

Disability Advocacy Work Plan 2023 – 2025



The *National Disability Advocacy Framework 2023-2025* is an
Associated Plan under *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

Introduction

The Australian Government, state and territory governments have committed to sharing responsibility for disability advocacy in their jurisdictions and to working together to achieve an effective network of disability advocacy across Australia, by agreeing to the National Disability Advocacy Framework 2023–2025 (the Framework).

To help guide this commitment, the Australian Government, state and territory governments have established the Disability Advocacy Work Plan (the Work Plan). The Work Plan supports the implementation of the Framework by outlining priority areas of work for the Australian Government, state and territory governments to collaboratively support the outcomes listed in the Framework. Jurisdictions have discretion to determine which Work Plan actions they wish to participate in, and implementation of the Work Plan actions may be undertaken within jurisdictions' existing budgets, resources, and priorities. This Work Plan should be read with the Framework for its full context.

In February 2025, the Disability Reform Ministerial Council agreed to amendments to the Work Plan in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Rationale

The Framework presents a joint vision for disability advocacy in Australia for people with disability to have access to effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. Currently, the Australian, state and territory governments, all separately fund disability advocacy programs using different service and funding models. There is currently no mechanism or consistent approach to identify, at a national level or within jurisdictions, where there is unmet demand for disability advocacy services. At a national level there are also no mechanisms to identify levels of service coverage, standards or funding across Australia.

The Framework and Work Plan represent the beginning of ongoing work by the Australian, state and territory governments, to improve alignment of disability advocacy services by committing to joint work in key areas. Activities under the Work Plan aim to improve the experience of people with disability accessing disability advocacy services. Each jurisdiction has its own priorities and over time there will be additional opportunities for jurisdictions to commit further to joint work, and for priority areas to be expanded. The Framework and Work Plan has a review point scheduled to ensure that the documents remain current.

Involvement of people with disability

Public consultation on the Framework 2022–2025 was conducted by the Department of Social Services (DSS) from 8 April 2022 to 8 July 2022 through the [DSS Engage](#) website. DSS received 111 submissions from people with disability, their families and carers, disability advocacy organisations and other interested respondents and over 500 people took part in targeted consultations, including online and face-to-face forums, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Forty percent of participants were people with disability. A consultation report which includes an independent analysis of all submissions and feedback received, has been published on the DSS Engage website.

The findings from public consultation informed the final version of the Framework and have also influenced the development of this Work Plan. Feedback from public consultation includes:

- The outcomes identified in the Framework need to be measurable and reportable.

- There needs to be ongoing co-design, and involvement of people with disability in the implementation of the Framework outcomes.
- Changes made in the sector need to be evidence-based.
- Funding for disability advocacy should be fair, needs-based, increased and for longer periods.
- Improving access to disability advocacy means building choice and control for people with disability, especially for First Nations people, people in regional and remote areas, and within this understanding how intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage may increase the need for advocacy for such priority cohorts.

Australian, state and territory governments are committed to involving people with disability to shape policies and programs that directly impact them. All governments will continue to involve people with disability in implementing this Work Plan. This will include through engagement with Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council and state and territory based councils; and Disability Representative Organisations. Further public or targeted consultation will be designed and undertaken in line with achieving the objectives of individual actions as appropriate.

Policy context

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC)

The DRC was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability. The DRC final report was delivered to the Governor-General on 28 September 2023, and tabled in the Australian Parliament on 29 September 2023.

Three recommendations are relevant to the Framework and Work Plan. The Work Plan has been revised to incorporate responses to these recommendations following the joint Government response dated 31 July 2024 accepting these recommendations in principle.

Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – Final Report

On 7 December 2023, the final report of the NDIS independent review (the Review) was released and included 26 recommendations as well as 139 supporting actions. The Review looked at the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS and also looked at ways to make the market and workforce more responsive, supportive and sustainable.

A number of recommendations and supporting actions have been identified that could be supported in part, by outcomes from some of the NDAF's work areas under the Work Plan.

Demand and Gap Analysis

In March 2020, DSS engaged a consultancy firm, ASK Insight, to lead a demand and gap analysis of 'independent disability advocacy and decision-making supports' to better understand the disability advocacy landscape since the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The project was finalised in December 2020 and a summary of the project's findings is available at [Demand and Gap Analysis Project Summary December 2020 \(dss.gov.au\)](https://www.dss.gov.au/consultations-and-projects/demand-and-gap-analysis-project-summary-december-2020)

The report concluded the Framework should be updated to take account of agreed outcomes and measures of national disability advocacy to achieve alignment and improve outcomes for people with disability. The Framework has been the document to set the objective, principles and outcomes for national disability advocacy and the Work Plan demonstrates the commitment of Governments to work together on improving access to disability advocacy.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 (the Strategy)

The Strategy is Australia's national disability policy framework. It is driving action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability. The Strategy recognises advocacy helps safeguard people's rights and overcome barriers to their inclusion and participation in the community. The Strategy recognises disability advocacy as being an important way to enable and support people with disability to protect and uphold their rights.

The Framework and Work Plan helps to support the Strategy's Policy Priority 'The rights of people with disability are promoted, upheld and protected' under the Safety, Rights and Justice Outcome Area. Finalising the Framework is an Australian Government action (Action 5.3) under the Strategy's Safety Targeted Action Plan.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap was developed in genuine partnership between all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations with the objective of enabling First Nations people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by First Nations people, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

Under the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, all Commonwealth agencies have obligations to embed disability as a cross-cutting outcome area across all 17 socio-economic targets and the four Priority Reforms.

Disability Sector Strengthening Plan (Disability SSP)

The Disability SSP provides a national framework for a joined up approach to strengthening the community-controlled sector and improve outcomes with and for First Nations people with disability. The Disability SSP was developed to support achievement of 'Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector' under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Disability SSP was co-designed through genuine partnership with the national peak for First Nations people with disability, the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) Australia. The Disability SSP has been endorsed by all jurisdictions and the Coalition of Peaks. The Framework and Work Plan helps to support the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Disability SSP by having a work area dedicated to First Nations access.

Governance

The Framework and Work Plan fall under the responsibility of the Disability Reform Ministerial Council (DRMC). Australia's Disability Strategy Inter-Jurisdictional Committee, which consists of officials from the Australian, state and territory governments, is responsible for driving the actions under this Work Plan and for the subsequent reviews of the Framework.

Reporting and Review

The Framework and Work Plan were endorsed by the DRMC on 21 April 2023. The Australian Government, along with state and territory governments, will provide progress reports to DRMC annually.

The Framework and Work Plan will be reviewed in the twelve months prior to the cessation of the Framework at the end of the 2025 calendar year. The review will include consideration of the progress of this Work Plan, as well as the findings from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the subsequent review of the Strategy.

Priority work areas

The Australian Government, state and territory governments have identified work areas which will help governments to implement the Framework and improve national consistency and access to disability advocacy services. It is intended that activities to be developed under these work streams will be short to medium term projects aimed at building the evidence-base to improve national consistency and service delivery. The evidence gathered will be used to inform future work. Priority work areas are:

1. Measuring and reporting the outcomes of the Framework
2. Improving data consistency
3. Improving service delivery
4. Sector development and support
5. Better coordination of funding
6. Supporting access for First Nations people

Over time other priority work areas may be added based on the outcomes of some of these projects. For example, as we better understand service delivery from a national perspective, projects focused on other cohorts may be prioritised. Information about the work to be undertaken under each of the priority work areas is provided in the table below.

Disability Advocacy Work Plan

Priority Work Area	Description	Indicative timelines
Work area 1: Measuring and reporting the outcomes of the Framework	<p>Develop a measure of outcomes for the Framework</p> <p>The Framework lists thirteen high level outcomes which disability advocacy supports provided in-line with the Framework will contribute to achieving. Further work is required to determine and agree indicators that can measure the outcomes in the Framework and a mechanism to measure and collate progress against the outcomes for reporting purposes.</p>	January 2024 to June 2025
Work area 2: Improving Data consistency	<p>Explore existing data collection practises across jurisdictions</p> <p>All jurisdictions administer and fund their own disability advocacy services using different designs, processes and infrastructure. Participating jurisdictions will work together to better understand existing data collection practices across jurisdictions with an aim to identify and agree to a disability advocacy core dataset, which may include met and unmet demand for disability advocacy. This will contribute towards nationally consistent data collection to improve reporting on disability advocacy at a national level and improve coordination of service delivery.</p>	April 2024 to June 2025

Priority Work Area	Description	Indicative timelines
<p>Work area 3: Improving service delivery</p>	<p>Conduct a mapping exercise to identify where current individual disability advocacy services are available</p> <p>All jurisdictions administer and fund their own disability advocacy services using different designs, processes and infrastructure. A mapping exercise is required to identify and describe available disability advocacy services across the nation. This will create a clearer picture of the supply of disability advocacy and where service gaps exist to better target future services. Information to be considered includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability type • Demographic information • Geographic location • Funding source • Issues in scope • Types of advocacy • Any other access requirements 	<p>October 2023 to December 2024</p>
<p>Work area 4: Sector development and support</p>	<p>Develop a national sector development project</p> <p>A highly skilled and knowledgeable advocacy sector helps deliver good outcomes for people with disability. Participating jurisdictions will work together to develop resources for individual advocates on best practice and support individual advocates to develop stronger networks to share information, learnings and experiences implementing evidence based practice.</p>	<p>October 2023 to February 2025</p>

Priority Work Area	Description	Indicative timelines *
<p>Work area 5: Better coordination of funding</p>	<p>Review existing funding arrangements and identify opportunities to better coordinate funding</p> <p>Utilise outputs from the projects on existing data collection and mapping of service delivery to identify possible improvements to the coordination of available funding across participating jurisdictions and work collaboratively to consider long-term and stable funding for disability advocacy programs to meeting demand.</p>	<p>July 2024 to June 2025</p>
<p>Work area 6: Supporting access for First Nations People</p>	<p>Increasing culturally appropriate and accessible advocacy services</p> <p>There is a need for improved access to culturally safe advocacy for First Nations people with disability. This project will identify ways to increase access to disability advocacy including by increasing training opportunities and resources to improve cultural competency for disability advocacy services and/or projects to enable First Nations people to become leaders and advocates in disability.</p>	<p>February 2024 to March 2025</p>