for people who are blind, vision impaired, or otherwise print disabled. The treaty will allow exceptions to copyright law to enable organisations to produce and distribute accessible format books and other materials where they are not commercially available.

**Voting online**

Electronic voting in ACT Legislative Assembly elections has been provided in six major centres across Canberra for people who are blind or vision impaired to give them the same rights as people in other territories. Wheelchair accessible and seated-voting compartments are also available in every polling place for local elections.

The ACT Electoral Commission is a member of the Australian Electoral Commission’s Disability Advisory Committee, which includes disability peaks and discusses electoral issues for voters.

Australian Human Rights Commission

Administrators and policymakers are being informed by the Australian Human Rights Commission about current barriers to equal treatment under the law that can be experienced by people with disability. In February 2014, the Commission released its report *Equal before the law: Towards disability justice strategies* to highlight services and programmes and ways for all levels of government to develop disability justice strategies.

The Commission found that equality before the law was a widespread problem for people with disability and, in some cases, the injustice experienced has been severe. Public meetings were held in each state and territory and the Commission conducted 114 individual meetings with people with disability, their families and carers, attorneys-general, members of the police forces, corrective services and judiciaries, disability advocacy peak bodies and community groups, as well as academic, medical and legal experts to inform the report.

The report is available at the [Australian Human Rights Commission website](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/equal-law)[[22]](#footnote-22).

**Promoting the rights of people with disability**

Several jurisdictions took action to improve the criminal justice system’s support for vulnerable witnesses and victims.

South Australia promoted the rights and needs of people with disability who are in contact with the criminal justice system, including those accused or convicted of a crime. The release of the *Disability Justice Plan 2014–2017* in June 2014 by the South Australian Government aimed to promote their rights, while the state budget funded support for people with disability to help them navigate the criminal justice system.

Specific actions to improve responses by the state’s criminal justice system to vulnerable witnesses and victims included:

* amendments proposed for the state’s *Evidence Act 1929* to assist people with disability when they give evidence across the criminal justice system
* legislative amendments to give people with cognitive impairment greater protection from abuse by service providers and support workers in positions of trust, power and authority
* establishment of a victim management section within the South Australia Police to give specialist advice to front-line police regarding investigative interviewing and statement-taking from vulnerable people, including people with disability.

In Tasmania, the state government created an *Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses* course to enable Tasmanian police to be more responsive to the needs of people with disability and provide them with a more positive experience of the justice system. The course was also attended by representatives from other government agencies.

Australian Law Reform Commission

The Australian Law Reform Commission’s report, *Equality, Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws* was tabled in parliament in November 2014. The inquiry examined the laws and legal frameworks within the Commonwealth jurisdiction that deny or diminish the equal recognition of people with disability as persons before the law and their ability to exercise legal capacity. The Australian Law Reform Commission made 55 recommendations for reform directed at adopting measures to encourage supported decision-making for people with disability.

The commission’s report is available at the [Australian Law Reform Commission website](https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/equality-capacity-disability-report-124)[[23]](#footnote-23).

**Improving the court experience for people with disability**

Courts in Victoria have introduced measures to improve the experience of people with disability prior to attending court. These include:

* providing independent support to people with disability before they go to court and while at court
* people with disability who are witnesses or victims not having to be in court to give evidence
* magistrates’ courts making it easier for accused people, witnesses and victims who have a disability and who need more support.

Disability service and victim support agencies in the state get support and information, which encourages collaboration. Support agencies assist victims with a disability as part of their contract with government.

In addition, Victoria’s Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice and Regulation are developing ways to improve the experiences and outcomes of those people with disability who have heightened vulnerabilities when they come into contact with, or are at risk of contact, with the justice system. These include:

* considering improvements to service models in line with the NDIS and other developments — such changes will lead to individually tailoring responses for people with disability when they are involved with the justice system
* a positive practice framework in use at Parkville Youth Justice Precinct is being reviewed for use at the Malmsbury Youth Justice Precinct — with adjustments to meet the needs of its older age group.

#### Restrictive practices

Disability ministers have endorsed a framework to reduce and eliminate the use of restrictive practices in Australia’s disability service sector. Federal, state and territory disability ministers endorsed the *National Framework for Reducing and Eliminating the Use of Restrictive Practices in the Disability Service Sector* at their Disability Reform Council meeting on 21 March 2014. This followed broad consultations to develop the framework with jurisdictions, NDIS officials and more widely with stakeholders from disability and industry sectors.

Work to reduce and eliminate the use of restrictive practices in the disability service sector is consistent with Australia’s commitment to meet its obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The new national framework is an interim step to provide leadership in reducing the use of restrictive practices. Later, it will be incorporated into the NDIS quality assurance and safeguards framework and implemented over the longer term. Biennial jurisdictional reports will track progress in implementing the national framework.

#### National Disability Advocacy Programme

The National Disability Advocacy Programme provides access for people with disability to effective advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. In 2014–15 the Australian Government committed $16.5 million under the programme to fund 59 organisations across Australia.

Policy and programme implementation is guided by the principles and objectives of key legislation, conventions, agreements and frameworks. These include the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*; the National Disability Strategy; the National Disability Agreement; the National Disability Advocacy Framework; and the *Disability Services Act 1986 (Cwth).*

**New South Wales**

The*Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (the Act)*,* which commenced on 3 December 2014, contains legislative safeguards for people accessing NSW funded disability supports and services. These include: that supports and services must be delivered in compliance with disability service standards; and that non-government organisations must provide evidence of third party verification that they can provide supports and services in compliance with the standards.

There are also new employment screening requirements which mandate that workers and non-government board members who provide supports and services directly to people with disability must undergo criminal record checks and provide at least one reference. The Act introduces an automatic bar to employment or volunteering for anyone convicted of certain prescribed offences.

Another new safeguard is that disability accommodation providers, including those who provide respite care, must report abuse or neglect of people with disability to the NSW Ombudsman.

**Victoria**

**Journalism award** **—** The Victorian Government Quill for Reporting on Disability Issues was created as an ongoing media award in 2013, sponsored by recurrent funding from the state government. The award recognises and acknowledges the work of journalists to positively and sensitively represent people with disability. The inaugural award was won in 2014 by Kirsten Veness for her story on Harvey Thulborn, a 12-year-old boy who wants to make wheelchair skating a mainstream sport in Australia.

The media plays a key role in shaping community understanding of people with disability. The leading media awards in Victoria are the Quill Awards for Excellence in Victorian Journalism, hosted by the Melbourne Press Club.

**Victims of crime** **—** People with disability are widely reported as being over-represented as victims of crime. To ensure victims’ services can assist people with disability who are victims of crime, a series of forums and professional development programmes are held annually in Victoria. The sessions ensure service providers have a better understanding of disability, know how to support people with disability in the criminal justice system, and know what other appropriate services are available.

**Violence against women and children —** Women and children with disability are at particular risk of becoming victims of violence. Victoria’s Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response provides immediate access to funds to meet the disability support needs of women and children in a family violence crisis. This support enables them to remain safe in their homes or to access family violence crisis accommodation. The initiative also has significant benefits for strengthening collaboration across the disability and family violence sectors.

**Queensland**

**Support for people with disability within the court system —** In Queensland, people facing court with intellectual, cognitive or mental health impairments have been linked to appropriate and available support services.

Queenslanders appearing on charges who had a health or social problem were referred to short‑term treatment or community support services to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. They were connected to support services through Queensland Courts Referral, a bail-based service that links defendants who come in contact with the criminal justice system with non-government organisations and government agencies to address the causes of their offending behaviour. Primary causes included drug or alcohol dependency, mental illness, intellectual disability, cognitive impairment and homelessness or risk of homelessness.

The service operates out of the arrest courts of the Brisbane, Beenleigh, Mount Isa, Cairns, Ipswich, Southport and Holland Park magistrate courts. It will be expanded to locations including Pine Rivers, Caboolture, Maroochydore, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Gympie and Rockhampton.

**Custodial, probation and parole training** **—** Entry-level custodial officers and probation and parole officers were trained to deal with people who have intellectual or cognitive impairments and behaviour management problems. The training was arranged by Queensland’s Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

All new custodial officers in Queensland receive specific training in working with and managing the behaviours of people with intellectual or cognitive impairment each year. They are trained on a rolling programme delivered through the Queensland Corrective Services Academy.

**South Australia**

New guidelines on how to support vulnerable witnesses in the giving of evidence were developed by the South Australian Government. These help investigative interviewers to provide support measures and to elicit evidence from people with disability in line with latest best practice.

Each step of the criminal justice process is covered — including the initial point of contact, interview, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and trial in court. The guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with comprehensive training in disability awareness and investigative interviewing.

Details of other measures that have been implemented between 2011 and 2014 under Outcome 2 are provided in Appendix 1, Table 2.

### Trend indicator summary

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to rights protection, justice and legislation. Data for the first two indicators are from the 2006 and 2010 General Social Surveys — which is baseline data from before the strategy. Further data will help ascertain progress on these indicators from 2011 onwards. Data for the last indicator is available from the baseline year of 2008–09 until 2012–13.

#### 2.1 Feelings of safety in different situations

In 2010, people with disability were less likely to feel safe or very safe in a variety of situations compared to people without disability, as shown in Table 2. Women with disability were significantly more likely to feel unsafe, compared to males with disability and to people without disability. For example: 21 per cent of women with disability felt unsafe or very unsafe at home alone after dark, whereas 8 per cent of men with disability and 4.5 per cent of people without disability felt unsafe or very unsafe in this situation. Similar trends in low-security concerns among people with disability were also observed in 2006.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Table 2 Proportion of people who felt safe or very safe, by disability status, in 2010

| **Situation** | **People with disability** | **People without disability** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| At home alone during the day | 87 per cent | 96 per cent |
| At home alone after dark | 75 per cent | 88 per cent |
| Walking alone after dark | 29 per cent | 53 per cent |

Source: DSS analysis of ABS General Social Survey, Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2010.

#### 2.2 Proportion of people with disability who take part in civic life

Between 2006 and 2010, the average level of civic participation for people with disability remained relatively steady between 3.1 to 3.4 per cent, although participation in certain types of groups fluctuated.[[25]](#footnote-25) In both years, people with disability had lower rates of participation in trade unions, professional associations, civic groups and body corporates or tenants’ associations, when compared to people without disability. This was particularly true for people with significant disability, who were restricted in core activities such as self-care, communication and mobility.

Encouragingly, people with disability had higher rates of participation in political parties, consumer organisations and other civil and political organisations, compared to people without disability in both 2006 and 2010.[[26]](#footnote-26)

#### 2.3 Proportion of complaints under the Disability Discrimination Act

Fewer complaints were received under the *Disability Discrimination Act* *1992* in 2012–13 than in previous years. A total of 793 complaints were received that year by the Australian Human Rights Commission. There had been a higher rate in previous years — 1,057 complaints in 2009–10; 823 in 2010–11; and 955 in 2011–12.

Disability continues to be the leading reason for discrimination complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission. Disability comprised 37 per cent of these types of complaints in 2012–13[[27]](#footnote-27). Most Disability Discrimination Act complaints in 2012–13 related to goods, services and facilities (34 per cent) or employment (33 per cent). Unlawful contravention of a disability standard was cited in 11 per cent of complaints. The major areas of complaints during the past five years are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Top-five areas of disability-related complaints, proportions received by area between 2008–09 and 2012–13

|  | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total Disability-related Complaints | 980 | 1057 | 823 | 955 | 793 |
| Top five areas of complaints received\* | 2035 | 2354 | 2176 | 1249 | 1084 |
| Goods, Services and Facilities | 35% | 37% | 35% | 36% | 34% |
| Employment | 40% | 36% | 31% | 31% | 33% |
| Unlawful to Contravene Disability Standard | 8% | 9% | 11% | 12% | 11% |
| Access to Premises | 2% | 3% | 6% | 4% | 6% |
| Education | 9% | 9% | 9% | 8% | 6% |

Notes: Each complaint can cover multiple areas, which is why there are more areas received than the number of complaints. In addition to the areas above, 1 per cent to 3 per cent of complaints related to Accommodation, Commonwealth Administration and Laws, Clubs and Incorporated Associations and Superannuation, between 2008-09 and 2012-13. There were none or less than 1 per cent of complaints relating to Land, Advertisements, Sport, Qualifying Bodies, and Registered Organisations in this period.

Source: Australian Human Rights Commission Annual Report: 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

Rights protection, justice and legislation were identified by stakeholders as needing a high priority for further investigation and investment by governments. While stakeholders acknowledged the Australian Human Rights Commission’s *Equal Before the Law Report* as a positive step forward, they also noted that the true value of the report would only become evident in the way governments respond to its insights and proposed actions.

Stakeholders also felt more investment was needed to develop self-advocacy materials and peer support. Importantly, these materials should be developed in consultation with people with disability and made available in accessible formats. They should target people with disability across disability types and throughout the socio-cultural spectrum, including by age and gender.

Stakeholders also sought to have government policies and legislation strengthened to better protect and uphold the rights of people with disability. Suggestions for this included tightening the terminology in the Disability Discrimination Act, integrating the strategy into key policies such as the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*,and removing the interpretive declarations within the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

## Outcome 3 Economic security

People with disability, their families and carers have economic security, enabling them to plan for the future and exercise choice and control over their lives

This outcome has three policy directions:

* increase access to employment opportunities as a key to improving economic security and personal wellbeing for people with disability, their families and carers
* income support and tax systems to provide an adequate standard of living for people with disability, their families and carers, while fostering personal financial independence and employment
* improve access to housing options that are affordable and provide security of tenure.

Economic security has several important and often interdependent dimensions that include certainty, stability and choice of housing; where we live and who we live with. Our proximity to and accessibility of employment, education, family, social networks and other support services are similarly significant dimensions.

Economic security depends not just on having certainty of income and other tangible resources that determine living standards. It also depends on having a degree of certainty around things that enable people to plan for the future and to exercise choice and control in the other aspects of life that contribute to overall wellbeing.

Accordingly, the objectives of Outcome 3, Economic Security, are closely linked to those of the other five outcome areas under the strategy. However, Outcome 3 specifically focuses on strategies that aim to improve employment opportunities and access to affordable and accessible housing. Income-support policies that encourage and support people to optimise their individual potential and independence also feature in this policy outcome area.

In addition to the NDIS (covered in detail under Outcome 4), partners to the strategy have progressed a variety of measures under Outcome 3 to provide greater economic security for people with disability. Details of measures implemented between 2011 and 2014 under Outcome 3 are in Appendix 1, Table 3.

### Employment initiatives

At a national level, the Australian Government has worked to increase employer demand for people with disability and to provide better support to assist people with disability to remain in employment. For example, the Department of Employment’s Wage Connect initiative resulted in more than 13,700 people with disability being placed in jobs during the initiative. The Department of Employment also administered the Social Enterprise Development and Investment Funds, an initiative to help support social enterprises to develop, grow and sustain their work and impact by providing an avenue for tailored finance.

In May 2012, the Australian Public Service Commission launched the *As One — Australian Public Service (APS) Disability Employment Strategy* to improve the recruitment and retention rates of people with disability in the Australian Public Service (APS) between 2012 and 2014. As One was developed in consultation with existing employees and disability networks for employees.

The APS also successfully piloted the RecruitAbility scheme between June 2013 and December 2014. The scheme aims to attract and develop applicants with disability and also facilitate cultural change in selection panels and agency recruitment.

RecruitAbility has been available to all APS agencies since 1 January 2015 and provides agencies with the means to better support people with disability in APS selection processes without compromising the merit principle. It is not compulsory but all APS agencies are encouraged to adopt it. Under the scheme job applicants with disability are progressed to further stages of assessment – usually an interview – where they meet the minimum requirements of the job.

**Department of Health committed to employing people with disability**

A total of 4.4 per cent of Australian Government Department of Health staff self-reported as having one or more disabilities in September 2014 — significantly more than the 3.7 per cent who reported this in 2008. Higher representation tends to be reported more regularly in staff survey results, with 7.9 per cent of employees recently anonymously disclosing their disability in the 2014 Australian Public Service Commission staff survey.

The Department of Health is committed to reflecting the diversity of the Australian community in its workforce and actively encourages people with disability to apply for roles by participating in the commission’s RecruitAbility pilot. The department also works to increase staff retention through its internal Staff with Disability Network, senior executive disability champions, an annual diversity conference and initiatives and events to build an inclusive culture.

The benefits of employing staff with disability include attracting new skills and adding valuable perspectives to the department. In return, the department gains loyal and committed employees with typically low turnover rates who will support the department in its vision to ‘create better health and wellbeing for all Australians’.

The department’s commitment to creating an inclusive workplace through employing and supporting those with disability was recognised by the APS Disability Council. In November 2014, the Department of Health won the inaugural 2014 APS Diversity Council Award in Disability Employment.

The Australian Government has introduced measures to improve the quality of assessment for the Disability Support Pension and to better support into employment people with disability who have some work capacity. This included a review of the tables used to assess work-related impairment for the Disability Support Pension — to bring them up to date with current medical and rehabilitation practice. Revised impairment tables were introduced in January 2012 after an expert advisory committee oversaw the review. The advisory committee included medical, allied health and rehabilitation experts, representatives of disability peak bodies, mental health advocates and relevant government agencies.

The Australian Government also introduced and enhanced programmes to help people with disability to gain suitable employment. They include:

* Disability Employment Services, which tailors assistance to address barriers to employment and works with employers to support individuals with disability in the workplace. The Government invested more than $3 billion over four years to uncap access to Disability Employment Services, ensuring people get the support they need. Previously, access to these services was capped and people had to wait up to a year for support from the services.
* Disability Employment Assistance, which funds Australian Disability Enterprises. The enterprises are commercial businesses that provide supported-employment assistance to people who are able to work for at least eight hours a week in a supported environment. Their clients have moderate to severe disability and face barriers to working in the open labour market.
* Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) Employment Services, which have helped people with a mental illness who are receiving government income support payments to engage with employment services since 2012–13.

The services work closely with employment providers such as Disability Employment Services and Job Search Australia to help PHaMs participants address non-vocational issues that are barriers to finding and maintaining employment, training or education.

* Employment-oriented Mental Health Respite: Carer Support Services have been trialled in four sites since 2013–14; locations included Fraser Coast, Queensland; Randwick/Botany Bay, New South Wales; Casey/Cardinia and Hume, Victoria. The services give intensive support to carers of people with mental illness so they can address the non-vocational barriers that prevent their workforce participation.
* Subsidies have been provided to employers to assist them with the costs of employing people with disability in long-term, sustainable jobs.
* The Employment Assistance Fund has been providing financial assistance for workplace modifications, special-work equipment, Auslan interpreting and disability awareness training.
* The JobAccess advisory service has been providing individualised information to employers and job seekers with disability. The service provides information on workplace adjustments, job design and government services and programmes that assist people with disability to obtain and maintain employment.

Since 2012, Disability Support Pension recipients have been allowed to work up to 30 hours a week without their payment being cancelled or suspended — providing them greater incentives to work. Disability Support Pension recipients can also receive a part-pension while they work, subject to income testing arrangements. Such changes removed employment disincentives for Disability Support Pension recipients and addressed the low workforce participation rate of people with disability.

In 2014, the Government also introduced compulsory, work-focused activities for Disability Support Pensioners aged under-35 who were assessed as capable of working at least eight hours a week. Activities will concentrate on support to prepare for, find and maintain their employment and could include connecting with an employment service provider, work experience, education and training, or rehabilitation activities to overcome individual barriers.

State, territory and local governments also set out to improve access to employment of people with disability. This included removing barriers to employment in the public sector, and creating employer incentives and job opportunities in both the community and private sectors.

Prospective employers have also been encouraged by governments to focus on ability, rather than disability, when recruiting staff through educating them about the contribution people with disability can make, with or without reasonable adjustments. For example the ACT Government introduced a payroll tax concession to encourage the Territory’s largest businesses to benefit from the skills of school leavers with disability aged between 17 and 24 years.

Another innovative approach was the production of a DVD by the Tasmanian Government to encourage the state’s businesses to employ people with disability. While, in NSW, the Department of Family and Community Services’ *Transition to Work* (TTW) programme supports young people with disability to develop the skills necessary to secure employment. In 2013-14, 68.6% of TTW graduates achieved employment or further education, exceeding the target set under Goal 14 of the State Plan *NSW 2021*.

**Victoria encouraging employment of people with disability**

*Employ Outside the Box* was an eastern Melbourne initiative to promote employment of people with disability. Local and regional businesses attended a breakfast forum on busting the myths of employing people with disability by having local, national and international businesses share their stories. As part of this project, Deakin University conducted evaluative research which identified that an employer’s past experience was the best predictor of their intent to employ people with disability.

The event was led by Knox Council in partnership with other eastern metropolitan councils, as well as Local Learning and Employment Networks, Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the National Disability Coordination Officer.

In March 2013, the Victorian Public Sector Commission and the Victorian Department of Human Services published a guide called *Recruiting people with disability — getting recruitment right*. Widely promoted to all departments, the guide will help state government departments employ and retain people with disability.

Paid internships have also begun for university students with disability at the Victorian Department of Human Services. The internships allow students to showcase their skills and knowledge and gain valuable work experience. It also helps foster a workplace culture that values and promotes the employment of people with disability.

**Western Australia Disability Enterprise Initiative**The State Supply Commission’s Open and Effective Competition policy allows State Government agencies to engage an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADEs) directly, without undertaking the usual competitive quote or tender process. The State Government has long recognised the value of employment to everyone, including people with disability and the initiative has proved very successful. More than 70 contracts have been secured from State and Local Government representing approximately $21million of government business.

Engaging an ADE gives access to quality work while contributing to social outcomes to the community, creating a win-win situation. Engaging an ADE makes good business sense. In Western Australia, there are seven disability enterprises who provide meaningful, supported employment for more than 2,100 people.

The ADEs have an all-encompassing commitment to quality and adopt national and international standards of best practice.

### Creating secure and affordable housing

Increasing availability of secure and affordable housing makes a significant difference in providing people with disability a greater degree of economic security. Having more public and private housing stock that incorporate principles of universal design will ensure people with disability have a greater choice of suitable properties and locations. One of the actions under the strategy is to include universal design elements in the majority of new dwellings built through stage two of the Social Housing Initiative.

Several jurisdictions are trialling new community housing developments, where housing tenants within the same small complexes provide friendship and support to their neighbours with disability. Informal support like this helps complement the support provided to people by their families, as well as funded assistance. People with disability in such housing complexes maintain choice and control over whom they invite into their homes.

In Queensland, projects funded from the first two rounds under the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial tested innovations in living arrangements. These included use of assistive technologies, accessible and affordable design, use of income streams created from rents paid by tenants without disability to purchase disability supports and services for the tenants with disability. The trial’s funding round required the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* to be addressed to gold standard. If adults with disability were identified, it was expected some platinum standards would also apply.

In Western Australia, universal design principles were a key contractual requirement for any social housing delivered under the Community Disability Housing Programme. For example, the state’s Liveable Homes criteria were applied to a social housing initiative that resulted in 319 people being provided accessible accommodation through the purchase of 197 new or established accessible homes. Changes to planning rules in Western Australia meant auxiliary housing was an emerging option. Smaller properties were considered for construction on existing housing blocks with existing dwellings. Consequently, people with disability could live independently, but with people nearby — such as family members.

In South Australia, the state government set up Access 2 Place, a new disability housing organisation, to supply and maintain appropriate housing for South Australians with disability. This included specialist housing and tenancy management services. Traditionally, housing and disability service provision were delivered as part of a package by the same providers. The new disability housing organisation separated provision of housing from disability support and gave its tenants — people with disability — more choice and independence in their day-to-day lives.

Access 2 Place is an independent, not-for-profit organisation funded by the South Australian Government to build 135 new properties. A significant number of these were to be completed by the end of 2014 in metropolitan and regional areas. The new homes included design features such as step-less entries, widened doorways and passages and a six-star energy rating. Meanwhile, a particular feature of the Smart Living Project at Woodville West in Adelaide has been the use of innovative technology and concierge services. These include, for example, the provision of 24-hour, 7‑day‑a‑week assistance, emergency and after‑hours support.

**Homeshare ACT — Doria’s story**

Disability ACT funded the Homeshare ACT programme to assist 17 people with disability in sharing a home with people without disability. Under this assistance, the person without the disability received subsidised rent in exchange for supporting the person with disability.  
Louise, a well-known Canberra Para Olympian and medallist in the 2012 London Olympics, shared a home with Doria who came to Canberra to study at ANU. ‘I wanted some company in my new home,’ Louise said. ‘Having a Homesharer gives me that, plus some support to lead the independent life I want.’  
Louise said it felt different from when she had support workers helping her. She felt enabled through this relationship, rather than being looked at as a client or feeling patronised. Doria and Louise said they liked to support and look after each other.

### Trend indicator data

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to Economic Security. The available data relates to the first and second years of the strategy and is presented alongside 2009 data from before the strategy was introduced. In other words, the current data represents baseline information from which to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy.

#### 3.1 Proportion of people with disability participating in the labour force

Eighty-three per cent of people without disability were participating in the labour force[[28]](#footnote-28) in 2009 and 2012, compared to just over half of people with disability (55 per cent in 2009; 53 per cent in 2012). Women with disability were less likely to be in the labour force compared to men with and without disability and compared to women without disability, as shown in Figure 2. In 2012, labour force participation was lowest when a person’s level of disability was severe or profound, down to 29 per cent for men and 31 for women.

Figure 2 Proportion of people in the labour force, by disability status and by sex, 2012

|  | **People with disability** |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5 in 10 Females with disability are in the labour force | 5 in 10 Females with disability are in the labour force. 5 in 10 Females with disability are not in the labour force. | 5 in 10 Females with disability are **not** in the labour force |
| 6 in 10 Males with disability in the labour force | 6 in 10 Males with disability in the labour force. 4 in 10 Males with disability are not in the labour force. | 4 in 10 Males with disability are **not** in the labour force |

|  | **People without disability** |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 8 in 10 Females without disability are in the labour force | 8 in 10 Females without disability are in the labour force. 2 in 10 Females without disability are not in the labour force. | 2 in 10 Females without disability are **not** in the labour force |
| 9 in 10 Males without disability are in the labour force | 9 in 10 Males without disability are in the labour force. 1 in 10 Males without disability are not in the labour force. | 1 in 10 Males without disability are **not** in the labour force |

Source: ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2012.

#### 3.2 People with disability in employment — by private or public sector

In 2012, about 85 per cent of people in the workforce were employed in the private sector, regardless of whether or not they had a disability. But between 2003 and 2012, people with disability in the workforce became less likely to work in the public sector, with the proportion decreasing from 19 per cent to 15 per cent. This change appears to be driven by the rate of employed females with disability shifting to the private sector (75 per cent in 2009 to 83 per cent in 2012).

#### 3.3 Average income of people with disability, compared with all Australians

The median gross weekly personal income for people with a reported disability has been about half that of people without disability throughout 2003, 2009 and 2012, as shown in the Figure 3.

Figure 3 Median gross weekly personal income — people aged 15 years and over living in households

|  | 2003 ($) | 2009 ($) | 2012 ($) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All people with reported disability | 225 | 306 | 380 |
| All people without disability | 480 | 614 | 700 |
| All Australians | 397 | 510 | 580 |

Source: ABS 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. ABS 2009 SDAC, Australia: Summary of Findings.

#### 3.4 Proportion of people with disability experiencing housing stress

Households experiencing housing stress were defined, in Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys, as those spending more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs, and where the household was in the bottom 40 per cent of Australian incomes. In 2009-10, 13 per cent of households with a person with a disability or long term health condition experienced housing stress. Meanwhile, less than 10 per cent of other households (with no reported person with disability) experienced housing stress.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholders felt there was still some way to go before people with disability enjoyed the same degree of economic security that many other Australians were able to achieve. Improving economic security for people with disability was one of the areas where stakeholders felt all levels of government could demonstrate greater leadership — not only ensuring greater representation of people with disability in public sector jobs, but also by providing information and incentives to private employers to encourage them to consider the value of employing people with disability.

Feedback suggested that governments could play a role in assisting schools to provide targeted careers advice and school-to-work transition programmes for students with disability. This would encourage and inspire students to ‘think big’ about what they could achieve post-school. Mentoring programmes initiated at school were also seen as a role for government.

Stakeholders noted the inconsistency in the reported success of some employment brokers in securing jobs for people with disability. They suggested some investment was needed to evaluate the success factors and facilitate the sharing of best practice models. This was another area where stakeholders felt better and more transparent data collection would help to inform progress. It would lead to continuous improvement and allow people with disability and their representative organisations to engage more effectively with governments, industry and business to achieve greater economic security for people with disability.

## Outcome 4 Personal and community support

People with disability, their families and carers have access to a range of supports to assist them to live independently and actively engage in their communities

This outcome has four policy directions:

* a sustainable disability support system which is person-centred and self-directed, maximising opportunities for independence and participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community
* a disability support system which is responsive to the particular needs and circumstances of people with complex and high needs for support
* universal personal and community support services are available to meet the needs of people with disability, their families and carers
* the role of families and carers is acknowledged and supported.

In many ways, this outcome — to provide personal and community support — embodies the overarching aims and purpose of the strategy. Outcome 4 aims to build a steady momentum towards a point where people with disability will be able to exercise choice and control in all spheres of their lives in the manner other Australians do.

The right to equality and the desire for greater choice and control across all aspects of their lives is at the heart of what people with disability want. This was reported back to governments in *Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia* — the 2009 consultation feedback report to government from the former National People with Disabilities and Carer Council. People with disability said in the report “we want our human rights recognised and realised. We want access to the things everyone else in the community takes for granted … somewhere to live, a job, better health care, a good education, a chance to enjoy the company of friends and family, to go to the footy and the movies”.

All levels of government committed to implementing actions under this outcome. Actions taken under Outcome 4 focused on promoting and enabling self-determination, choice and control for people with disability who need personal and community supports. Such consumer power was expected to have a positive impact on driving mainstream reform across many services within and across government, community-based services and the private sector. Details of measures implemented under Outcome 4 between 2010 and 2014 are in Appendix 1, Table 4.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme

Without doubt, the greatest and most influential single achievement supported by all levels of government under this outcome, and arguably under the strategy as a whole, was development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The extent to which the NDIS has engaged people with disability, their families and the wider community presented minor challenges to the implementation of the strategy. Not only were the NDS and NDIS acronyms mistakenly used interchangeably, but the mainstreaming objectives of the strategy were sometimes overshadowed by the individualised focus of the NDIS. Both, however, are important, essential and interdependent elements of COAG’s disability reform agenda.

The NDIS will drive mainstream reform by encouraging mainstream services to meet the broader needs of people with disability. Conversely, mainstream reforms under the strategy will provide people with disability more choice in the services, activities and opportunities they seek.

The NDIS represents a very significant change to the way people with disability are supported. It is a pioneering piece of economic and social reform that will provide fairness, security and opportunity to more than 460,000 Australians and their families who, for too long, missed out on a fair go. Consistent with Productivity Commission recommendations, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) was established in March 2013 to implement and operate the NDIS. The NDIA combined the principles of insurance and market competition with the best expertise from the disability sector to build a world-leading scheme.

Notable outcomes were achieved in a relatively short time:

* 8,585 participants were found eligible for the scheme and 7,316 had an approved plan by the end of June 2014
* most participants were very satisfied, with a satisfaction rating of 1.66 on a scale of -2 (extremely unsatisfied) to +2 (extremely satisfied), at 30 June 2014
* on 1 July 2014, the scheme expanded trial sites across the whole of the Australian Capital Territory, the Barkly region in the Northern Territory, the Perth Hills area in Western Australia, the Lake Macquarie area in New South Wales and, in South Australia, the age cohort increased to 13 years of age
* these sites joined the four that began on 1 July 2013 — in the Hunter (New South Wales) local government areas of Newcastle and Maitland; Barwon (Victoria); South Australia (for children aged from birth to five); and in Tasmania (for young people aged 15 to 24 years)
* through a two-year National Partnership Agreement, the Commonwealth and Western Australian Government will share the costs — using two contrasting approaches to deliver disability services in different parts of that state.

The NDIA is committed to learning, building and reflecting on what has been undertaken to date. Evidence given to the Joint Standing Committee of the Australian Parliament early in 2014 showed aspects of the scheme need to be improved. The internal review processes of the NDIA also identified areas to be refined and strengthened.

The agency has implemented several changes to respond to the lessons learned so far. This included working to ensure that choice and control remain paramount and that people with disability are supported to participate in the community and to build up their social and economic independence.

The agency is committed to managing the NDIS on sound insurance principles. The insurance framework needs to ensure the scheme’s sustainability, as well as drive efficiency and effectiveness. The insurance approach is about ensuring lifetime support — once a participant is in the scheme — and it is intended to meet their lifetime costs.

The NDIA is committed to basing decision making on rigorous actuarial advice and the best-available evidence. It is also clear that all work needs to be underpinned by robust data — both quantitative and qualitative. Of course, an enormous amount of hard work, listening, learning and building still lies ahead as Australia moves from the trial to the full roll out of the scheme.

The progress made, by state and territory, in building personal and community support up to October 2014 included:

#### New South Wales – Ready Together

*Ready Together* continues the NSW Government’s *Stronger Together 2* reforms for disability services from 2011–12 to 2015–16, to deliver 47,200 new places for people with disability to access support. *Ready Together* focuses this investment on what people say they most want – more flexibility, more choice and more control – implemented through the *Living Life My Way* framework. The investment and reforms in *Ready Together* are critical to meeting the growing demand for disability supports. *Ready Together* also prepares NSW for transition to the full National Disability Insurance Scheme, which will commence on 1 July 2016 and continue until June 2018.

Ability Links, the NSW approach to local area coordination, is providing information and planning support for people with disability and their families and carers. It commenced in 2013 and was fully operational across NSW from 1 July 2014. Ability Links is improving pathways to mainstream supports and strengthening community inclusion. It has supported 1,327 people directly and made over 44,500 community contacts.

The trial of the NDIS is already underway in the Hunter area and plans are being made for how NSW as a whole will transition to the NDIS over the coming years. *Ready Together* places people with disability, providers, and the disability service system across NSW, in the best position to transition seamlessly to the NDIS. As part of this process, there are two new laws in NSW. The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* protects the rights of people with disability and promotes community inclusion now and into the future. The *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Act 2013* enables government services to transfer to the non-government sector.

**Joint NDIA-National Disability Services training in shared accommodation quoting**

National Disability Services and the NDIA national office in NSW developed an accommodation-quoting template in 2013. This now supports providers in meeting the agency’s quoting requirements.

NDIA’s Hunter trial site, in partnership with National Disability Services, ran a well-received workshop on the template early in 2014 and it covered the new approach to quoting requirements. This quoting approach changes the pre-existing block-funding-by-tender system to a model of service built around the participant. It requires a change in business practice and thinking.

The workshops increased providers’ understanding of accommodation quoting. National Disability Services continues to provide one-on-one support to service providers, where required. It also delivered training in Tasmania and ACT, setting a good example of positive collaboration between the agency, industry peak bodies and service providers to the benefit of participants who live in group or shared-living arrangements.

Victoria supporting complex needs

The Barwon trial site in Victoria focused on supporting best practice in services provided to those with exceptionally complex needs.

The site worked with participants and their families and providers to innovate, trial and adapt service responses that respect choice and dignity of risk. The outcomes revealed an exciting journey of change for participants towards independence, inclusion and opportunity to participate as valued members of the community.

Queensland getting ready for 2016 rollout

Planning and preparations are underway for the rollout of the NDIS in Queensland from July 2016. The Queensland Government signed a heads of agreement in May 2013 with the Australian Government for full implementation of the NDIS.

Planning began between the Australian and Queensland governments for an agreement that sets out arrangements for eligible people with disability to transition between 2016 and 2019 to the NDIS. Joint planning on the agreement will continue during 2015.

The Queensland Government also rolled out initiatives to prepare for the NDIS people with disability, families, carers and providers. These will:

* support people with disability and communities so they are well informed and confident about what the NDIS means for them
* support people with disability, families and carers in making choices and taking up opportunities
* support non-government service providers in operating in a competitive, market-based environment
* support small rural and remote and discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in working toward local approaches to delivering disability services under the NDIS.

The Queensland Government signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014 with the NDIA to set up NDIA bases in Townsville and Brisbane to get a head-start on preparing the Queensland community to be as NDIS-ready as possible. Two staff started work in Brisbane and one in Townsville.

WA trialling two models

Western Australia was the only state to trial two models, following a national partnership agreement with the Australian Government, which enabled a two-year trial of the NDIS to start in the state in July 2014. The two models underway were:

* The WA NDIS My Way trial, delivered by the WA Disability Services Commission. This had a trial site in the state’s Lower South West, which began in July, 2014, and another that will start in July 2015 in the Cockburn/ Kwinana region
* A trial began in the Perth Hills of the NDIA agency model, which the Australian Government implemented.

A state-wide reference group of key stakeholders, the WA NDIS My Way Reference Group, which includes people with disability, families, and service organisations, provides advice to the Joint Steering Committee overseeing the trials on the implementation of the WA NDIS My Way trial. A local advisory group in the Lower South West provides input to the WA NDIS My Way Reference Group and a similar local advisory group will be established in Cockburn/Kwinana reflecting the decentralised approach of the trial.

**My Way trial —** This was well received and supported local, person-centred planning and individualised approaches. These included decentralised, local decision-making. A solid foundation was provided for the trial by Western Australian experience in working with people with disability and commissioning service providers to deliver community services in partnership.

**Perth Hills trial site —** This set up two local advisory networks to guide implementation of the scheme. Network members had good local knowledge of the disability sector and, in many cases, were people with disability or had a lived experience of disability.

The advisory network had more than 80 members who represent people with disability, families, service providers, local government representatives and consumer and service peaks. The network was the trial site’s own initiative and proved an important forum to share information, gather ideas and discuss the scheme’s implementation.

The second local advisory group fulfilled an advisory requirement outlined in the bilateral agreement between the Australian Government and the Western Australia Government. This group provided advice to a joint steering committee that oversaw both state and federal trial sites in Western Australia, and also advised the NDIA Board regarding preparations for commencement of trial sites.

Both trial sites encouraged community ownership and interest in the scheme.

#### South Australia working with remote communities

The South Australian trial site worked with local organisations and Aboriginal communities in Yalata and Oak Valley in the Maralinga Tjaruta Lands to explain the NDIS and how it can be accessed. Early work in these areas helped develop a service response and strengthen the NDIA’s relationship with these communities.

NDIA staff also worked with the staff and senior members of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPY Women's Council). This is a community-based organisation formed to assist people who live in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in South Australia.

A three-day workshop enabled NPY Women’s Council and NDIA representatives to talk about and translate the scheme’s principles and processes into Aboriginal languages and artworks. Their partnership will enable information dissemination about the scheme and its implementation in the community in culturally appropriate and accessible ways.

#### Tasmania helping students into jobs

Employment is a critical outcome for the NDIS and the agency took a proactive and innovative approach to help people with disability find work. The Tasmanian site trialled a pilot on the pathway from school to work for Year 11 and 12 NDIS participants who used Disability Employment Services.

The state’s School Leaver Integrated Transition Pathway to Employment project trialled ways for school transition officers and agency planners to work alongside the school participants to streamline and simplify the planning process for them. Disability Employment Services and Australian Disability Enterprises, higher education bodies and community based service providers also collaborated in this integrated model. Their approach will be evaluated to find evidence of improved and sustained employment results for these school leavers.

ACT co-locating at a single gateway

The ACT was the first site to transition the entire eligible population into the scheme over two years. The ACT trial site was also the first in Australia to co-locate with another government service. It co-located with the ACT Government’s One Human Services Gateway (1HSG), which is delivered by leading community sector agencies in a partnership with the Territory’s Community Services Directorate.

The 1HSG project provides a single gateway for numerous human services in the Territory. It is a single entry point for the Territory’s individuals, families, community and government services to improve services for members of the community who need to access support services and information. Under the ACT trial, a small team of NDIA staff located at the 1HSG site in Belconnen. The ACT site held community forums and targeted information sessions that paid attention to smaller and specific-needs groups.

NT working with communities in Tennant Creek

Linguistically diverse and geographically dispersed communities were reached through NDIA’s trial site in the Barkly region of the Northern Territory. NDIA staff coped with the local diversity by working closely with the Aboriginal Interpreters Service, local Indigenous engagement officers and mainstream community service providers. Together, they found ways to provide meaningful, two-way communication with local people.

NDIA in the Territory explored creative approaches to meeting the challenges of providing services and infrastructure in remote areas and succeeded in registering 13 service providers. It is also developing a Rural and Remote Service Delivery Strategy to encourage Indigenous people to access the scheme. This will draw on the experiences of other territory, state and federal departments to develop best practice.

### Other measures to improve personal and community support

Support for the rollout of the NDIS was a key achievement under Outcome 4. The Australian Government and state and territory governments carried out many activities additional to these that also aligned with Outcome 4 of the strategy. Some were tangible, such as investments in aids. Other programmes provided equipment for independent living and developed more housing options for people with disability.

**Improving access to assistive technologies in Victoria**

Many people with disability require aids and equipment to get to work or stay involved in the wider community. In the past, they often needed to contact multiple programmes to get the assistance they needed. But now, in Victoria, the State-wide Equipment Programme has been centralised and provides subsidised aids, equipment and home and vehicle modifications to Victorians who have a permanent or long-term disability. The programme also includes 24/7 emergency after-hours assistance for equipment breakdowns.

In the past year, the programme provided more than 36,000 items to nearly 29,000 people across Victoria. Administered by Ballarat Health Services, the programme has improved independence and facilitated community participation. In September 2014, the Victorian Government committed to providing 2,000 more people with disability immediate support to purchase aids and equipment.  
  
**Queensland — meeting communication and mobility needs**

In Queensland, the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme commenced in February 2012 to increase the independence of people with disability and help them to be more active in their communities. The scheme provides subsidies for a range of transport options including vehicle modifications and driving lessons.

In March 2013, the Community Aids Equipment and Assistive Technologies Initiative provided eligible applicants with aids and subsidies for equipment to help them participate in their communities of choice. The equipment helped people with their communication and mobility needs.

Outcome 4 also progressed through training educators, health professionals and others who work with people with disability. Relevant activities were backed by mechanisms to promote sharing of best-practice ideas, together with improving linkages across agencies to streamline their administration of services for people with disability.

**Queensland — helping elderly parents who care for adult children**

Long-term, sustainable living arrangements for adults with disability aged over 25 years who are in the care of parents aged over 60 were provided in Queensland under the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial. The three-year trial, which also catered for Indigenous parents aged over 50, began in 2012-13. Eight organisations were funded to create up to 61 places for adults with disability.

Trialled innovations included leveraging funds from other sources such as private social investors; buying additional supports for tenants with disability by using rent from tenants without disability; using models of support other than rostered staff; and using assistive technologies such as lighting and temperature control activated by smart phones and other remote devices.

**Victorians with disability can now directly employ their carers**

Victorians with disability who had an individual support package and were able to make direct payments on the internet could choose to employ their support worker directly — using money under the Direct Employment initiative. Being a direct employer meant people became responsible for all the legal, financial and human resource management obligations involved and, therefore, the Victorian approach did not suit everyone. However, those who opted to be direct employers said it gave them many benefits, including having more control over how they organised their supports to suit their lifestyle, better quality of support because they had control over the employment process. The approach gave them happier, more dignified lives and improved value for money.

**WA — families helped to improve their caring role**

Western Australian families were given more help by organisations to plan and manage the resources they need to support the wellbeing of their disabled family member. A Partners in Change package that provided training for this kind of support was completed by 20 disability sector organisations.

Each participating organisation developed an action plan to guide person-centred approaches and community inclusion in their work with people with disability and their families. The package explored contemporary values, attitudes and models of services that support inclusion and individualised supports and services. As a result, Western Australian families received more support in their caring role which, in turn, helped more people with disability lead a good life with help from their families.

**Emerging technology —** Significant gaps were found between the potential and actual use of six types of potential technologies for people with disability. These included assistive technology, environmental controls, communication technologies, technology for safety and health, technologies for assessment, training and evaluation and workforce management. The findings emerged from a workshop into the potential use of emerging technologies for people with disability, their families, carers and disability services.

The workshop was convened in 2012 by the Disability Services Commission and the Independent Living Centre. It was attended by Western Australian disability sector organisations, advocacy groups, technology engineering groups and academics. As a result, a partnership of sector and industry stakeholders led by the Independent Living Centre developed strategies to address the identified gaps in understanding and application of technology across the disability sector.

**NT listening to break down the barriers**

The Northern Territory’s Individual Transition Plan has given all potential service providers opportunities to meet students and discuss their access barriers and the potential solutions. Departments in the Territory have found listening to family stories and situations can help them improve the access people with disability have to all areas of life. This includes post-school, during their school years, as well as their access to technology and programmes.

New insights have been found through such discussions involving the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Health. The resulting learning and benefits included more-open communication, raised awareness of individual needs and early intervention to possible barriers. In turn, the approach gave students new opportunities to have their voice and needs heard.

Better outcomes from this process included improved access to work sites, more participation in programmes, assistive technology for everyday living, as well as improved educational skills and more collaboration to extend, develop and amend essential access provisions for people. Introductions made through the Individual Transition Plan process enabled families and agencies to ensure there was more follow-through with programmes and support.

**ACT sector development for NDIS**

The capacity of ACT people with disability to exercise more choice and control under an NDIS were boosted in 2013–14 through sector-development activities. These helped service providers to transition from block funding to individualised funding, and increased their market options in the ACT.

Sector-development activities included community conversations, capacity building workshops, digital stories, supported decision-making pilots and sponsoring individuals to take part in family leadership activities and conferences. These activities helped people with disability and their families prepare for the introduction of the NDIS.

The mental health sector was supported through the Connecting Communities initiative via the expansion of an information and referral service, supported decision making, and a peer workforce education module. The NDIS Organisational Readiness Toolkit, developed by National Disability Services, helped more than 60 providers to assess their level of readiness for the NDIS. The toolkit enabled many organisations to identify which areas they needed to strengthen to be market-ready for the NDIS.

Organisations could also apply for a sector development grant to further assist their readiness for the NDIS. The ACT Government offered 25 organisations a governance and financial management package, and 20 organisations were offered a business investment package.

### Trend indicator summary

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to personal and community support. The available data relates to 2010-11 and 2012-13, the first and second years of the strategy. It is presented alongside data from years before the strategy was introduced. In other words, the current data represents baseline information from which broad changes will be measured over the life of the strategy.

#### 4.1 Potential population accessing disability services

A comparison of the proportions of the estimated potential population accessing disability services in 2010-11 and 2012-13 is presented below in Table 3, by level of government and by service type.

Table 3 Proportions of estimated potential population accessing disability services, by level of government and by service type, 2010-11 and 2012-13[[30]](#footnote-30)

| Disability service type | 2010-11  (per cent) | 2012-13  (per cent) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| State- and territory- delivered disability services | | |
| Community support services | 25.9 | 25.3 |
| Respite services | 14.9 | 16.4 |
| Community access services | 9.0 | 8.7 |
| Accommodation support services | 6.2 | 6.5 |
| Australian Government- delivered employment services | | |
| Disability Employment Services – Employment Support Services | 7.2 | 7.3 |
| Disability Employment Services – Disability Management Services | 7.1 | 8.4 |
| Australian Disability Enterprises | 8.2 | 7.5 |

Source: Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Report on Government Services 2015, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.

Although 2012–13 and 2013–14 data for most disability services as a proportion of the potential population were not yet available, more than 7,300 eligible people with disability were known to have received an approved plan with the National Disability Insurance Scheme during 2013–14.[[31]](#footnote-31)

**4.2 People with disability reporting a need for more formal assistance**

In 2012, 34 per cent of people with reported disability stated they did not receive the full amount of assistance they required, compared to 32 per cent in 2009. People with more significant levels of disability were less likely to report their needs as being fully met.[[32]](#footnote-32)

**4.3 Carers of people with disability reporting a need for further assistance**

In 2012, 27 per cent of primary carers of people with disability reported a need for further assistance in their caring roles, compared to 23 per cent in 2009. Female carers were more likely than males to report a need for further assistance in 2012 (29 per cent compared to 23 per cent).[[33]](#footnote-33)

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

When stakeholders were invited to comment on the implementation of Outcome 4 of the strategy they said the NDIS promised to be the greatest achievement under the strategy and a historically significant social policy for all Australians. They acknowledged that once the scheme was fully implemented people with disability should begin to experience greater control and choice in their lives.

They believed they would become more visible and empowered in society and contribute in a positive way to changing attitudes about the contribution that people with disability make. However, stakeholders also noted that the focus and reach of the strategy was always intended to be considerably wider than the NDIS and cautioned against governments becoming too distracted or self-satisfied by this single, but significant, initiative. They were concerned that the commitment and momentum for mainstream disability reform should be maintained with vigour, by all levels of government.

## Outcome 5 Learning and skills

People with disability achieve their full potential through their participation in an inclusive high quality education system that is responsive to their needs. People with disability have opportunities to continue learning throughout their lives

This outcome has four policy directions, to:

* strengthen the capability of all education providers to deliver inclusive, high-quality educational programmes for people with all abilities from early childhood through adulthood
* focus on reducing the disparity in educational outcomes for people with disability and others
* ensure that government reforms and initiatives for early childhood, education, training and skills development are responsive to the needs of people with disability
* improve pathways for students with disability from school to further education, employment and lifelong learning.

High-quality education and targeted training are universally recognised as essential prerequisites for gaining independence and confidence and for developing the competencies that enable people to reach their full potential in life. The aspiration and capacity for reaching the highest level of personal achievement is no different for a person with disability than it is for any other Australian.

The strategy acknowledges the economic, social and human rights imperative to providing people with disability access to quality education and vocational training that enables them to optimise their potential throughout their lives. It aims to ensure that people with disability are not disadvantaged in their pursuit of personal growth and self-reliance by addressing the physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers that people with disability may experience.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments, as parties to the strategy, set out to improve access to a quality education and appropriate training and support for people with disability through both mainstream and disability-specific policies and programmes. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, education and training providers (including universities) are required to ensure students with disability are able to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as those without disability.

Removing barriers to education

The Higher Education Disability Support Programme assisted in removing barriers to education for domestic students with disability by:

* providing funding to eligible higher education providers to assist with the cost of providing educational support services and equipment to students with disability
* encouraging providers to implement strategies to attract and support students with disability
* funding the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training website, which provides information and other resources designed to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices for people with disability.

The National Disability Coordination Officer Programme (NDCO) also assisted people with disability to access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment. It funded organisations like universities and TAFEs, as well as non-government organisations, that employed a national network of 31 full-time NDCOs. The NDCOs helped reduce barriers, while helping people with disability make smooth transitions from school to tertiary education to employment.

The Australian Government is committed to improving school and education outcomes for all students, including students with disability. Under its *Students First* approach, the Australian Government worked with states and territories to make a real difference for all students by focusing on the key areas of school autonomy, quality teachers, an effective curriculum and more parental engagement.

The Australian Curriculum was also developed to ensure the curriculum establishes high expectations for all students. It provides flexibility for teachers to take into account the different rates at which students develop, as well as tailoring the content and context for learning in ways that cater to various levels of student ability.

Details of measures taken between 2010 and 2014 under the National Disability Strategy by the Australian Government and state and territory governments under Outcome 5, are provided at Appendix 1, Table 5.

#### Improving outcomes for students with disability

At the national level, the Department of Education and Training introduced measures to improve educational and training outcomes for students with disability. These included the Inclusion and Professional Support Programme, the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative, the National Disability Coordination Officer Programme, and the Early Years Learning Framework.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability is underway from 2013 to 2015. This provides important data to enable governments to better target support for students with disability.

**Support for students with disabilities**

The capacity of Australian schools and teachers to educate students with disability grew under the Australian Government’s More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative. This invested $300 million over the 2012 to 2014 school years.

High-quality support for the professional development of school leaders, teachers and paraprofessionals was provided by the initiative. This included using disability-specific online training modules and more use of assistive technology.

Other support included setting up support centres-of-expertise; making more effective use of allied health professionals in schools; guidance, documents and resources to differentiate the curriculum to support learning for students with disability; and fostering more collaboration between schools and parents.

State and territory governments similarly introduced measures to respond to the needs of students with disability. These included better training and teaching resources for educators so they could work more effectively with students with disability. Some jurisdictions explored expanding learning opportunities through finding innovative uses for assistive technologies, web-based teaching and learning resources that could be adapted for students’ abilities.

The states and territories also ran transition programmes to support students from primary to secondary school, and from school to post-school. These included providing careers advice, vocational training and support in tertiary institutions. In addition, they worked to bring about attitudinal change towards people with disability through leadership programmes for people with disability and their families, and disability awareness programmes in schools.

**ACT improving education outcomes**

Several initiatives were carried out in the ACT to achieve better learning outcomes for people with disability. These were under the ACT Education and Training Directorate’s strategic plan for 2014–2017 — *Education Capital: Leading the Nation.*

The directorate worked with the extension into the Territory of the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative. This work helped create sustainable processes to ensure positive learning outcomes for students with disability into their post-school life.

**Victorian schools supporting students with ASD**

Fifteen Victorian schools began inclusion-support programmes for students with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) — who benefit from being in ASD-friendly learning environments. Teachers were trained to meet their needs and the schools provided additional resources to assist the training.

They also increased their staff to help the teachers meet the learning and development needs of children and young people with an ASD. The state’s programmes were part of a joint initiative between the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

**Every Student, Every School making local decisions in NSW**

Disability reforms helped give NSW public schools more authority to make local decisions about how best to meet the needs of their students with disability. They also strengthened education provision in schools in remote and rural areas.

The Department of Education and Communities reform strategy of 2012, *Every Student, Every School,* increased the capacity of more than 2,240 NSW public schools to better meet the learning and support needs of students with disability, regardless of where they enrol. The strategy introduced an extensive variety of projects that provided a strong focus on strengthening and expanding professional learning and support for teachers. This enabled teachers to provide quality learning experiences and outcomes for students with disability at all stages of schooling.

*Every Student, Every School* complemented and supported other significant education reforms to benefit all students in NSW public schools. NSW also increased opportunities for students with disability through extensive work to develop:

* a new assessment tool to help teachers provide personalised learning and support for students in collaboration with parents — more than 24,000 students in 556 schools were involved in a trial of the tool in 2013
* a new website to improve information for school communities about supporting the educational needs of students with disability.

### Trend indicator summary

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to Learning and Skills from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.[[34]](#footnote-34) The available data should be viewed as baseline information from which we will measure broad changes over the life of the strategy. This is because the available data relates to 2011 and 2012, the first and second years of the strategy, as well as to the years prior to the strategy.

#### 5.1 Proportion of people with disability in mainstream schools

Most people with disability (67 per cent of those aged 5 to 20) took part in regular classes at mainstream schools in 2012. This rate increased slightly from 65 per cent in 2003. A further 20 per cent attended special classes at mainstream schools in 2012, while 13 per cent attended special schools.

Exploring school attendance rates for children and young people (5–20) with and without disability will help put this data in context. Young people with disability were more likely to attend school than their counterparts without disability. In addition, young people with disability stay at school for longer than children without disability.

#### 5.2 Proportion of people aged 19–25 years with a disability who have attained at least Year 12 or equivalent qualification

In 2012, about 61 per cent of people with disability had attained Year 12 or equivalent qualifications; an increase from 37 per cent in 2003 and 56 per cent in 2009. Understandably, Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates varied across disability type, with the rates in 2012 being:

* 57 per cent for people with a severe or profound core-activity limitation
* 60 per cent for people with a schooling or employment restriction
* 62 per cent for people with a mild or moderate core-activity limitation.

These rates of Year 12 attainment continue to lag behind the rate for people without a reported disability (78 per cent in 2012).

#### 5.3 Proportion of people with disability with post-school qualifications

People with disability in the working-age population (15–64 year olds) are increasingly completing post-school qualifications. Forty-five per cent had post-school qualifications in 2003 and this grew to 50 per cent in 2012. People without disability were still more likely to hold a post-school qualification (58 per cent).

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholders reported some improvements and positive initiatives that aligned to the objectives of Outcome Area 5. They specifically noted the value and importance of funding to the Australian Human Rights Commission that enabled people with disability to participate in international conferences. The growing exploration of and investment in online learning tools and resources, both for educators and people with disability, were also recognised as a positive outcome in recent years.

Some stakeholders noted improved access to TAFE and tertiary education, but this was not a universal view. Stakeholders also identified where, with more consideration and targeted investment, learning and skills development for people with disability could be improved. This was by making better use of the resources, structures and networks in schools and other institutions to drive attitudinal change about the potential and rights of people with disability. The attitudinal issues that need to be addressed included the tendency to respond to disability as a medical issue, and the need for a greater commitment at all levels to eliminate bullying and the indirect discrimination of students with disability.

Better teacher training was required to increase expertise in educating children with disability including, for example, giving more teachers basic skills in signing for the deaf and hard of hearing. More expert and specialised staff were also needed to better support students with disability in transitioning through school and into tertiary studies, vocational training and employment.

Stakeholders noted a need for greater national consistency in the opportunities and outcomes experienced by students with disability, their families and carers. Better, more systematic, mechanisms to share best practices across learning and teaching institutions and jurisdictions were also identified by stakeholders as an area for future action.

## Outcome 6 Health and wellbeing

People with disability attain highest possible health and wellbeing outcomes throughout their lives

This outcome has four policy directions:

* all health service providers (including hospitals, general practices, specialist services, allied health, dental health, mental health, population health programmes and ambulance services) have the capabilities to meet the needs of people with disability
* timely, comprehensive and effective prevention and early-intervention health services for people with disability
* universal health reforms and initiatives to address the needs of people with disability, their families and carers
* factors fundamental to wellbeing and health status, such as choice and control, social participation and relationships, to be supported in government policy and programme design.

It was recognised when the strategy was being developed that people with long-term disability experienced comparatively poorer health than the average population. The extensive consultations with people with disability that took place to inform the strategy revealed possible reasons for this. For instance, barriers to health care were linked to physical access to both acute and chronic or preventive health care services. Access to buildings and transport services were another issue for people with disability. In addition, many information sources related to public health notices or better health strategies were not accessible to some people with disability. These were seen as contributing to poor health outcomes. Measures were set out under Outcome 1 Inclusive and accessible communities to address these issues.

Another factor seen to contribute to poor health outcomes and negative experiences with the health sector was the inadequate level of education and training for health and allied professionals in how they should interact with people with disability. Lack of adequate training can impact on issues as fundamental as establishing trust and rapport in the patient-doctor relationship, without which patients may not be comfortable disclosing more complex health issues.

People with disability also reported that some healthcare professionals tended to focus on their most apparent disability, but often missed or dismissed other complaints or symptoms that were causing greater distress or concern. Identification and appropriate treatment of unrelated mental health issues and appropriate responses to sexual and reproductive health issues were noted examples of this tendency.

Actions under the strategy to improve health and wellbeing sought to address access to health services and support for people with disability across many fronts. These included attention to appropriate training and education for medical and allied health professionals; improved assessment tools to identify complex needs; increased representation of people with disability in health-advisory roles; better data collection; and improved networking, leadership and sharing of best-practice models across and within health and lifestyle services.

Details of measures taken under the National Disability Strategy by the Australian Government and state and territory governments under Outcome 1 between 2010 and 2014 are at Appendix 1, Table 6.

**Medicare Locals representing people with disability**

The Australian Government Department of Health continued working with Medicare Locals to ensure their board membership represented the broader community demographic. This included increasing the representation of people with disability on universal health bodies.

In 2014–15 all Medicare Locals were required to complete a comprehensive annual needs assessment of their communities. This involved consulting with a broad variety of primary healthcare providers and the community — including people with disability and their sector representatives. The annual needs assessment explored opportunities for joint service planning with other local primary healthcare providers, Local Hospital Networks, and provider sectors.

The 61 Medicare Locals are being replaced with 30 Primary Health Networks, as announced in the 2014-15 Federal Budget and following the Government’s review of Medicare Locals. The networks will be efficient, corporate organisations responsible for improving patient outcomes in their local areas. They will ensure services across primary, community and secondary health sectors align and work together in the interest of patients.

**NSW raising clinicians’ awareness of intellectual disability**

The NSW Ministry of Health, in partnership with local health districts, ran pilot projects to improve access to medical and allied health care for people with intellectual disability. The pilots set out to improve the awareness and capacity of clinicians to respond to the specific needs of people with disability, including people with complex health needs and high-support needs. The state’s pilots were supported by the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation’s Intellectual Disability Network, which includes clinicians, consumers and NSW representatives.

**Victoria — encouraging cancer screening for women with disability**

In Victoria, an awareness-raising project set out to increase awareness of the need for cancer screening among more than 7,000 women with an intellectual disability. Cancer-screening rates are lower among women with an intellectual disability than women in the general Victorian population. The women were encouraged to discuss health checks with their GP and to have mammography, Pap and faecal occult blood tests, as appropriate. In 2013, the project also included training for disability services staff to support the women during the process, and an online directory for GPs.

**Rehabilitation for people with acquired brain injury in Victoria**

The recovery process for people with an acquired brain injury can be slow and specialist care may be needed. In 2011–2012, the Victorian Government, through the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services, and in conjunction with the Transport Accident Commission, funded a new 42-bed rehabilitation unit at Caulfield Hospital for people with an acquired brain injury. This provided the support and specialist care these people needed in order to return to and participate in community life. Victoria’s acquired brain injury rehabilitation service opened in September 2014.

**Queensland — meeting the health needs of people with intellectual disability**

The attention paid by GPs to the health needs of adults with intellectual disability increased substantially in Queensland through the use of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Programme (CHAP). The programme was made available by the state government (since late 2007) to every adult with an intellectual disability who received a Disability Services delivered or funded service.

The programme enables improved identification and documentation of the health needs of adults with an intellectual disability, and resulted in more disease detection.

The programme was developed by the Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability as a two-part book, which can be downloaded from a website by people who register. The book is completed by individuals, family members, carers, general practitioners and staff of government and funded non-government service providers on behalf of people with an intellectual disability.

Evaluations of the programme showed positive benefits in using a health assessment tool for adults with an intellectual disability. These individuals often have a reduced lifespan and several unrecognised or poorly managed medical conditions, inadequate health promotion and disease prevention.

**South Australia — improving life skills, connectedness and wellbeing**

The life skills, connectedness and wellbeing of up to 90 young South Australians who are deaf and have additional disability were boosted through the

WHISPA Life Skills project delivered by the Cora Barclay Centre in 2013. The project was supported by a South Australian Government *youth***connect** grant. The WHISPA Life Skills project particularly targeted young people with hearing impairment who were geographically isolated, disengaged and who had poor social and emotional wellbeing.

**Western Australia - improving public health outcomes for people with disability**

Western Australia is building on inclusive approaches to health services through the establishment of the Western Australian Disability Health Network. The network improves the health experience for people with disability by informing and influencing the development of a Western Australian health system that supports people with disability to enjoy the best health possible throughout their life.  
Currently 3,237 people are registered as members of the Disability Health Network, including health and disability service professionals as well as people with disability, their families and carers.  
  
The Disability Health Network is driving:

* a WA Health Disability Health Care Coordination Framework to identify best practice and any gaps in care coordination in the health and disability sectors
* a WA Health Disability Health Hospital Stay Guide to improve the disability sector capacity to support people with disability transitioning into and out of hospital
* a WA Health Workforce Development Disability Health Capability Framework which describes the health workforce capabilities that are expected when providing services to people with disability, families and carers.

### Trend indicator summary

Baseline information that will be used to measure broad changes over the life of the strategy is set out in this section. It presents key baseline data on the trend indicators relating to the Health and Wellbeing outcome. Data for these indicators are from sources that dated from 2006 to 2012. As a result, it should be interpreted as baseline data from before the strategy was introduced and from the year the strategy was introduced. Further data is needed to ascertain progress on these indicators from 2012 onwards.

#### 6.1 Proportion with disability who report their health status as ‘good or better’

People with a reported disability were less likely to report that their health was “better than good” than people without disability. Data from 2006 and 2010 is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4 Self-reported health status of people 18 years and over, by disability status**

|  | 2006 - People with a reported disability | 2006 -  People without disability | 2010 -  People with a reported disability | 2010 -  People without disability |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Better than Good | 30.2% | 67.8% | 32.7% | 74.0% |
| Good | 34.6% | 27.7% | 32.3% | 22.8% |

Source: ABS unpublished, General Social Survey 2006, General Social Survey 2010.

#### 6.2 Access to GPs, dental and other primary healthcare professional

Proportions of people with disability who accessed selected health services in 2012, are presented in Table 5. Data from the patient experience survey shows the general population had lower or equal rates of visits to health professionals in comparison to people without disability. However, this comparison should be treated with caution because the two surveys were undertaken using different methods.

Table 5 People with disability aged under 65 years who accessed health services in the last year, 2012

| **Health Service accessed** | **%** | **Health Service accessed** | **%** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Saw a general practitioner | 93% | Saw a dental professional | 49% |
| Saw a medical specialist | 55% | Admitted to hospital | 21% |
| Visited hospital emergency department | 27% | Saw 3 or more health professionals for same condition | 33% |
| A health professional helped to coordinate care | 23% | - | - |

Source: DSS analysis of ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2012.

#### 6.3 Risk factors for preventable disease in people with disability

People with disability appear to have more health-risk factors than the general adult population. The Australian Health Survey 2011–12 revealed that people with profound and severe disability are more likely than the general population to:

* smoke on a daily basis (19 per cent compared to 16 per cent)
* have low exercise levels or be sedentary (87 per cent compared to 68 per cent)
* have a body mass index classified as overweight or obese (76 per cent compared to 63 per cent).

However, people with disability were less likely to consume alcohol at risky levels, as set out by the National Health and Medical Research Council in 2009.

Further data on these trend indicators, including available information by gender, Indigenous status and other factors, appear in Appendix 2.

### Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholders reported that this outcome should remain a priority for governments and that more work was needed to achieve nationally consistent outcomes. They expected the delivery of health services for people with disability should be at least equal to the standard and availability of health services provided to most other Australians.

Nevertheless, stakeholders reported positively on the increase in online health services and the potential for this delivery model to assist people with disability who had a preference for online support, or for people with disability who live in rural and remote locations. However, they also cautioned against an over-reliance on online health services as a cheap alternative to comprehensive face-to-face health and medical assessments and services. Both options should remain open to people with disability.

Stakeholders maintained that more training and education of health and allied professionals was needed. This was to ensure people with disability are treated holistically and with dignity and respect when they present at public and private healthcare facilities. They also felt that more effort was needed to ensure all health and health-promotion material is accessible to people with disability, and that better data collection was needed to monitor the overall health outcomes of people with disability.

1. Disability plans are a requirement under some state legislation, such as in Queensland where the development of agency disability service plans is regulated by the *Disability Services Act 2006*. At the Australian Government level, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* encourages development of action plans, which are provided to the Australian Human Rights Commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/about\_us/strategies/national\_disability\_strategy/nds\_nsw\_implementation\_plan [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.lgnsw.org.au/policy/disability [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. www.dhs.vic.gov.au/statedisabilityplan [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/reform-and-renewal/disability-services/queensland-government-disability-plans/queensland-disability-plan-2014-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/reform-and-renewal/disability-services/queensland-government-disability-plans/queensland-government-disability-service-plans [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. www.disability.wa.gov.au [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/disability-sa/disability-sa-publications/plans-and-reports/strong-voices [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csrt/for\_and\_about/people\_with\_disability [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/disability\_act/policies\_and\_publications [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0006/79872/final\_policy\_framework\_PUBLISHED.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0007/314593/final\_policy\_framework\_PUBLISHED.doc [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/guidelines\_for\_new\_nps.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. http://mcm.arts.gov.au/working-groups/nads [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Note: some of these people (in the 34 per cent segment) provided reasons for their difficulty in using public transport that were not related to potential transport improvements. A total of 17 per cent cited fear or anxiety; 11 per cent cited cognitive difficulties; and 6 per cent cited behavioural problems. However, the remaining 66 per cent reported reasons like access difficulties and lack of seating. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Source: Department of Social Services (DSS) analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2012 TableBuilder [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Source: DSS analysis of ABS SDAC, 2003, 2009 and 2012 TableBuilder. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Source: DSS analysis of ABS SDAC, 2012 Confidentialised Unit Record File. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Source: DSS analysis of ABS SDAC, 2009 and 2012 Confidentialised Unit Record File. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=5 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/equal-law [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/equality-capacity-disability-report-124 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. DSS analysis of ABS General Social Survey, Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. DSS analysis of ABS General Social Survey, Confidentialised Unit Record File*,* 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. DSS analysis of ABS General Social Survey, Confidentialised Unit Record File*,* 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Source: Australian Human Rights Commission Annual Report: 2012-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ‘Participating in the labour force’ includes people who are employed and people who are unemployed but looking for work (engaged in the labour market). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. DSS analysis of ABS Household Expenditure Survey 2009–10 Basic Confidentialised Unit Record Files. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. It is not possible to analyse whether some people used more than one of these disability service types. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, Report to the Disability Reform Council, June 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Source: ABS SDAC, 2009 and 2012. Note DSS has decided to use the SDAC data on all people with disability because the National Disability Strategy is broader than the NDA potential population. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Source: ABS SDAC, 2009 and 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sources for all data in this section are the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2003, 2009 and 2012 and the DSS analysis of ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2003, 2009 and 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)